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“STRAIGHT WAYS AND SHINING”

The Medieval Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela

by Mother Nectaria McLees

The Apostle

The Apostle James, whom we venerate in the town of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, is one of the twelve apostles, often called James “the Greater” to distinguish him from the younger apostle James. The son of Zebedee and Salome, he was also the brother of St. John the Theologian, “the beloved disciple.” Santiago is derived from the Galician version of the apostle’s name.

The Gospels introduce James and John fishing with their father by the seashore when Christ called them to follow him, and they, along with Peter, were the three apostles who witnessed the Lord’s transfiguration. Bearing the nicknames *Boanerges* or “Sons of Thunder,” James and his brother were rebuked by the Lord when they wanted to call down fire on a Samaritan town that did not receive him: “The Son of Man came not to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” They appear again petitioning Christ to allow them to sit on his right and left when he comes into his glory, and finally, when, in response to his prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem they ask, “...when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?”

The Acts of the Apostles records Herod Agrippa’s order that James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem, be put to death by the sword; the first of

Opposite: Medieval image of the Apostle James as a pilgrim.

the apostles to be martyred for his faith. Today, the site of the martyrdom can be seen in the Armenian Cathedral of St. James in Jerusalem, in a chapel to the left of the altar. Armenian tradition holds that his head is buried beneath the altar, marked by six burning votive lamps.

Translation of the Relics

Commissioned by a medieval Compostela bishop, the twelfth-century *Historia Compostelana* summarizes the pious tradition of St. James in Spain: first, that the apostle preached the gospel in Iberia as well as in the Holy Land, and that it was there, on the banks of the Ebro River (now the town of Zaragoza) that the Mother of God appeared to him, telling him to return to Jerusalem, where he was eventually martyred. After his martyrdom, his disciples carried his body by sea back to Iberia, where they landed at Padrón in Galicia, eventually burying him at what is now Santiago de Compostela, part of the medieval kingdom of Asturias. Later tales provide a tapestry of miraculous events to explain the translation, including the unescorted coffin being carried by waves in a rudderless stone boat from the Holy Land to Spain.

The *Historia* recounts that early in the ninth century during the reign of King Alfonso II of Asturias (818 -842) and Bishop Theodemir of Iria Flavia, the relics were recovered when a holy hermit named Pelagius had a heavenly vision of the presence of the relics, including bright lights or stars illuminating the area. He informed the bishop, who declared a three-day fast before starting out with companions to investigate the deserted spot, twelve miles from Iria Flavia, where they found an overgrown marble tomb containing the relics of St. James and his two disciples. A monastery was established at the burial site soon after, and later a cathedral. The place, tradition continues, was known as Campo de la Estrella (Field of the Star), later shortened to Compostela.

Although popularly believed throughout the medieval world, details of this history have always been controversial. Yet recent archeological finds have given credence to at least some of the details. While the word Compostela was actually not used as the name of the site before the eleventh century, it is now thought to derive from the Latin word *compositium*, meaning burial-place. Twentieth-century excavations at the cathedral revealed that

Opposite: Streets of Santiago de Compostelo.



the cathedral was indeed built over an earlier Roman cemetery or Christian necropolis, and in 1955 workers uncovered a tomb inscribed with the name of Bishop Theodemir. That he chose to be buried in this remote spot rather than in his cathedral church indicates the bishop's belief in the authenticity of the relics.¹

Another explanation of the translation of the relics was published by the noted Spanish Benedictine historian Fr. Justo Perez de Urbel (+1979), who documents a religious congregation in ninth-century Santiago de Compostela who venerated relics of various saints, including St. James, in a church dedicated to the Mother of God. This list of relics was identical to another set venerated two centuries earlier in a church also dedicated to the Virgin, west of Madrid in Merida. Between these two dates, conquering Moors had left an account of the inhabitants of Merida fleeing north-west to Galicia, and Fr. Perez de Urbel surmises that the final stage of their journey almost certainly took place by sea, thus laying the foundation for the later popular tradition of the arrival of the relics at the Bay of Padrón, close to Iria Flavia.

Whatever the provenance, within a very few years after the discovery of the tomb, a martyrology by Florus de Lyon noted "extraordinary devotion paid by the inhabitants to the relics," and that pilgrims were already arriving from great distances. Eventually, St. James was named the patron saint of Spain. European church dedications to him were also numerous: England alone had over 400 such churches and chapels, and France and Spain even more.

Even now, many pilgrims believe that relics of the saint do reside in Santiago de Compostela, while others who start the Camino in doubt, or even outright disbelief, find that they have remarkable experiences on the road and at the cathedral. Nearly all sense a spiritual dimension, and many, even if not believers themselves, comment on the living tradition of the saint and the pilgrimage.

For Roman Catholic or Orthodox Christians, the saint's relics, although a great and treasured blessing, are not in themselves essential to receiving his intercession and the grace of the pilgrimage. As one prays to the Lord and the Mother of God without having earthly relics, so we pray to St. James with whom we are united in the ever-present, grace-filled Church of Christ. Stepping onto the Camino in faith, or even in honest questioning, draws us into the presence of Christ and his apostle, and unites us with the prayers of those who, for over a thousand years, preceded us on the pilgrim's way.

¹ Bishop Theodemir's tomb is preserved in the cathedral. (If you get there, remember to thank him.)

While we hope to venerate the apostle's relics, the reality of his presence can be experienced on or off the road to Santiago de Compostelo.

Images of St. James

The earliest images of St. James were frescos, icons, paintings, mosaics, and sculptures depicting him amongst the twelve apostles, where he was often portrayed bearded.

The subsequent history of Spain contextualized a second important image. The Islamic invasion of Spain by the Moors began in 711, a century before the discovery of the tomb in Galicia, and over the following decades much of Spain was conquered. Although the Moors were driven south of Gaul by Charles Martel when they marched on Tours in 732, large portions of central and southern Spain remained under Islamic rule for the next 800 years until Granada, the last Moorish holding, was freed in 1492. Centuries of occupation saw ongoing resistance by the native Christian populations, and forced Islamization raised many new martyrs among Christians who refused to apostatize. But with Martel's victories in the north, the major pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela through France and northern Spain were free of Islamic interference.

During a Spanish victory over the Moorish army at Clavijo in 834, soldiers claimed to have seen St. James, who appeared at the height of the battle dressed as a knight and mounted on a horse, leading the Christian forces to victory. By the seventeenth century, forty such appearances of the saint in battle had been recorded, and the apostle became known as Santiago Matamoros, "the Moor-Slayer."

This image of the apostle as warrior coexisted with a third popular medieval depiction of St. James appearing as a pilgrim carrying a *bordón* (staff), *escarcela* (pouch), and wearing a wide-brimmed hat decorated with a scallop shell, the symbol of a Compostela pilgrim.

Textual Sources for the Tradition

A main literary source for these images in the early centuries of the pilgrimage was the *Codex Calixtinus* (*Liber Sancti Jacobi*), dating from the early twelfth century. An illuminated manuscript of five separate books, it



includes stories of St James’s miracles; a collection of sermons and hymns in his honor; a medieval account of the translation of the relics; a separate book dedicated to Charlemagne and Roland;² and finally, the famed “Pilgrim’s Guide” describing the routes to Santiago de Compostela, a forerunner of many such guides. The original Codex survives until now. On the Church of St. James, the *Codex* has this to say:

In this venerable basilica the revered body of Santiago lies under the main altar, built in his honour, in a marble coffin in a fine arched tomb, built with appropriate craft and size.

The body is held to be immovable, according to St Theodormir, bishop of this city, who discovered it and was not able to move it. May rivals across the mountains blush, therefore, who say they have anything of him or his relics.

The whole body of the Apostle is here, divinely illuminated by heavenly precious stones, permanently honoured by divine and fragrant smells, graced with gleaming celestial candles, honoured with angelic and meticulous deference.

Over this tomb is a small altar, which it is said his disciples made, and for the love of the Apostle and his disciples, nobody afterwards wanted to destroy.

Above it is a large and wonderful altar, fifteen palms high, twelve long and seven wide. I have measured it so with my own hands. The small altar is enclosed by the larger on three sides, right, left and behind, but is open at the front, so that one can see through the opening the old altar, when the silver screen is taken away. But

² This book describes the supposed coming of Charlemagne to Spain, his defeat at Roncevaux Pass, and the death of his knight Roland. After the defeat, the account relates that St. James appeared in a dream to Charlemagne, urging him to liberate his tomb from the Moors and showing him the direction – with the Milky Way pointing the way. The Milky Way (*La vía Láctea*) became an alternate name of the Camino de Santiago, and in later poetic folk imagery, the Milky Way itself was composed of the dust stirred up by the feet of the Camino’s “hundred thousand” holy pilgrims.

Opposite: Reliquary of the Apostle James and his companions, Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

if anyone wishes to send an altar cloth or linen for the altar of the apostle, out of love for Santiago, it should be nine palms in width and twenty-one in length.

An even earlier text is the *Breviarium Apostolorum*. Written in the seventh century by an anonymous author and based on the ancient *Byzantine* or *Apostolic Catalogues*, the *Breviarium* gives accounts of the lives, works, death, and burial of the twelve apostles, focusing on the missions of Peter and Paul in Rome, James in Spain, Philip in Gaul, and Matthew in Macedonia. This is the oldest account of the preaching of James on the Iberian Peninsula and the principal source of the *De ortu et obitu partum* of Isidore of Seville (+ 636), who also refers to St. James' presence in Iberia. Although some authorities believe that the text has been misconstrued and mistranslated from the original Greek, it is still regarded as a document of extraordinary importance for Spanish ecclesiastical history.

The seventh-century St. Aldhelm, Abbot of Malmesbury, describes the apostle in a Latin poem as “...*the first fruits of the gospel, St. James through his preaching converted the Hispanic peoples.*”

Pilgrims to St. James

The first pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela was undertaken in 824 by King Alfonso II the Chaste of Asturias who, when told by Bishop Theodemir of the discovery of the saint's remains in the north of his kingdom, began the 300-kilometer pilgrimage to verify the claim. This route is still known as *Camino Primitivo*, the “original” or “primitive” way.”

Over the centuries, many royals embarked on the pilgrimage and in 1486 Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain built a large pilgrim hostel near the cathedral for sick and hungry pilgrims in gratitude for the Spanish capture of Granada from the Moors. Not only did the hostel have Spanish clergy, but priests from England, Flanders, and France were available to hear confessions and administer sacraments to the ill and dying. Writing in the late sixteenth century, the Jesuit Luis de Molina left a brief account:

Opposite: Mountain route, Camino de Santiago.



In the three large wards there are few days when there are under two hundred sick people, and the number is much larger in a Jubilee year. Yet every patient is treated with as much care as if the hospital had been erected for his particular benefit. The hospital is one of the great things of the earth. Apart from its sumptuousness and the regal grandeur of its architecture it is a marvelous thing to feel its size, the multitudes of its officials, the diligence and zeal of its attendants, the cleanness of its linen, the care taken about the cooking, the perfect order of the routine, the assiduity of the doctors. One may indeed regard it as a crowning glory of Christendom.

Medieval pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela came from all walks of society – royalty, nobility, clergy, governors, judges, educators, merchants and artisans, students, farmers, and peasants. Some simply wanted to venerate St. James, while others sought forgiveness of sins, to fulfill a vow, to recover their health or that of a loved one, to do penance assigned by a confessor or even a court, or to receive an indulgence. Sometimes, the reasons had additional urgency: in 1170 St. Thomas Becket of Canterbury recommended the Compostela pilgrimage as an avenue of healing for a possessed woman. By the thirteenth century the poet Dante, while describing Christians journeying to the Holy Land as *palmer*s, and those to Rome as *romei*, wrote that the only true pilgrim “in the narrow sense [is] the man who travels to and from Compostela.”

Pilgrims seeking the intercession of the saint were not the only ones to travel to Santiago de Compostela. The Islamic Moors were thwarted in an eighth-century invasion, but an even greater threat was the Reformation, when after the defeat of the Armada in 1589, Queen Elizabeth I’s Protestant pirate, Sir Francis Drake, sailed an army of 14,000 to Galicia to destroy Santiago de Compostela, which he regarded as a stronghold of “pernicious superstition.” Although Drake raided the Galician coast, he was not able to take the city. When the English attacked again in the early eighteenth century, the apostle’s relics were hidden so well in the masonry behind the high altar that they were only rediscovered in 1879. The find was verified by a missing piece of the apostle’s skull that had been given centuries before to the cathedral in Tuscany: the match of the small relic to the skull was exact.

Travelling to Santiago de Compostela

Pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela in peak years of the medieval period numbered over 250,000 per year, although recent estimates have put it as high as 500,000 in the thirteenth century. This would have meant that one out of every 140 Europeans set off to Compostela annually. One recent German study spanning three centuries estimates that from 1150 to 1450 between 20 and 50 percent of Europe's adult population took part in pilgrimage.

Following Black Plague epidemics of the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformation, and general political unrest, the number of pilgrims decreased dramatically, until by 1950, the Camino was all but forgotten.³ However, according to one credible source, it was still very alive at the end of the eighteenth century.

In 1779, John Adams was appointed by the Continental Congress to help negotiate treaties of peace and commerce with France during the Revolutionary War. With his young sons, he sailed for Europe, but the arduous journey caused them to land at Ferrol, where tradition says that the apostle's relics landed. The group followed the Way of St. James in reverse by mule train and on foot to get to Paris, though the group did not stop in Santiago de Compostela, which Adams later greatly regretted. He did however leave a short account of the finding of the relics and the building of the Church, and described how, after the Moorish invasion, St. James had appeared in battles on horseback with a drawn sword. In his autobiography he recounts... "the People made a Vow, that if the Moors should be driven from this Country, they would give a certain portion of the Income of their Lands to St. James. The Moors were defeated and expelled... and the People, believing that they owed the Victory to the Saint, very cheerfully fulfilled their Vows by paying the tribute. ... there are great numbers of Pilgrims who visit it every Year, from France, Spain, Italy and other parts of Europe, many of them on foot."⁴

Spring was generally the season to set out, in order to have time to arrive at the relics of the apostle and to return before winter set in. Even without bitter

³ The official count for 1985 was only 690 pilgrims completing the trek to Santiago de Compostela, but these numbers dramatically increased as the route became known. In 1987, the Council of Europe named the Camino the first European Cultural Route, and in 1993 UNESCO declared the four major routes from France and across northern Spain a World Heritage Site. In 2018, 327,342 pilgrims registered in the Pilgrim's Office at Santiago de Compostela.

⁴ *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, Volume 3, Peace, 1779–1780, (Sheet 10 of 18). Belknap Press, Harvard University, 1961.

FIRMAS Y SELLOS

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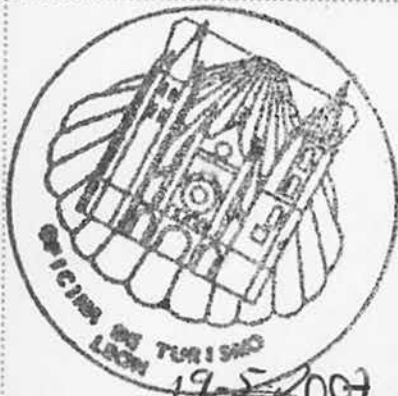


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cold and impassible snows, the hardships of the pilgrimage were daunting and the *Codex Calixtinus* listed swamps, fever, mosquitoes, robbers, hostile natives, sickness, inadequate food, bad water, excess heat, infecting winds, wild animals, and onerous mountains as obstacles to be faced along the way. Yet there were also the long silent stretches of road, the rhythm of movement, meetings with other pilgrims. However discouraging the hardships, one imagines the medieval pilgrim agreeing with Edward Abbey: "Walking is the only form of transportation in which a man proceeds erect – like a man – on his own legs, under his own power. There is immense satisfaction in that."

Throughout medieval Europe, rulers and wealthy donors provided for the protection and well-being of pilgrims, and major routes featured pilgrimage hostels for the poor maintained by local villages and religious orders. These free or inexpensive hostels still exist today along the major Camino routes. Even in the far north, as early as 1000, St. Olaf II, the newly-converted king of Norway, encouraged pilgrimage by providing ship transport and secure roadways. Everywhere religious pilgrims were afforded protection, exempted from tolls and tariffs, and eligible for charity, food, and beds; it was a grave sin and strictly punishable by law to rob or injure them.

Charity to passing pilgrims was an acknowledged Christian duty, but the pilgrims also had obligations, such as praying for their benefactors and not overstaying individual or hospice hospitality. The usual stay for a pilgrim was a single night, with three nights lodging allowed for bad weather and again after reaching Santiago de Compostela. An edict enacted under King Edgar of England (959-75) stated:

It is a deep penitence that a layman lay aside his weapons and travel far barefoot, and nowhere pass a second night, and fast and watch much, and pray fervently, by day and by night, and willingly undergo fatigue, and be so squalid that iron [combs or scissors] come not on hair or on nail. Not that he come into a warm bath, nor into a soft bed, nor taste flesh, nor anything from which drunkenness may come... but yet diligently seek holy places, and declare his sins, and implore intercession, and kiss no one, but be ever fervently confessing his sins.⁵

⁵ *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England...*, Ed. Benjamin Thorpe, Oxford University, 1840, p. 281.

Opposite: Stamps in Pilgrim's Credential.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the pilgrimage to St. James' relics. Most European cities maintained hospices for pilgrims setting off, often run by dedicated religious orders. In addition to providing free food and beds, the pilgrims could confess, commune, receive route advice, and even material help for their journey. In Paris, the main artery of the city since Roman times was renamed Rue Saint-Jacques, as it remains today, and at the pilgrimage's height in the eleventh and twelfth centuries half a million people per year may have used the road leading to Spain. Pilgrims leaving from Paris started from the Church of Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie at the Place Saint-Jacques. Although the church was razed during the French Revolution, its bell tower, the Tour St. Jacques, still remains with its moving milestone at the base, inscribed "Zero".

Another example of a pilgrim center was the hospice in Dublin built near the Stein or Long Stone (a standing stone erected by Vikings in the tenth century) maintained with revenues from the Diocese of Glendalough. It was established for the benefit of "the poor and pilgrims, those particularly intending to visit the shrine of St. James the Apostle and awaiting at the seaside suitable wind and weather." Here the pilgrims "have their wants supplied in food and beds," by lay brethren dressed in black cloaks with a white cross on the breast. Their spiritual needs were attended to by resident priests.

Along with these earlier monastic and local parish attempts to assist poor pilgrims, the thirteenth century saw the dawn of city guilds such as the Paris *Confrérie de Saint-Jacques-aux-Pèlerins*. These were made up of former pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela who took it upon themselves to not only feed and clothe those setting out (with meat and wine on feast days – the last the fasting pilgrim would consume before reaching Compostela), but also provided medical care and even a hospital. In a one-year period (1368-1369) the Parisian guild received 16,690 pilgrims. In the late Middle Ages such confraternities existed in every major European city, and France alone had over two hundred.

Routes to Santiago de Compostela

There were as many routes to Santiago de Compostela as there were starting points, and many, predictably followed old Roman trade routes, overland

Opposite: Pilgrim on the Camino del Norte, not far from Cerdigo y Islares.



through France and Portugal or by sea. Often, they end not at the cathedral, but with an additional eighty-six kilometers to Cape Finisterre (Land's End), or even a side trip to Padrón, the port at which medieval pilgrims believed the relics had landed.

Trails feeding in from across Eastern and Western Europe joined the four major routes in France: starting from the Tour St. Jacques in Paris; from the shrine of Mary Magdalene in Vézelay; from Le Puy; and from Arles via Toulouse, with its particularly difficult climb over the Pyrenees. The first three met up at Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in southwest Gascony, then descended from the Pyrenees into the great Spanish pilgrimage city of Roncevalles where the route led due west to Santiago de Compostela. Trails from south and central Spain also came into popular use as the occupying Moors were driven out. The length of pilgrimages varied: from France, Italy, or Spain one might walk from 300 to 1000 kilometers, while for pilgrims from Central Europe, Northern Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Slavic countries, the distance could be more than 3000. Journeys from the far north or east of Europe often took years. Unlike today, when pilgrims simply book air tickets home, medieval pilgrims had to retrace the entire journey on foot or by horseback.

While most continental pilgrims travelled to Santiago de Compostela overland, Irish and British pilgrims used sea routes: the British mostly from Cornwall, Devon and Bristol, while the majority of Irish sailed from Dublin, Drogheda, Wexford, New Ross, Waterford, and Galway. Such pilgrimage ships landed in the medieval Galician ports of La Coruna or Ferrol, the starting point of the "English Way." In 1456, one English pilgrim counted 84 pilgrim ships in the harbor of La Coruna.

Overland hazards included attacks by thieves and bandits, inclement and bitterly cold weather, sickness on the road, poverty, hunger, and danger from wild animals (particularly dogs), yet sea travel had its own hazards. Sea-sickness and crowded, unsanitary conditions below deck were often compounded by dangerous storms and the threat of pirates. In one example, Bartholomew Couper, a London merchant, was returning from Santiago de Compostela to Waterford, Ireland in 1477 with 400 Irish pilgrims when the ship was captured by pirates, "to the number of 800." They despoiled the captain and pilgrims and sailed the ship to a remote Irish port. Couper was held captive for three years and was fortunate to escape with his life.

Arriving at the Shrine of St. James

Setting out on the long journey, arrival at the sacred relics, and the return home were spiritual events marked by receiving the sacraments and special rites. Before departing, pilgrims confessed their sins, partook of Holy Communion, and received a blessing for the journey.

The scallop shell, the archetypal emblem of St. James that is still plentiful on northern Spanish beaches, was not worn by medieval pilgrims on the way to St. James as pilgrims do today, but as an identifier that one had actually reached Santiago de Compostela.⁶ Nor was it the actual shell itself that was worn, but a purchased metal scallop-shaped emblem displayed as a hat or cloak badge that could not be worn by anyone who had not finished the pilgrimage. When a black market arose in the thirteenth century for buying and selling pilgrim's emblems, Camino authorities began to require identity papers, such as the *Credencial del Peregrino*, a passport-like booklet on which stops at churches or hostels were stamped to verify that the pilgrim had passed through on foot or horseback.

After covering immense distances over months and sometimes years, there were traditions often enacted before entering the city. The first was at Lavacolla, thirteen kilometers from Santiago de Compostela, where pilgrims would bathe in the river to wash away the journey's dust and grime before entering the city.

At Monte do Gozo (The Hill of Joy), the final hilltop from which they first caught sight of the three spires of the cathedral, Compostela history records groups of medieval pilgrims racing each other to the summit. The first to see the spires cried out "My Joy!" and became the "king" of the group as they entered the city. Today, reaching the hilltop is still a moving experience for the believer, with pilgrims dropping to their knees in prayer and hymns.

From the hilltop, an hour walk would finally bring them to one of seven gates into the city, usually the Francigena (*Puerta del Camino*). They entered the cathedral itself through the magnificently sculpted gateway, the *Portico da Gloria* (Portico of Glory). Inside, the newly arrived pilgrim would have

⁶ Our popular contemporary idea that most medieval pilgrims wore naturally-formed scallop shells as emblems is only partially true. Although today's pilgrims often sport the shell as a symbol of their journey to any traditional Christian holy place, the original badges were of silver, copper or lead, with different designs depending upon the destination. Pilgrims to the Holy Land wore the Jerusalem Cross, while those who had journeyed to Cologne bore an image of the Adoration of the Magi, and shrines to the Mother of God produced an image of her with the infant Christ or simply the first letter of her name.

seen the central marble pillar, known as the Tree of Jesse, topped with a statue of St. James holding a pilgrim's staff and a scroll that reads, "The Lord sent me." For a thousand years now, pilgrims have placed their right hand into five indentations worn into the marble pillar and said a prayer of thanksgiving (traditionally five Hail Mary's) for their safe arrival.

From the Portico, pilgrims (then and now) made their way up the wide aisles of the cathedral to the high altar, the shrine of St. James. Up a short series of stairs and through a small anteroom behind the altar, they approached the back of the twelfth-century *Cappila Mayor*, a statue-bust of the apostle gleaming with gold and silver, which they embraced from behind. Kissing his jeweled cape and touching their hats to his head were common acts of veneration as the view stretched out before them from the high altar down the nave of the cathedral. Many have described this as the most moving moment of the pilgrimage.

From there, they descended to the crypt below the high altar to view the casket that contains the remains of St. James. If the pilgrim was a priest or a fortunate layman, he could serve or attend a liturgy in the tiny reliquary chapel. Afterwards, other chapels around the inside of the church were also visited.

A sermon in the medieval *Codex Calixtinus* describes this moment: "the chorus of pilgrims keeping watch around the venerable altar of St. James" ... "Germans on one side, French on another, Italians on another standing in groups, holding burning tapers in their hands, which illuminate the whole church as the sun or rather the brightest day."

Next, the pilgrims would confess and attend the pilgrim's mass before being given their *compostela*, the official certificate that testified to their completing the pilgrimage.⁷ With the *compostela* in hand, they were now allowed to buy their scallop-shaped metal badge from metalsmiths in the Square of the Silversmiths, and then find a hostel or inn where, upon presentation of their *compostela*, they received three nights free board and lodging. For believers, these same rituals continue until now.

Services were daily held in the cathedral for the pilgrim's return home, for their journey was but half over. Though weary with extended fasting and

⁷ Today's pilgrims also receive an official *compostela* from the cathedral upon completing at least 100 kilometers of the route on foot or 200 by horseback or bicycle. Those who make the pilgrimage for non-religious reasons receive a certificate of welcome for the same distances.

walking, they now had to endure again the hardships of the outward pilgrimage, but now with a sense of gratitude and accomplishment at having fulfilled a penance, a vow, or simply the spiritual desire to venerate. Arriving home, they could join one of the many confraternities of St. James made up of pilgrims who had finished the Camino, and when they died, their scallop shell or other emblems of the apostle were buried with them.

Returning pilgrims were another kind of people: Christians cleansed and set apart who would have concurred with St. Jerome: "We do not worship, we do not adore for fear that we should bow down to the creature rather than to the Creator, but we venerate the relics of the martyrs in order the better to adore Him whose martyrs they are." ✠