

ENCOUNTERING ANNE

ENCOUNTERING ANNE:  
JOURNEYS TO SAINTE ANNE DE BEAUPRÉ

By

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the experience of visitors to the shrine of Sainte Anne de Beaupré in Québec, Canada. Drawing on ethnographic data, narratives and historical research, this project describes the ways in which Saint Anne is meaningful to people. I focus on the themes of pilgrimage and tourism, devotional expressions, visionary experiences and religious healing.

While the earliest visitors to the shrine were primarily motivated by stories of the miraculous, contemporary visitors have many different motivations, blurring the scholarly boundaries constructed between pilgrimage and tourism.

Devotional expressions at Sainte Anne de Beaupré, understood as “media of engagement” or “relationships of presence,” encompass a wide range of practices, meanings and functions. Power is invested and diffused through Saint Anne by forming “cogent connections” to her through the media of devotional expressions.

This study also considers visionary experiences that are associated with Saint Anne, especially visions that are related to pilgrimage and religious healing at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. Rather than focusing on the “epiphany” of the visionary experience itself, I suggest that agency is key to understanding visions, particularly as they relate to issues of empowerment.

Finally, I situate pilgrimage, devotional expressions and visionary encounters in the context of religious healing. The term healing encompasses a broad range of meanings, and I demonstrate that journeys to Sainte Anne de Beaupré involve a quest for therapy, self-transformation, identity and/or personal empowerment.

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## Introduction

### *Between Heaven and Earth: The Ethnographic Endeavor*

*Anthropology, to give my Aunt Rebeca a grandiose reply, is the most fascinating, bizarre, disturbing, and necessary form of witnessing left to us at the end of the twentieth century. As a mode of knowing that depends on the particular relationship formed by a particular anthropologist with a particular set of people in a particular time and place, anthropology has always been vexed about the question of vulnerability.<sup>1</sup>*

My maternal grandmother unknowingly introduced me to the figure of Saint Anne and the Basilica of Sainte Anne Beaupré. Many people have recounted to me stories about how this tradition was transmitted to them by their grandmothers. My grandmother never told me about Saint Anne. Instead, she passed this tradition on to me after she died. I knew my grandmother had been a practicing Roman Catholic in her youth, but she fell in love and married a Protestant. For various reasons she did not continue to practice her faith in the Roman Catholic Church. After my grandmother died my mother gave me a few of her belongings. Among the few cherished objects she took into the nursing home was a small tarnished portrait of Saint Anne framed in glass from Sainte Anne de Beaupré. I was intrigued by this small memoir of my grandmother, especially since I had an academic interest in early female Christian figures and contemporary pilgrimage.

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 5.

I initially visited Sainte Anne de Beaupré in the late summer of 2002, while studying French at Université Laval, but was called home for a family emergency. At that time, I only had the opportunity to view the exterior of the Basilica. It was another four years before I would finally return to Sainte Anne de Beaupré. I had decided to change my academic direction—from studies focused in the ancient world to the contemporary world. I returned to the shrine in 2006 for preliminary fieldwork, and upon finally entering the shrine, I was struck by the beauty of the church—its architecture, statues and perfumes. For reasons unknown to myself, I felt overwhelmed and tears flowed softly down my face. Was I recalling the time I was called home? Was I weighed down by various life events, such as a divorce? Was I remembering my grandmother? Was I simply moved by the simplicity of pilgrim’s faith or the beauty of the church? I’m not sure to this day, but I do know that in some way I was moved by the simple act of entering the shrine. I recall telling a priest that the shrine was simply beautiful. He knowingly nodded his head in affirmation. A question that continues to perplex me is why some people, including myself, feel moved at pilgrimage sites. Moreover, how does one represent this emotional experience in ethnography?

Drawing upon Ruth Behar’s work, the anthropologist who makes herself vulnerable in such places makes the experiences much more intelligible and hopeful. Sites such as Saint Anne de Beaupré offer pilgrims, visitors and even anthropologists an opportunity to experience a “place between heaven and

earth.” I recall thinking one sunny day, while sitting outside near the shrine swinging gleefully on a swing, listening to the birds chirping cheerfully, children playing at the nearby school and the church bells ringing gaily, that this was truly a place that was contrary to my experiences in a large city and bustling university in southwestern Ontario. I was at peace, without worries in a place far removed from my hectic and stressful everyday life.

One woman at the shrine wisely instructed me that I would never really learn about Saint Anne devotion unless I experienced helping sick people. Her advice to me was that I must volunteer for the Aides of Saint Anne to truly understand the dynamics at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. Although my experience in caring for the sick and handicapped was not as extensive as Ruth Harris’s fieldwork in her study of Lourdes, I did volunteer as an Aide of Saint Anne, helping pilgrims in a limited way.<sup>2</sup> While Harris assisted a mother caring for her handicapped adult son on the train ride to Lourdes, I helped sick pilgrims primarily with information, assigning wheelchairs, and assisting them so they could participate in various pilgrimage activities.

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<sup>2</sup> See Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in a Secular Age* (London: Penguin Books, 1999).



Figure 1. *Anointing of the Sick, Novena 2007*. As an Aide of Saint Anne, I assisted Father Alfred Bradley with the Sacrament de l'onction des maladies on July 26, 2007. Photo by Robert Wagenhoffer.

Fieldwork is much more than simply participant-observation. It can be physically, intellectually and emotionally demanding. I spent many hours volunteering at the shrine; some days working twelve hours, and would often return exhausted, being too tired to even write field-notes. Other days I interviewed several people and it would be difficult to clear my mind to sleep. Behar suggests that “at the end of the voyage, if you are lucky, you catch a

glimpse of the lighthouse, and you are grateful.”<sup>3</sup> Like Behar, I allowed myself to become emotionally involved in my quest for understanding others. I became the vulnerable observer, feeling not only people’s pain and anguish, but also their renewed sense of hope and joy. Writing vulnerably means to expose the self, who is spectator, which requires “a keen understanding of what aspects of the self are the most important filters through which one perceives the world and more particularly, the topic being studied.”<sup>4</sup>

Despite being a Roman Catholic convert, I write this ethnography as an anthropologist on the margins, being neither an insider nor an outsider. I find myself “betwixt and between” social worlds. I had assumed because I belonged more or less to the same culture that I would clearly and intuitively understand the people I studied. I was naïve: being half-in and half-out is awkward at the very least. My status as a Roman Catholic afforded me many opportunities that might not have occurred otherwise. Being a Catholic, even a nominal one, created an element of trust between pilgrims and myself. Many people I approached were suspicious of my study. After discovering I was a Roman Catholic, they felt at ease and were willing to share their stories and experiences. My Catholic identity also entitled me to fully participate in pilgrimage rituals, especially the Mass. Despite being an “insider,” and warmly welcomed by

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<sup>3</sup> Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

others, I often felt myself on the periphery of the group. After all I was studying “the native point of view.” As an anthropologist we can only enmesh ourselves so far into another culture, without “going native” ourselves. Although I was a Roman Catholic and an Aide of Sainte Anne, people ultimately knew I was studying them. I was also fully aware that I was studying them. I felt this distinction most clearly during the Feast Day in 2008. I had returned to the shrine shortly after the birth of my son, and I was unable to volunteer as an Aide as my son was only two weeks old. I observed the Anointing of the Sick<sup>5</sup> from the periphery of the crowd, rather than helping the Aides with the sick and handicapped. It was an entirely different fieldwork experience, one less meaningful and fruitful. I became one of the hundreds in the crowd, one face among many. Up until this point, I had not realized how much my experiences and emotions constituted a form of knowledge.

James Clifford has suggested that ethnographic truths are “inherently partial—committed and incomplete.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, he compares the ethnographer to a Cree hunter who claimed: “I am not sure I can tell the truth...I can only tell

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<sup>5</sup> The Anointing of the Sick is a Roman Catholic sacrament. It is given to individuals who suffer from serious illness and infirmity. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, this sacrament was called Extreme Unction (final anointing), a ritual that took place at the time of an individual’s death. See “The Anointing of the Sick,” *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992), 320-326.

<sup>6</sup> James Clifford, “Introduction: Partial Truths,” In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford and George E. Marcus eds., 1-26 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 7.

what I know.”<sup>7</sup> Ethnography is a type of storytelling. Moreover, much like culture, its meaning is fluid and ever-emergent. This ethnography, *Encountering Anne: Journeys to Sainte Anne de Beaupré*, is a particular story about particular group of people at a particular point in time. It does not represent one story but numerous stories. As Edward Bruner posits, both the anthropologist and informants equally share responsibility for “finding meaning in the field.”<sup>8</sup> Ethnography is a collaborative effort in the construction of meaning.

Does the anthropologist necessarily need to “believe” in the same way as the people she/he studies? There are many different ways of “believing.” Many of the people I interviewed were pious Roman Catholics, fully devoted to Saint Anne. Theirs is a piety that in all honesty, I can barely grasp. There were also numerous other people who were nominal Catholics, but they devoted many hours to the service of the sick. We only need to be human and have some life experience to understand or empathize with another’s experience of pain, suffering and sickness. Although anthropologists must be concerned with reflexivity and positioning themselves within ethnographies, like Robert Orsi, I think belief is the wrong question to ask:

The saints, gods, demons, ancestors, and so on are real in experience and practice, in relationships between heaven and earth,

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Bruner, “Ethnography as Narrative,” In *The Anthropology of Experience*, Victor Turner and Edward Bruner eds., 139-158 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 149.

in the circumstances of people's lives and histories, and in the stories people tell about them. Realness imagined this way may seem too little for some and too much for others. But it has always seemed real enough to me.<sup>9</sup>

I have incorporated a variety of materials into this study. As indicated earlier, I began preliminary fieldwork in 2006. I conducted interviews at Sainte Anne de Beaupré during the 2007-2008 pilgrimage seasons. I spoke to various people including priests, nuns, pilgrims, pilgrimage organizers, tourists, and local people. Some of these interviews were over two hours in length, while others were brief. I have also drawn on petitions that pilgrims left at the shrine as well as entries recorded in the shrine's "Book of Peace" (2007). The majority of the petitions were given to me in 2008, and they did not go through a filtering process by shrine officials. I was given access to the shrine's archives during my fieldwork in 2007-2008, and I made copies of letters written to the shrine, which were archived under the heading "Miracles et Guérisons (Faveurs)." I have incorporated letters into this study from 2000-2004, despite having access to several other years. I was only able to copy letters that had already been archived, and I was not given access to recent letters written by pilgrims. I continued my fieldwork in 2009 and interviewed Colette Coulombe, a woman who has had visionary experiences of Saint Anne. I met with Colette at Our Lady of the Rosary in Port Colbourne, Ontario and she granted me an interview

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 18.



despite her busy schedule at the shrine. I participated in numerous religious activities during my fieldwork, and I volunteered as an Aide of Sainte Anne for two pilgrimage seasons. I have incorporated a broad spectrum of voices into this study, including my own experiences. I could not recount each letter, interview or petition in this study, but I did attempt to include as much as was humanly possible.

This study does not include a sociological analysis of data as a means to locate patterns in people's behaviors, experiences or stories. Although I do examine the category of gender, parameters such as socio-economic status, ethnic, cultural, religious or sexual identities are not analyzed although in many instances such parameters are mentioned. In many of the examples I have incorporated into this study, such as letters or petitions, sociological data was simply not available. In other instances, such as interviews, I felt that revealing such information might readily identify informants. A sociological examination of visitors to Sainte Anne de Beaupré would provide valuable information, but would require a different methodology, using systematic questionnaires, for example, and would constitute a separate project from the present study.

Many of my colleagues have asked me several times over the past few years: "What is your thesis?" I was not sure how to respond to that question when asked and I am not sure I have an overall thesis now. The phenomena at Sainte Anne de Beaupré cannot be summarized into a neat and concise sentence

or two. It is not simply a place of pilgrimage—it is also a bustling tourist destination. While the earliest pilgrims were primarily motivated by stories of the miraculous, the contemporary visitor has many different motivations, blurring the boundaries between tourism and pilgrimage. However, two recurring themes are apparent in the pilgrimage experience: re-enchantment or presence and empowerment. The pilgrimage experience might be summarized as follows: through a journey to the shrine and/or participation in various devotional expressions, individuals form relationships with Saint Anne or another divine persona. These are relationships of presence or re-enchantment of the mundane world, which empower the divine and the individual alike. Sainte Anne de Beaupré is a place between heaven and earth, an intersection of the earthly world with the heavenly realm. Ultimately, it is in the interstices of the extraordinary, divine world and the ordinary, mundane world that both healing and visionary experiences take place.

Chapter One, “Pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré: Place of Power, Power of Place,” examines the transformation of a small church at Petit-Cap in the seventeenth century to a major tourist/pilgrimage site in the twenty-first century. The origins of the shrine at Petit-Cap are rooted in stories of the miraculous, narratives that recount Saint Anne’s presence in the emerging colonial context. Such narratives, as shaped by their clerical redactors, played a pivotal role in defining local and colonial identity as sacred, French and Catholic.

Through the triad of miraculous stories, pilgrimage and donations, the devotional cult at Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap materialized, transforming both the structure of the church and the physical landscape of the Saint Lawrence Valley.

Turning to social scientific studies of pilgrimage, this chapter highlights some of the significant models for studying pilgrimage, beginning with Victor and Edith Turner's seminal work. Although Turner's concepts of liminality and *communitas* are important in some aspects of this study, they do not account for all visitors' experiences at the shrine. Rather than understanding the phenomena of pilgrimage as *sui generis*, this section focuses on studies that consider not only individual motivations but also pilgrimage's connections to tourism.

As a key to understanding contemporary journeys to Sainte Anne de Beaupré, various individual motivations are explored, and it is observed that motivations are often mixed. While stories about the miraculous continue to be a motivating factor for pilgrimage, other narrative genres also promote travel to the shrine. Throughout this section, the blurring between the boundaries of tourist/pilgrim and tourism/pilgrimage are emphasized, suggesting that the contemporary shrine of Sainte Anne de Beaupré is sustained and transformed through the triad of narratives, pilgrimage and tourism. Just as there are a variety of motivations, there are also a variety of outcomes. Not all visitors are transformed by their journey to the shrine. However, for some people, the journey is transformative, re-enchanting the world and empowering the self.

Chapter Two, “Negotiating Power: Private, Collective and Service Devotions,” examines various devotional expressions at Sainte Anne de Beaupré, proposing that such expressions encompass a wide range of practices, meanings and functions. This examination considers devotional expressions in the context of social scientific studies, postulating that such expressions should not be understood as “popular devotions,” since the concept “popular” is problematic. Similarly, the term “lived religion” to characterize devotional expressions limits an understanding of devotional expressions as practice. Instead, devotional expressions are best understood as “media of engagement” or “relationships of presence.”<sup>10</sup> Pilgrims empower themselves and form relationships through cogent connections with Saint Anne or other divine personae. Effective empowerment is obtained through three strategies: reciprocity, conflating categories and appropriating identities.

After setting the theoretical framework for understanding devotional expressions, major devotions are examined at the shrine. These expressions are categorized into three domains: private, collective and service. While private and collective devotions tend to centre on the self or loved ones, devotions of service focus on the care of others. Various private and collective devotional expressions are examined: prayer, Miraculous Statue, novenas, relics, religious objects (oil,

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<sup>10</sup> The terms “media of engagement” and “relationships of presence” are used by Robert Orsi and are discussed in Chapter 2. Also see Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-195* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), xxi and *Between Heaven and Earth*, 1-18.

water, images), Rosary, Candlelight Procession, *ex-votos*, Venerable Alfred Pampalon, Scala Santa, and Stations of the Cross. Turning to devotions of service, organized group pilgrimages and volunteer associations are considered. In short, all devotional expressions have the potential to be meaningful, relational and empowering.

Chapter Three, “Encountering Anne: The Role of Visionary Experience,” examines some of the legendary, historical and contemporary visionary experiences that are associated with Saint Anne, especially visionary phenomena that are related to pilgrimage and religious healing at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. There are a variety of encounters that have been studied in recent social scientific literature, which focus on an individual’s religious experiences and their interpretation of such experiences. Rather than focusing on the “epiphany” itself, agency is key to understanding visionary experiences, especially as it relates to issues of empowerment. Visions of Saint Anne are either social or private, and they tend to occur during a physical or psychological crisis in an individual’s life. Such visions often lead to private devotional expressions including pilgrimage.

Visionary experiences are an important aspect of the Saint Anne tradition. Visions in the ancient and early modern world were “effective” visions—visionary experiences with social recognition and consequences. Visions of Saint Anne are as old as the legends associated with her, and various early Christian texts and hagiography are foundational for later traditions about Anne. Many

visions are recorded in legends associated with the founding of shrines, the revitalization of sacred spaces and the construction of convents. In medieval and early modern Europe, visions provided women with a legitimate means to engage in social and religious discourses.

A common theme in visionary experiences is religious healing. Some of the earliest traditions about Saint Anne focus primarily on healing and the image of Saint Anne as healer. This chapter explores this theme not only in the earliest legends but also in the contemporary world. Using letters written to the shrine as a lens, this study examines how private visionary experiences are meaningful to individuals. It also explores the visions of Colette Coulombe, a contemporary seer, whose visionary experiences are both healing oriented and apocalyptic.

Chapter Four, “Good Saint Anne: Human Suffering and the Production of Meaning,” examines the meaning of pilgrimage and devotional expressions in the context of religious healing, through various oral and written narratives. This chapter begins by offering a brief sketch of some of the key issues in religious healing, noting the distinctions between illness and disease and curing and healing. A broad understanding of healing is presented in this chapter, which encompasses many of the pilgrimage dynamics at Sainte Anne de Beaupré.

Healing stories often take the form of life histories. Such narratives are important for examining how illness shapes a person’s sense of identity and selfhood. These embodied stories can be effective, having not only personal

significance but also social relevance. Using a contemporary case study, the wounded storyteller and the crucified Christ, I demonstrate that such narratives not only re-enchant a disenchanted world for the storyteller, but may also have similar effects for those who listen to the story.

Pilgrims often incorporate a variety of devotional expressions into religious healing and several examples are highlighted, demonstrating how devotional objects are both meaningful and empowering in the context of healing. Healing at Sainte Anne de Beaupré encompasses much more than physical ailments. It can include various life problems, social alienation, spiritual loss and the fragmentation of the self. Through the lens of gender, this study illustrates the feminization of religious healing that takes place as women care for others. I also focus on the theme of human suffering, underlining various forms of social healing, deliverance and death.

Finally, Chapter Five, “Moved by Anne: The Future of Pilgrimage in the Modern World,” explores the ways in which people are moved by Saint Anne. Using the theme of movement, this chapter discusses how *Encountering Anne: Journeys to Sainte Anne de Beaupré* relates to other scholarship on pilgrimage, devotional expressions, visionary experiences and religious healing. To conclude, it offers several suggestions for future research at Sainte Anne de Beaupré and other shrines dedicated to Saint Anne.

## Chapter One

### *Pilgrimage: Place of Power, Power of Place*

*It is, after all, stories that make an event into a miracle and the worker of that miracle into a marvelous figure who can work yet more wonders that will each generate their own stories.<sup>11</sup>*

Situated at the foot of the Laurentian Mountains on the north shore of the Saint Lawrence River, the Basilica of Sainte Anne de Beaupré celebrated its 350th anniversary in 2008. With an estimated one million visitors a year,<sup>12</sup> it is the second most popular pilgrimage site in the province of Québec, rivaling Sainte Joseph's Oratory in Montréal which is visited by two and a half million pilgrims and tourists a year.<sup>13</sup> Next to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, Sainte Anne de

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<sup>11</sup> Simon Coleman and John Elsner, "Pilgrim Voices: Authoring Christian Pilgrimage," In *Pilgrim Voices: Narrative and Authorship in Christian Pilgrimage*, Simon Coleman and John Elsner eds., 1-18 (Oxford: Berghahn, 2003), 4.

<sup>12</sup> According to various written sources, the number of pilgrims/tourists that visit Saint Anne de Beaupré is estimated between 1-1.5 million per year. A church official told me that it is very difficult to assess the exact amount of visitors. Shrine officials aim to install infrared cameras in 2011 as a means to track the precise number of visitors. See Dominique Hardy, "70 000 pèlerins au rendez-vous," *Le Journal de Québec*, July 25, 2010 <<http://lejournaldequebec.canoe.ca/actualites/faitsdiversetjudiciaires/archives/2010/07/20100725-222029.html>> (accessed September 22, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> For Saint Joseph's Oratory see Martin Geoffroy and Jean-Guy Vaillancourt, "The New Pilgrimage – Return to Tradition or Adaptation to Modernity? The Case of Saint Joseph's Oratory, Montréal," In *On the Road to Being There: Studies in Pilgrimage and Tourism in Late Modernity*, William Swatos ed., 255-275 (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006).



Beaupré is the oldest pilgrimage site in North America.<sup>14</sup> It is also the only officially recognized pilgrimage site in Canada or the United States that is based on a miracle story.<sup>15</sup> What began with the inauguration of a small chapel dedicated to Saint Anne in 1658 has become one of the major tourist/pilgrim attractions in Québec.

Today, Sainte Anne de Beaupré is a small town with a population of 2803 people, according to Statistics Canada 2006. While many of the inhabitants commute to larger urban centers for employment, some people depend on local tourism and pilgrimage for economic survival. Traveling east along Route 138 into Saint Anne de Beaupré, before one even observes the tall twin spires of the basilica, the contemporary traveler is confronted by consumerism: motels, gas stations, restaurants, Subway, Tim Hortons and McDonalds.<sup>16</sup> The hamlet of the seventeenth century Saint Anne de Beaupré and its small wooden chapel seems lost in the midst of bustling tourists and buses, and the printed t-shirts, plastic

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<sup>14</sup> The beginnings of Our Lady of Guadalupe occurred in 1531 when the Virgin Mary reportedly appeared to Juan Diego, commanding him to build a church. See Eric Wolf, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol," *Journal of American Folklore* 71/1 (1958): 34-39 and Jeanette Rodriguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> See Peter W. Wood, "Pilgrimage and Heresy: The Transformation of Faith at a Shrine in Wisconsin," In *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, Alan Morinis ed., 115-134 (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> Beginning in the 1970s, Saint Anne de Beaupré officials began various land acquisitions as a means to control mercantilism surrounding the basilica, which was according to Father Guy Pilote, "getting out of hand." See Clyde H. Farnsworth, "Ste. Anne de Beaupré Journal: At Shrine, Prayers Get Priority, Sales Short Shrift," *New York Times* 144 August 7, 1995, A6.

miniatures and other religious objects for sale in the privately owned shops along Avenue Royale and Avenue Régina.

The small wooden chapel that was partially constructed in 1658 has long since disappeared. It was built too close to the Saint Lawrence River and was damaged by spring tides.<sup>17</sup> The construction of a new church began in 1661, and by 1676 a new stone church was constructed to accommodate the growing number of pilgrims and parishioners. This third church was used until 1876 and was demolished in 1878. The building of the first basilica began on August 24, 1872. The church underwent expansions in 1882 and 1886. In 1887, Pope Leo XIII raised the church to the rank of a minor basilica. A fire destroyed this basilica on March 29, 1922, along with the seminary and monastery. The construction of the current basilica began on July 26, 1923. Its style is a blend of Romanesque and Gothic.

Sainte Anne de Beaupré continues to be transformed by various renovations and projects, despite the Roman Catholic Church's situation in Québec.<sup>18</sup> As Martin Geoffroy and Jean-Guy Vaillancourt have pointed out in their study of pilgrimage at Saint Joseph's Oratory, the Roman Catholic Church

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<sup>17</sup> For a brief outline of the construction of church buildings see *Sanctuaire de Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré* (Québec: J.C. Ricard Inc., 2005).

<sup>18</sup> For instance, an inaugural ceremony was held on July 16, 2008 to celebrate the completion of a new Saint Anne fountain and its surrounding garden project, both located at the front of the basilica. Father Guy Pilote informed me that the basilica has many ongoing ambitious projects planned in the future.

in Québec is no longer the dominant cultural and political institution it once was from the beginning of the twentieth century to the “Quiet Revolution” in the 1960’s.<sup>19</sup> Despite the disappearance of heritage churches, monasteries and convents in the province due to lack of funding, worshippers and religious, Sainte Anne de Beauré continues to flourish in the twenty-first century.



Figure 2. *Sainte Anne de Beauré, Novena 2008*. Photo by John Spaleta.

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<sup>19</sup> See Geoffroy and Vaillancourt, “The New Pilgrimage,” 255. Also see Michael D. Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec’s Quiet Revolution: Liberalism Versus Neo-Nationalism, 1945-1960* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1985) and Michael Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec’s Quiet Revolution, 1931-1970* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005). The Quiet Revolution extending from 1960 to 1966 is an important period in Québec’s history. It was characterized by major institutional, political and cultural shifts from a traditional Catholic society to a modern secular society.

### **Miraculous Stories and the Making of a Shrine**

Legends associated with the origins of Saint Anne de Beaupré, like many other shrines around the world, are rooted in stories of the “miraculous,” extraordinary and marvelous events attributed to a divine persona. Simon Yarrow suggests that miracle stories belong to a genre of hagiography, which is designed to promote a shrine and to educate the laity in forms of “Christian practices that encourage discipline, nurture hope, and [teach] acceptance and recognition.”<sup>20</sup> Yarrow points out that such stories are “shared experiences”<sup>21</sup> that are shaped by a “negotiating community.”<sup>22</sup> Mary Corley Dunn argues in her study of the seventeenth century miracles at Saint Anne de Beaupré, which was initially known as Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap, that miracles are social productions. They are negotiations between clerical redactors and their lay audience. Dunn contends:

These miracles can be understood as strategies by which social bodies at once responded to and transformed the colonial environment, not only effecting some degree of “social integration” but at the same time “distinguishing local identities, ordering social differences, and controlling the contention and negotiation involved in the appropriation of symbols” in ways that both united and defined the colonial community as French (not English),

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<sup>20</sup> Simon Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth-century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

Catholic (not Protestant), and governed by the inscrutable power of God rather than the predictable forces of nature.<sup>23</sup>

There are two stories of the miraculous associated with the origins of the Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap. One persistent local legend, which continues to be recounted by contemporary pilgrims, attributes the founding of the shrine to Breton sailors in 1650, who called out to their patron saint during a frightening storm on the Saint Lawrence River. The sailors vowed to build a chapel for Saint Anne if she saved them from their perilous situation. After landing safely on shore, according to legend, they fulfilled their promise. Several *ex-votos* depict this scene in the shrine's museum. Paintings characterize Saint Anne hovering in the clouds above shipwrecked sailors, leading them to safety. There are some devotional materials citing this legend, which suggest that Saint Anne devotion predates the building of the first church in 1658 in Petit-Cap.<sup>24</sup> In addition, some historians of early modern New France allude to the existence of a church prior

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<sup>23</sup> Dunn picks up on Catherine Bell's idea of ritualization to ameliorate an understanding of the seventeenth century miracles at Petit-Cap. See Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 130. Also see Mary Corley Dunn, *Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap: The Making of an Early Modern Shrine*. Diss. Harvard University (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard, 2008), 107.

<sup>24</sup> For example, L. X. Austin records this "time-honored tradition," suggesting that many pilgrims have read about this account in various "guidebooks" produced by the shrine. See L.X Austin, *St. Anne de Beaupré and America* (Québec: Ste-Anne de Beaupré, 1933), 15-16.

1658.<sup>25</sup> Dunn argues that factual data does not support such claims, suggesting that there is very little historical evidence to support the idea that the establishment of the church at Petit-Cap bore any connection to sailors.<sup>26</sup> She suggests that this myth likely arises in part from a post-facto association between the devotion at Petit-Cap and the Breton shrine of Sainte-Anne-d’Auray in northwestern France, where the interests of sailors figured largely in the making of the church. Moreover, Dunn notes that historical records indicate that marriages and baptisms were celebrated in settlers’ homes until 1661.

The second miraculous story is associated with the building of the shrine at Petit-Cap in 1658. At that time, there were about twenty families and one hundred people living in the small village of Petit-Cap. Many of these settlers had emigrated from the western regions of France: Normandy, Perche, Orléanais, Poitou, Paris, Maine, Bordeaux and Angoumois.<sup>27</sup> On March 8, 1658, a layman named Étienne Lessard donated some land so that the settlers of Petit-Cap could build a church or chapel. Dunn notes that there is no evidence to suggest that Lessard intended to place this church under the patronage of

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<sup>25</sup> For example, Jean-Baptiste-Antoin Ferland describes a church “built on the Saint Lawrence River” as a “souvenir of the pilgrimage to Sainte-Anne d’Auray.” He posits that this church was built at the insistence of neighboring settlers and was destroyed by high tides before 1658. See Jean-Baptiste-Antoin Ferland, *Cours d’Histoire du Canada I*, (East Ardsley, England: S. R. Publishers, 1969), 437.

<sup>26</sup> See Dunn, *Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap*, 195.

<sup>27</sup> Some of the inhabitants were born in the colony.

Anne.<sup>28</sup> It is reported that Lessard was “touched by a desire to honor God and to contribute something according to his power, seeing that the habitants of Beaupré have for a long time been inclined toward having a church in which they can assist in divine services and participate in the holy sacraments.”<sup>29</sup> Five days later Father Guillaume Vignal and the Governor Lois D’Ailleboust arrived at Petit-Cap. On March 13, 1658, Vignal blessed the site of the church, dedicating it to Saint Anne, and Ailleboust laid the first foundation stone.

During this time it was reported that a young local man named Louis Guimont was cured of “*grande douleur de reins*.”<sup>30</sup> In 1647, at the age of twenty-two, Guimont had contracted himself as an *engagé*<sup>31</sup> to Jean Juchereau de Maur and had traveled from Tourouvre, France to Canada to perform manual labor. Dunn observes that the unfavorable conditions of his contract most likely suggest a physical or other impairment, which compromised the value of his service to his employer.<sup>32</sup> The *Jesuit Relations* reports that Guimont “was

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<sup>28</sup> Dunn suggests that Saint Étienne would have likely been Lessard’s choice for a patron saint for the future church at Petit-Cap. Although Lessard is identified as a sailor, Dunn states that there is no evidence to support the connection between the foundation of the church and sailors. See Dunn, *Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap*, 194-195.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted from Dunn, *Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap*, 97-98.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>31</sup> *Engagés* or indentured servants performed backbreaking labor such as clearing land, cutting wood, or hauling water from the river.

<sup>32</sup> Guimont’s term of engagement was six years instead of the customary three years, and he was paid only forty *livres* instead of seventy-one.

suddenly cured of a great back pain while placing, with devotion, three stones on the foundations of the Church of Saint Anne, which was beginning to be built.”<sup>33</sup> It was at this point that Dunn suggests the “the cult of Saint Anne at Petit-Cap was born.”<sup>34</sup>

By the time of his “miraculous cure” in 1658, Guimont had made the transition from *engagé* to *habitant*, married Jeanne Bitouset, and had purchased land. Guimont’s health, however, was short-lived. Three years after his cure, on June 18, 1661, Guimont was captured, tortured and killed by the Iroquois, leaving behind his wife and three surviving children. A letter written by “a Frenchman in captivity” to his friend in Trois-Rivière describes Guimont’s fate:

Did you know Louis Guimont, who was captured this summer? He was beaten to death with clubs and iron rods, receiving so many blows in succession that he perished under them. But yet he did nothing but pray to God, so that the Iroquois, enraged at seeing him constantly moving his lips in prayer, cut away his upper and lower lips entirely. What a horrible sight! And still he ceased not to pray, which so irritated the Iroquois that they tore his heart, still throbbing with life, out of his breast and threw it in his face.<sup>35</sup>

Contemporary stories about Guimont’s ailment vary, describing him as being crippled, suffering from arthritis, having rheumatism of the loins, or bedridden with kidney disease. Regardless of his precise bodily affliction, the

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<sup>33</sup> Quoted from Dunn, *Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap*, 98.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Quoted from Robert C. Olson, “The Saga of Louis Guimont,” Archives PA 33B1 23406, 1982.



stories about Guimont's healing spread throughout the countryside and the shrine became known for its healing possibilities. Early settlers, such as Guimont, lived in a harsh environment: isolation, short agricultural season, severe weather conditions, little medical assistance, and constant threat of Iroquois attacks.

People turned to Saint Anne in times such as these, seeking her help. In 1662, Marie-Esther Ramage, a forty-five year old parishioner of Petit-Cap, called upon Saint Anne, asking her to “do a miracle for her, like she had done this man [Guimont].”<sup>36</sup> Thomas Morel, a priest who served the settlements along the Beaupré coast until 1683, recorded that Ramage had been so completely hunched over for a period of eighteen months that she could not “straighten herself again, and was obliged to drag herself around as she could with her cane, hopeless of ever recovering her health by human remedies.”<sup>37</sup> After invoking Saint Anne's intercession, Morel records that Ramage was “quite erect on her feet, walking as easily as she had ever done.”<sup>38</sup> A second cure was reported in the same year, occurring on Saint Anne's Feast Day (July 26). Robert Drouin, a fourteen-year-old boy from the neighboring parish of Château-Richer, reportedly suffered from

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<sup>36</sup> *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, Reuben Gold Thwaites ed. (Cleveland: Burrows Bros., Co., 1896-1901), Vol. 51, 90.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

“the falling sickness.”<sup>39</sup> Morel reports that after dedicating himself to Saint Anne and performing a Novena,<sup>40</sup> the boy was completely cured from his disease.

Dunn notes that there were thirty-three instances of miraculous cures reported in the seventeenth century at Sainte Anne of Petit-Cap.<sup>41</sup> In a period when doctors were scarce, the potential for a cure at Petit-Cap was available to everyone across the social strata.<sup>42</sup> Saint Anne, contends Dunn, “did not discriminate among her devotees on the basis of social status or economic status and the possibility of a miraculous cure proved freely available to all—even to those suffering from the most incurable of diseases or most intractable of afflictions.”<sup>43</sup> These miracles, suggests Dunn, reflect similar characteristics to

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>40</sup> The term novena is derived from the Latin *novem* meaning nine. However, some novenas are longer than nine days. Novenas are devotional expressions that are usually directed to a saint.

<sup>41</sup> Although the miracle reports number thirty-three, Dunn suggests that there are actually thirty-five discrete instances of miraculous intercessions. One report relates the accounts of three separate individuals who apparently received individual cures. See Dunn, *Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap*, 119, n. 399. Dunn also notes that there were likely more than thirty-five reports in the seventeenth century, since Morel’s own testimony indicates that Saint Anne devotees experienced more miracles. See Mary Corley Dunn, “The Miracles at Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap and the Making of a Seventeenth-Century Colonial Community,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 91/4 (2010): 611-635.

<sup>42</sup> According to the census of 1661, there were only five doctors serving a population of 3215. Suggesting a deteriorating situation, only thirteen doctors serving a population of 9677 are reported in the 1681 census. See Dunn, *Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap*, 147 n.514.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 148.

those at Saint-Anne d’Auray in the same period.<sup>44</sup> Like present day miracles<sup>45</sup> and those reported in seventeenth century France, the miracles attributed to Petit-Cap occurred sometimes in the confines of the shrine itself and other times elsewhere.<sup>46</sup> Some of these miracles were collective, while others were individual in nature:

Of the thirty-three reports, six involve miracles of collective nature; five of these six relate instances of Anne’s solicitude in rescuing a group of travelers from death on a body of water—in most cases the notoriously treacherous Saint Lawrence. The remaining twenty-eight episodes of miraculous intercession brought about physical cures. Of the miracles of healing, eleven concern afflictions relating to physical immobility of some sort, like paralysis, arthritis, or broken limbs. Three involve safe and healthy labors and deliveries, three implicate cases of blindness and muteness, two have to do with recovery from epilepsy... two with the alleviation of pleurisy and dropsy, one with mental illness, and six with general or non-specific ailments such as sickness “over the whole body” or the “bloody flux.”<sup>47</sup>

Pilgrims soon began journeying to Petit-Cap from nearby settlements. Within a few years, written records suggest that Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap became known as a powerful place of healing. For example, Marie de l’Incarnation, the founder of the Ursulines in Québec, wrote to her son on September 30, 1665:

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>45</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>46</sup> Dunn, *Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap*, 121.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 119-120.

A sept lieues d'ici, il y a un bourg appelé, le Petit-Cap, où il y a une église de Ste-Anne, dans laquelle Notre-Seigneur fait de grandes merveilles en faveur de cette sainte Mère de la très sainte Vierge. On y voit marcher les paralytiques, les aveugles recevoir la vue, et les malades de quelque maladie que ce soit recevoir la santé.<sup>48</sup>

The seventeenth century pilgrim journeyed to the shrine by foot, carriage or boat. The first recorded pilgrimage group came to pray to Saint Anne in 1663 from Château-Richer, a small town located between Québec City and Saint Anne de Beaupré.<sup>49</sup> In 1671, the first Huron converts from Côte Sainte-Michel traveled to Petit-Cap led by the Jesuit Pierre-Joseph-Marie. The shrine had also attracted a number of colonial notables, including wealthy merchants, a top advisor to the sovereign council, Lieutenant General Alexander Prouville de Tracy, Governor Daniel de Rémy de Courcelles, and Intendant Jean Talon. By 1687, pilgrimage was so developed that Bishop Jean Baptiste de Saint-Vallier identified the shrine at Petit-Cap as “a place of pilgrimage where one goes all year.”<sup>50</sup>

If stories about miracles gave rise to the tradition of pilgrimage at Petit-Cap, then pilgrimage encouraged donations to sustain and transform the shrine.

Dunn suggests that by the end of the seventeenth century, Saint-Anne-du-Petit-

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<sup>48</sup> Quoted from Louis-Philippe Bélanger, *Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré: Histoire et souvenirs, pèlerinage et paroisse* (Canada: Imprimerie H.L.N., 1998), 39. English translation: Seven leagues from here there is a village called Petit-Cap, where there is a church of Saint Anne, in which Our Lord does great miracles in favor of the mother of the Blessed Virgin. There one sees the paralytic walking, the blind receiving sight, and those with various sicknesses receiving health.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted from Dunn, *Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap*, 100.

Cap had been transformed from a church to a pilgrimage centre.<sup>51</sup> The first gilded statue of Saint Anne, which became the focus of cultic devotion, was donated by Monsignor Laval, and was installed in the church in 1662. The shrine received its own relic of Saint Anne imported from Carcassone, France in 1670. Donations such as these contributed to the “prestige of the modest church, attracting yet more pilgrims, encouraging yet more miracles, and stimulating yet more donations.”<sup>52</sup> Dunn suggests:

The construction of the devotional cult at Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap through the triad of miracle, pilgrimage, and donations wrought a tangible transformation of the church structure itself, the physical landscape of the Saint Lawrence Valley, and the body of individual *miraculés*. As pilgrims wore paths over the colonial terrain and as the movement of relics, statues, and paintings from Europe transported holiness bit by bit from old world to new, the topography of New France gradually began to acquire a sacral significance that marked the land as divine territory. Similarly, as the broken limbs and ruined vision of the *miraculés* became whole again through the miraculous intercession of Anne, their bodies became relics and what had been the domain of the natural became the field of the supernatural and proof of God’s presence in Canada.<sup>53</sup>

Other factors contributed to Saint-Anne-du-Petit-Cap’s growth and popularity among the colonial migrants in the seventeenth century. For instance, the shrine was both a sacred space and a designated redoubt against Iroquois

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 103-104.

attacks. As Dunn suggests, the shrine marked the frontier between wilderness and habitation. From the origins of the shrine, Saint Anne's church took shape against Iroquois hostilities. It "served as a safe haven of sorts for the *habitants* of Petit-Cap" as relations deteriorated between the French and their Iroquois neighbors.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, Governor D'Ailleboust and Monsieur Vigal's primary intention for traveling to Petit-Cap in 1658 was to see whether or not the redoubts were being worked on—not necessarily to bless the site or lay its first foundational stone.<sup>55</sup>

Further, encouraging widespread devotion, Bishop François de Laval declared Anne's feast day a holy day of obligation for everyone in New France by the end of the seventeenth century, stating: "Nothing has helped us more efficaciously to bear the burden of our pastoral office in this young church than the special devotion which all the inhabitants of this country bear towards Saint Anne, a devotion which, we can affirm with certitude, distinguishes this people from all others."<sup>56</sup> Not only did Saint Anne's feast day become obligatory, Saint Anne devotion, especially her miracles, distinguished local and colonial identity as sacred, Catholic and French.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Dunn posits that the miracles

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>55</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, Vol. 44, 89-91.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted from Dunn, *Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap*, 75.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

reported at Petit-Cap operated as *argumenta fidei*.<sup>58</sup> In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries miracles were confronted on both intellectual and theological grounds. On the one hand, the emerging natural sciences threatened traditional notions about miracles. At Petit-Cap, stories about miracles functioned to affirm the supreme authority of God and the institutional church. Dunn suggests that the conspicuous presence of medical doctors in the miracle stories from Petit-Cap testifies to the perceived limits of human sciences. Miracles also served as a “theological polemic of sorts” over and against Protestants, who denied the utility of pilgrimage, devotion to saints, and the possibility of the miraculous in the modern world.<sup>59</sup>

Although Laval claimed that special devotion to Saint Anne distinguished the people of New France from all others, including their French counterparts, Dunn suggests that at least some part of this devotion was influenced by the cults of Saint Anne at the French shrines of Apt and Auray. While some scholars argue that Auray must have been the source of devotion at Petit-Cap,<sup>60</sup> others reject this possibility, noting that only a small minority of settlers came from

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 144. English translation of the Latin phrase: arguments of faith.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>60</sup> See Ferland and also Jean Simard, “Le Modèle Breton,” *Les Cahiers de Dix* 50 (1995): 55-77.

Brittany.<sup>61</sup> In some ways, the shrine at Petit-Cap resembles a hybrid sacred space. It is a recreation of old religious traditions into the colonial new world. Julia Boss suggests that the “outflow of hagiographic narratives and relics from Europe reinforced a spatial understanding of the Catholic Church in which Europe’s ‘holiness’ might be transmitted, piece by piece, to American soil.”<sup>62</sup> In New France, these relics became “tangible expressions of what it meant to be Catholic and colonial.”<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Dunn proposes that “through the physical importation of relics and statues from metropole to colony and the conscious replication in New France of ritual practices remembered from France, the *habitants* succeeded in rendering the unfamiliar familiar and in claiming the territory of the Saint Lawrence valley for God and the church.”<sup>64</sup> Alternatively, one might suggest that through the triad of miracles stories, pilgrimage and donations, the early settlers of Petit-Cap enchanted their unfamiliar environment, fashioning a sacred place in the mundane wilderness, a place between heaven and earth.

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<sup>61</sup> See Jean Aubry, “Sainte Anne de Jérusalem, Sainte Anne de Chartres et du Perche, Sainte Anne de Beaupré,” P.1, b.5 no. 31502 (32), Archives de Sainte Anne de Beaupré.

<sup>62</sup> Julia Boss, “Writing a Relic: The Uses of Hagiography in New France,” In *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas*, Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff eds., 211-233 (New York: Routledge, 2003), 214.

<sup>63</sup>Jodi Bilinkoff, “Introduction,” In *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas*, Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff eds., xiii-xxii (New York: Routledge, 2003), xvii.

<sup>64</sup> Dunn, *Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap*, 104.



### **Social Scientific Approaches to the Study of Pilgrimage**

Nearly forty years ago Victor Turner remarked on the lack of anthropological studies of pilgrimage, stating that pilgrimage “was a great popular process, demographically comparable to labor migration, involving millions of people the world over in many days and even months of traveling, rich in symbolism and undoubtedly complex in organization, and yet very often ignored by the competing orthodoxies of social science and religion.”<sup>65</sup> Since the time that Turner wrote these words, anthropological studies of pilgrimage have flourished. Moreover, pilgrimage itself, has continued to burgeon in a “post-modern” world. Michael Winkelman and Jill Dubisch assert that pilgrimage has experienced a renaissance at both traditional and newer sites.<sup>66</sup>

The earliest anthropological models for studying pilgrimage were informed by the Durkheimian focus on social structure and function or the Marxist emphasis on power, conflict and structural transformation.<sup>67</sup> Victor and

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<sup>65</sup> Victor Turner, “Pilgrimages as Social Processes,” In *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, 166-230 (Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1974), 187.

<sup>66</sup>Jill Dubisch and Michael Winkelman, “Introduction: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage,” In *Pilgrimage and Healing*, Jill Dubisch and Michael Winkelman eds., ix-xxxvi (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2005), ix.

<sup>67</sup> For an early examination of a Roman Catholic pilgrimage site see Wolf, “The Virgin of Guadalupe.” Wolf’s study, a classic prior to the development of symbolic anthropology, examines the Virgin of Guadalupe as a Mexican national symbol that this symbol refers to a wide variety of social relationships. In his work, Wolf was concerned with the functional aspects of the symbol, its roots and reference to the major social groups within Mexican society.

Edith Turner offered the first broad-ranging theoretical model for the anthropological interpretation of pilgrimage.<sup>68</sup> Following the French folklorist Arnold van Gennep's notions about rites of passage,<sup>69</sup> Turner developed the concepts of liminality and *communitas*. Liminality describes the condition of ritual participants who have symbolically exited one social space or state but have not fully entered a new one. Turner suggests that participants are "liminal entities" or "threshold people," being "betwixt and between" two social worlds.<sup>70</sup> The most significant aspect of liminality is its ability to generate *communitas*. Opposing the concept of structure, Turner proposes that *communitas* develops in the small interstitial spaces between social structure: "a 'moment in and out of time,' and in and out of secular social structure."<sup>71</sup> *Communitas* is a liminal phenomenon, which combines the qualities of lowliness, sacred,

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<sup>68</sup> See Victor Turner, "Pilgrimages as Social Processes" and Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

<sup>69</sup> Van Gennep postulated a universal structure for rituals that moved participants from one social status or stage of life to another. He suggested that all rites of passage are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or limen), and aggregation. In rituals participants are symbolically separated from their former state or position, go through a period of ritual transition, and then are reincorporated into society in their new statuses. Turner focuses his analysis on the transitional phase. See Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

<sup>70</sup> Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995), 95.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

homogeneity and comradeship.<sup>72</sup> It is an “essential and generic human bond,” that is undifferentiated, existential and egalitarian.<sup>73</sup> Those who experience *communitas*, suggests Turner, have “a feeling of endless power.”<sup>74</sup>

Turner and Turner moved from evaluating rites of passage in preindustrial societies to examining liminality in cultures dominated by the “historical” or “salvation” religions.<sup>75</sup> Viewing pilgrimage as a form of institutionalized or symbolic anti-structure, Turner suggests that pilgrimage replaces the rite of passage as the primary locus of liminality and *communitas*.<sup>76</sup>

A pilgrimage center, from the standpoint of the believing actor, also represents a threshold, a place and moment “in and out of time,” and such an actor—as the evidence of many pilgrims of many religions attests—hopes to have there direct experience of the sacred, invisible, or supernatural order, either in the material aspect of miraculous healing or in the immaterial aspect of inward transformation of spirit or personality. As in the liminality of initiation rites, such an actor-pilgrim is confronted by sequences of sacred objects and participates in symbolic activities which he believes are efficacious in changing his inner and, sometimes, hopefully, outer condition from sin to grace, or sickness to health. He hopes for miracles and transformations, either of soul or body.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 250.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>76</sup> Turner, “Pilgrimage as Social Processes,” 182.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 197.

Traveling to a distant holy place, the pilgrim leaves behind guilt, conflicts, and the “occasions of sin” of daily life.<sup>78</sup> The pilgrim is liberated from profane and mundane social structures in the course of the journey, becoming “increasingly circumscribed by symbolic structures: religious buildings, pictorial images, statuary, and sacralized features of topography.”<sup>79</sup> The nature of pilgrimage, the Turners note, is entirely voluntary, unlike the obligatory rites of passage in preindustrial societies.<sup>80</sup> Pilgrimage shares common elements in “rituals of affliction,” performed to “propitiate or exorcize supernatural beings or forces believed to be the cause of illness, ill luck or death.”<sup>81</sup> The “curative, charismatic aspect of pilgrimage is not thought of as an end in itself. In the paradigmatic Christian pilgrimage, the initiatory quality of the process is given priority, though it is an initiation to, not through, a threshold. Initiation is conceived of as leading not to status elevation...but to a deeper level of religious participation.”<sup>82</sup>

Many scholars reject the Turnerian model, positing that the quality of antistructure and the experience of *communitas* are largely absent from specific pilgrimage concepts. Ellen Badone and Sharon Roseman suggest that while

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<sup>78</sup> Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 7.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>80</sup> Since pilgrimage is voluntary in nature, the Turners suggest that pilgrimage is liminoid or quasi-liminal. *Ibid.*, 34-35.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

*communitas* may be one aspect of pilgrimage, it can neither be assumed to exist in all pilgrimage nor should the concept be used as “a master key for unlocking the meaning and significance of pilgrimage for all participants in every cross-cultural setting.”<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Alan Morinis suggests that Turners’ model neglects to account for individual motivations. Morinis defines pilgrimage as “a journey undertaken by a person in quest of a place or a state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal.”<sup>84</sup> For Morinis, pilgrimage is an individual process, not a social one. Similarly, John Eade and Michael Sallnow argue against the social and universalistic functions of pilgrimage. They advocate examining each specific pilgrimage in terms of its particular social context and its “historically and culturally specific behaviors and meanings.”<sup>85</sup> In Eade and Sallnow’s analysis of competing discourses, they draw attention to three coordinates: person, place and text. Following Eade and Sallnow, Simon Coleman and John Elsner maintain that the triad of person, place and text work

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<sup>83</sup> Ellen Badone and Sharon Roseman, “Approaches to the Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism,” In *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*, Ellen Badone and Sharon Roseman eds., 1-23 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>84</sup> Alan Morinis, “Introduction: The Territory of the Anthropology of Pilgrimage,” In *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, Alan Morinis ed., 1-27 (Westport: Conn.: Greenwood, 1992), 4.

<sup>85</sup>John Eade and Michael Sallnow, “Introduction,” In *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, John Eade and Michael Sallnow eds., 1-29 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 3.

together to determine the particular character of pilgrimage sites.<sup>86</sup> They also focus on one additional element, movement, which they perceive as central to the pilgrimage process. Coleman and Elsner suggest “it is the experience of travel and the constant possibility of encountering the new which makes pilgrimage distinct from other forms of ritual in the religions we have examined.”<sup>87</sup> Similarly, Nancy Frey’s study of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage focuses on the meaning of human movement and the outcome of the journey itself.<sup>88</sup> Frey observed that the motives and meanings of pilgrimage en route, and for many pilgrims these continue to evolve over time after the return home.

For Eade and Sallnow, pilgrimage is “above all an arena for competing religious and secular discourses.”<sup>89</sup> Several studies on Roman Catholic shrines have highlighted this observation. Marysia Galbraith’s examination of Polish youth on a walking pilgrimage to the Black Madonna of Czestochowa illustrates

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<sup>86</sup> Simon Coleman and John Elsner, *Pilgrimage Past and Present in the World Religions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>88</sup> See Nancy Frey, “Stories of the Return: Pilgrimage and Its Aftermaths,” In *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*, Ellen Badone and Sharon Roseman eds., 89-109 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004) and *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

<sup>89</sup> Eade and Sallnow, “Introduction,” 2.

that *communitas* itself can function as an instrument of contestation.<sup>90</sup> She suggests that pilgrims express a wide range of motivations for making a journey, and in some cases, even challenge the official goals and interpretations of the pilgrimage.<sup>91</sup> Eade's examination of Lourdes focuses on the organization and role of lay helpers, and his study reveals numerous contestations at the shrine, among lay helpers themselves as well as between lay helpers and pilgrims.<sup>92</sup> In addition, he observed various competing discourses concerning the significance and meaning of the healing baths, between official and popular beliefs and practices.<sup>93</sup> Ruth Harris also describes various contestations at Lourdes, not only between religious authorities and the laity, but also the larger battle between the domains of science and religion.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Christopher McKeivitt's study of the community surrounding the shrine of Padre Pio in Italy reveals that the shrine is

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<sup>90</sup> Marysia Galbraith, "On the Road to Czestochowa: Rhetoric and Experience on a Polish Pilgrimage," *Anthropological Quarterly* 73/2 (2000): 61-73.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-67.

<sup>92</sup> See John Eade, "Order and Power at Lourdes: Lay Helpers and the Organization of a Pilgrimage Shrine," In *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, John Eade and Michael Sallnow eds., 51-76 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000). These types of contestations also occur at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. For example, some male volunteers for the Aides of Saint Anne felt that the organization had changed with the inclusion of female members. One male volunteer suggested that since women had become involved, the focus of the organization had moved, from helping sick and handicapped pilgrims to helping priests with various rituals and events.

<sup>93</sup> As at Lourdes, there are competing discourses about the significance of water, specifically from Saint Anne's fountain. While some pilgrims perceive that the water is efficacious in healing, religious officials suggest that it has no curative properties.

<sup>94</sup> See Harris, *Lourdes*.

far from being a “harmonious axis mundi.”<sup>95</sup> McKeivitt suggests that the shrine is fraught with conflicting discourses, intense competition for control of wealth and resources, as well as contrasting interpretations of divinity.

In Erik Cohen’s examination of youth travelers in Thailand, he examines the relationship between pilgrimage and tourism, suggesting that pilgrimage is often indistinguishable from tourism.<sup>96</sup> He observes that the categories pilgrim-tourist and traveler-tourist are “empirically blurred.”<sup>97</sup> Badone and Roseman posit “the rigid dichotomies between pilgrimage and tourism or pilgrim and tourist are no longer tenable in the shifting world of postmodern travel.”<sup>98</sup> They note that the primary basis for “distinguishing between pilgrimage and tourism involves assumptions about the beliefs and motivations of travelers who undertake journeys to religious shrines.”<sup>99</sup> Moreover, as Luigi Tomasi suggests, the distinction between pilgrimage driven by faith and tourism for cultural or recreational purposes no longer holds insofar as contemporary pilgrimages

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<sup>95</sup>Christopher McKeivitt, “San Giovanni Rotondo and the Shrine of Padre Pio,” In *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, John Eade and Michael Sallnow eds., 77-97 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 95.

<sup>96</sup> See Erik Cohen, “Pilgrimage and Tourism: Convergence and Divergence,” In *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, Alan Morinis ed., 47-61 (Westport: Conn.: Greenwood, 1992).

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>98</sup> Badone and Roseman, “Approaches to the Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism,” 2.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.



involve such large numbers that they can only be organized in the same manner as tourism.<sup>100</sup> Citing the example of the World Youth Rally in Rome during 2000, Tomasi postulates that although it was an event of prayer and faith, it was also one of religious tourism. He writes:

The spiritual component was flanked by the human one. Were these young people tourists, Catholics, the curious, holiday-makers, or pilgrims? It is difficult to say. Perhaps they were all of these and more, and all at once. Guides to Rome mixed with prayer books, and the merging of devotion and tourism was evident; the mingling of religion and religious tourism was obvious.<sup>101</sup>

Daniel Olsen and Timothy Dallen point out in their study of tourism, religion and spirituality that scholars, governments and tourist agencies have only recently noticed the increasing number of visitors to sacred sites in relation to the general growth of cultural and heritage tourism.<sup>102</sup> This public interest, they suggest, is largely due to the economic potential of religious tourists: “Venerated places are now being seen as tourism resources that can be commodified for travelers interested in cultural and historical sites.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Luigi Tomasi, “Homo Viator: From Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism via the Journey,” In *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism: The Social and Cultural Economics of Piety*, William Swatos and Luigi Tomasi eds., 1-24 (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 21.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Daniel Olsen and Timothy Dallen, “Tourism and Religious Journeys,” In *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*, Daniel Olsen and Timothy Dallen eds., 1-21 (Florence, KY: Routledge, 2006), 1.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

Moreover, Olsen and Dallen propose: “As a result of marketing and a growing general interest cultural tourism, religious sites are being frequented more by curious tourists than by spiritual pilgrims, and are thus commodified and packaged for a tourism audience.”<sup>104</sup>

In their examination of pilgrimage, the Turners observed: “A tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist.”<sup>105</sup> Parallels between tourism and pilgrimage have been a lively source of debate among scholars. Sociologist Ian Reader challenges the rigid dichotomy between secular and sacred, postulating that pilgrimage, as a concept, does not need to be restricted to “explicitly religious traditions.”<sup>106</sup> Christine King’s examination of pilgrimage to Graceland depicts how Elvis Presley became a symbol, a holy figure, and the center of a cult that shows no signs of diminishing in the future.<sup>107</sup> She asserts that pilgrims testify to both the *communitas* of pilgrimage and to the solemn and intensely emotional experience they have shared. Like many Roman Catholic pilgrims, visitors to Graceland take home a “piece of the holy land” in little vials filled with soil. King suggests that “at Graceland, as at any medieval shrine, the object

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>105</sup> Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 20.

<sup>106</sup> Ian Reader, “Introduction,” In *Pilgrimage and Popular Culture*. Ian Reader and Tony Walter eds., 1-25 (London: Macmillan, 1993), 5.

<sup>107</sup> Christine King, “His Truth Goes Marching On: Elvis Presley and the Pilgrimage to Graceland,” In *Pilgrimage and Popular Culture*. Ian Reader and Tony Walter eds., 92-104 (London: Macmillan, 1993).

of devotion is physically and spiritually more accessible than was possible in life. At Graceland, Elvis belongs to each pilgrim and in him the pilgrim's own life is validated."<sup>108</sup>

Valene Smith points out that some scholars continue to hold that tourism and pilgrimage are at the opposite ends of a continuum of travel.<sup>109</sup> The term pilgrim commonly implies a person on a religious journey. However, Smith notes that the term's Latin derivation, *peregrinus*, has broader interpretations such as foreigner, wanderer, exile, traveler, newcomer or stranger. Moreover, the Latin root for tourist, *tornus*, refers to someone who "makes a circuitous journey—generally for pleasure—and returns to the starting point."<sup>110</sup> Smith points out that contemporary notions of the pilgrim as a religious traveler and the tourist as a vacationer are culturally constructed polarities, which veil the motives of the traveler's quest.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>109</sup> See Valene Smith, "Introduction: The Quest in Guest," *Annals of Tourism Research* 19 (1992): 1-17.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

Similarly, Ellen Badone has recently argued that pilgrimage and tourism are related forms of voluntary travel.<sup>112</sup> Individuals travel to places where they perceive that “goods” are believed to be located: “These ‘goods’ may be tangible: fine food or wine, unique items of material culture, artistic or architectural treasures—or intangible: health, escape from stress, or religious enlightenment.”<sup>113</sup> Badone advocates using the term pilgrimage to refer to journeys to both established religious sites and non-religious sites such as Graceland, using the terms “conventional pilgrimage” and “unconventional pilgrimage” to distinguish the different types of sites. Broadly viewing religion through the lenses of Geertz and Durkheim, Badone argues that the term “religion” should not be restricted to the divine realm, the supernatural or to any particular moral code. She defines religion “as a social and individual endeavor to interpret experience in ways that are perceived to be meaningful, and as an effort to overcome the isolation of the self through connections with persons, values and communities that are perceived to transcend, elevate and empower the individual.”<sup>114</sup> Touristic journeys, she posits, are therefore both “religious” and “pilgrimages.” The rigid distinctions between pilgrimage and tourism have

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<sup>112</sup> See Ellen Badone, “Conventional and Unconventional Pilgrimages: Conceptualizing Sacred Travel in the Twenty-First Century,” Paper prepared for 6<sup>th</sup> International Colloquium Compostela: “The Reformulation of the Historical Pilgrimages and New Pilgrimages,” Santiago de Compostela, December 14-16, 2010.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

derived from unreflective perceptions and should be recognized as value judgments. Badone suggests that scholars should “approach both pilgrimage and tourism as products of ongoing processes of cultural construction that involve a dialectical interplay between the distant and the familiar through which travelers seek perceived meaning and value.”<sup>115</sup>

Likewise, Simon Coleman argues that scholars need to look at the relationships between pilgrimage and other forms mobility, including tourism.<sup>116</sup> Pilgrimage should be perceived of as a lens, he posits, through which we look outward, “making points about human behavior *through* using ‘pilgrimage’ as a case-study rather than focusing *on* the institution itself.”<sup>117</sup> Moreover, Coleman argues that “religion” and its subcategory “pilgrimage” have been isolated from other aspects of human activity and behavior in the Western worldview.<sup>118</sup> Writing from the perspective of Japan, Reader points out in his study on the Shikoku *henro* that it is “methodologically problematic to separate out the

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>116</sup> Simon Coleman, “Do You Believe in Pilgrimage? Communitas, Contestation and Beyond,” *Anthropological Theory* 2/3 (2002): 355-368.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 363.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

‘tourist’ from the ‘pilgrim.’”<sup>119</sup> As he observes, “‘praying and playing’ are activities that frequently operate hand in hand.”<sup>120</sup>

As suggested by this brief survey of literature, social scientific approaches toward pilgrimage, much like our contemporary notions about culture, are fluid, contested and emergent. Recent publications in the field indicate that there has been a serious shift in theoretical frameworks, from emphasizing issues related to rituals at pilgrimage shrines themselves to a broader concern with mobility and travel. While some studies continue to be influenced by the Turnerian model of pilgrimage,<sup>121</sup> others have adopted new agendas, examining pilgrimage in wider theoretical and/or geographical contexts. For example, recent publications

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<sup>119</sup> Ian Reader, *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 37.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> For example, Paula Holmes-Rodman’s study on pilgrimage to the shrine of El Santuario de Chimayo in New Mexico suggests that liminality generates *communitas*. See Paula Holmes-Rodman, “‘They Told What Happened on the Road’: Narrative and the Construction of Experiential Knowledge on the Pilgrimage to Chimayo, New Mexico,” In *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*, Ellen Badone and Sharon Roseman eds., 24-51 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

have focused on the relationship between pilgrimage and narratives, the Internet, and ethnic identity.<sup>122</sup>

It is difficult to draw clear-cut distinctions between pilgrim/tourist and pilgrimage/tourism. As an ethnographer, my interests are to listen to discourses on the ground. My concern is with how people speak and think about themselves rather than to impose rigid categories and definitions on them. It must also be recognized that discourses are always situated. Shrine officials, volunteers or locals may see some people as tourists and others as pilgrims. Likewise, visitors to Sainte Anne de Beaupré may also impose categories on people. Throughout this study, I have sought to pay attention to these situated emic categories and their meanings, rather than to seek to refine scholarly or etic categories.<sup>123</sup> Ultimately, as we shall see in the next section, people and their activities slip back and forth between the categories. An additional problem

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<sup>122</sup> These three examples by no means represent an exhaustive list of recent studies, as there are many other excellent examples. For pilgrimage and narratives see Coleman and Elsner, *Pilgrim Voices*. For a study of virtual pilgrimage see Mark MacWilliams, "Virtual Pilgrimage to Ireland's Croagh Patrick," in *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, Lorne Dawson ed., 205-218 (Florence, KY: Routledge, 2004) and "Virtual Pilgrimages on the Internet," *Religion* 32 (2002): 315-335. For pilgrimage and ethnic identity see Kristy Nabhan-Warren, *The Virgin of El Barrio: Marian Apparitions, Catholic Evangelizing, and Mexican American Activism* (New York: New York University Press, 2005) and Cathelijne de Busser and Anna Niedźwiedz, "Mary in Poland: A Polish Master Symbol," In *Moved by Mary: The Power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, Anna-Karina Hermkens, Willy Jansen and Catrien Notermans eds., 87-100 (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009).

<sup>123</sup> See Clifford Geertz, "'From the Native's Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," In *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, 55-70 (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 56-57.

associated with seeking to refine definitions of pilgrimage and tourism is the implicit assumption of a hierarchy of value, with pilgrimage at the top and tourism at the bottom. Both pilgrimage and tourism are voluntary activities, undertaken outside the framework of structured, everyday life, but tourism is often negatively associated with hedonism, while pilgrimage is considered “sacred.” Social scientific studies need to move beyond this framework and recognize that touristic travel can also involve the quest for the spiritual, knowledge of self and other, and the “extraordinary.”

### **Half and Half: Intersecting Motivations and Journeys**

While sitting in the pews observing various activities at Sainte Anne de Beaupré, I was struck by the variety of visitors at the shrine, especially their actions and others’ reactions. For instance, sometimes I saw pilgrims who were praying disrupted and annoyed by flashing cameras and large groups of tourists passing by. In such cases the distinction between pilgrim and tourist seemed obvious. For example, I recall being asked by a youth who was in a school group: “Where are those holy stairs everyone is talking about?” I directed him toward the Scala Sancta and watched several youths bound up and down the stairs – the same stairs that pilgrims often ascend prayerfully on their knees. At other times it was difficult to discern who was the pilgrim and who was the tourist. Most people walk solemnly through the basilica and sit in the pews simply observing their surroundings. Often, what I observed was a blurring of the boundaries of



these categories, pilgrim and tourist. For example, during a candlelight procession, a woman, who was part of a pilgrimage group participated in the procession, carrying a candle and singing. However, she often stopped during the procession to sit in a pew and videotape others in the procession. Likewise, I often observed people praying at the miraculous statue with a camera slung over their shoulder. On one occasion I saw a father teaching his young son how to pray at the miraculous statue. They gave Saint Anne a beautiful long stemmed red rose. A few minutes later, the man's wife and daughter arrived at the statue, and the man and his children posed for a photograph in front of the statue. In another example, I observed a young woman standing in front of the Chapel of Saint Anne, pointing to her forearm, while her companion snapped a photo.<sup>124</sup> I was not the only one observing: a nun sat nearby and watched them too. She did not react; her facial expression remained unchanged. Moreover, adding to the complication of understanding pilgrim and tourist as distinct categories, religious authorities at the shrine promote Sainte Anne de Beaupré as a tourist attraction, highlighting its educational, historical and cultural aspects. By utilizing various technologies, activities and marketing schemes, religious authorities not only encourage potential visitors but also seek to enhance the visitor's experience. The following section examines some of the complex

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<sup>124</sup> The major relic of Saint Anne, a four-inch piece of Saint Anne's forearm, is displayed at this chapel, which is also called the Chapel of the Relic. The young woman was part of a school group visiting the shrine.

motivations and journeys of those who travel to Sainte Anne de Beaupré and also those of the people who work at the shrine itself.

Boris Vukonic suggests that religious tourism in the Catholic tradition often appears in three forms: (1) as a pilgrimage, a continuous group and individual visit to a religious shrine; (2) large-scale gatherings on the occasion of significant religious dates and anniversaries; and (3) tours of and visitation to important religious sites within the framework of a tour itinerary.<sup>125</sup> Vukonic points out that leaders and theologians in the Roman Catholic Church have actively engaged in explaining the relationship between religion and tourism. Vukonic's examination of the interface between religion and tourism outlines several theological tenets that influence this relationship.<sup>126</sup> He proposes that the following forms the basis of the theologians' acceptance of tourism's place in the life of modern humanity: "Life on Earth, therefore, is only a journey towards the

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<sup>125</sup> Boris Vukonic, "Sacred Places and Tourism in the Roman Catholic Tradition," In *Tourism, Religion and Spirituality*, Daniel Olsen and Timothy Dallen eds., 237-253 (Florence KY: Routledge, 2006), 238.

<sup>126</sup> It is not my intention to outline all the theological aspects of the relationship between the Church and tourism. I only wish to point out that there are theological reasons why the Church encourages both pilgrims and tourists at religious sites. Several religious officials at Sainte Anne de Beaupré informed me that one never knows what a tourist obtains from their visit or why they came to the shrine. For example, a tourist may have an unexpected religious experience or a visitor may encourage others to visit the shrine at a later date. One young male I interviewed had journeyed to the shrine as part of his Grade 8 school trip to Québec City. Several years later he returned to the shrine to work in the youth pastoral group. Additionally, the young man's parents also visited Sainte Anne de Beaupré for the first time too. For discussion of theological tenets see Vukonic, "Sacred Places and Tourism in the Roman Catholic Tradition," 238-243.

final goal—eternal life after death. Roman Catholics believe that their status on earth is, theologically speaking, *homo viator*, and the church on Earth, or *ecclesia peregrinans*, is actually *in statu viae*.<sup>127</sup> Roman Catholics are encouraged to visit holy places associated with Jesus or saints and to participate in the holy sacraments wherever they might travel. Through traveling the world and experiencing it, individuals can develop spiritually and “perceive themselves as masters of the entire natural world.”<sup>128</sup> By welcoming visitors (Catholics and non-Catholics) into traditional religious sites, the Church itself demonstrates God’s love, hospitality and relationship to all humanity.

Although the primary focus of Sainte Anne de Beaupré is pastoral and it is considered a “special place of prayer,” the shrine also recognizes that it needs money to sustain itself.<sup>129</sup> Thus, the Roman Catholic Church’s relationship to tourism is not just theological but also financial. As a means to encourage potential visitors, the shrine offers various attractions and services such as an information kiosk, museum, guided tours, gift shop, coach parking and snack bar that are analogous to those found at many tourist sites. Like many tourist attractions, the shrine has recently made available audio-guides for visitors to

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>128</sup> Vukonic is referring to Genesis 1:26-28 here.

<sup>129</sup> Although the shrine does not charge visitors, many people give small donations or make purchases at the shrine’s store.

rent. These hand held devices lead visitors through the history of the shrine. During the pilgrimage season, the shrine offers two types of accommodations.<sup>130</sup> Pilgrims can camp free of charge (donation suggested) for short durations at the Domaine Sainte Anne. They may also stay at the Basilica Inn for a reasonable rate. Food and beverages are available at both the Basilica Inn and the small snack bar located on the shrine's grounds. For a nominal admission fee visitors can tour the Sainte Anne Museum, which houses many of the shrine's artifacts. The Shrine's store offers over two thousand objects for sale, including both religious objects and souvenirs. The front of the church has recently been renovated, and now has a beautiful garden area with a Saint Anne fountain. Visitors can sit and rest on the numerous park benches or bring their own lawn chairs. Quite often one sees people picnicking in the gardens. During the hot summer months, children splash and play in the fountain's water, just like they would play at a water-park. At the same time, pilgrims may bottle this water, perceiving it as efficacious in religious healing.

During the summer of 2007, I observed a striking example of the utilization of an ostensibly "secular" attraction at the shrine, an example that resembles activities one might find at an amusement or children's park. As a means to commemorate the shrine's upcoming anniversary in 2008, visitors, especially children, could ride the "Petit Train de Sainte Anne" or "Mini

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<sup>130</sup> The following two types of accommodations are intended for pilgrims. However, other types of visitors could use also them.

Express” for a small fee. Children and adults, including myself, boarded the five car electric ecological train, and traveled around the grounds of shrine. The train-ride was fun and children shouted with glee as the conductor tooted the horn. I was caught up in the *communitas* of the experience. I could not help but feel that the experience itself was liminal and “extraordinary,” not something that participants would experience in their everyday life at home. Visitors also perceived the “Mini Express” as something beyond the ordinary, since many people took pictures of the train. The “Mini Express” led me to question what I had initially perceived as a division between sacred pilgrimage activities and secular tourist activities at the shrine. Both pleasure and prayer are equally part of the visitors’ liminal experiences at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. The “Mini Express” at the shrine resembles rides at “secular” amusement parks, but neither are everyday experiences. In both cases, rides enable participants to leave the world of structure, and enter that of liminality and *communitas*.<sup>131</sup> People generally travel to “the center out there”<sup>132</sup> to have such experiences. Phenomena like the “Mini Express” challenge us to examine more deeply the spiritual in the secular realm, especially by paying attention to the ways in which such experiences can promote *communitas*. Adapting the Turners’ phrase, one might

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<sup>131</sup> Alexander Moore has drawn the comparison between amusement parks and pilgrimage shrines. See Alexander Moore, “Walt Disney World: Bounded Ritual Space and the Playful Pilgrimage Center,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 53 (1980): 207-218.

<sup>132</sup> Victor Turner, “The Center Out There: The Pilgrim’s Goal,” *History of Religions* 12/3 (1973): 191-230.

propose that a tourist site is half a pilgrimage site, if a pilgrimage site is half a tourist site.



Figure 3. *Petit Train de Sainte Anne*. Photo by the author.

According to local residents and volunteers, the number of pilgrims to the shrine has been steadily declining. Several informants advised me that pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré has changed over the years, especially since the mid-twentieth century, and that fewer pilgrims come to the shrine every year. Religious officials have also noticed a slight decrease in the numbers of visitors. I was informed that there are currently more tourists who come to the

shrine than pilgrims.<sup>133</sup> Each year the shrine prepares an annual report for the pilgrimage season indicating the number of groups who visit the shrine, the number of vehicles parked at the shrine, and the number of guided tours conducted by the basilica. In the year 2007, the majority of the groups that visited the shrine were from Canada (38.14%) and the United States (22.63%).<sup>134</sup> A significant number also arrived from France (11.51%) and Mexico (8.00%). The number of vehicles counted during the Novena has declined significantly in recent years. In the year 2004 the shrine reported 4663 vehicles in comparison to 2793 vehicles in 2006.<sup>135</sup> Guided visits of the shrine have also declined.<sup>136</sup> During the 2001 pilgrimage season there were 333 tours compared to 206 in 2007. These

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<sup>133</sup> From the point of view of shrine officials, pilgrims are those who visit the shrine on organized pilgrimages, while tourists are those who travel with tour agencies. However, in practice this distinction is difficult to maintain because it assumes the motivations of visitors. For example, some visitors who travel with a tour agency to Sainte Anne de Beaupré may seek or have a religious experience.

<sup>134</sup> Statistical data is taken from annual reports prepared by the shrine. See “Rapport sur les Activités Pastorales au Sanctuaires de Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré pour la Saison 2007.”

<sup>135</sup> There were 2930 vehicles reported in 2007, suggesting an increase over the 2006 figures. In addition, for unknown reasons the number of vehicles present at the shrine on July 23, 2007 is not included, so the estimated number is likely 3400. Compared to statistical data compiled in 1949, there is a large difference. In 1949, vehicles numbers were compiled weekly for the month of July, not specifically for the Novena. During the third week of July, 13133 vehicles were reported and during the fourth week 16218. Even if these figures are inflated, they confirm that there have been significant decreases in the number of visitors to the shrine during the Novena, which most likely supports the idea that the shrine currently has more tourists than pilgrims, as suggested by both shrine officials and locals.

<sup>136</sup> These numbers do not reflect guided visits by tour agencies, only those tours offered by personnel of the shrine itself.

statistics, of course, have concerned shrine officials and various efforts have been undertaken to increase the shrine's visibility, especially to potential groups and tourists. For example, although the shrine has accepted many school group tours over the years, it has recently developed a position for a school group coordinator. A brochure has been created for educators, suggesting that a visit to Sainte Anne de Beaupré can offer students an educational experience in world religions, the arts, history and geography and French or English as a second language.

Sainte Anne de Beaupré has formed partnerships with other shrines as a means to draw the public's attention. With the recent canonization of Brother André on October 17, 2010 the public's attention has been drawn toward Québec's religious heritage.<sup>137</sup> Four of Québec's sanctuaries hope to benefit from this publicity, aiming toward capitalizing on the growing religious tourism

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<sup>137</sup> Brother André is the first Canadian-born male saint. Like many other saints, he is credited with many miraculous healings. His remains lie in a tomb located below Saint Joseph's Oratory's main chapel in Montréal, and his heart is preserved in a reliquary at the oratory for veneration.



industry.<sup>138</sup> On November 13, 2010, the four national sanctuaries and their four affiliated regional tourist associations announced that a preliminary marketing plan was completed, aiming toward making “Québec one of the most prized religious and spiritual tourism destinations in the world.”<sup>139</sup> The sanctuaries involved in this marketing action plan are: Saint Joseph’s Oratory, Sainte Anne de Beaupré, Our Lady of the Cape Shrine (Trois-Rivières) and Sainte Anthony’s Hermitage (Sanguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean). The goal of the plan is to develop a joint Internet site, to produce a common promotional brochure (French and English), and to create a welcome plan to greet the journalists and travel agents attending the annual World Religion Travel Association Expo, which was held in Montréal on November 13-15, 2010.

Another means of attracting attention is through the Internet. As early as 1989, Pope John Paul II saw the potential “opportunities offered by computer

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<sup>138</sup> The World Tourism Organization estimates that 300 million people take part in religious tourism, which represents over 18 million dollars in consumer spending. The organization suggests that sixty percent of this spending is done by North Americans. See Tourism Montréal, “Religious and Spiritual Tourism in Québec: An Action Plan for Marketing the Four National Sanctuaries of Québec,” <<http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/November2010/13/c3986.html>> (accessed December 8, 2010). While Saint Joseph’s Oratory charges a fee to tour operators for tour groups, the other shrines have not yet implemented charges. Prices range from \$1.00 per student to \$5.00 per person for a guided tour at Saint Joseph’s Oratory. In 2008 Father Pilote informed me that Sainte Anne de Beaupré was considering charging tour operators \$1.00 per person. His rationale was that tour groups also use the facilities at the shrine and tour organizations charge customers for their visit to the shrine. However, there were no plans to charge students.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

telecommunications to fulfill the church's missions, which he called the 'new evangelization.'"<sup>140</sup> Christopher Helland has noted in his study of popular religion and the Internet that "official religious organizations have flocked to cyberspace, attempting to establish their presence."<sup>141</sup> Although Sainte Anne de Beaupré has had an Internet website for several years, various significant changes to the website occurred in 2010.<sup>142</sup> It now offers more information and has become interactive. In many ways pilgrims are now able to go on virtual pilgrimages or participate in online religion, since the Sainte Anne de Beaupré's

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<sup>140</sup> Joshua Cooper Ramo, "Finding God on the Web," *Time* 149/1 (1996): 55.

<sup>141</sup> Christopher Helland, "Popular Religion and the World Wide Web: A Match Made in (Cyber) Heaven," In *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, Lorne Dawson and Douglas Cowan eds., 21-33 (Florence, KY: Routledge, 2004), 29.

<sup>142</sup> Although Sainte Anne de Beaupré has made significant changes, both Saint Joseph's Oratory and Our Lady of the Cape have made more use of the Internet and its technologies. For example, Our Lady of the Cape has recently implemented a Webcam feature. Web viewers are able to see the Miraculous Statue of the Virgin Mary. Saint Joseph's Oratory also uses social networking. People can either become a "fan" of Brother André on Facebook or they can follow Brother André on Twitter. In addition, while the other three national shrines of Québec have already extensively updated their Websites, reflecting their partnership with other shrines, Sainte Anne de Beaupré currently lags behind (as of December 8, 2010).

Website has moved beyond simply being informational.<sup>143</sup> Pilgrims can now take a virtual tour of the shrine, recite weekly prayers or read a homily about Saint Anne.<sup>144</sup> Like several other shrines, pilgrims are now able to electronically submit prayer intentions.<sup>145</sup> They are now also able to purchase various religious objects through the Annals of Saint Anne’s website.<sup>146</sup> Pilgrims never need to leave the comforts of their homes to order rosaries, medals, books, statues, candles or even Saint Anne’s holy oil. Instead of a physical “journey to a centre

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<sup>143</sup> Mark MacWilliams examines the similarities and differences between virtual and “real” pilgrimages. He defines virtual pilgrimage as “an Internet neologism for a Web site where people can simulate a sacred journey for educational, economic and spiritual purposes.” See MacWilliams, “Virtual Pilgrimage to Ireland’s Croagh Patrick,” 205. Glenn Young distinguishes between religion online and online religion. Religion online provides information about religion, while online religion is participatory. Young suggests that online prayer requests, at least in part, are an instance of online religion, since they involve reciprocity in information exchange. See Glenn Young, “Reading and Praying Online: The Continuity of Religion Online and Online Religion in Internet Christianity,” In *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, Lorne Dawson and Douglas Cowan eds., 86-97 (Florence, KY: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>144</sup> For the English version see Sainte Anne de Beaupré Shrine’s website: < <http://www.ssadb.qc.ca/eng/index.htm> > (accessed June 8, 2011). The shrine’s French website has many more options than the English site. For instance, French viewers can listen to and view the 2010 Feast Day homilies. For homilies see: “Homélie de la Neuvaine 2010 à Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré,” <<http://www.sanctuairesainteanne.org/neuvaine2010/index.html>> (accessed December 20, 2010).

<sup>145</sup> Many other Roman Catholic shrines have online prayer requests, including Lourdes, Saint Joseph’s Oratory and Our Lady of the Cape. Sainte Anne de Beaupré has only recently added this feature to its website and it is not easy to navigate to it.

<sup>146</sup> See the Annals of Saint Anne’s website: < <http://www.annalsofsaintanne.ca/boutique/eng/> > (accessed December 8, 2010).

out there,” the Internet can virtually take people beyond the confines of their home.<sup>147</sup>

Virtual pilgrimages to Sainte Anne de Beaupré are possible through either tourist or religious websites. For example, “Virtual Tourist” offers historical, visual, and practical information about visiting the shrine.<sup>148</sup> This website also offers various opinions from visitors about their visit to the shrine such as: “A great sight to see for religious people, especially Catholics” or “Non religious people may feel uncomfortable here.” Virtual pilgrimages of Sainte Anne de Beaupré can also be found on religious sites such as “Gloria.tv: The More Catholic the Better.”<sup>149</sup> Unlike Virtual Tourist, this website contains videos of the shrine and is geared more toward the Catholic viewer.

Like the Internet, other forms of media may also function as a type of virtual pilgrimage. Marian Bowman, a religious studies scholar, observed that many women in Newfoundland participate in a “virtual” pilgrimage to Sainte

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<sup>147</sup> See Turner, “The Centre Out There.”

<sup>148</sup> See [http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/North\\_America/Canada/Province\\_of\\_Quebec/Sainte\\_Anne\\_de\\_Beaupre-904612/TravelGuide-Sainte\\_Anne\\_de\\_Beaupre.html](http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/North_America/Canada/Province_of_Quebec/Sainte_Anne_de_Beaupre-904612/TravelGuide-Sainte_Anne_de_Beaupre.html).

<sup>149</sup> See various videos at [www.gloria.tv](http://www.gloria.tv).

Anne de Beaupré.<sup>150</sup> She notes that for many of the women she interviewed, a trip to the shrine was the only time that these women left the province. Bowman proposes:

Through the devotional magazine *The Annals of St. Anne de Beaupré*, Newfoundlanders received news of the Shrine and the miracles occurring there. By writing in with prayers to St. Anne, sending thanksgivings for answered prayers, and praying for other letter writers, they were able to participate in a “virtual” pilgrimage, to experience *communitas* despite their spacial isolation. So close was the connection that in one case a copy of *The Annals* was tied around an injured leg for curative purposes!<sup>151</sup>

As MacWilliams suggests, “pilgrimage is as much an act of the mind as an act of the body.”<sup>152</sup> If we understand pilgrimages as individually motivated acts that are privately meaningful, then a journey to a pilgrimage site such as Sainte Anne de Beaupré does not need to be physical, collective or a publicly shared religious experience. The power of place and the place of power becomes embodied in the Internet and other forms of media. As Sainte Anne de Beaupré shifts more into “cyberspace,” the shrine offers pilgrims new ways of being spiritual in the postmodern world.

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<sup>150</sup> Marian Bowman examined popular devotion in Newfoundland during the late 1970s. Eighteen years after her research, she decided to visit Sainte Anne de Beaupré herself because it had meant so much to her informants. See Marian Bowman, “Sainte Anne de Beaupré: Along the Path of Devotion,” In *On Pilgrimage: Sacred Journeys Around the World*, Jennifer Westwood ed., 166-167 (Mahwah, New Jersey: Hidden Spring/Paulist Press, 2003).

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>152</sup> MacWilliams, “Virtual Pilgrimage to Ireland’s Croagh Patrick,” 206.

As Badone points out above, people voluntarily travel to places where they perceive that “goods” are believed to be located. Ethnographic fieldwork at Sainte Anne de Beaupré suggests that visitors to the shrine report a variety of motivations for travel: leisure, historical, cultural, social, educational, the desire for connection with their ancestors, health related issues, financial issues, familial concerns, searching for love or life direction and so on. Visitors often report that they have more than one motivating factor: there may be several reasons for travel. Despite this wide range of motivations, all travelers expect “goods.” These “goods” may be tangible such as a souvenir or religious object, but the majority of “goods” are intangible: an aesthetic or educational experience, connection with the historical past, a religious experience, a sense of belonging or healing. Some people report that their visit to the shrine was brief, lasting only an hour, while others visitors stay for days, sometimes weeks. Visitors to the shrine often travel in larger groups organized by schools and pilgrimage or tour agencies.<sup>153</sup> Some groups come specifically to Sainte Anne de Beaupré, while others travel to the shrine as part of a planned tour itinerary. Like tour agency groups, organized pilgrimage groups often have planned itineraries. For example, many pilgrimage groups plan trips to Québec City, for sightseeing and shopping. People also travel individually or with smaller groups that include family or friends. Often people travel to the shrine for their own sake, whereas others make the journey

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<sup>153</sup> Some pilgrimage groups use travel agencies to organize their trips.

for the sake of other people, usually loved ones or friends. Some visitors simply become aware of the shrine, while driving along the highway. Since Sainte Anne de Beupré is also a parish church, visitors may also come to the shrine for various rites of passage: funerals, weddings, baptisms or confirmations.

Like the early church at Petit-Cap, contemporary pilgrimage to Saint Anne de Beupré is often motivated by stories. These stories describe others' travel experiences to the shrine. Such narratives, either oral or written, may describe an individual's particular religious healing or transformational, cultural, educational, social or aesthetic experience. Alternatively, narratives, such as travel brochures, may simply describe the architectural, artistic, cultural or historical features of the shrine. Regardless of the genre, the story itself motivates others to undertake a journey. Some people are changed in significant ways by their visit, while others are not. Travelers to the shrine aim to have meaningful experiences, similar to those they have heard or read about, experiences that transcend, elevate and empower the individual.

Many people who come to the shrine are motivated by stories of the miraculous. For some people, Saint Anne de Beupré is perceived as a powerful place of healing. Many visitors are Roman Catholics, although not all.<sup>154</sup> Many

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<sup>154</sup> As at Saint Joseph's Oratory, many Hindus come to pray to local saints. Several volunteers at the shrine suggest that many Hindus and Muslims visit Saint Anne. In addition, other visitors come to the shrine to see the "place where miracles happen." Such visitors may appear simply curious rather than specifically religiously motivated. However, some visitors are both curious and religiously motivated.

visitors seek Saint Anne's intervention for healing.<sup>155</sup> They travel to the shrine and pray to Saint Anne, often writing petitions. Visitors seek various forms of healing: social, physical, psychological or spiritual. They often ask for healing of specific ailments such as cancer, addictions or infertility. They may also petition Saint Anne for general good health, blessings, safety and protection, for themselves, their family or friends. Many people travel to Sainte Anne de Beaupré on behalf of those who cannot make their own pilgrimage. Individuals will often leave stacks of petitions at the Miraculous Statue, petitions written by other people. For example, one envelope contained thirty-two different petitions. An original copy of an example petition provided by the shrine had been photocopied; the same person had handwritten requests for various favors on each petition, and each petition had a different name recorded.

Some people travel to Sainte Anne de Beaupré to ask Saint Anne for specific favors. People anticipate that as a result of their visit to the shrine, Saint Anne will grant their request. Many people petition Saint Anne to intercede in financial matters: to enable them to pay off debts, to collect debts, to find employment or employment security, to win the lottery, to build a dream home, to achieve general financial stability, to help with family budgets or with the sale of homes, businesses or vehicles. For example, an archeology graduate, who was discouraged because she could not find a job in her field, wrote to the shrine in

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<sup>155</sup> This highly motivating factor for travel to the shrine is discussed in Chapter 4, so I will keep my comments brief here.



2002, indicating that she had undertaken a pilgrimage to the shrine in hopes that Saint Anne would help her find employment in archeology. She reported in the letter that one month after her visit, she received a phone call from a provincial government ministry, offering her a research position. Like this graduate, many students ask Saint Anne for favors: good grades, success with studies and eventual graduation. Some requests are very specific. One petition asked Saint Anne for an overall average of seventy five percent or higher during the school year. Another petition asked for success in nursing related courses, which had been outlined, including the course numbers.

Many visitors come to the shrine as an *ex-voto*, in fulfillment of a vow or as an expression of thanksgiving to Saint Anne. There are numerous reports of people returning year after year owing to promises made to Saint Anne. One couple had made the trip for eleven consecutive years because of such a promise. In a letter written in 2001, a woman narrated that eleven years previously her husband had been diagnosed with Leukemia, and had undergone chemotherapy and radiation treatments. While her husband was in remission, they traveled to the shrine and promised Saint Anne that if he were healed of Leukemia, they would return every year to the shrine for the rest of their lives. Similarly, another woman reported in a letter written during 2002 that she had undertaken thirty-three organized pilgrimages and two private pilgrimages. She wrote: “Dear Ste. Anne has been so good to me. Thirty-five years ago I promised her if she cured

me of migraine headaches I would go on the Pilgrimage to her shrine every year, while I am able to. In those thirty-five years I missed going on the pilgrimage twice but I visited her shrine with family and friends. I hope St. Anne accepted that as part of my promise.”<sup>156</sup> Although the primary motivation in cases like these for traveling to the shrine is one of thanksgiving, the grateful pilgrims generally ask Saint Anne for additional favors while they are at the shrine.

Several people have reported that they were motivated to visit the shrine out of loneliness and isolation. Some come to Sainte Anne de Beaupré to ask Saint Anne for help finding a soul mate, life partner, boy/girlfriend or spouse. Individuals may ask Saint Anne personally, or, often parents, especially mothers, ask on behalf of their children for a “good” wife or husband.<sup>157</sup> I met one young man in his mid-twenties on such a venture. He had walked from the Ile d’Orleans to Sainte Anne de Beaupré, carrying a backpack and walking stick. Understanding an arduous physical journey as being more efficacious than taking a bus, he had left his home at dawn, arriving at the shrine by mid-day. Although he complained that his feet were tired, swollen and blistered, he was

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<sup>156</sup> I quote this letter and all following letters and petitions as they are written, not editing grammar or spelling. In doing this, I aim to be inclusive of a pilgrim’s voice, regardless of their apparent social or educational strata. While some letters are meticulously written, others are not. Some letters are difficult to read, but I have tried to duplicate them, as best as I can, so that a variety of voices are reported.

<sup>157</sup> “Good” often means a practicing Roman Catholic. One mother asked Saint Anne for “good” wives for her three sons, specifying that they were to be Catholic, loving and kind.

elated to finally see the façade of the shrine. When I asked him why he was walking to the shrine, he explained to me that he was alone in Canada. All his family and friends were in the Philippines. He had come to Canada to study, hoping for a better life than in the Philippines. This young man desperately wanted to find a woman who would eventually become his wife, easing his loneliness.<sup>158</sup> Because he had heard from other people that Saint Anne often grants such favors at her shrine, he decided to walk there, hoping that his request would be granted.<sup>159</sup> Like this young man, other immigrants also seek Saint Anne's assistance in easing their loneliness or isolation. Some people petition Saint Anne to help find ways or open doors so that family members can also immigrate to Canada. One woman wrote: "Please pray and open a door for my brother and family can come and live in Canada." Another woman asked Saint Anne for her own immigrant status papers and also that her daughter could join her in Canada soon. Sometimes, visitors will ask for the opportunity to live in Canada. For example, a man from Egypt simply wrote: "Oh my Lord, I want to live in Canada."

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<sup>158</sup> On the same day that the young man arrived at the shrine I found a petition left at the Miraculous Statue asking for a wife, specifying "a strong woman."

<sup>159</sup> Patron saints, such as Saint Anne are often invoked by the lovelorn. A popular prayer is "Dear Saint Anne, send me a man. If he lies or if he dies, please, Mary's mother, send me another" or simply "Dear Saint Anne, send me a man as fast as you can." See Alice La Plante and Clare La Plante, *Dear Saint Anne, Send Me a Man: And Other Time Honored Prayers for Love* (New York: Universe, 2002).

Some visitors to the shrine seek recreation: “the re-creation of the self by engaging in activities that are believed to promote health and/or relieve the drudgery of mundane labor.”<sup>160</sup> Many travelers to the shrine report that they aim to escape their everyday lives: a time away from employment or domestic labors. For some women a religiously motivated pilgrimage provides a legitimate means to escape the household, while a vacation to Cancun with friends does not. Some religiously oriented journeys are flanked by leisure motivations. One woman told me that her annual participation in an organized pilgrimage group provided her with an opportunity to escape daily domestic duties: childcare, cooking, dishes and laundry. A visit to the shrine gave her time to pray quietly, socialize with others and reflect upon her life. For many people, a yearly pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré represents their only vacation. Without pilgrimage, there would be no other legitimate reason for traveling away from their familial responsibilities. Moreover, since some pilgrimage groups provide funding for those who otherwise could not financially afford to make a journey to the shrine, a pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré may represent their only opportunity for travel.

Some visitors come to the shrine annually as a family vacation, returning year after year to camp at the Domaine Sainte Anne. Although camping may appear be simply a recreational activity, it is also an activity planned around the

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<sup>160</sup> Badone, “Conventional and Unconventional Pilgrimages,” 3.

Novena.<sup>161</sup> It is not only leisurely and religiously motivated, but it is also perceived as a social activity. Camping during the Novena provides numerous opportunities to meet and socialize with other people, enjoy family time, and perform various devotions to Saint Anne.<sup>162</sup> Several First Nation people informed me that the Novena provided an opportunity to meet and socialize with other First Nation groups.

Some visitors to Sainte Anne de Beaupré seek to discover something beyond their ordinary everyday experiences. This may be a different cultural or historical experience. Or, it may simply be to view something aesthetically pleasing. Many visitors note the shrine's artistic and architectural features, describing it as "one of the most beautiful churches I have ever been in," "wonderful," "magnificent piece of architecture and art," "truly inspiring,"

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<sup>161</sup> During the Novena, the large open section behind the basilica's buildings is opened for campers, since the Domaine Sainte Anne is quickly filled with tents, trailers and other recreational vehicles. Both areas have no facilities (water or electricity). Many campers stay in these areas for the entire Novena (nine days). An underground tunnel joins the basilica grounds and Domaine Sainte Anne.

<sup>162</sup> Ronald Lee, a Canadian Romani writer, linguist and activist, reported in 1981 that many Romany undertook annual pilgrimages (the *Santana*) to Sainte Anne de Beaupré for the Novena. He writes: "For a few days each summer the grounds around the basilica become an old-time Gypsy encampment where several thousand Gypsies renew old friendships and see relatives again." See Ronald Lee, "Dance Gypsy, Pray Gypsy," *Today* 15 (October 31, 1981), 15. Presently, the *Santana* no longer remains the annual gathering for Romanies in Canada. I did not observe any large groups of Romany camping at the shrine. When I asked shrine officials about "gypsies," I was informed: "They don't come here any more." Lee notes that Romany pilgrims are now a minority at the Novena, suggesting that many of the Romanies have turned to charismatic forms of Protestantism (Personal Communication, June 10, 2011). Similarly, at Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer Badone observes that Pentecostals outnumber Catholics in the Romany population in France." See Ellen Badone, "Pilgrimage, tourism and *The da Vinci code* at Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France," *Culture and Religion* 9/1 (2008): 23-44.

“perfect,” “fabulous,” or “peaceful.”<sup>163</sup> Some describe their visit to the shrine as awesome. The use of the adjective awesome suggests that it is something beyond the ordinary every day experience of the visitor. One woman reported that Sainte Anne de Beaupré was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen: “The church is amazing. I have never seen anything as beautiful in my life! It took my breath away.” Another woman wrote: “Dear Saint Anne, thank you for the marvelous place of beauty where we may all have the chance to behold the splendor of God. Amazing, breath-taking and above all life changing.” One person suggested that the visit had been transformational, highlighting the “power of place:” “It’s so weird. I hardly go to church at home. This magnificent, spiritual structure just drew me in—physically and emotionally. Thank you God for guiding me back to your path.” Similarly, a thirteen-year old girl wrote: “I love this church. I wanted to cry but couldn’t. My heart was once warm but now it has hardened. But this church has softened it up. I have come to love God even more. Thank you.” Some first time visitors are inspired to return again: “Good Saint Anne, your

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<sup>163</sup> These descriptions and the following two examples are reported in the 2007 “Book of Peace.” In this source, it is difficult to discern religiously motivated travelers from other forms of travelers, especially when only a single word or phrase is recorded. Sometimes the distinction is obvious, particularly when religious words are used such as “God” or Jesus.” One comment that asked for healing uses the form “G-d,” suggesting a Jewish visitor. Sometimes visitors will specify that they are traveling with a tour agency, not necessarily affiliated with any religion: “Hello Saint Anne, we are here on a bus tour. What a beautiful church. So glad we came to this beautiful place.” Visitors to the shrine on bus tours also verbalized to me brief descriptive comments about their visit. The difficulty with speaking to people on tours is that their visits to the shrine are often brief. They do not have time for lengthy interviews. Generally, they told me where they were from and their overall first impressions of the shrine.

brehtaking beauty just blew us away. You have been hope for so many and helped all who believe. We will surely visit again...many thanks for just letting us look around.” However, not all people are moved or transformed by the shrine’s appearance. One man from England queried: “One can only guess at the millions of dollars it must have cost. One does wonder what Jesus would have spent this money on if he were alive today.”<sup>164</sup>

Some people may be motivated by other people’s pilgrimage stories and pilgrimages to other conventional sites. One couple I interviewed, Henri and Marie,<sup>165</sup> had heard about the various ways the walking pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, revived since the 1980s, had changed peoples’ lives spiritually and personally.<sup>166</sup> Influenced by others’ transforming experiences, this young professional couple embarked on an eighteen day walking pilgrimage from Saint Joseph’s Oratory in Montréal to Sainte Anne de Beaupré, known as the Chemin

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<sup>164</sup> This example is recorded in the 2008 visitor’s book. Such critical comments are rarely written in the book and no one verbalized comments such as these to me during my fieldwork.

<sup>165</sup> Pseudonyms are incorporated throughout this study to protect the anonymity of informants. When a full name is cited, a pseudonym has not been used.

<sup>166</sup> This Francophone couple is in their late twenties, and they are Roman Catholics. Because their professional lives were hectic, they rarely attended church.

des Sanctuaires.<sup>167</sup> Henri and Marie had decided to undertake this walking pilgrimage, rather than the one to Santiago de Compostela, because it was less expensive, and they could complete the journey in eighteen days.<sup>168</sup> Although this couple was primarily motivated by others' stories, Marie had secondary

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<sup>167</sup> According to Suzanne Boutin, this type of pilgrimage is a phenomenon located between tradition and modernity—a reinvention of the old and new: “Il se présenterait comme une réinvention de la tradition du pèlerinage dans la modernité avancée québécoise.” See Suzanne Boutin, “Le Chemin des sanctuaires: Un phénomène entre tradition et modernité,” *Études d'histoire religieuse* 74 (2008): 42. Denis Leblanc, a retired police officer from the Sûreté du Québec, initiated the framework for the Chemin des Sanctuaires in Quebec. In 1995, Leblanc had undertaken the 1800 kilometers pilgrimage route from Paris to Santiago de Compostela. While backpacking alone through France and Spain, he thought about creating a Québécois version of the Santiago pilgrimage. In 1996, he mapped out a route from Saint Joseph's Oratory in Montréal to Sainte Anne de Beaupré. By 1998 he had set up local committees in 18 towns to house pilgrims along the pilgrimage route. In the year 2000, the Chemin was underway and was officially inaugurated. The Chemin des Sanctuaires charges a sixty-dollar non-refundable application fee. Along the route, pilgrims are also required to pay a nominal donation for shelter. Groups of three or four pilgrims depart from Montréal during the months of July and August, following a daily itinerary, which guides them through the 375 kilometers journey from Sainte Joseph's Oratory to Sainte Anne de Beaupré. According to statistical data produced by the Chemin, the majority of the pilgrims are women, and most pilgrims range in age from 50-59. Pilgrims report a variety of motivations for undertaking this type of pilgrimage: spiritual or religious reasons, historical interests, and the desire for physical adventure or for a union with nature. For statistics and motivations see: “Statistiques,” <[www.lamec.info/sanctuaires/Web/nouveau/index2.html](http://www.lamec.info/sanctuaires/Web/nouveau/index2.html)> (accessed August 4, 2010). As on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, pilgrims carry a pilgrim's credential or “passeport.” Its primary purpose is to identify the pilgrim. The pilgrim's credential is stamped daily by either religious institutions or places of shelter at each stage of the pilgrimage. At the concluding stage of the pilgrimage, pilgrims are invited to join in Mass, sitting near the altar of Sainte Anne de Beaupré. Marking their presence at the shrine, they place their backpacks in front of the altar. At the end of Mass, pilgrims receive an official certificate verifying the completion of the pilgrimage. In the spring of 2010, Sainte Anne de Beaupré began advertising this form of pilgrimage on its website, referring to it as “the Camino de Santiago right in our own backyard” or “Compostelle québécois.”

<sup>168</sup> They had heard from other people that the Santiago pilgrimage took nearly two months to complete. At this point in their lives, they could not dedicate that much time away from their professions.



motivations for pilgrimage: to reflect on her life; to mark the transition from student to professional; to create time for her spouse, and time for prayer. At the end of their journey, they both perceived it as a physical accomplishment. Neither had initially anticipated the arduousness of the journey.

Henri and Marie informed me that along their journey they met many interesting people, who sincerely wanted to help them. Overall, they noted, people are good: “Always willing to help and give love.” Henri and Marie slept in private homes, community centers and a church basement. Because they traveled with another couple, Henri and Marie discovered that there was very little time for intimacy in the eighteen-day period. As a young married couple, they found this particularly difficult. Along the journey, many people asked them to pray for them—most people asked for continued health. Henri and Marie heard many miraculous stories about Saint Anne at each stage of their journey. Marie suggested to me that she only discovered Saint Anne devotion along the way, advising me that not everyone in Québec knows about Saint Anne.<sup>169</sup> Marie told me that devotions to the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph are much more common in the Montréal area.

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<sup>169</sup> In contrast, Father Pilote informed me that there is a statue of Saint Anne in every church in Québec.

I asked Henri and Marie how the pilgrimage had changed them, and they responded that they were unsure of its effects.<sup>170</sup> However, Marie did suggest that she had learned to clear her mind of distractions. She also began to pray daily, which is something she did not usually do in her everyday life. One day Marie asked the Virgin Mary to help her with prayer, since she initially had difficulty focusing. The following day, Marie informed me that she was able to pray for an hour and a half undistracted. This pilgrimage provided her with an opportunity to form a close relationship with the Virgin Mary. Henri and Marie also started praying the rosary together. Marie told me: “I love Mary more now than what I did in Montréal.” Both planned on sharing their pilgrimage experience with others and to encourage others to undertake such a pilgrimage.

As mentioned in the previous section, Frey’s study of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage focuses on the meaning of human movement and the outcome of the journey itself. She suggests that the motives and meanings of the journey emerge en route, and for many pilgrims these continue to evolve over time after the return home. In Frey’s earlier work, she notes that “the ‘source of power’ is not the sacred place (Santiago) per se but how the pilgrim relates to the landscapes of the Camino and the meanings that emerge as a result of this process. Radical change is not as vital as is understanding the various

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<sup>170</sup> I interviewed Henri and Marie on July 22, 2007. I met with them only two hours after they had arrived at Saint Anne de Beaupré. They planned on immediately returning to Montréal so they did not have much time to think about what I was asking them.

experiences and meanings of common participation in an event that often leads one ultimately back to home and to the self with a ‘difference.’”<sup>171</sup> Instead of focusing on the presence or absence of change, Frey advocates that anthropological questions should address how the pilgrimage endures: “How the experiences are interwoven into daily life, influencing future actions and ways of being.”<sup>172</sup>

Keeping Frey’s “going home” aspect of pilgrimage in mind, I contacted Henri and Marie the following year.<sup>173</sup> I discovered that they had moved to France for one year as Marie had received a fellowship and was working in Paris. I was somewhat surprised at Henri’s response. The previous year he had related very little about his pilgrimage experience, telling me that he had no expectations. Henri informed me that they had both been changed by their journey, being moved “deeper into our faith.” Their pilgrimage experience continued and was interwoven into their daily lives. They both pray several times a day, especially before meals, and they attend Mass three or four days a week. Henri and Marie had joined both a prayer group for the reunification of the church and a group of young musicians, who play at the local parish Mass. They had also undertaken an organized pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which was

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<sup>171</sup> Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 178-179.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>173</sup> I emailed the couple and Henri responded in June 2008.

led by a priest. Further, Henri wrote: “It was no dramatic changes in our lives but just the confirmation that Jesus is the Lord and he is with us and all humanity in this difficult era. I think the pilgrimage has brought us more conscious of the presence of God at any time and encouraged us to take every free moments of the day to talk to him and ask him his strength, even if it’s just for a few seconds!” In Henri’s email response, there was no mention of devotion to Saint Anne, only Jesus and God were mentioned. However, I suspect that Marie continues her devotion to the Virgin Mary, since this was an important aspect of her pilgrimage. For this couple, it was not “the power of place,” but rather the experience of the journey itself that was meaningful and transforming.

### **Conclusions**

People have undertaken pilgrimages to Sainte Anne de Beaupré for nearly three and a half centuries. From the onset of pilgrimage, visitors have been drawn to the shrine by means of stories of the miraculous. Narratives about miraculous healings, from the earliest accounts recorded by parish priests in the seventeenth century to healing stories reported by pilgrims in the twenty-first century, have played a pivotal role in shaping both the cult of Saint Anne in Canada and the pilgrimage experience. Through the triad of miracle, pilgrimage and donations, the small church at Petit-Cap was transformed and sustained, becoming a shrine by the end of the seventeenth century and a minor basilica in the late nineteenth century.

Stories of the miraculous, as Dunn suggests, have both narrative and performative dimensions: they both conveyed and constructed meaning in the emerging colonial community in the seventeenth century. Although the early accounts are obviously redacted and therefore do not necessarily represent an individual's experience, they do reveal how clerical authorities utilized these stories to promote their own interests. Dunn states:

Read as both narrative and performance, the seventeenth-century accounts of the miracles at Petit-Cap united the *habitants* of Petit-Cap, the dispersed settlements along the St. Lawrence valley, France and New France, and human and divine, in both articulating and constructing an understanding of the colonial community. In the miracles at Petit-Cap, the parish priests saw what they wanted to: a community enchanted with the presence of God and his saints, aligned with French national interests, and organized under the authority of the post-Tridentine Catholic Church. For Morel and his clerical successors, the miracles at Petit-Cap at once proved *argumenta fidei* of sorts against the scientific naturalists, the Protestant reformers, and the English aggressors, and at the same time gave shape to a community ordered from within under the authority of the institutional church and centered on the figure of the cleric, the context of the liturgy, and the performance of a sanctioned set of devotional practices.<sup>174</sup>

Today, Sainte Anne de Beaupré continues to be transformed and sustained through the triad of narratives, pilgrimage and tourism. Although stories of the miraculous remain a motivating factor for pilgrimage in the modern world, recent social scientific approaches to the study of pilgrimage, which focus on individual motivations and pilgrimage's connections to tourism, are useful for understanding the dynamics of Sainte Anne de Beaupré today.

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<sup>174</sup> Dunn, *The Miracles at Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap*, 634-635.

This study of Sainte Anne de Beaupré suggests that there are a variety of motivations, which are often mixed, blurring the boundaries between sacred/profane and pilgrimage/tourism.

During one of my interviews at the shrine, a priest postulated: “Saint Anne is for everyone. She is a good grandmother who helps us all.” Although Saint Anne continues to be a powerful symbol of the French tradition, she is no longer perceived solely in terms of French Catholic identity. With the exception of a single *fleur de lis* left at the Miraculous Statue, I never saw evidence or heard anyone claim that Saint Anne symbolizes French identity or nationalism. Instead, Saint Anne is connected to tradition and heritage. Saint Anne de Beaupré welcomes all visitors, regardless of their ethnicity or religious background. Given the church’s changing situation in Québec and the decrease in numbers of pilgrims, pilgrimage sites such as Sainte Anne de Beaupré have turned to tourism to financially sustain themselves. Although the primary focus of Sainte Anne de Beaupré is pastoral, it has modeled itself like a tourist attraction, offering a variety of services to visitors. It has formed partnerships with other shrines as a means to publicize itself as part of Québec’s religious heritage, aiming to capitalize on the growing religious tourism. Sainte Anne de Beaupré has also utilizes the World Wide Web as a means to attract potential visitors and its website has recently become interactive. As the shrine shifts more into cyberspace, it may change our understanding of pilgrimage at the shrine in the

future. The place of power and the power of place may be shifted from the physical world, becoming embodied in the cyber world. In this context, pilgrimage no longer needs to be understood as a physical journey.

Visitors to Sainte Anne de Beaupré report a variety of reasons for travel. Like visitors to the early church at Petit-Cap, some visitors are motivated by stories of the miraculous, but they are not the only motivating stories. Other stories exist as well. Written or oral narratives about an individual's experience at the shrine may describe a physical healing or a transformational, cultural, educational, social or aesthetic experience. Narratives, such as travel brochures, may also describe the architectural, artistic, cultural, or historical attributes of the shrine. Regardless of the type of story, narratives motivate people to travel to Sainte Anne de Beaupré.

As suggested, people are often motivated to seek Saint Anne's intercession. This may be for a specific healing or favor. People may travel for themselves or for others. Some people visit the shrine to fulfill a vow or to express thanksgiving to Saint Anne. Many visitors travel to the shrine as recreation, the re-creation of the self. Others travel to seek something beyond their ordinary everyday life experiences. Often, people travel to the shrine with mixed motivations, taking family vacations which incorporate participating in various religious activities, especially during the Novena.

Not all people report that they are transformed by their experiences at the shrine. Just as there are a variety of individual motivations, there are also a variety of outcomes.<sup>175</sup> Nonetheless for some people, a visit to Sainte Anne de Beaupré is transformative. Undertaking a journey to the shrine transforms the mundane world, bringing the extraordinary to life. Often, people seek to repeat their experiences, and they return to the shrine annually. This journey thus becomes a type of devotional expression that not only re-enchants the world, but also empowers the self.

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<sup>175</sup> Visitors' motivations and experiences at Sainte Anne de Beaupré are no different than other sites of pilgrimage studied by anthropologists. For ethnographic examples see: Thomas Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Frey, "Stories of the Return" and *Pilgrim Stories*; Jill Dubisch, *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender, and Politics at a Greek Island Shrine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Simon Coleman, "Pilgrimage to 'England's Nazareth': Landscapes of Myth and Memory at Walsingham," In *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*, Ellen Badone and Sharon Roseman eds., 52-67 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).



## Chapter Two

### *Negotiating Power: Private, Collective and Service Devotions*

*Catholics live in an enchanted world, a world of statues and holy water, stained glass and votive candles, saints and religious medals, rosary beads and holy pictures. But these Catholic paraphernalia are mere hints of a deeper and more pervasive religious sensibility, which inclines Catholics to see the Holy lurking in creation.*<sup>176</sup>

Roman Catholic devotional expressions at Saint Anne de Beaupré encompass a wide range of practices, meanings and functions.<sup>177</sup> William Christian makes a distinction between “devotion” and “a devotion” suggesting “devotion is the attitude of reverence toward a sacred figure,” while “a devotion’ is an ongoing reverence or cult afforded a sacred figure.”<sup>178</sup> Further, he notes that in a limited sense, “a devotion” can also be understood as a form of worship, such as a Novena, prayer or the Stations of the Cross. While some people are more devoted to one sacred figure, such as Saint Anne, other people may perform devotions to various sacred figures. Devotions to Saint Anne are similar in nature to those directed toward the Virgin Mary: the performance of

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<sup>176</sup> Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>177</sup> Although I prefer the term “devotional expression,” other phrases such as “devotional activities,” “devotional practices” or “performance of devotions” are used interchangeably. These terms are understood broadly, not reducing devotions to practices but viewing them as media of engagement, which encompass actions, feelings, ideas and imaginings.

<sup>178</sup> William Christian Jr., *Person and God in a Spanish Valley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 47.

rosaries or chaplets, use of prayer cards, statues, medals or healing water. Many of the pilgrims I spoke to at Sainte Anne de Beaupré performed devotions to more than one divine persona, although Saint Anne herself was often the motivating factor for pilgrimage to the shrine. Many devotions are practiced individually and outside of official Catholic rites. Devotions are also performed collectively, especially during sacramental liturgies. Sometimes, pilgrimage groups perform their own special devotions at the shrine, such as group prayers, which are offered to Saint Anne at the Miraculous Statue. Devotions to Saint Anne, as one informant advised me, may also be performed as a type of service to Saint Anne, which includes helping her pilgrims, especially the sick, suffering or handicapped. Likewise, the organization of a pilgrimage group is also a type of service devotion.

Since some Roman Catholic devotions are performed outside of institutionalized Catholic rites, such practices have often been framed in terms of “popular religion.” The official church uses the term *pia exercitia* to characterize popular devotions or devotional practices. The term was assigned during the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy during the Second Vatican Council on December 4, 1963. The *Sacrosanctum Consilium* states:

Popular devotions of the Christian people are to be highly commended, provided they accord with the laws and norms of the Church, above all when they are ordered by the Apostolic See. Devotions proper to individual Churches also have a special dignity if they are undertaken by mandate of the bishops according to customs or books lawfully approved. But these devotions should

be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some fashion derived from it, and lead the people to it, since, in fact, the liturgy by its very nature far surpasses any of them.<sup>179</sup>

The term “popular religion” or “popular devotions,” as Badone notes, is problematic as a scholarly category of investigation.<sup>180</sup> Peter Brown asserts that the notion of a “two-tiered” religious system composed of elite and popular categories can be traced back to David Hume in the eighteenth century.<sup>181</sup> Hume’s work contrasted the monotheism of the “enlightened few” with the polytheistic tendencies of “the vulgar:” the masses, which were irrational, uninstructed and ignorant.<sup>182</sup> Following this perspective, early anthropological work inspired by the anthropologist Robert Redfield depicted “great” and “little” religious traditions as relatively autonomous and distinct categories.<sup>183</sup> This distinction perpetuated the misunderstanding that popular religion was

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<sup>179</sup> See Chapter 1 section 13 of “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 4, 1963” <[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html)> (accessed June 8, 2011).

<sup>180</sup> Ellen Badone, *Religious Orthodoxy & Popular Faith in European Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 4.

<sup>181</sup> Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 13-22.

<sup>182</sup> David Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*. H. E. Root ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, [1757] 1956).

<sup>183</sup> Robert Redfield, “The Social Organization of Tradition” In *Peasant Society and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Civilization*, 67-104 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

always rural, primitive, traditional and unreflective, while the religion of the elite was urban, civilized, modern and intellectual. Christian demonstrates in certain regions and periods of European history, members of all social classes have shared the same “local” religious style. He posits that the term popular religion can only be legitimately applied when it refers to “religion as practiced” versus “religion as prescribed.”<sup>184</sup> Christian further defines religion as practiced as rooted in particular historical communities and geographical localities. He argues that it is often conservative, resisting changes imposed by non-local authorities. Moreover, he notes that the so called “little tradition” is often simply the “great tradition” that has taken root in a particular place and has lasted longer than its time.

Many scholars have abandoned the concept of “popular religion” entirely, since such categorizations make it difficult to conceptualize the “popular” as a meaningful realm.<sup>185</sup> For example, Paula Kane postulates that popular religion is

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<sup>184</sup> William Christian, *Local Religion in Sixteenth Century Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 178.

<sup>185</sup> Moreover, such categorizations in scholarship are often reductionalistic. For example, the sociologist Michael P. Carroll proposes that a popular devotion is a pious practice that focuses on the veneration of some sacred thing or object, and is not considered by the Church as part of its official liturgy. He suggests that the popularity of such devotions is due to psychological processes that transcend particular socio-cultural boundaries. Incorporating Sigmund Freud’s “wish fulfillment” theory of religion, Carroll argues that the appeal of popular Catholic devotions emerges from the idea that such devotions gratify one or more unconscious infantile wishes. See Michael P. Carroll, *Catholic Cults & Devotions: A Psychological Inquiry* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989).

an inappropriate term for characterizing Marian devotions in the United States. Drawing on sociological approaches, she describes any religious activities occurring in a society as a religious economy, which consists of a market of current and potential customers, a set of religious “firms” seeking to serve that market, and their religious “product lines.”<sup>186</sup> As a product line within a Catholic religious economy, devotees expect temporal and spiritual rewards from devotional activities. Kane prefers the term “lived religion” to describe such practices, since laity and clergy share similar assumptions. She posits that this term is helpful because it does not force a distinction between elite and vernacular forms. Moreover, she suggests that “lived religion” emphasizes the practice of religion embodying at once the contradictory hallmarks of regulation and resistance to regulation.

Robert Orsi also prefers the term “lived religion;” however, he suggests that it is not about practice but rather about ideas, gestures, imaginings—all as media of engagement of the world.<sup>187</sup> He asserts that beliefs and practices must be understood in the context of how people use these ideas in everyday life. Moreover, the emphasis in the study of lived religion is on embodied practice and imagination, as people exist in and move through their built and found

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<sup>186</sup> Paula Kane, “Marian Devotion Since 1940: Continuity or Casualty?” In *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth-Century America*, James M. O’Toole ed., 89-129 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

<sup>187</sup> Orsi, *The Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street*, xxi.

environments: “Religion-in-action cannot be separated from other practices of everyday life, from the ways that humans do other necessary and important things or from other cultural structures and discourses.”<sup>188</sup> Orsi has argued that religion should not be understood as a web of meanings but as a network of relationships between heaven and earth.<sup>189</sup> The bonds formed in these relationships and the realness of sacred presence in the imaginations and experiences of religious devotees are crucial for understanding religion. He suggests that Catholic devotions focus on the relationship on things. These things may be rosaries, a statue or a prayer card. In turn, things take on their meaning from the relationship with a divine persona. Orsi states:

Relationships of presence, the being face to face with each other, that arise in the devotional context—either between persons on earth or between heaven and earth, among the living or among the living and the dead, among persons as they are or as persons as they desire to be or are desired to be—likewise come under the power of the unlocked imagination.<sup>190</sup>

According to Orsi, relationships or the promise of relationships is what draws people to pilgrimage sites. Moreover, Ann Taves suggests that devotions “presupposed the existence of social relationships between faithful Catholics and

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> See Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*.

<sup>190</sup> Robert Orsi, “Abundant History: Marian Apparitions as Alternative Modernity,” In *Moved by Mary: The Power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, A. Hermkens, W. Jansen and C. Notermans eds., 215-225 (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 223.

supernatural beings, and provided a means of interacting with them.”<sup>191</sup> Many pilgrims to Sainte Anne de Beaupré and the shrine’s religious officials often characterize themselves as being in a relationship with Saint Anne, describing her in familial terms. Saint Anne is perceived as a powerful and loving grandmother, mother or friend, who is accessible through devotional expressions. Her presence is felt not only at the shrine, but also in the everyday lives of her devotees. As one informant advised me, “Saint Anne is a real person, not a statue – she is really real.”

### **Empowering Saint Anne, Empowering the Self**

Many of Saint Anne’s devotees have pointed out that devotional practices are efficacious. Prayers to Saint Anne, the use of holy oil or touching her relics are means of assessing Saint Anne’s power. As Brown has pointed out, such devotees are following an ancient Christian tradition of taking holy objects and utilizing them to transform or sacramentalize everyday life.<sup>192</sup> The theological term used in Roman Catholicism to characterize the relationship between the sacred and the material is sacramentality. Andrew Greeley proposes that sacramentals are part of a “special Catholic imagination,” which is “a revelation

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<sup>191</sup> Ann Taves, *The Household of Faith: Roman Catholic Devotions in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 47.

<sup>192</sup> Peter Brown uses the term *praesentia* to describe the physical presence of the holy, especially in reference to relics (86-105). This idea, that human remains could be filled with the fullness of a beloved person, occurred as early as the fourth century church (11). Moreover, relics were a means of “the joining of Heaven and Earth” (1). See Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*.

of the presence of God.”<sup>193</sup> In Greeley’s view, it is this Catholic religious imagination that shapes people’s everyday lives and experiences, emphasizing the metaphorical nature of creation: everything in creation discloses something about God and God is in all creation.<sup>194</sup>

In David Hufford’s examination of pilgrimage and healing at Sainte Anne de Beaupré, he distinguishes between official and “folk” sacramentals.<sup>195</sup> He suggests that the majority of the traditional practices at the shrine are sacramentals – actions or objects resembling the sacraments but instituted by the church rather than by the biblical Jesus.<sup>196</sup> Sacramentals include official practices and objects such as relics or praying the rosary. In contrast, “folk” sacramentals include unofficial practices such as the use of water from Saint Anne’s fountain or applying the *Annals* to various body parts as a means to achieve religious healing. Moreover, Hufford notes: “Even the most official action may have unofficial, traditional interpretations and meanings attached.”<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination*, 1.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>195</sup> David Hufford, “Ste. Anne de Beaupré: Roman Catholic Pilgrimage and Healing,” *Western Folklore* 44/3 (1985): 194-207.

<sup>196</sup> The Roman Catholic Church has seven sacraments: Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and the Anointing of the Sick.

<sup>197</sup> Hufford, “Ste. Anne de Beaupré,” 198.



Leonard Primmiano offers a broad interpretation of Catholic sacramentals, proposing that sacramentals can describe liturgical art objects in the church (altars, vestments, candles); church decorations (statues, stained-glass windows); objects used in daily liturgy (wine, candles, incense), and also the material culture used as part of the personal devotional life of Catholics (rosaries, medals, holy cards).<sup>198</sup> Further, Primmiano postulates that any object has the potential to become an object of belief given the sacramental nature of Catholic culture. Such objects are not simply “Catholic kitsch” insofar as they are meaningful and affective.<sup>199</sup>

Suzanne Kaufman argues in her study of Lourdes that the spiritual and material have always been intertwined at sites of pilgrimage.<sup>200</sup> In her view, the sale of religious objects is not religious debasement but rather an expression of religious piety. She notes that the interplay of Catholic devotion and commercial culture at Lourdes during the second half of the nineteenth century produced new and exciting expressions of religiosity. It offered people new ways of connecting with the sacred.

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<sup>198</sup> Leonard Norman Primmiano, “Postmodern Sites of Catholic Sacred Materiality,” In *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture*, Peter W. Williams ed., 187-202 (Oxford: Blackwell University Publishers, 1999): 190.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 198. Primmiano notes that scholars, as well as some Catholics, have often classify Catholic material culture as “kitsch,” suggesting that it is simply “religious theme junk with no spiritual value.”

<sup>200</sup> Suzanne Kaufman, *Consuming Visions: Mass Culture and the Lourdes Shrine* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

In a similar vein, the anthropologist Robert Armstrong suggests that in all cultures certain objects may outwardly appear ordinary, yet they are treated quite differently than objects are usually treated.<sup>201</sup> It is people's behavior toward objects that makes them something more than they outwardly appear. The reason for their special treatment, according to Armstrong, is their "affecting presence." Colleen McDannell's study of Christian material culture explores some of the ways in which religious objects achieve "affective presence."<sup>202</sup> One way an object becomes powerful is through the authority of the institutional traditions and organizations. These forces decreed that certain objects are powerful or have affective presence. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church clearly defines what material can mediate between God and people, notably the sacraments. As suggested above, sacramentals develop from the concept of a sacrament. McDannell proposes that sacramentals are like a sign or symbol of a sacrament: "Sacramentals can appear in almost every aspect of daily life and, like sacraments, serve as a doorway between the secular and sacred worlds."<sup>203</sup> Objects may also be ascribed power, meaning or affective presence by

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<sup>201</sup> Robert Plant Armstrong, *The Powers of Presence: Consciousness, Myth, and Affecting Presence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

<sup>202</sup> Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

individuals and in some instances by a divine persona – religious authorities are not always the final arbitrators.

In their examination of Marian pilgrimage sites, Anna-Karina Hermkens, Willy Jansen and Catrien Notermans have proposed that people are moved by Mary in their search for empowerment.<sup>204</sup> Pilgrims empower themselves and form relationships through various devotions. Power or presence is invested in Mary through devotional activities. Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans propose that effective empowerment can only work by creating “cogent connections” with Mary, noting that such connections must be compelling, convincing and potent in order to be effective. Rather than assuming that Mary’s presence is *a priori* given, the authors suggest:

By repetitive performative acts, by selecting or duplicating her image, carrying it around, gazing at it, or narrating about it, presence is communicated and invested in Mary, enabling her to operate, to move and mobilize people. Life force is thus effectively communicated into images of Mary. This communicating presence is both profane and sacral. It takes place between the living, between the living and the dead, and between the living and Mary.<sup>205</sup>

Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans advocate that Marian pilgrimages are polysemic practices. In order to obtain Mary’s power, pilgrims must invest

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<sup>204</sup> Anna-Karina Hermkens, Willy Jansen and Catrien Notermans, “Introduction: The Power of Marian Pilgrimage,” In *Moved by Mary: The Power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, A. Hermkens, W. Jansen and C. Notermans eds., 1-13 (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009).

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

power in her. The authors suggest that there are three strategies or mechanisms that people apply as a means of ultimately obtaining empowerment: reciprocity, conflating categories, and appropriating identities. These mechanisms or strategies are pertinent for understanding Saint Anne, since there are numerous similarities between devotional and pilgrimage activities directed toward Saint Anne and the Virgin Mary.

Reciprocity is a key element in many religious traditions. Pilgrims offer or promise something to Mary or Anne in return for favors or blessings. Offerings or promises can take several forms: from offering money or flowers, lighting candles, saying prayers, to sacrificial acts such as fasting or walking on one's knees toward a sacred figure. Negotiating with the sacred is a reciprocal relationship and is key to understanding the ways in which people bond with Mary or Saint Anne. Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans suggest "by these acts, pilgrims must first empower Mary by accepting her presence and offering her their loyalty, before Mary can empower them."<sup>206</sup> David Morgan proposes that this investment of power is "an economy of the sacred." Using the Fatima shrine as a lens, he illustrates that devotional activities are a material economy of the sacred:

Marian devotion may be described as an economy or system of interaction with the divine inasmuch as it operates according to a set of practices that regulate the giving and receiving of divine

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 9.

favor through the intermediary office of the Virgin. The economy is sacred by virtue of its traffic in divine blessing and material in means of operation, pivoting on the statue of Our Lady, but also in a host of devices that render penance and devotion to her, such as the rosary and embodied forms of prayer and adoration. And the economy is penitential in nature because the devotion one pays to Our Lady commonly takes the form of suffering, whether it is sickness, or the pain of kneeling for long minutes in prayer, or the self-denial of fasting. Fatima called for such sufferings as reparation for sin, and she rewards it with divine favor. The efficacy of this material and penitential economy of the sacred is not doubted by Fatima's devotees.<sup>207</sup>

The second strategy or mechanism is conflation. Pilgrims and devotees make cogent relations by conflating categories or dichotomies: past and present, sacred and profane, public and private, local and global. Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans suggest, "by conflating time, space, and substance, the presence of the holy can be felt and shared and put to use."<sup>208</sup> Place is conflated through replicas, which are not simply copies of a specific space. The authors propose that through an act of mimesis Lourdes replicas achieve "their own special meaning and can make the presence of Mary felt just as with the original, whether they are made in Indonesia, Jordan, or the United States."<sup>209</sup> A replica induces devotions and reactions that are similar to those induced in the original

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<sup>207</sup> David Morgan, "Aura and the Inversion of Marian Pilgrimage: Fatima and Her Statues," In *Moved by Mary: The Power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, A. Hermkens, W. Jansen and C. Notermans eds., 49-65 (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 49-50.

<sup>208</sup> Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans, "Introduction," 10.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

spaces.<sup>210</sup> Time is conflated through various narratives. Just as Saint Anne was present with the early settlers at Petit-Cap, as depicted in the miracle stories, she is also present with contemporary pilgrims and figures in their healing stories. Thus, narratives of the past give reality to the experiences of the present. Finally, cogent relations are formed through the conflation of substance. For instance, although devotees understand that a statue is made of wood, plaster or plastic, it is personified or deified at the same time. As Armstrong noted, a statue of a saint is much more than an object because people behave differently toward it. At Sainte Anne de Beaupré, many pilgrims kiss, hold, stroke or hug the Miraculous Statue. The statue is imbued with Saint Anne's power and presence. Replicas are also treated in the same manner—presence is not lost in replication. Devotees treat various other statues of Saint Anne in the same manner, whether they are located in the shrine or elsewhere. These behaviors are also evident toward other material objects such as water, rosaries, relics or medals. Such objects may be purchased for private use or they may be given as gifts to friends or relatives. Devotional objects are imbued with meaning, Saint Anne's presence and with feelings of connectedness.

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<sup>210</sup> Here we might consider Sainte Anne de Beaupré as a replica of the Saint Anne shrines in France, where the local fuses with the global. The conflation of place is also evident in visionary experience, especially Colette Coulombe's mission, "The Cry of Mary" (Chapter 4). Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans propose that this fusion can also take place in the home through various media images. See Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans, "Introduction," 11.



Figure 4. *The Miraculous Statue*. Photo by the author.

The third strategy or mechanism of empowerment is appropriating identities. Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans note that while categories are conflated, Marian devotion may also assist in constructing and differentiating categories. In their examination of Marian devotion in relationship to power dynamics, they observe that Marian discourse expresses and fortifies national, ethnic, religious and gender identities. Similarly, Dunn demonstrates how Saint Anne was appropriated in the formation of the early church at Petit-Cap to form colonial, French and Catholic identity.<sup>211</sup> Saint Anne is also appropriated in the contemporary church to express identity, especially in the context of religious healing.<sup>212</sup>

Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans conclude that the power of pilgrimage and the strategies of empowerment work through various media. Through images, narratives and performances, devotees empower the sacred and in turn empower themselves. Although relationships with a divine persona may change an individual's life, these relationships are not always effective in changing large-scale social inequalities. The authors suggest that since the cogent experience of a relationship with a divine persona is temporal and local, people regularly want to repeat and renew this experience: "Pilgrimage is a never-ending journey. The power of Marian pilgrimage lies in people's continual desire

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<sup>211</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>212</sup> See Chapters 3 and 4.



to bond and affiliate with Mary, constituting a never-ending movement of pilgrims and Mary throughout time, place and space.”<sup>213</sup>

### **Devotional Expressions at Sainte Anne de Beaupré**

There are many different types of devotional activities at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. Devotional activities are accessible, simple to learn and as pilgrims suggest, very often affective and effective. Not all pilgrims perform the same type of devotional activities. Some pilgrims may simply pray and participate in the Mass, while other pilgrims or groups of pilgrims may perform several elaborate types of devotions. A devotional activity may be performed only once by a pilgrim, while other pilgrims may repeat a single devotion numerous times. Lydia Fish has suggested that devotional practices at Sainte Anne de Beaupré are learned behaviors—pilgrims observe what other pilgrims do. She postulates in her study that the pilgrim is a performer, proposing that the pilgrim is “very anxious to be on his or her best religious behavior” because according to “folk belief,” a “pilgrim who ‘does everything right’ is more likely to be granted the favor which he seeks.”<sup>214</sup> Devotional practices are also learned from other contexts as well—from ethnic organizations, transmitted from family members or by reading popular devotional literature.

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<sup>213</sup> Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans, “Introduction,” 13.

<sup>214</sup> Lydia Fish, “Pilgrimage as Performance: Ste. Ann de Beaupre,” *New Directions in Folklore* 4/2 (2000): 4. Although Fish’s article is a relatively recent publication, her fieldwork was conducted in 1981 with David Hufford.

Devotional expressions at Sainte Anne de Beaupré can be categorized into three domains: private, collective or devotions of service. The distinction among these domains is not always clear: some collective practices are private; devotions of service may be both private and collective, and the collective can perform private devotions. The following describes some of the major devotional activities that I observed during fieldwork. Throughout these descriptions, I aim to demonstrate how people form meaningful relationships with Saint Anne through pilgrimage practices or devotional activities, illustrating how effective empowerment is infused and diffused through this powerful figure.

The most common and diverse type of devotional expression at Sainte Anne de Beaupré is prayer. Prayer is both a private and collective activity. Various collective prayers are offered during the sacraments. The majority of the sacraments at Sainte Anne de Beaupré are conducted in French, although there are regular Masses offered in English during the pilgrimage season.<sup>215</sup> Various pilgrimage groups may also request Mass in vernacular languages such as Spanish, Italian or First Nation languages.<sup>216</sup> People also pray privately at the

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<sup>215</sup> The English Mass is held in the morning and is not usually well attended. If there are no pilgrimage groups present, there may only be a handful of people. The evening Mass is bilingual if there are many Anglophones present. I have attended the evening Mass with other Anglophones and the Mass was conducted in French.

<sup>216</sup> Pilgrimage groups often arrive at the shrine with their own parish priest, who is able to conduct the Mass in the vernacular.

shrine, outside times of public worship. Whether private or collective, prayer is a means to communicate and interact with the divine realm.

Orsi suggests that prayer is always a relational imaginative activity: it is a narrative activity addressed to someone who responds.<sup>217</sup> At Sainte Anne de Beaupré pilgrims address their prayers to God, Jesus, Mary, Anne and various other saints. People pray in pews, near various images or statues located throughout the shrine, and outside in the church's gardens. People regularly kneel and pray at the foot of the Miraculous Statue. Some male pilgrims choose to pray on a marked area near the Miraculous Statue, perceiving that this particular place is imbued with additional power, since this is the spot where Pope John Paul II knelt in prayer to Saint Anne on September 10, 1984.<sup>218</sup>

At Sainte Anne de Beaupré there are five forms of communication with the divine.<sup>219</sup> The first type is generalized affective prayer. These prayers simply praise a divine figure and no response is anticipated other than the reciprocation of love. This type of prayer is not common at the shrine although some pilgrims write petitions simply stating that they love Saint Anne. Pilgrims may also

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<sup>217</sup> Robert Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 203.

<sup>218</sup> I did not observe any women kneeling in prayer at this place. However, I did see one woman remove her sandals to stand and pray at this spot.

<sup>219</sup> These forms are based on Christian's observations in Spain. See Christian, *Person and God*, 114-187. In this section I only illustrate prayers to Saint Anne, although they are certainly not limited to her.

address her as “Bonne Sainte Anne,” “loving grandmother” or “my beloved.” The shrine publishes devotional materials that teach pilgrims how to pray to Saint Anne, and a section on praises to Saint Anne is included.<sup>220</sup> More often praise is incorporated into other types of prayers as a salutation or conclusion.

The second type is prayer for the fulfillment of the annual round. This prayer also seeks no specific response other than the maintenance of the existing order. Many pilgrims at Sainte Anne de Beaupré undertake annual pilgrimages to pray for continued guidance, health and protection for themselves and their families. Prayers are often directed toward Saint Anne but not always.

The third type of prayer is the request for forgiveness for some wrongdoing. Unlike the first two types of prayers, this prayer seeks a definite response. Prayers of forgiveness are incorporated into Mass.<sup>221</sup> During Mass, people ask for forgiveness twice. The “Our Father” prayer includes a stanza seeking forgiveness: “Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our

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<sup>220</sup> One publication offers a series of ten praises with responses. An example is: “We bless you, Saint Anne, for loving the Lord our God with consummate love...We bless you, Saint Anne. See Gerard Desrochers, *Saint Anne Prayer Book* (Québec: Sainte Anne de Beaupré, 1986), 36-37.

<sup>221</sup> James M. O’Toole observes in his study of American Catholicism that changes in liturgy and religious practice initiated by Vatican II contributed to the overall decline of confession. He states: “Two portions of the Mass touched particularly on sin and forgiveness and, perhaps without being fully aware of it, American Catholics began in effect to substitute these for confessions.” See James M. O’Toole, “In the Court of Conscience: American Catholics and Confession, 1900-1975,” In *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth-Century America*, James M. O’Toole ed., 131-185 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 174.

trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”<sup>222</sup> Forgiveness is also asked during the Penitential rite. At this point in the Mass, individuals are asked to “call to mind our sins.” After a moment of silent reflection, the following is collectively recited:

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do; and I ask the blessed Mary, ever Virgin, and all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.<sup>223</sup>

Contrary to official teaching, some pilgrims ask Saint Anne to forgive their sins.<sup>224</sup> These pilgrims perceive that Saint Anne has the capacity to forgive human sin, and not simply intercede on their behalf to the Father or the Son. Some pilgrims may also seek forgiveness through the sacrament of

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<sup>222</sup> Matthew 6:11-12. The “Our Father” is not one of the liturgical changes outlined by O’Toole.

<sup>223</sup> In addition to the Penitential rite, O’Toole notes that a priest then grants a pardon: “May Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you your sins, and bring you to life everlasting.” O’Toole suggests that although this is not the same absolution imparted in confessional, parishioners “might understand it as essentially equivalent.” See O’Toole, *Habits of Devotion*, 174-175.

<sup>224</sup> Official teaching holds that only God or Jesus can forgive sins. Several petitions asked Saint Anne directly for the forgiveness of sins, without mentioning God or Jesus.

reconciliation.<sup>225</sup> The objective of this sacrament is to reconcile individuals with God, since it is understood that sin separates people from God. In private, an individual confesses their mortal or venial sins to a priest.<sup>226</sup> Theologically, the priest acts *in persona Christi* and is given the power by the Church to absolve sins. If the individual is sorry for their sins (contrition), discloses their sin (confession), and agrees to make amends for sin through an assigned penance, then the priest offers them absolution or forgiveness.

The fourth type of prayer is prayer for salvation. It is a request for divine action in the world to come. Pilgrims often seek salvation for deceased family

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<sup>225</sup> Pilgrims are encouraged to attend the sacrament of reconciliation, also known as the sacrament of penance or confession. Priests are available on a daily basis for this sacrament. I have seen large line-ups of pilgrims waiting for Confession, but this does not seem to be a regular occurrence. Having never entered a confessional booth myself, I decided that I would participate in this ritual so that I could experience this pilgrimage activity. The booth was very hot and I found it difficult to breath. The kneeling pad was also very hard and I found myself wishing that the priest would hurry up so that I could exit the cramped booth. I confessed that I was divorced and living with my partner. I was told that we should not have sex outside of marriage. Instead, we should pray for the souls in purgatory because our prayers could help those poor souls. Next, the priest asked me if I regularly masturbated. I was speechless. I could not understand how this was relevant to what I confessed. I thought to myself: “Does he think I am a sex addict or does he get sexually aroused by such discussions?” Needless to say, I quickly exited the confessional booth angry, flabbergasted and hurt. I felt as though I had been assaulted. I wondered if other pilgrims had similar confessional experiences. I waited and watched other people exiting the same confessional booth. My suspicion was confirmed. I watched a flushed woman quickly exit the booth, shaking her head in dismay. I did not confront this priest, as I did not want to jeopardize my fieldwork at the shrine. Perhaps some people choose to offer their confessions or sins to Saint Anne rather than a priest, not due to ignorance of church teachings but as a conscious decision as a means to empower oneself in an overtly authoritative and male dominated tradition.

<sup>226</sup> According to Roman Catholicism, there are two types of sin. Mortal sins are more serious than venial sins insofar as mortal sin results in a complete separation from God.

members. Many pilgrims undertake pilgrimages to Sainte Anne de Beaupré for that reason. For example, one petition lists a series of deceased family members, hoping that they are in heaven with Jesus and Saint Anne. Some pilgrims pray asking that they personally might have “eternal rest in heaven.” Others make this same request on behalf of living family members. One petition, which names seventeen children, asks that each child may be “welcomed into heaven with Jesus.” Less regularly, pilgrims may also pray for unknown souls in purgatory.

The final type of prayer is instrumental. This is the most common form of prayer at the shrine. Pilgrims seek a divine response in the form of action in this world about a particular problem. Instrumental prayer is a petition in times of crisis. At Sainte Anne de Beaupré, crisis situations are generally related to health issues but may also concern familial, financial or social issues. There are different forms of instrumental prayer. An individual may offer a prayer without any obligation attached. Such individuals assume that their prayer will be granted through their faith and trust alone. Pilgrims often write that they have complete faith in Saint Anne or that they trust she will fulfill their request. One informant suggested that people should pray, believing that their request has already been granted. The prayer is efficacious because of an individual’s faith. If the prayer is not answered, then, the individual did not have enough faith. According to my informant, this form of prayer is rooted in Jesus’ teaching about the meaning of the withered fig tree: “So, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that

you have received it, and it will be yours.”<sup>227</sup> People may also pray for a specific request without a concomitant pledge. If the request is granted, an individual may offer various forms of repayment such as a monetary donation or undertaking a pilgrimage in the future. The most common type of instrumental prayer, however, contains a promise or *voto*. It is a conditional pledge that specifies what actions are to be undertaken if the request is granted. For example, people often write to the shrine asking to have their stories of healing published in the *Annals of Saint Anne* as payment. In addition to instrumental prayer, there is also a negotiation type of prayer at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. This type of prayer offers alternative outcomes should the primary request not be granted. For example, “if my request cannot be granted, send many graces instead.” Or, one woman writes: “Dear St. Anne, I am offering you my sight. P.S. Let me hold onto it until Jesus takes me with him to heaven. Thank You!”

Pilgrims’ devotion to Saint Anne is often expressed through the Miraculous Statue of Saint Anne.<sup>228</sup> Pilgrims perceive that that this statue is imbued with Saint Anne’s power and presence—it is more than an object for

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<sup>227</sup> Mark 11:24.

<sup>228</sup> The current Miraculous Statue of Saint Anne is not the original. The original statue was donated in 1881 and was destroyed by the second fire in 1926. The new statue arrived at the shrine in 1927. The statue depicts Saint Anne holding the Virgin Mary child in her right arm, while her left hand points up to heaven. See Jean-Marie Lebel and Brigitte Ostiguy, *Saint Anne de Beaupré: An Inspiration* (Québec: Les Éditions du Chien Rouge, 2006), 18.



veneration.<sup>229</sup> For some pilgrims, this statue *is* Saint Anne – she is *really real*. Saint Anne is embodied in the statue. Pilgrims’ relationships with Saint Anne are characterized through their interactions with the statue. I often observed pilgrims intimately touching, caressing or kissing the statue. People often pray with their hand(s) touching the statue. Some pilgrims rub their hands over the Miraculous Statue and then wipe their faces. Many sick pilgrims pray at the statue. One morning I watched one woman pray intently; she then stood up; gazed at the statue in awe, and wiped away a single tear. She coughed and I could hear the rattle in her chest from a distance: it was clear that she was very sick. Pilgrims greet Saint Anne as they would a beloved family member, a mother or grandmother. They are very receptive toward her statue. Relationships with Saint Anne are often expressed through human emotions. Many pilgrims articulate that they love Saint Anne. This type of devotional expression is also often affective, inducing emotional responses. I often saw tears of joy when pilgrims initially greeted Saint Anne. I also saw tears of sorrow when it was time for pilgrims to bid farewell to her. Less often, pilgrims may sit quietly in the pews and glare at Saint Anne angrily.<sup>230</sup> Many pilgrims suggest that prayers to

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<sup>229</sup>Some literature suggests that the principal object of devotion in the early church prior to the arrival of the statue in 1881 was the altar of the miraculous painting and relics. See Jean-Marie Lebel, “La première basilique de Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré,” *La Coste des Beaux Prés* 9/1 (2003): 10-15.

<sup>230</sup> I was unable to interview such pilgrims and can only speculate about their emotional state.

Saint Anne at her statue are especially effective, that is, petitions are more efficacious at this particular place. The statue is perceived as both empowered and empowering.



Figure 5. *Pilgrims Praying at the Miraculous Statue.* Photo by the author.

Some pilgrimage groups perform distinctive devotions at the Miraculous Statue. For example, a large pilgrimage group from Ontario, all wearing blue scarves, concluded their final prayers to Saint Anne by walking away from the Miraculous Statue backwards. It was explained to me that they always faced Saint Anne, and never turned their backs to her. A Mi'kmaq pilgrimage group

from Nova Scotia also has a special way of greeting and saying goodbye to Saint Anne.<sup>231</sup> As a group, after entering the shrine, they crawl approximately 20-25 feet toward the Miraculous Statue and then pray at the foot of the Statue. I was told that this practice hurt and it was difficult to do. The Mi'kmaq pilgrims explained that when people first arrive at the shrine, they have heavy hearts, filled with sin. Throughout the year, people carry their crosses and heavy sins. People feel "lighter" after going to Confession at the shrine. At the conclusion of their pilgrimage, Mi'kmaq pilgrims also crawl toward Saint Anne to say goodbye. Since the pilgrim's "load is a lot lighter," crawling toward her is much easier and it does not hurt as much as when they first came to greet Saint Anne. I also heard stories from volunteers about atypical private practices involving the Miraculous Statue. For example, one unknown person left a sock full of money at the statue, and another person left a hard-boiled egg wrapped in a handkerchief for three days during the Novena. Occasionally, one might even observe a

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<sup>231</sup>The Mi'kmaq have had a special devotion to Saint Anne since the seventeenth century when they adopted her as their patron saint. The Mi'kmaq also hold a novena and celebrate Saint Anne's Feast on Chapel Island. Some of the women from this group described to me a special devotion that they perform for Saint Anne. On Chapel Island women sing Mi'kmaq hymns while washing a four feet statue of Saint Anne on July 25 in preparation for the feast day. The cloth that is used for washing is divided up among the community. Some people tie this cloth around their wrist or ankle, perceiving that it had special protective powers. When the cloth falls off an individual's wrist or ankle, it is understood that the cloth had done its job. Also see: Ann-Christine Hornborg, "St. Anne's Day – A Time to 'Turn Home' for the Canadian Mi'kmaq Indians," *International Review of Missions* 91/361 (2002): 237-255 and Angela Robinson, *Ta'n Teli-ktlamsitasit (Ways of Believing) Mi'kmaw Religion in Eskasoni, Nova Scotia* (Toronto: Pearson Education, 2005).

pilgrim having a conversation with Saint Anne, chatting openly with the saint as you would with another person.

Prayers to Saint Anne may be undertaken in the form of novenas. A novena is a nine-day period of collective or private devotion to obtain special graces or favors. Although many people perform a novena for a special favor, often healing, an individual may also perform a novena as an expression of thanksgiving. At Sainte Anne de Beaupré there are various pamphlets available, which outline several novenas for pilgrims: Saint Gerard Majella, Venerable Alfred Pampalon, Mother of Perpetual Help and Saint Anne. These novenas can be performed privately and at any period of time during the year.

Some Roman Catholic novenas are temporally set, generally in relation to saint feast days. At Sainte Anne de Beaupré each year the Novena begins on July 17, culminating on July 26, Saint Anne's feast day. Many pilgrims come to the shrine for the Novena. This is the busiest time of year for the shrine and officials plan additional pilgrimage activities and religious services. During this time, the shrine brings in additional help for security and first aid. Police also direct traffic into the busy parking lot. Newspaper and television journalists report and record the pilgrimage activities. The shrine generally remains open during the night before the feast day, July 25-26. While security watches over the activities in the shrine, some pilgrims choose to sleep in the pews near the Miraculous Statue. During the Novena, the mood is reflective and solemn: a time of spiritual

preparation. The feast day itself, July 26, is the pinnacle of Saint Anne devotion. It is a time of celebration and laughter. Pilgrims often hug and kiss one another exclaiming, “Bonne fête, Sainte Anne!”

Devotional expressions at Sainte Anne de Beaupré also focus on the veneration of Saint Anne’s relics.<sup>232</sup> There are several relics of Saint Anne at the shrine.<sup>233</sup> The “Great Relic” is enclosed in a reliquary and is displayed for veneration on the altar of Saint Anne’s chapel. In 1960, Pope John XXIII presented this relic to the shrine. It is a portion of Saint Anne’s forearm. When I asked one woman why this relic was so special to her, she told me that this was the arm that held not only the Virgin Mary but also the infant Jesus. The relic’s power is thus deemed threefold. Other relics are venerated at the conclusion of the evening procession. Many pilgrims touch or kiss them, while other pilgrims ask priests or other officials to place the relics on specific body parts. Relics have special powers for healing and protection. Like the Miraculous Statue, pilgrims perceive that these objects are imbued with Saint Anne’s power and presence.

At Sainte Anne de Beaupré, pilgrims have access to the various religious objects made available at the shrine such as relics, holy oils and waters, prayer

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<sup>232</sup> Other relics also exist at the shrine. In the Chapel of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, there is a relic of Bernadette Soubirous. The Venerable Alfred Pampalon is also entombed in a section of the lower church.

<sup>233</sup> Samuel Baillargeon states that the majority of Saint Anne relics come from the Shrine of Saint-Anne-d’Apt in Provence, France. Some of these relics, including the current “Great Relic” were exposed for veneration in Rome. See Samuel Baillargeon, *Your Visit to the Shrine of Sainte-Anne de Beaupré* (Québec: Saint Anne de Beaupré, 2000), 96-98.

cards and images of saints.<sup>234</sup> Many pilgrims incorporate these objects into their devotional practices at home, especially during times of illness. Such objects generally have specific practices for their use. The shrine usually has some sort of publication, which describes the origins of the devotional objects and their appropriate application. Pilgrims are advised that they must have the objects they purchased blessed by a priest in order for them to be efficacious, and a priest is regularly available at the Blessings Office or Bureau des bénédiction. During fieldwork, I did observe people standing in line to have their purchases blessed, but this practice does not seem to be common among pilgrims. Pilgrims purchase various articles at the store.<sup>235</sup> During 2007, the church store sold the following: Saint Anne statues (2 000), Saint Anne medals (40 000), Saint Anne images or pictures (1 000), Saint Anne vehicle pins (3 000), Saint Anne chaplets (1 440), Saint Anne holy oil (35 000) and Saint Anne water bottles (2 000).<sup>236</sup> During an interview I was advised that girls tend to buy many rosaries for themselves, while boys made purchases for their female relations (grandmothers, mothers or sisters). The store's manager informed me that people, who she considered to be pilgrims, make a variety of purchases. In contrast, she told me

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<sup>234</sup> Purchased "relics" do not contain actual bone fragments. Instead, "relics" are pieces of cloth that have touched Saint Anne's relic.

<sup>235</sup> People may also purchase religious objects at other stores in the vicinity of the shrine.

<sup>236</sup> These are estimates based on statistical information supplied by the store's manager. Saint Anne's water bottles are sold empty. Many pilgrims bring their own containers to fill with Saint Anne's water.

that people, who she considered tourists, tended to purchase primarily books or pictures.

The recitation of the Rosary is a common and traditional devotional activity.<sup>237</sup> At the peak of the pilgrimage season, the Rosary is recited daily at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. The communal Rosary is prayed in English, French or it may be bilingual. Pilgrimage groups may also set aside time to pray the Rosary together. One often observes people praying the Rosary privately at the shrine, sometimes even during Mass. While I observed both men and women praying the Rosary, it seems to be devotional activity dominated by women.<sup>238</sup> Some pilgrims recite the Rosary as an *ex-voto*. For example, one petition promised to recite one thousand Rosaries in exchange for the healing of breast cancer. Occasionally, pilgrims pray chaplets, which seem to be less popular than the Rosary. Chaplets are shortened versions of the Rosary, which often include focusing on a saint. The origins of Saint Anne's chaplet is said to date back to

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<sup>237</sup> The Rosary, as we know it in the Latin West, emerged in the late Middle Ages. From that time, it became a popular form of Catholic prayer and practice, and it continues to have a significant place in many individuals' lives. The Rosary is structured into a series of repeated prayers, which include the Our Father, the Apostles Creed, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and O My Jesus. The Rosary is divided into five decades, each presenting a mystery or event in the life of Jesus. The mysteries are categorized as Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful and Glorious. Each category contains five mysteries for contemplation. See Nathan D. Mitchell, *The Mystery of the Rosary: Marian Devotion and the Reinvention of Catholicism* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

<sup>238</sup> This may simply be indicative of the presence of more women at the shrine than men. I was surprised to observe that many men do pray the Rosary, either collectively or privately.

1875.<sup>239</sup> It has three main sections, each honoring Jesus, Mary and Saint Anne. Like the Rosary, its prayers include the Our Father and Hail Mary. Its genre is more instrumental in nature, not contemplative. After each Hail Mary an individual recites the following petition: “Jesus, Mary and Saint Anne, grant the favor I ask.” Nathan Mitchell suggests that this type of devotion has several attractions, despite its well-established structure of ritually repeated prayers and meditations.<sup>240</sup> It is an adaptable devotion, which offers people considerable freedom and flexibility. It can be prayed individually or collectively, in Latin or the vernacular, as a private petition or public liturgy. As a devotional object, the Rosary is also attractive because its prayers focus attention on the central meanings and mysteries of Christian faith, as seen and experienced through a man (Jesus) and a woman (Mary). Overall, Mitchell posits that the Rosary is portable, exportable, and flexible insofar as the Rosary’s mysteries are open to interpretation. Moreover, he argues that the Rosary is linked not only to Catholic memory, but it is also a potent medium of presence: “Those who make use of this devotion are not simply trying to recall a past but are celebrating the arrival, the

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<sup>239</sup> There is no historical proof of the chaplet’s origins other than a prayer card stating the date.

<sup>240</sup> Mitchell, *The Mystery of the Rosary*, 238.



coming-into-presence, of persons and realities (Christ, the Virgin Mary, the mysteries of salvation) decisive for human life and its future.”<sup>241</sup>



Figure 6. *Procession aux Flambeaux*. Photo by the author.

The Procession aux Flambeaux or Candlelight Procession is a favorite devotional activity at Sainte Anne de Beupré, and is enjoyed by both adults and children. This evening service is bilingual and is well attended by pilgrims. For a nominal fee pilgrims may purchase a candle and paper lantern. During the procession, pilgrims sing; hold up their candles, and some pilgrims carry pilgrimage group banners or other parish’s statues of Saint Anne. Many pilgrims

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

in wheelchairs also participate in the procession. Weather permitting, the procession exits the interior of the shrine and continues outside. During my fieldwork in 2008, this procession weaved up through the Stations of the Cross, returning to the entrance of the shrine. Pilgrims who were wheelchair bound circumnavigated the shrine.<sup>242</sup> It was a beautiful sight, a mass of pilgrims and lighted lanterns flickering in the distant darkness. For some pilgrims, the conclusion of this service imparts mixed emotions. While it is a joyful ceremony, it often signals the conclusion of one's pilgrimage journey as many pilgrims leave the shrine early the next morning. It is a time for pilgrims to say goodbye to Saint Anne.

As suggested earlier, pilgrims often promise Saint Anne something in repayment for favors granted to them. This type of promise has several variations, but it often takes the form of an offering or *ex-voto*.<sup>243</sup> It can include a pledge of some sacrifice or resource by the promiser. Often, people give money in the form of masses, candles or alms. They may also leave coins throughout the shrine, most often at statues. Pilgrims also place money or cheques in envelopes,

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<sup>242</sup> It is difficult for wheelchairs to follow the procession down from the Stations of the Cross, since pilgrims must process down a set of stairs by the Scala Santa. I did observe one man taking his child, who was in a wheelchair, through the Way of the Cross. His son had to be carried down the stairs.

<sup>243</sup> This practice, as Christian notes, dates back to pre-Christian Greek religion. See Christian, *Person and God*, 121. Pilgrims began leaving *ex-votos* at Sainte Anne de Beaupré very early in the church's history. Many of the early *ex-votos* are housed in the shrine's museum.

depositing them in petition boxes. Many people offer Saint Anne flowers, especially during the Novena of Saint Anne. The area around the Miraculous Statue and the Saint Anne Reliquary are filled with flower offerings at this time. Occasionally, pilgrims will leave veils, jewelry, and baby articles such as soothers or booties or the *fleur de lis* at the Miraculous Statue. Pilgrims offer rosaries or medals and these are left throughout the shrine. They also leave pictures of their loved ones. Pilgrims often leave eye patches, glasses, crutches or braces at the shrine as an *ex-voto* in return for being healed. People also sacrifice their personal time as an offering. This sacrifice may take the form of daily prayer, rosaries or novenas. It may also include undertaking a pilgrimage in the future.

Pilgrims at Sainte Anne de Beaupré also engage in devotions to other saints. Many pilgrims have a powerful devotion to the Virgin Mary and people frequently pray to her downstairs in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception.<sup>244</sup> Some pilgrims at Sainte Anne de Beaupré have a strong devotion to the Venerable Alfred Pampalon, who was born in 1867 in Lévis, Québec.<sup>245</sup> He joined the Redemptorist Order in 1886 and studied in Belgium. Pampalon returned to Saint Anne de Beaupré in 1895, and died the following year of tuberculosis. Pope John Paul II officially recognized him as Venerable on May 14, 1991 and shrine

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<sup>244</sup> The lower church is dedicated to the Virgin Mary. This area is often used for Mass.

<sup>245</sup> See Gerard Desrochers, *Alfred Pampalon: He Loved Mary, He Loved Saint Anne* (Québec: Sainte Anne de Beaupré, 2001).

officials are continuing to work toward his beatification with the ultimate aim of canonization. His remains are preserved in a reliquary placed in a tomb in the lower church. Many people invoke Pampalon for special favors, especially those suffering from drug or alcohol addictions. Pilgrims often leave lighted candles, petitions or flowers on his tomb. Although he is not beatified or canonized, many pilgrims perceive him as a local saint. Pilgrims may also pray and leave petitions, rosaries or coins at chapels or altars dedicated to various saints located throughout the upper portion of the shrine. Occasionally, pilgrims may exhibit atypical devotional practices toward various saints. For instance, I observed a woman approach each of the Radiating Chapels on her knees, and kiss various areas in the chapels.<sup>246</sup> In another example, I watched a young woman praying and pressing a crucifix against the statues of Saint Anne and Saint Joachim in the Holy Redeemer Chapel.<sup>247</sup>

As a devotional expression, some pilgrims pray and ascend the stairs in the Scala Santa or sacred stairs. The Scala Santa is a chapel, located on the

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<sup>246</sup> The ten Radiating Chapels are located in the apse of the basilica and are dedicated to the following: Saint Alphonsus Liguorio, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Saint Patrick, Saint Joseph, Saint Benedict, Saint Jean-Baptiste-de-LaSalle, Saint Joachim, Saint John the Baptist, the Blessed Sacrament and Saint Gerard.

<sup>247</sup> This is a small but beautiful chapel in the lower church. From Monday to Saturday at 7:10 am, a Mass is televised from this area. Many locals prefer to attend this Mass because there are no tourists present.

shrine's grounds, that was built to shelter the Sacred or Holy Stairs.<sup>248</sup> These stairs, twenty-eight in total, represent the steps that Jesus climbed to meet Pontius Pilate. One of these stairs contains soil from the Holy Land, which some pilgrims suggest imbues power. As an act of penance, pilgrims ascend these stairs on their knees, silently reciting a series of prayers. Some pilgrims use prayers that are outlined in a brochure, while other pilgrims personalize their prayers. While this type of devotional activity is private, families or pilgrimage groups often ascend the stairs together as a group. Many pilgrims leave petitions or pictures of loved ones after completing the stairs. Although I regularly saw pilgrims performing this type of devotion, it is not a common devotional expression for the majority of pilgrims.<sup>249</sup> The following observations from my field-notes illustrate this type of devotional activity:

Today, there are several people ascending the stairs: old, young, men, women, and a priest. It is very still and quiet, while they make their way up the stairs. Their faces are determined, focused and intent on prayer. One young woman's eyes are fixed upward, toward Jesus and Pilate. The priest recites the prayers, while a rosary and prayer book are clasped between his hands. There is one woman in her twenties, two other women in their forties. After they finish each prayer, they gaze upward before ascending the next step. There is also another man in his fifties. He does not carry a prayer book. He recites his own. One of the woman's hands is

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<sup>248</sup> Construction of the Scala Santa began in 1891, and it was blessed and inaugurated in 1894. This type of devotional practice in North America originated at Sainte Anne de Beaupré.

<sup>249</sup> Some informants noted that the Scala Santa used to be a favorite devotional practice. Some pilgrims performed this devotion numerous times during their pilgrimage to obtain favors. Today, the focal point of pilgrimage appears to be within the shrine itself.

shaking. As she shifts her legs, I can see that she is uncomfortable. She is bare legged, wearing a navy knee length skirt. Her knees stick to the wooden steps, as she tries to ascend. The young woman finishes the stairs and then kneels and prays before the statue depicting Christ carrying his cross. The other woman finishes and stumbles after standing up. The woman in the blue skirt cannot stand up by herself. Her companion comes to her aid and at the same moment, the priest reaches out to help her. After the priest is finished ascending the stairs, he does not stand up. Instead, he makes his way to the Christ statue on his knees, and prays there. Then, he rises and walks over to the statue where the Crucified Christ sits on this throne, the Ecce Homo. The priest gently bows down to kiss Christ's feet before he leaves. I notice that the paint from Christ's feet is worn away, worn from many pilgrims kissing or touching them. After everyone is gone, a lone man enters and bounds up the stairs; he has a quick look around, and then he leaves.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> This example is an excerpt from my field-notes on July 18, 2007.



Figure 7. *Pilgrims Ascending the Scala Santa*. Photo by the author.

After exiting the Scala Santa, pilgrims are encouraged to walk through the Stations of the Cross.<sup>251</sup> This devotion commemorates the Passion of Jesus. Weaving up through a hillside, pilgrims meditate on fourteen main scenes of

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<sup>251</sup> The original Stations of the Cross were made of wood and were installed before 1895. The current Stations of the Cross were prepared in Vaucouleurs, France. They were built over a period of 32 years, from 1913-1945. See Baillargeon.

Jesus' suffering and death.<sup>252</sup> At Sainte Anne de Beaupré, the Stations of the Cross are made of large bronze-plated cast iron. Pilgrims often place rosaries or flowers on life-sized sculptures of Jesus' body. Like the Scala Santa, the majority of pilgrims do not complete the Stations of the Cross, although some pilgrimage groups do so as part of their group pilgrimage activities, often praying in their own languages. Shrine officials also lead pilgrims through the Stations of the Cross during the peak of the pilgrimage season. This activity is conducted in two sessions, in French and English, during the mid-afternoon and late evening.

The devotional activities mentioned thus far have been either private or collective in nature. Devotional activities such as prayer, Rosaries and novenas tend to be performed for the benefit of the self or for loved ones. Turning now to devotions of service, I examine devotions that are more oriented toward helping others, especially the elderly, sick and handicapped. This type of devotion is performed on behalf of Saint Anne. Although individuals may perceive that this type of devotional expression is primarily intended to benefit others, it is also personally meaningful for those individuals who give up their time and resources. Through service devotions, meaningful relationships are not only

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<sup>252</sup> As outlined in a brochure produced by the shrine, pilgrims meditate on the following events: (1) Jesus is condemned to death; (2) Jesus accepts his cross; (3) Jesus falls the first time; (4) Jesus meets his mother; (5) Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus; (6) Veronica wipes the face of Jesus; (7) Jesus falls the second time; (8) Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem; (9) Jesus falls for the last time; (10) Jesus is stripped of his clothing; (11) Jesus is nailed to the cross; (12) Jesus dies on the cross; (13) Jesus is taken down from the cross; (14) Jesus is laid in the Tomb. An additional station focuses on the resurrected Jesus: (15) Jesus is living. After meditating on each event, a prayer is recited and between each station pilgrims are encouraged to recite the prayer "Our Father."



formed with the heavenly realm but also with other people through everyday mundane interactions.

Many people express their devotion to Saint Anne through organizing pilgrimages to Saint Anne de Beaupré. Pilgrimage organizers have many responsibilities including advertising the pilgrimages, fundraising, planning pilgrimage activities, and arranging accommodations and transportation. Some pilgrimage groups raise enough money throughout the year to fully fund pilgrimages for individuals, while other groups provide no financial support.<sup>253</sup> There are many different organized pilgrimages that come to the shrine throughout the year. Some of these groups are small, while others are large. Some groups plan a day pilgrimage to the shrine, and other groups plan for longer durations. Many pilgrimage groups were initially organized because of a promise made to Saint Anne, usually in gratitude for a religious healing. Repayment in this context differs from other types of *ex-votos* offered to Saint Anne insofar as it requires a long-term commitment of the promiser.<sup>254</sup> Many of these pilgrimage groups continue despite the death of their founder. Often, responsibility is handed down to family members.

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<sup>253</sup> Many groups fundraise throughout the year. Funds are often raised through bingos, bake sales, barbeques, toonie and loonie sales or donations. Some groups fundraise simply to provide a “needy pilgrim” fund.

<sup>254</sup> The majority of *ex-votos* specify a finite or fixed offering or resource.

On June 1, 2008 I met with a Mi'kmaq pilgrimage group from Eskasoni Nova Scotia, and they welcomed me warmly and eagerly told me about their group. I spoke with several people, including the daughters of Annie Johnson, the founder of this pilgrimage, who was originally from Boston.<sup>255</sup> Annie, I was told, became ill in 1950 after the birth of her daughter. She was diagnosed with tuberculosis in her chest, leg and kidneys. Annie's doctor told her that she would have to have her kidneys removed. After reading about Saint Anne in *The Annals*, she decided to undertake a pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré. When Annie returned home, her doctor told her that her kidneys were functioning normally and that she did not need the surgery after all. As an expression of thanksgiving, Annie published her story in *The Annals* (July, 1962).<sup>256</sup> Many years later, as a result of her experiences at the shrine and her devotion to Saint Anne, Annie began to think about creating a pilgrimage group for people in her community. With the help of others, Annie was able to raise enough money through parish bingos and other activities to send pilgrims to Sainte Anne de

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<sup>255</sup> Annie became ill in 2003 and since then her daughters have undertaken responsibility for organizing the pilgrimage.

<sup>256</sup> This volume of *The Annals of Saint Anne* was not available in the archives. Annie's daughters read their photocopied version to me.

Beaupré. Beginning in 1973, sixty-four members of her community have traveled to the shrine each year by bus.<sup>257</sup>

Like the Mi'kmaq pilgrimage group, the Andrew J. Ahearn group from Springfield, Massachusetts also developed as a result of its founder's healing. Andrew was injured in an accident shortly after the birth of his first child Rita, while working for the American Railway Express Company. Rita, who published a devotional book about her father, recounts his injury in 1915:

The horses drawing the Express wagon had started up unexpectedly. Andrew, working on the rear of the wagon, was thrown to the pavement, landing on his spine and striking his head. He was rushed to the Springfield Hospital where x-rays showed he had two broken vertebrae in the lumbar region, as well as a clot of blood at the base of his brain. The latter resulted in seventy-two convulsions in a 24-hour period. The convulsions were to continue irregularly for more than a year.<sup>258</sup>

According to Rita, as a result of her father's accident, he was permanently disabled. He had no control over the left side of his body and he used crutches to walk. Andrew's wife, Agnes, read about various pilgrimages and cures at Saint Anne de Beaupré in the local newspaper. She contacted Ellie McCarthy, the organist at the Sacred Heart church in Springfield. McCarthy had organized short pilgrimages to the shrine. After meeting the Ahearns, McCarthy gave

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<sup>257</sup> People are required to pay a nominal fee for the trip. In 2008, pilgrims paid \$200 each, and there were 85 people in total. Some members travel to the shrine in other vehicles. Overall, the total expenses for the pilgrimage are estimated at \$25,000 - \$30,000. All this money is raised through bingos.

<sup>258</sup> Rita Ahearn Rielle, *Saint Anne's Salesman* (Québec: Sainte Anne de Beaupré, 1991), 7. Details about Ahearn's cure at Sainte Anne de Beaupré also appear in the shrine's archives.

Andrew the novena prayers to Saint Anne and a copy of *The Annals*. After reading about many cures at the shrine, Ahearn began to think that perhaps Saint Anne could help him too. He began a novena to Saint Anne but did not undertake a pilgrimage to the shrine. Due to Andrew's disability, he was barely able to earn enough money to support his family, and he did not have an extra sixty dollars to pay for his train fare. The Ahearns decided to mortgage their home so that Andrew could pay for his fare. On July 24, 1922 Andrew boarded the train for Canada with McCarthy's pilgrimage group. They arrived at Sainte Anne de Beaupré on July 25 in the afternoon. While Andrew was kneeling at the altar rail, McCarthy called Father Giroux over to him, telling the priest that Andrew was a young married man with a young child who wanted to be cured. Giroux told Andrew, "Tomorrow, young man, you will be cured."<sup>259</sup>

Rita reports that her father was healed on July 26, 1922, the feast day of Saint Anne. His cure was not immediate. After reciting the Rosary throughout the night, he attended Mass at 9:30 am. He briefly left the shrine and returned later. He assisted at the next Mass, constantly repeating the rosary and pleading for a cure.<sup>260</sup> Rita narrates the events leading up to her father's cure:

After Mass was over, he moved toward the altar. He was still paralyzed, still dragging his left leg. Everyone was surging forward to venerate St. Anne's holy relics, anxious and hoping that this time he or she would be cured. Andrew shuffled to the rail, knelt with

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>260</sup> Rita does not recount how her father assisted at the Mass.

his rosary still clutched in his hand, and venerated the relic. Nothing happened! He signaled the priest to apply it to his neck and back—still no change! Back he went to the foot of St. Anne’s statue and again stormed heaven with the rosary and the Act of Contrition. Still nothing changed! He prayed on and as he stated afterwards, “I seemed to imagine good St. Anne standing by my side with her right hand on my left shoulder; then I made the following promises: (a) That I would make the First Fridays in honor of the Sacred Heart as long as I lived (b) That I would return to the Shrine every year as long as I lived, and bring an afflicted pilgrimage, taking all afflicted regardless of race, color or creed. If they did not have the funds necessary for fare, room and board, either all or in part, I myself would go from door and beg it (c) I also promise never to take intoxicating liquors, even sweet cider which I truly liked. Kneeling there, saying my rosary and feeling my paralyzed leg, it suddenly seemed to me that Good St. Anne left me, opened the gates to the altar rail, crossed in front of the altar and had her hand on the knob of the vestry door. I felt that I had done all that I could do, made every promise I could and would live up to. I felt then that my only hope was in her having been a mother and having a little girl, too, that she would listen to me if I asked my favor in their names. So, at the top of my voice, I called out, ‘O Good St. Anne, if you won’t cure me for my sake please, please cure me for my good wife and child who need me.’” He swayed and seemed to faint. However, the next moment he reached for his paralyzed leg. There was feeling! He stood up, crutches dropping to the floor, and walked straight down the center aisle of the church.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Rielle, *Saint Anne’s Salesman*, 17-19. Rita reports later in her book that her father’s cure was only partial—his left leg was shorter than his right one. This problem was cured later at the shrine to Saint Anne in Fiskdale, Massachusetts. Andrew also broke both his legs in 1932, and he needed to use a cane as support. In 1942, Andrew reported that Saint Anne cured him again. Although this quotation is lengthy, I have included it because it describes typical devotional expressions at the shrine, including a possible visionary experience, which is discussed in the next chapter.

News about Andrew's cure traveled quickly, and it was reported in *The Springfield Daily News*.<sup>262</sup> Andrew fulfilled his promises made to Saint Anne. In 1923, he began to prepare for his first handicapped pilgrimage. Rita suggests that it was very difficult for her father to raise funds for the pilgrimage, noting that people's attitude toward the handicapped was problematic: "People with chronic afflictions in those days were kept for the most part out of the way and not accepted by the population mainstream."<sup>263</sup> Raising enough money was also an issue for Andrew, and Rita reports that her father often had to beg for funding or walk up a flight of stairs to simply collect a quarter donation. On July 16, 1923, the first Ahearn pilgrimage departed for Sainte Anne de Beaupré, with 116 people, 77 of them handicapped. With the exception of 1932, when Andrew cancelled the pilgrimage because of his two broken legs, the Ahearn pilgrimage group has continued to travel to the shrine each year for the Novena.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Articles included "Crowds Flock to Home of Andrew J. Ahern Who Was Cured of Lameness at Famous Shrine of St. Anne" and "Andrew J. Ahern Who, Cured at St. Anne's Shrine, Left his Crutches Behind Him." See *The Springfield Daily News*, July 28, 1922.

<sup>263</sup> Rielle, *Saint Anne's Salesman*, 23. Orsi examines American Catholic attitudes toward the handicapped and sick in the United States during the mid-twentieth century, proposing that the tradition itself was ambivalent about the moral status of the sick. See Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 19-47.

<sup>264</sup> A second annual pilgrimage began in 1953, which did not include the handicapped or sick individuals who were unable to care for themselves. This pilgrimage, undertaken in the fall, also travels to Saint Joseph's Oratory and Our Lady of the Cape.

Andrew spent many years as “Saint Anne’s Salesman,” promoting the shrine and pilgrimages for the handicapped.<sup>265</sup> His final pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré was in January 1956. At this time he had traveled there to discuss the details of a proposed elevator for the shrine. While at the shrine, he suffered a severe heart attack. He returned home and died on March 18, 1956. After the death of Andrew, his son-in-law Louis assumed responsibility for organizing the pilgrimage until 1998 when Leonard DiVittorio, a long-term Aide, agreed to continue organizing the pilgrimage.<sup>266</sup>

As a pilgrimage organizer and long-standing Aide, DiVittorio told me in 2007 “that pilgrimage seems to be having very rough time right now.” There are fewer pilgrims and volunteers. He suggested that there is a current need to restructure pilgrimage. There are many reasons why the disabled and handicapped do not undertake pilgrimages, including changes in Medicaid rules in the United States. There are also fewer donations despite constant fundraising efforts. In general, he observed that society has changed over the years—pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré is not in vogue. For example, he noted that some people prefer to go to Casinos instead of going to Sainte Anne de Beaupré.

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<sup>265</sup> Rita refers to her father as Saint Anne’s salesman, asserting that Andrew Ahearn “sold the power and love of Good St. Anne to everyone he met...always, there was a medal or a prayer in one of his pockets ready for someone in need.” See Rielle, 60.

<sup>266</sup> Andrew and Agnes had a son, Thomas, but he did not want to take on the pilgrimage group. Also, Rita and Louis did not have any surviving children. Their only child, a boy, was stillborn.

Some pilgrimage groups have ceased altogether or have combined forces with other pilgrimage groups. DiVittorio also suggested that it is difficult to recruit youth volunteers, since many students must work full time during the summer months to pay for their education. Despite challenges such as these, DiVittorio remains optimistic about the future of pilgrimage. In his own experience, his devotion to Saint Anne and the pilgrimage itself takes on new meaning every year: “One never knows what will happen, whether or not the pilgrimage will be cancelled. Saint Anne always gets things together just in time.”

Pilgrimages, such as the Ahearn Memorial Pilgrimage<sup>267</sup> in July, do not only require continual financial and organizational support, but they also need many volunteers to assist the elderly, sick and handicapped pilgrims. Without special groups of aides (men, women and nurses), such pilgrimages would not be possible. The current Aides of Saint Anne, suggests Robert Wagenhoffer, can be traced back to the Ahearn pilgrimage group.<sup>268</sup> As pilgrimage numbers increased in the 1950s, so too did the need for volunteers at the shrine. In the 1940s, a group of local men decided to form a group to be called the Aides. These Aides donned an armband and uniform, which readily identified them to pilgrims in need. In 1949, the Sodality of the Aides of Saint Anne was founded for the explicit purpose of caring for the sick and invalids. Originally, members

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<sup>267</sup> The name of the pilgrimage group changed after Andrew Ahearn died.

<sup>268</sup> Robert Wagenhoffer, “Origin of the Aides,” *La Coste des Beaux Prés* 13/3 (2008): 11.



were men, both Canadian and American. Women volunteers were not officially recognized until 1978, despite their presence among the volunteers in earlier days.

The Aides of Saint Anne express their devotion to Saint Anne through charitable works. Many individuals were recruited as Aides in their youth, and some Aides have volunteered at Sainte Anne de Beaupré for over sixty years. Current Aides range in age from 16-82, although younger volunteers cannot be full members until they are 18 years of age.<sup>269</sup> Aides include men and women of all ages, educational and cultural backgrounds. Some Aides have a physical handicap. Aides are united through a common purpose: to serve Saint Anne through service to the sick and handicapped. Many Aides pay all or part of their own expenses, covering the cost for their uniforms and travel to the shrine. All Aides of Saint Anne, including nurses, chaplains and pilgrimage directors or organizers work without remuneration. However, the shrine does provide some meals for Aides at the Basilica Inn. Some Aides give up their personal vacation time at their places of employment to volunteer at the shrine, especially during the Novena.

For the Aides associated with the Ahearn Pilgrimage group, days were often long and exhausting. In the early years of the pilgrimage, the work was described as “very physical and demanding.” It was a twenty-four hour train

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<sup>269</sup> It currently takes three years of service to become a full member of the Sodality. It was originally five years.

ride to Sainte Anne de Beaupré, and Aides worked continuously, sleeping sporadically. There was no platform at the shrine for pilgrims to descend out of the train, and Aides lifted pilgrims nearly five feet off the train. Aides at the shrine today recollect that the early pilgrimage groups consisted of 250-280 people, with approximately 110 in wheelchairs. In 2007, there were 80 people participating in the Ahearn Memorial pilgrimage, only 10-12 of these pilgrims were disabled or handicapped. Some of these pilgrims required a significant amount of help in their daily care, including dressing and bathing. Aides also help with meals, pushing wheelchairs or lifting invalids out of bed and on/off toilets. Aides also assist pilgrims during religious services, from morning Mass until the Candlelight Procession in the late evening.

While some of the Aides describe their volunteer work at the shrine as a type of “social duty,” others characterize their work as form of devotion to Saint Anne. Volunteers are often inspired and moved by others, especially pilgrims who have had dramatic changes in their lives as a result of pilgrimage. Sometimes, too, volunteers are moved by miraculous stories. Occasionally, Aides recount seeing a miracle at the shrine – often described as a spontaneous healing.

Caring for the sick and handicapped is a reciprocal relationship. Volunteers help with the physical needs of pilgrims, and in turn volunteers often report an increase in faith or spirituality. One female Aide suggested, “You receive much more than you give.” Pilgrimage not only transforms pilgrims, but

also those who care for the sick and handicapped. Michael, a long standing male Aide, suggested that there are two major types of participants at Sainte Anne de Beaupré: those who are handicapped or sick and those who volunteer to help them: “It is a relationship that doesn’t exist without each other. There is no meaning without both types.” Michael explained that being sick is meaningless, unless you provide the opportunity to be helped. Through helping others, meaning is created for the volunteer. It is a reciprocal relationship of giving and receiving. Michael noted that assisting the handicapped at the shrine differs from the experience of salaried workers in a medical environment such as a nursing home or hospital, since professionals tend to remain detached from patients. The sense of fulfillment and meaning gained through serving as an Aide, he suggests, is difficult to understand and explain to others: “At Sainte Anne de Beaupré, it is a feeling of being home again.” There is no detachment from others. Michael could not imagine a single year without working as an Aide. People at the shrine have become like his family and Michael has formed many close relationships with pilgrims and volunteers. Other Aides also spoke of their pilgrimage relationships in familial terms: the sick and handicapped, the divine realm and volunteers are perceived as one large family.<sup>270</sup> As in an individual’s relationship with Saint Anne, the emotional bonds between some volunteers and pilgrims are

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<sup>270</sup> Some of the Aides I interviewed did not speak of pilgrimage relationships in familial terms.

strong and enduring. This is particularly evident when an Aide recounts memories of pilgrims who have died.

Like the Aides of Saint Anne, volunteers of the Comité de l'Espoir or Committee of Hope, also assist the handicapped. The Comité de l'Espoir is an organization that aims to make Sainte Anne de Beaupré more accessible to Francophone disabled pilgrims. The organization has raised funds for nearly twenty years to finance the pilgrimage of approximately seventy individuals each year during the Novena. Although many of these pilgrims do make donations toward their pilgrimages, they are not required to do so. Resources are made available to cover accommodations, meals and personal care.

Volunteering with the Comité de l'Espoir is described as an entirely different experience from working as an Aide of Saint Anne.<sup>271</sup> Some of the pilgrims are complete invalids and are unable to do anything for themselves so their personal care is much more intensive. Joshua, a male volunteer, described his experiences as very rewarding, despite being a lot of work. As a male, Joshua had never experienced caring for others at home. As a volunteer, he helped shower, dress and feed handicapped men. Joshua suggests that through volunteering he formed special relationships with both the handicapped and

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<sup>271</sup> Many of the Aides of Saint Anne are not directly associated with the American Ahearn pilgrimage group. The type of volunteer work is different. It includes helping pilgrims with their visit at the shrine but not with daily personal care outside of the shrine. Aides typically push or assign wheelchairs to the handicapped, ill or senior pilgrims. Aides also assist these individuals during religious services or activities. Some Aides of Saint Anne also volunteer with the Comité de l'Espoir.

other volunteers. Joshua was able to both give and receive love through his volunteer work. Helping the handicapped may also evoke private religious experiences. Joshua described a connection to Jesus, while caring for a young handicapped man: “As I was washing down his hands and stuff I felt like I was washing the hands of Christ. I really did. His hands were so soft and he looks at you and smiles at you.” One female volunteer, Rosa, who was filled with emotion when recalling the event, told me about a similar experience. Rosa had been assisting a quadriplegic man, who was always asking for help. Rosa recalls that she had been working so hard that day that she did not have time to receive Holy Communion. Just before coming to Mass, this man needed to be changed, and Rosa missed communion. She kept asking herself why she had been unable to find time to receive communion when she had been at the shrine all day. Rosa’s answer came from inside herself. In her heart, she received the certainty that she had been given Holy Communion at the time she had been caring for the quadriplegic man. He himself was the body of Christ.

As we have seen from the Ahearn example, devotions of service, especially those associated with the organization of pilgrimage groups, often emerge in response to healing. The original performance of private and/or collective devotional activities that produce a positive personal outcome may lead to devotions of service, which then turns the focus from the individual to others. Devotions of service, such as those associated with the Aides of Saint

Anne or the volunteers of the *Comité de l'Espoir*, tend to emerge primarily out of a desire to help others. Pilgrimage is meaningful not only for the pilgrim but also for those who assist pilgrims. Reciprocal relationships are formed with Saint Anne, the sick, elderly or handicapped, and other volunteers. For many volunteers, devotions of service form networks of family, loving and long-term relationships that are both extraordinary and yet also involve the activities of daily living: helping others to eat, bathe, use the toilet, and move around the shrine. Moreover, devotions of service may also evoke private religious experiences, which strengthen bonds between heaven and earth.

### **Conclusions**

As this chapter has demonstrated, devotions at Sainte Anne de Beaupré encompass a wide range of practices, meanings and functions. Although Saint Anne herself is often the motivating factor for pilgrimage to the shrine, individuals may perform devotions to other sacred figures as well. There are three forms of devotional expression evident at Sainte Anne de Beaupré: private, collective and service. The distinction between these forms is often blurred, and all three provide a means of interacting with the divine realm. Through the performance of devotional activities, bonds are created and reinforced between heaven and earth. Through these relationships, Saint Anne is empowered, which in turn empowers the individual.

Saint Anne moves pilgrims at Beaupré in the same way as pilgrims at other shrines are moved by the Virgin Mary in order to gain empowerment.<sup>272</sup> Power or presence is invested in Saint Anne through various forms of devotional media: images, narratives and performances. Effective empowerment is created through cogent connections with Saint Anne. Through the strategies of reciprocity, conflating categories and appropriating identities, individuals re-enchant their worlds, making Saint Anne “really real.”<sup>273</sup> As suggested by Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans, the “cogent experience is temporal and local.”<sup>274</sup> Many people seek to renew and repeat their experiences through both pilgrimage and devotional activities.

There are many different types of devotional activities at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. The most common yet diverse type is prayer. Prayer is a relational narrative activity. Narratives may be private or collective and they may be directed toward Saint Anne or other divine personae. Prayer often has a practical purpose: praise, maintenance, requesting forgiveness, salvation or action. At Sainte Anne de Beaupré the most common type of prayer seeks action or a divine response to a particular problem, especially the need for healing. Prayer may also be performance. It is often incorporated into other types of devotional activities

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<sup>272</sup> See Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans, “Introduction.”

<sup>273</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 121.

<sup>274</sup> Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans, “Introduction,” 13.

such as the recitation of the Rosary, and participation in Novenas, the Candlelight Procession, Scala Santa or the Stations of the Cross.

Saint Anne's power and presence is often invested in various devotional objects or images. For some people, Saint Anne is embodied in her Miraculous Statue. Pilgrims' interactions with the statue, either emotional or physical, suggest that the statue is not an ordinary object. It is something more. It is imbued with Saint Anne's power and presence. She is a loving grandmother, mother or friend, who is readily accessible to her devotees. Through repetitive narrative, performance and images, effective empowerment is created and diffused. Likewise, other devotional objects such as relics, water, oil, prayer cards or replica statues can impart Saint Anne's presence and power through cogent connections. In contrast to official viewpoints, such objects do not need to be blessed by religious authorities to be efficacious; rather, pilgrims create and re-establish effective empowerment through their own pilgrimage activities.

Private or collective devotional activities are often employed for self-benefit. Motivations for pilgrimage and/or devotional activities generally seek to draw upon Saint Anne's power for a specific purpose – either for oneself or loved ones. Devotions of service are performed on behalf of Saint Anne, not exclusively for self-benefit. Serving sick, elderly or handicapped pilgrims are a means to perform one's devotion to Saint Anne. In addition to the strategies of reciprocity, conflating categories and appropriating identities, effective empowerment is also



created through the discourse of the suffering body. Saint Anne's presence is infused in the body of volunteers, those individuals who assist with the daily mundane physical needs of her pilgrims. Presence is conveyed through volunteers, who dress, bathe, toilet, feed and transport her pilgrims. Volunteers symbolically become Saint Anne's "hand and feet." Likewise, divine presence may be conveyed through the suffering body of the pilgrim. As the two religious experiences described in the previous section suggest, the "hands of Christ" or the "body of Christ," the suffering pilgrim represented the sufferings of Jesus for the volunteer. Devotions of service are reciprocal relationships of giving and receiving *par excellence*: volunteers assist the sick and the handicapped; in return the sick and the handicapped assist the volunteer, and in the interstices the divine realm is perceived to intervene in the pilgrim and volunteer experience. Both the pilgrim and the volunteer are transformed by the pilgrimage experience. Strong relationships are formed in devotions of service, friendships that are often depicted in familial terms among volunteers, the sick, elderly and handicapped, as well as those bonds created between heaven and earth.

### Chapter Three

#### *Encountering Anne: The Role of Visionary Experience*

*He had a quiet and peaceful death. In my heart I believe he saw “HER” face and that brings me much comfort and peace.<sup>275</sup>*

This chapter examines some of the legendary, historical and contemporary visionary experiences that are associated with Saint Anne, especially incidents of visions that are related to pilgrimage and religious healing at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. Although apparitions of Anne are less frequently reported than those involving the Virgin Mary, it is likely that they occur much more frequently than the published documentation suggests. Reports of Saint Anne apparitions have been recorded throughout the world. They appear in various sources: shrine foundational stories, monastic writings and occasionally visions of Saint Anne are briefly mentioned in scholarly works. At Sainte Anne de Beaupré, I encountered evidence of visionary experiences in the form of *ex-votos*, mosaics, newspaper articles, scattered stories or legends associated with the Saint Anne tradition, letters written to the shrine and in some field interviews.

During my fieldwork there was a general unease when I asked people about visions. Almost everyone replied that they did not have visions of Saint

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<sup>275</sup> An excerpt from a letter dated in 1999 by a woman who wrote to the shrine to announce her husband's death. She wrote that they had made pilgrimages to Sainte Anne de Beaupré for 35 years and had often visited the shrine as many as six times per year.

Anne or any other supernatural figure. Some people would even roll their eyes as if I were crazy for asking such a question. One woman asked me suspiciously: “What do you want from us?” Fifteen minutes into our conversation I discovered that her companion did indeed have visions of the Virgin Mary.<sup>276</sup> In short, examples such as this one suggest that people do not like to share their visionary experiences because they have encountered rejection or criticism from others when talking about their visions. Only five women encountered during fieldwork reported having either unusual phenomena or visions and only three women would share their visionary experiences with me during a formal interview.<sup>277</sup>

During the summer of 2009, I met with Colette Coulombe, a woman who has been experiencing visions of Saint Anne for many years. During my fieldwork at Saint Anne de Beaupré, I had no idea that this visionary existed. It

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<sup>276</sup> This older African American woman stood out among the pilgrims, wearing a blue dress and white lace veil. She told me that the Virgin Mary appeared to her frequently and told her to dress in such a manner. Later, she removed her veil revealing very thinned hair. Wearing the veil, covering her entire head, concealed her balding head. This woman was part of an organized pilgrimage that visited three shrines in Québec. The highlight of her pilgrimage was not Sainte Anne de Beaupré but Notre-Dame du Cap, a shrine dedicated to the Virgin Mary in Cap de la Madeleine. According to tradition, in 1888 a statue of the Virgin Mary opened her eyes at this shrine. See Peter Mullen, *Shrines of Our Lady* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 44-46.

<sup>277</sup> One informant described hearing Saint Anne calling her into the shrine (a self-defined Protestant tourist), while the other informant described seeing gold dust form around a stained glass window in the shrine (a self-defined Roman Catholic pilgrim). Both experiences occurred during prayer and both women were physically disabled and experienced gradual healing after their visit to the shrine. The third woman’s visions are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

was only by chance that I was able to find her through an unrelated Internet site and then a maze of phone calls to obtain her contact information. No one that I spoke to at the shrine, neither clerics nor lay people, told me about Colette and her visionary experiences of Saint Anne. This silence is not surprising as I am sure that the majority of the shrine's priests do not support Colette's mission although it is obvious that some do.<sup>278</sup>

### **Varieties of Encounters**

William Christian posits that visions are both universal and perennial: "It is a story of people who claim to speak with the gods and try to tell what they heard and saw and it is the story of other people who tried to stop them."<sup>279</sup>

Some scholars suggest that the Virgin Mary alone has appeared twenty-one

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<sup>278</sup> In addition, of the thousands of letters housed in the shrine's archives, I was only able to find seven letters that concerned visionary experiences or unusual phenomena. This small sampling may very well represent the actual number of letters written. However, it is also plausible that more letters referring to visionary experiences have been written to the shrine. Importantly, all letters sent to the shrine go through a filtering process before they are archived – some are saved while others are discarded. I spoke to the two priests who were in charge of deciding which letters qualified as archival material. They were both reluctant to talk about qualifying criteria, saying only that the letters were carefully selected. They also refused to grant me access to any letters not already placed in the archives. They would not allow me access to letters about healing dating from 2005-2008, since these had not yet been archived. The priests would also not allow me to see current letters so I could determine the different types of letters being sent to the shrine. Moreover, one priest did not even want me to review what was in the archives. Fortunately, the majority of the priests at the shrine were very accommodating. See this chapter's conclusions for more on filtering processes.

<sup>279</sup> William A. Christian Jr., *Visionaries: The Spanish Republic and the Reign of Christ* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 1.

thousand times in the past thousand years.<sup>280</sup> Other scholars suggest that there have been almost seven hundred Marian apparitions between 1945 and 2000.<sup>281</sup> But these numbers are meaningless, since if we take into consideration private visionary experiences of worshippers, not just publicized or church sanctioned visions, the number may be far greater. For nearly two centuries divine manifestations have been given worldwide publicity, as a result of improved media technologies, mass transportation and commercialization.<sup>282</sup> As Galia Valtchinova points out, Marian apparitions form the largest and most studied category of divine interventions that is reflected in modern scholarship.<sup>283</sup>

The term “divine intervention” as an analytical tool is not easily defined. Moreover, the concept might seem to contradict the rationalist, secular stance implicit in social scientific studies of religion. The notion of divine intervention is used here as a lens to study visions that does not necessarily focus on the “epiphany” itself but rather on individuals’ religious experiences and their interpretations of such experiences—“the ways they imagine, interact with, and

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<sup>280</sup> Charlene Spretnak, *Missing Mary: The Queen of Heaven and Her Re-Emergence in the Modern Church* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 137.

<sup>281</sup> Paolo Apolito, *The Internet and the Madonna: Religious Visionary Experience on the Web*, Antony Shugaar tr. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 25.

<sup>282</sup> See Kaufmann, *Consuming Visions* and Apolito, *The Internet and the Madonna*.

<sup>283</sup> Galia Valtchinova, “Introduction: Ethno-Graphing ‘Divine Intervention,’” *History and Anthropology* 20/3 (2009): 203-218.

locate divine agency in their lives and worlds.”<sup>284</sup> Agency is central to understanding divine intervention. Focusing on agency can illuminate the interplay of human practice, social structure and symbolic mediation. Valtchinova defines agency as “the structural capacity, enshrined as social relations, of human beings to embark on autonomous self-realization.”<sup>285</sup> Placing emphasis on agency, Valtchinova defines divine intervention as follows:

Divine interventions may be defined as *symbolic means* by which social actors, the powerful as well as the disempowered or the marginal ones, assess or earn some measure of authority or power and create or underpin a sense of community.<sup>286</sup>

There are a variety of divine interventions, which include sub-categories such as visions, apparitions, dreams and trances as well as near-death experiences. Valtchinova suggests:

*Vision* is somewhat tacitly accepted as a general term, subsuming various (both “divine” and “demonic”) experiences of supernatural or spiritual encounters that are primarily perceived and depicted through sight and “seeing.” “Vision,” however, is distinguished from “dream” when consciousness and psycho-motor processes are taken into account.<sup>287</sup>

In general, visionary experiences can be either social or personal in nature. Christian distinguishes three categories of social apparitions in his study of

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 207.

Spanish visionary phenomena.<sup>288</sup> The first category involves public and serial events, social or effective visions. They attract immediate public attention and appeal for some type of verification, having significance for a community or the wider society.<sup>289</sup> Public and serial visions receive social recognition and have social consequences often leading to the creation of new shrines. Such apparitions also provide pertinent instructions for coping with imminent social situations such as war or plagues. Christian suggests that in such visionary phenomena divine figures appear to one or more seers “in the flesh,” and they communicate with the seers either by walking with them, showing them things, touching them or occasionally leaving sacred objects with the seers.<sup>290</sup> Sandra Zimdars-Swartz describes this type of visionary experience:

An apparition is best understood as a specific kind of vision in which a person or being not normally within the visionary’s perceptual range appears to that person, not in a world apart as in a dream, and not as a modification of a concrete object as in the case

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<sup>288</sup> William A. Christian Jr., *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981).

<sup>289</sup> An exemplary illustration of this type of apparition occurred in Lourdes, France in 1858. Bernadette Soubirous’ visions at Lourdes are especially important because they became the model for subsequent apparitions such as those in Fatima and Medjugorje. For information on Lourdes see Harris, *Lourdes*. For apparitions in Fatima and Medjugorje see Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary: Visions of Mary from La Salette to Medjugorje* (New York: Avon Books, 1991). For social apparitions in a North American context see Kristy Nabhan-Warren, *The Virgin of El Barrio* and Jessy Pagliaroli, “Kodak Catholicism: Miraculous Photography and its Significance at a Post-Conciliar Marian Apparition Site in Canada,” *CCHA, Historical Studies*, 70 (2004): 71-93.

<sup>290</sup> Christian, *Apparitions in Late and Medieval Spain*, 8.

of a weeping icon or moving statue, but as part of the environment, without apparent connection to verifiable visual stimuli.<sup>291</sup>

The second category identified by Christian, signs, includes images with supposedly unusual properties: phenomena such as moving, weeping, bleeding or sweating statues.<sup>292</sup> Such phenomena can be verified by the senses. The statues or images can be seen or touched by anyone. The third category, which Christian suggests is not really a true vision, includes the “miraculous” finding of statues or paintings.<sup>293</sup> All three categories are applicable to Saint Anne visionary experience, both in historical and contemporary contexts.

In contrast to social visions, private visions do not have broad social significance. These visions sometimes occur in the context of religious orders or miraculous cures. They may be relevant to an individual or to a specific religious community.

Apparitions of Saint Anne are of both kinds—social and private. Social visions of Saint Anne tend to have occurred early in the Saint Anne tradition, although some contemporary visions have inspired the foundation of new religious societies and/or missions and even initiated the construction of a

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<sup>291</sup> Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary*, 4.

<sup>292</sup> For a European example of this type see William A. Christian Jr., *Moving Crucifixes in Modern Spain* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992). For a North American example see Manuel Vásquez and Marie Marquardt, “Globalizing the Rainbow Madonna: Old Time Religion in the Present Age,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 17/4 (2000): 119-143.

<sup>293</sup> See Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile*.



monastery. Contemporary visions, with the exception of Colette Coulombe's, tend to be private, and the majority of reports are connected to some sort of healing or physical cure. They generally occur once during a physical or psychological crisis in an individual's life. These visions provoke private devotion to the saint, which often includes undertaking a pilgrimage to the shrine of Sainte Anne de Beaupré.

### **Visions in Early Christian Literature and Hagiography**

Christian suggests, "Visions are as old as humanity."<sup>294</sup> In the case of Saint Anne, visions are as old as the legends associated with her. The earliest visions begin with those she reportedly experienced herself. This information is recorded in early Christian literature and subsequent hagiography.<sup>295</sup> *The Protevangelium of James* is a pivotal narrative for both the cults of Saint Anne and the Virgin Mary. This text likely does not contribute any relevant information about the "historical" Anne; rather, it elucidates the prominence of Anne in some early Christian communities and sets the groundwork for later stories about her.<sup>296</sup>

Without this early Christian text, both Anne and Joachim, Mary's parents, would

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<sup>294</sup>Christian, *Visionaries*, 1.

<sup>295</sup> Saint Anne's vision is also depicted on mosaics in the central vault of Sainte Anne de Beaupré. These mosaics depict the life of Saint Anne. Other visions are also integrated in this life history, including the hermits' vision, the vision of Emérentine and Stolan (Anne's parents) and the Virgin Mary's Annunciation.

<sup>296</sup> For the *Protevangelium of James* see Sherry Angela Smith, *The Making of the Virgin: Mary in the Protevangelium of James*. MA thesis. Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier, 2004).

have remained marginalized in the Christian tradition. *The Protevangelium of James* was an early Palestinian-Syrian Christian text composed in Greek during the late second century. It extends the canonical Matthean and Lucan birth stories about Jesus back to the events surrounding the birth of Mary and her childhood, concluding shortly after the birth of Jesus. In this text, an older and barren Anne has visionary experiences after she laments in her garden. Two heavenly messengers visit her, informing her that she will give birth to a child:

Suddenly a messenger of the Lord appeared to her and said: “Anna, Anna, the Lord God has heard your prayer. You will conceive and give birth, and your child will be known all over the world” (4:1).<sup>297</sup>

The messengers then inform Anne and her husband Joachim that she is pregnant (4:4). Slightly different visions are also recorded in two later Christian texts, both composed in Latin. In *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (ca. fourth-fifth centuries), an angel of the Lord appears to Anne, advising her that Joachim was returning from the mountains.<sup>298</sup> In this text and its later renditions, more emphasis is placed on Joachim’s visions—Anne’s visions are brief, while Joachim’s visions are much more detailed. In *The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* (ca. eleventh century), an angel of the Lord appears to Anne again, announcing that she will give birth to a

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<sup>297</sup> Translation by Ronald F. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 1996).

<sup>298</sup> See Chapter 3 of “The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew,” In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., Vol. 8., 368-383 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 370.

daughter.<sup>299</sup> In this account the angel of the Lord describes how Mary is to be reared, as well as her significance in giving birth to “the Savior of the world.”<sup>300</sup> As previously mentioned, variations of *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* were transmitted into later hagiography. In Italy, this text was integrated into Jacobus de Voragine’s *The Golden Legend* (ca. 1260).<sup>301</sup> In England, Osbern Bokenham incorporated Voragine’s text in *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* (ca. 1447).<sup>302</sup> In short, Anne’s reported visions are socially significant insofar as they serve to legitimate and subsequently provide doctrinal basis for Mary’s immaculate conception. Moreover, they are foundational for later traditions about Anne.

### **The Creation or Revitalization of Sacred/Monastic Spaces**

For Christian one vital effect of narratives about an apparition is either the “sacralization of a place or the revitalization of a sacred place.”<sup>303</sup> Such legendary accounts, as Christian suggests, were often “created to justify, illustrate, or

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<sup>299</sup> “The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary,” In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., Vol. 8., 384-387 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989).

<sup>300</sup> See Chapter 4, *Ibid.*, 385.

<sup>301</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, “The Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary,” In *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, William Granger Ryan tr. Vol. 2., 149-158 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>302</sup> Osbern Bokenham, “The Life of St. Anne Mother of St. Mary,” In *A Legend of Holy Women*, Sheila Delany tr., 29-41 (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992).

<sup>303</sup> Christian, *Apparitions*, 212.

dignify a preexisting devotion.”<sup>304</sup> Visions of Saint Anne are often recorded in legends associated with the founding of shrines. In France the cult of Saint Anne is associated with miraculous fountains. Both Sainte-Anne-la-Palud and Sainte-Anne-d’Auray in Brittany have springs associated with visionary experiences.<sup>305</sup> In Brittany, Saint Anne is considered both a national patroness and secular sovereign figure. Moreover, in familial terms, Saint Anne is often referred to as *Mamm Goz ar Vretoned* or “Grandmother of the Bretons.”<sup>306</sup>

At Sainte-Anne-la-Palud Anne’s visions not only legitimate a place and local tradition, but they also establish her as a domestic leader.<sup>307</sup> According to folklore, Anne was a Breton princess or queen, whose husband was so cruel that an angel appeared to her. The story holds that after Anne told her spouse that she was pregnant, he unmercifully turned her out of his house. While wandering the shoreline of the Baie de Douarnenez on the Breton coast, she saw a white ship with a white angel at the helm. Together, they set sail for Jerusalem. A few days after her arrival, she gave birth to Mary. Many years later Anne prayed that she

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>305</sup> James Doan proposes that both shrines are likely revitalizations of cultic centers of the Celtic goddess Anu, who was assimilated into the figure of Saint Anne by early Christian missionaries. See James Doan, “Five Breton ‘Cantiques’ from ‘Pardons,’” *Folklore* 91/1 (1980): 27-40.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>307</sup> See Anatole Le Braz, “Sainte-Anne de la Palud - Le Pardon de la Mer,” In *Au Pays des Pardons* (Paris: Éditions Terre de Brume, 1998), 245-275.

could return to her beloved Brittany. The angel returned, though this time it was clothed in black because Anne's husband had died. She returned to Brittany, moved into a hut on the shore and lived a life of prayer. The story further postulates that Jesus, Anne's grandson, visited Brittany. During his visit to France, Jesus granted his grandmother a favour. Anne said to Jesus:

“Eh bien! prononça-t-elle, qu'une église me soit consacrée en ce lieu. Et, aussi loin que sa flèche sera visible, aussi loin que s'entendra le son de ses cloches, que toute chair malade guérisse, que toute âme, vivante ou morte, trouve son repos!”<sup>308</sup>

Demonstrating his love for her, Jesus struck his staff in the ground, bringing forth a spring that became known for its healing properties. Shortly after this visit Anne died and her body was never found. The story claims that fishermen brought up a statue of Anne in their nets. Bringing it ashore, they could carry it no further than to the place where Anne had lived. Considering this a sign, the people built her church.<sup>309</sup>

Similarly, other reported visions served to legitimize local traditions. At Ste-Anne-d'Auray, the visions of Yves Nicholaizic led to the rebuilding of a

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<sup>308</sup>Ibid., 254. English translation: Indeed! She said, “A church shall be consecrated to me in this place. And, as far as its spire can be visible, as far as the sound of its bells can be heard, all sick flesh shall be healed, all souls, living or dead, shall find rest.” W. Branch Johnson's English translation of this text is less detailed. He writes: “‘Grandson,’ answered St. Anne, ‘let a church be consecrated to my honour upon this spot, and let my Bretons come here for healing.’” See W. Branch Johnson, *Folktales of Brittany* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1927), 32.

<sup>309</sup> See Johnson, *Folktales of Brittany*, 32-33.

church.<sup>310</sup> Beginning in 1623 this French farmer had a series of visions. During the first apparition, Yves had a vision of Anne and her attendants, while tending his cattle at a spring. During the second vision, Anne spoke to him saying:

Fear not but do as I bid you. Upon your farm you will find an image of me buried where it fell in the wild days of Vandalism. Unearth it, and rebuild there the chapel in my name in which your ancestors used to worship.<sup>311</sup>

After the vision disappeared, a star shone in the sky, indicating the location of the image. Tradition holds that Nicholaizic dug with his bare hands, unearthing the statue of Anne. The next day he built a chapel of earth for the statue. During a third visitation, Anne appeared to him and placed an image of the chapel in his mind that she wished for him to build. He immediately drew the complete plans and began building the church. Tradition holds that even before the church was completed, pilgrims came to honor Anne and obtain healing from the miraculous spring.<sup>312</sup>

Breton devotion to Saint Anne also appears in early French-Canadian literature. A visionary experience is preserved in an old rhyme entitled “The Soldier-Peasant’s Vision” in which Saint Anne appears to a soldier from the

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<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 34-36.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

Carignan-Salières regiment.<sup>313</sup> Saint Anne is depicted as both “guardian of my race” and “mother of all Bretons.” Edward Farrer, a journalist, reported the rhyme in an article in 1882.

All by the broad St. Lawrence, a hundred years ago,  
The Angelus was ringing from the bells of Île-au-Roux;  
The reaper leaned upon his scythe, the wild-bee ceased its hum,  
The consecrated river hushed its water and was dumb;  
The oxen as at Bethlehem knelt of their own accord,  
While the incense of the mid-day prayer was wafted to their Lord!  
“O good Saint Anne, I swear to thee, thou guardian of my race,”  
Cried the bareheaded reaper, while tears bedewed his face,  
“For sovereign, for seigneur, for those in high command,  
France, with her vines and olives, is in sooth a pleasant land;  
But fairer than lily on her shield is the New World colony  
Where the weary serf may stand erect, unawed by tyranny!

“Do thou ask the Blessed Virgin to bless our sire, the King,  
To overthrow his enemies, bless him in everything;  
To speed his royal banners, crown them with victory,  
As when we fought the Paynim on the plains of Hungary!  
But, O mother of all Bretons, by the love for Mary’s son,  
By His agony and dolours, by His wounds on Calvary won,  
Guard thou New France from tyrants, oh spare her virgin soil  
From the hell of the oppressor, from tumult and turmoil!”

Saint Anne had heard the veteran’s prayer, and stood upon the tide,  
An aureole about her brow, and angels by her side.  
“Fear not, my son,” she sweetly said, “Be New France true to me  
And she shall ever be the home of rugged liberty!”  
The vision passed, and the reaper bent to the cutting of the grain;  
The covenant is kept; he did not pray in vain.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> The Carignan-Salières regiment was used to combat the Iroquois threat between 1665-1668. Over 400 soldiers and officers remained in New France when the regiment was recalled to France. See Jack Verney, *The Good Regiment: Carignan-Salières Regiment in Canada, 1665-68* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991).

Legends associated with the revitalization of sacred spaces have also occurred outside of France albeit near the French border. An apparition of Saint Anne is linked to the construction of a church near Vinadio, Italy.<sup>315</sup> In this example, a shrine was already in existence. This healing shrine, located high up in the Maritime Alps, was originally dedicated to the Virgin Mary (Santa Maria di Brasca), serving as a resting point for travelers across the Lombarda Pass.<sup>316</sup> Legend reports that Saint Anne appeared to a young shepherdess named Anna Bagnis. As in the French apparitions, Saint Anne instructed the girl to build a church. When the inhabitants of Vinadio began to build the church where Saint Anne had appeared, legend holds that angels carried the exterior walls onto the site during the night.<sup>317</sup>

Visionary experiences connected with the building of churches dedicated to Saint Anne have also occurred in Asia. During the late sixteenth century in India it was reported that two people received visions of Anne during the

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<sup>314</sup>See Edward Farrer, "The Folk Lore of Lower Canada," *Atlantic Monthly* 49 (April 1882): 542-550. The original source and date is unknown. Farrer's article states: "The original, of which the following is a close translation, was written, it will be observed before the English conquest of Quebec" (549).

<sup>315</sup> "Santuario Sant' Anna di Vinadio," <[www.sanctuariosantanna.it/](http://www.sanctuariosantanna.it/)> (accessed August 30, 2009).

<sup>316</sup> The name of Saint Anne was recorded for this shrine in 1443 but the church was not built until 1681. (Norbert Maggi, Personal correspondence, February 11, 2009).

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.



construction of the church of St. Anne in Santana, Goa.<sup>318</sup> Tradition holds that an elderly villager named Bartholomeu Marchon had a vision, and he described Anne as an old lady carrying a staff. Donning a hat, she ambled down the neighboring hill, telling this visionary that the church under construction was her home and that she intended to live there. An elderly Brahmin lady of high social standing described a similar apparition. This woman was reportedly seriously ill. The apparition appeared to her in dreams and reportedly miraculously cured her illness. As a token of gratitude, the woman embraced Christianity. Once the word of her cure reached the village priest, he consecrated the church in honor of Saint Anne.

Similarly, in Talawila, Sri Lanka apparitions of Saint Anne are associated with the construction of a shrine. At this shrine two different founding stories have been recorded. One is an apparition story. Unlike previous examples, the visionary is unnamed. In this account, Richard Stirrat suggests that the sacralization of the place is of primary importance—the actual identity of the visionaries is insignificant.<sup>319</sup> According to this narrative, which is set in the seventeenth century, an impoverished Portuguese man who was traveling to

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<sup>318</sup> This legend appears to be available only online and is mentioned on several Goa tourism sites. For example see, “Saint Anne Church Goa,” <[www.tourismgoa.net/churches-in-go/st-anne-church.html](http://www.tourismgoa.net/churches-in-go/st-anne-church.html)> (accessed March 18, 2010).

<sup>319</sup> Richard L. Stirrat, “Place and Person in Sinhala Catholic Pilgrimage” In *Contesting the Sacred: Anthropology of Pilgrimage*. John Eade and Michael Sallnow eds., 122-136 (London: Routledge, 2000), 126.

find work fell asleep under a tree at Talawila. Saint Anne appeared to him at the foot of the tree, giving him a relic in the form of a statue. She instructed him to build a church, name it after her and house the statue in it. The man complied with her request and began building a small chapel. Saint Anne appeared to him again and gave him some gold coins, which he used to return home and raise funds for the construction of a permanent church. After he had build this church, Saint Anne appeared to him for a third time and instructed him to build a larger one in its place.<sup>320</sup>

In addition to the construction of churches, visionary experiences are also connected to the construction of convents in Spain. Ana de San Agustín (1555-1624), a Discalced Carmelite, recorded numerous visions in her *relaciones*.<sup>321</sup> Ana gained a reputation as a visionary early in her monastic life, having visions not only of Saint Anne but also of Jesus, Saint Teresa of Ávila, various saints and martyrs, heaven and hell, guardian angels, the Trinity, Lucifer and others. Saint Anne was one of Ana's patron saints, guiding Ana as she oversaw the construction of convents and churches. In some visions Saint Anne provided the requisite funds to pay for various undertakings. While Ana was the elected prioress of the convent of Villanueva de la Jara, she reported in her writing that

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> For the following details about Ana's visions of Saint Anne see Elizabeth Teresa Howe, *The Visionary Life of Madre Ana de San Agustín* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2004), 19-21.

although the convent was dedicated to Saint Anne, it did not own a painting of the saint. During prayer Saint Anne came to Ana in a vision. After a painting was installed, Ana received further visions and locutions from “*la gloriosísima santa Ana.*” Ana initially hesitated to act on her visions, not doubting their veracity but because of financial concerns. Later, she did begin to doubt her visions of Saint Anne but not for very long. In order to test the veracity of the visions, Ana asked that Saint Anne adore her grandson on Ana’s rosary, and the saint immediately complied with her request. Ana further reported that Saint Anne along with Saint Teresa mandated further projects in Valera de Abajo. Ana’s visions came at a time, the late sixteenth century, when there was an upsurge in Saint Anne’s popularity in Spain, with the establishment of communal vows, the construction of devotional chapels, and the establishment of her feast day as obligatory in a number of dioceses.<sup>322</sup>

### **Women’s Visionary Experiences: Medieval and Early Modern Europe**

Throughout Christian history, visionary experiences have been effective as a form of discourse, especially for women. In short, visions afforded women a legitimate means to engage in religious and social discourses that are generally restricted to the male realm. Moreover, certain visions could be considered “theological visions.”<sup>323</sup> These types of visions were wide ranging. Some

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<sup>322</sup> Christian, *Local Religion*, 37-38, 53, 67-68.

<sup>323</sup> Christian, *Apparitions*, 6.

theological visions were concerned with eschatological issues, while other visions tended to focus on various devotional, social or doctrinal concerns. Two visions were especially concerned with the contested issue of marriage in medieval society. Birgitta of Sweden (1302-1373) had a vision in Rome, which served to promote the image of Anne and Joachim as a new ideal for godly wedlock. In this vision Anne states:

I ame Anne, ladi of all wedid folke that were byfor the lawe. Doughtir, wirshepe God of this manere: “Blissed be thou Jesu Criste, the son of God that chesid the one modir of the weddinge of Joachim and Anne. And, therefor, for the praiers of Anne, have merci of all thame that are in wedeloke or thikes to be weddid, that thai mai bring furth froite to the wirshpe of Gode.”<sup>324</sup>

Colette of Corbie (1381-1447) used her visionary experiences to justify the concept of the *tribubium* or the three marriages of Anne, a notion highly criticized by the Church Fathers, since it violated social norms. In medieval France, this was an important cult. Initially, Colette refused to pray to Saint Anne because she was repulsed by Anne’s three marriages. Moreover, Colette tended to pray to saints known for their virginity. However, while Colette was at prayer, Saint Anne appeared to her: “And in this apparition, the glorious Anna manifested to her that although she had several times copulated in marriage no one in the whole church militant and triumphant was so adorned for his progeny and

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<sup>324</sup> Kathleen Ashley, “Image and Ideology: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Drama and Narrative,” In *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in the Late Medieval Society*, eds. Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, 111-130 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 120.

honored with fame.”<sup>325</sup> As a consequence of this vision, Colette recognized the powerful intercessory potential of Saint Anne and her descendants and she founded special chapels and devotions to Saint Anne in her convents.

Anne Catherine Emmerich of Germany (1774-1824) also recounted two visions of Anne in her writings. Both visions were concerned with the immaculate conception of Mary. During Anne’s lifetime, this concept was not yet defined as dogma. Instead, Roman Catholics were free to believe or not believe in Mary’s immaculate conception without being accused of heresy. It was not until 1854 that Pope Pius IX defined it as dogma in *Effabilis Deus*.<sup>326</sup> Anne Emmerich’s visions suggest that she was an advocate for the future dogma:

Both Joachim and Anne were in a supernatural state. I learned that, at the moment in which they embraced and the light shone around them, the Immaculate Conception of Mary was accomplished.<sup>327</sup>

Visionary experiences have also occurred in opposition to male-oriented reform movements in Germany. One abbess, Katharina von Hoya of the Cistercian convent in Wienhausen reported having a vision of Saint Anne in

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>326</sup> Bernadette Soubirous’s apparition of the lady in white addressed herself as the Immaculate Conception in 1858.

<sup>327</sup> Anne Catherine Emmerich, *The Life of Jesus Christ and Biblical Revelations*, Vol. 1 (Illinois: Tan Books, 1986), 137-138.

response to reforms.<sup>328</sup> In the fifteenth century there were widespread reforms of female religious communities aiming to impose community property, a cloistered lifestyle and uniformity. Katharina was one of the many abbesses who resisted intrusive reformers. Reports suggest that she was not an easy abbess. Some nuns had disputed her original election as abbess. In order to avoid factionalism, Katharina resigned, moving into a private house within the cloister. Unlike many of the nuns under her direction, she was quite wealthy and well connected with her noble relatives and with neighboring towns. During an illness she had a vision of Saint Anne where the saint threatened Katharina with purgatorial punishments for her luxuries. In 1442, the abbess converted her house into a chapel for Saint Anne, endowing it with much of her own inheritance.

Often women's visionary experiences came under the investigation of male clerical authorities. A Roman rite compiled in the 1580s by Cardinal Giulio Antonio Santori aimed to provide a method to discern spirit possession.<sup>329</sup> Santori was convinced that women simulated possession. In his opinion, they faked sanctity and were actually possessed by the devil. He believed that

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<sup>328</sup> For the following details about Katharina's visions see Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 405-408.

<sup>329</sup> See Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 188-189.

women's visions were initiated by human depravity caused by material or carnal lust, the desire to avoid punishment or as a result of hatred or desperation. During the Inquisitions some women were charged with simulating sanctity. One woman, an illiterate Neapolitan named Alfonsina Rispoli was condemned to perpetual imprisonment because of the Inquisition's inability to discern her spiritual behaviors.<sup>330</sup> Some judges believed the authenticity of her visions and their revelations while others did not. Her visionary experiences initially began with an apparition of Saint Anne who promised Alfonsina that Naples would be spared from an epidemic. She later had visions of other saints and claimed that she had visited hell, purgatory and heaven. Further, Alfonsina reported that she had participated in the Last Supper and also experienced stigmata.

### **Visions and the "Miraculous" Raising of the Dead**

A visionary experience recorded in an Icelandic legend depicts Saint Anne as having extraordinary powers.<sup>331</sup> In this atypical tale Saint Anne's powers are so great that she is able to raise a woman from the dead, much like Jesus' raising of Lazarus. As Marianne Kalinke suggests, such tales reveal information about the importance of Saint Anne devotional practices in the late Middle Ages.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> For the following details about Alfonsina's visions see *Ibid.*, 189-190.

<sup>331</sup> See Marianne E. Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar: The Last of the Great Medieval Legendaries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 146-149.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

Moreover, Saint Anne is depicted as substantially rewarding people for their devotion. The legend describes a poor couple that formed an image of Saint Anne, lit three candles daily for Mary, Anne and Jesus, and held masses every Tuesday to be said in honor of Saint Anne. Saint Anne rewarded them with such great wealth that they became the richest people in the city. In gratitude the couple built a church, appointed priests and paid tithes. Despite being married for twenty-eight years, this couple was also childless. Saint Anne rewarded them again and the woman gave birth to male triplets, naming them after the saint's three legendary husbands—Joachim, Cleophas and Salome. After the boys were three years old, the story narrates that the mother died. The husband is reported as being inconsolable: "It is said that their love and affection for each other was so great that each would have preferred to die before the other, if thereby the other could be spared from death."<sup>333</sup> After the mother was buried, the children cried and asked for her. The father took the children to Saint Anne's church, sat them on the altar and told them that Saint Anne was now their mother. When the children turned toward the statue of Saint Anne, refusing to return home with their father, the man fell on his knees, asking the saint to take his children under her protection. After he returned home alone he had a visionary experience of Saint Anne. He saw her step down from her altar and go to his wife's grave. She lifted the woman up, telling her to return home. When the man awoke he heard a

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 148.



knock on the door and a woman's voice asking to be let in. Initially the man was terrified and did not open the door. He then heard his children, opened the door and saw his wife. His wife told him that she had been brought back from the dead through the powers of Saint Anne.

### **Visions and Healing in North America**

Narratives about early visions of Saint Anne in Québec have been connected to physical healing. For example, in *The Jesuit Relations* various "marvels" at Saint-Anne-du-Petit-Cap were reported in the seventeenth century. One of these records describes the vision of "two venerable ladies" in a dream. The report suggests that Elie Godin, a 50-year-old man, was healed of dropsy<sup>334</sup> in 1664. There was no medical treatment for this illness and a priest advised Elie to turn to the Blessed Virgin and Saint Anne for help. The priest writes:

When I came back to give him Communion, he told me with a serene face: "Sir, I am cured. Let me stand up. When you were in church, I fell asleep while saying my rosary. During my sleep, I saw two venerable Ladies who came to me. One of them had in hand a box, which she opened and I saw a very long and narrow road leading to Heaven. At this sight, I was filled with consolation and relieved of my ailment."<sup>335</sup>

Early reports of visions also attracted numerous pilgrims to Sainte Anne de Beaupré. Charles Chiniquy, a Roman Catholic priest, recounts that he had a

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<sup>334</sup> Dropsy is an old term used for edema, the swelling of soft tissue due to the accumulation of excess fluid.

<sup>335</sup> Quoted from Gerard Desrochers, *Healings through Good Saint Anne*, Gabriel Bergeron tr. (Québec: Saint Anne de Beaupré, 1990), 35.

vision of St. Anne and St. Philomene in 1837, while in a feverish state caused by typhoid fever.<sup>336</sup> Chiniquy reports that when he believed he was about to die, he thought of “*La Bonne Ste. Anne du Nord.*” After he had promised to add to his penances, to live a more holy life, and to have a painting commissioned for the church at Beaupré, the saints appeared to him. He records the vision and cure as follows:

The last words of my prayer were scarcely uttered, when I saw above my head St. Anne and St. Philomene sitting in the midst of a great light, on a beautiful golden cloud. St. Anne was very old and grave, but St. Philomene was very young and beautiful. Both were looking at me with great kindness. However, the kindness of St. Anne was mixed with such an air of awe and gravity that I did not like her looks; while St. Philomene had such an expression of superhuman love and kindness that I felt myself drawn to her by a magnetic power, when she said distinctly, “You will be cured,” and the vision disappeared. But I was cured, perfectly cured! At the disappearance of the two saints, I felt as though an electric shock went through my whole frame; the pains were gone, the tongue was untied; the nerves were restored to their natural and usual power; my eyes were opened, the cold and icy waves which were fast going from the extremities to the regions of my heart, seem to be changed into a most pleasant warm bath, restoring life and strength to every part of my body.<sup>337</sup>

According to Chiniquy, the news of his cure spread rapidly throughout Québec, though many attributed his vision to his fever. Three months after his cure, he went to Sainte Anne de Beaupré stating:

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<sup>336</sup> See Charles Chiniquy, *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome* (Toronto: S. R. Briggs, 1886), 219-231.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

By the next morning the crowds began to arrive, not by hundreds, but by thousands, from the surrounding parishes. The channel between 'L'Isle D'Orleans' and Ste. Anne, was literally covered with boats of every size, laden with men and women who wanted to hear from my own lips, the history of my miraculous cure, and see, with their own eyes, the picture of the two saints who had appeared to me. At 10 A.M., more than 10,000 people were crowded inside and outside the wall of the Church.<sup>338</sup>

Other apparitions have also attracted pilgrimage and/or curiosity in the United States. For example, in Syracuse, New York, an eleven-year old girl named Shirley Ann Martin appeared to be able to make a broken plaster statue of Saint Anne weep, which drew thousands of visitors in 1949.<sup>339</sup> Although the origins of the statue cannot be confirmed, it may have been obtained from Sainte Anne de Beaupré, especially given the number of American pilgrims to the shrine in the mid-twentieth century. According to various accounts, each time Shirley kissed the statue's forehead, water dripped from its eyes. Other people attempted the same action, but were unsuccessful. Reports also indicated that after Shirley's grandmother rubbed the statue's tears on her arthritic shoulder, her arm function returned.<sup>340</sup>

In 1910 an article in the New York Times reports a visionary experience, leading a bedridden woman toward the relics of Saint Anne at a local church during the Novena of Saint Anne. This woman had apparently been ill for nine

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 331-332.

<sup>339</sup> "Weeping Statue," *Western Folklore* 8/3 (1949): 274.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

years and her friends believed that she was miraculously healed – not by directly touching the relic herself but by sending her daughter with a ribbon to be blessed and touched by the relic.

It was on the night of July 21 that the woman had a vision, a beautiful young woman, who told her to send some one with a ribbon to the Church of St. Jean Baptiste at Seventy-sixth Street, near Park Avenue, Manhattan, and there have it blessed by being touched with the famous relic of the church, a bone of St. Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary. The next day Mrs. Ott sent a ribbon to the church by her daughter and that night bound it around herself. “I felt no relief that night,” said Mrs. Ott yesterday, “but in the morning I was hungry and was able to eat a substantial meal. Then I began to recover. When my doctor called on Monday morning I was at the door to greet him and shake hands with him. Since then my improvement has been steady. I tell you it felt good to be out of bed. I don’t see now how I stood it for nine years.”<sup>341</sup>

Another example not directly related to Sainte Anne de Beaupré was reported in May 2004. In this instance an icon of the St. Righteous Anna was found to be weeping myrrh in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Accounts claim that many miracles occurred to those who venerated the icon and were anointed by its myrrh. Among these claims, it is reported that a priest named Father Joachim from Maryland received healing. He suffered from two ruptured disks in his spine, and had become completely incapacitated. After praying before the icon and being anointed with its myrrh, he was reportedly able to walk again.<sup>342</sup> The

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<sup>341</sup> “Vision Leads to a Cure: Woman Ill for Nine Years Strangely Directed to Relic of St. Anne,” *New York Times*, August 8, 1910.

<sup>342</sup> See “Weeping Icon of St. Anna,” <[http://holycrossonline.org/latest\\_news/special\\_events/2005/022505.php](http://holycrossonline.org/latest_news/special_events/2005/022505.php)> (accessed September 1, 2009).

icon was later taken on various pilgrimages to other churches in the United States.<sup>343</sup>

### **Visions and Shrine Letters**

As previously mentioned, information about contemporary visions emerges primarily in the form of letters written to the shrine of Sainte Anne de Beaupré. Each year thousands of letters are written to the shrine asking for prayers, favors, masses, subscriptions or information about pilgrimages. Other letters describe various healings or favors received from Saint Anne and approximately forty of these are saved in the archives each year. Women write the majority of letters saved in the archives, although men certainly do write to the shrine. A very small percentage of the letters describe visionary experiences. The format of the letters varies—from office memo to life history story. Some of the visionary letters have been given titles by their authors such as “Our Miracle Babies,” “A Dream” or “Cured of a Tragic Car Accident.” Of the seven letters recounting visions I have seen, a man wrote only one. It is obvious that some of these letters have been written to the shrine because pilgrims have been asked by a priest at Sainte Anne de Beaupré to document their experiences.

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<sup>343</sup> St. Anne Society Incorporated organizes pilgrimage requests for the Icon. See church brochure “The Myrrh Streaming Icon of St. Anne Mother of the Holy Virgin,” <<http://www.churchofourlady.org/Documents/St-Anne-Festival-2008/StAnneBrochureEnglish.pdf>> (accessed September 1, 2009).

Some of the letters recount visionary experiences that occurred when the writer was asking for a favor for her or himself from Saint Anne. The earliest such letter I saw was written in 1977, describing a vision that took place in the 1920s. In this letter an American woman recounts her father's vision of Saint Anne to a priest. The letter was written during a pilgrimage that the woman made to the shrine on behalf of her deceased father. She reports that her father was saved by the saint while working on the seventh floor of a department store construction site. The letter states:

When pulling a wheelbarrow he tripped and fell down. When about half way he saw St. Ann making a gesture like to say stop and he turned and landed feet first in the mud up to his knees; he did not get a scratch or a broken bone. He just lost his voice for a month.

The man then promised Saint Anne that he would light a big candle to thank her and Saint Anne told him that she would come and light the candle for him. In her letter the woman told the priest that her father had started a society to honor Saint Anne, to pray and to make donations. The woman also asked Saint Anne for a favor for herself – to prevent her from going completely blind.

Another letter written by an American woman in 1981 describes a “sign” in 1972, when a statue seemed to become illuminated.<sup>344</sup> The woman writes that her daughter and two grandchildren had been killed instantly in a train collision

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<sup>344</sup> Compare Christian, *Apparitions*, 8.

but her son-in-law had survived albeit critically injured with broken bones and a brain injury. Recounting the situation, the woman writes:

My son-in-law had his right arm broken; his leg was also fractured in three places from the hip to the knee. For days he was unconscious from brain injuries. The Doctor advised us to start making funeral arrangements. The following day, I got up and rushed to the hospital. While in the waiting room, I prayed Saint Anne to save my son-in-law who was still unconscious. I poured some Saint Anne's water on his head and applied to him the Holy picture of the saint. At that moment his blood pressure became normal. The second night we said the Chaplet of Saint Anne. While I was saying the beads, the statue kept shining on me. In that same light I could see Saint Anne's most beautiful blue eyes. I set a statue of the Saint on the bedside table and lit up a candle. For four days, the young man remained unconscious.

The woman further reports that the cure was gradual. Her son-in-law was kept in the hospital for six months following the accident. She states that the following year she took him on a pilgrimage to the shrine, leading him to the Miraculous Statue. For three days she prayed and cried. On the fourth day they prepared to leave the shrine and they noticed that her son-in-law had been cured. She concludes the letter by stating that since this pilgrimage he has been enjoying perfect health.

A third letter does not imply any type of religious healing or protection but rather describes visions as beautiful and positive religious experiences. An American Protestant man, in 1985, reports that Saint Anne appeared to him twice in the form of a dream.<sup>345</sup> These visions seem to have occurred prior to making a

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<sup>345</sup> He was a Protestant who married a Catholic.

pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré, although the man later went to the shrine to explore the meaning of his visions. He discussed them with other people including family members and priests. Both visions were similar in nature but in the second visionary experience he saw and explained his vision to four priests.<sup>346</sup> The man wrote that as a result of these visions he hoped to construct a new monastery dedicated to Saint Anne and Saint Benedict. Additionally, he claimed that Saint Anne has been his patron saint throughout his life, guiding him. His letter describes the first vision as follows:

St. Anne visited me in a dream in the spring of 1984. Our family went on a reunion picnic on a mountain. I saw this beautiful petite woman sitting on a stone along the pathway. She had a bright smile on her round pretty face with big brown eyes. We continued on our walk. A large airplane crashed into the mountain nearby. All of us went to the rescue of the passengers and to help the injured. After this we continued on our picnic trip. Later we started to walk down the mountain for our return. I saw this beautiful lady again sitting on another stone. The mountain started to shake and vibrate. An earthquake resulted. The lady told us not to be afraid. Then I asked, "Who are you?" She said, "I am Saint Anne and we will meet again." Then I awoke and remembered the whole dream.

Not all writers describe their visions as a positive experience. One Canadian woman reported that her visions had been troubling throughout her entire life. Her letter, written in 1995, takes the form of a life history describing various visions from childhood. This woman also asked for prayers, seeking both financial assistance and employment. Her letter also informs us that she had been to Sainte Anne de Beaupré on several pilgrimages. At the conclusion of the

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<sup>346</sup> He saw the four priests in his dream.



letter the woman reported that writing her letter “feels like I just said a rosary. It feels like a prayer.” The act of writing seems to offer her a sense of release from her troubling visionary experiences. In her letter she described serial visions over her lifetime of the Virgin Mary, Jesus and Saint Anne. The majority of her visions came in the form of dreams but her initial vision was similar to a “sign” vision. The letter records that she had a very difficult childhood, being physically abused by both parents. Her first vision occurred during her first communion. The woman explains that the statue of the Virgin Mary made the sign of the cross to her, blessing her, while she was fixated on the statue praying. She recounts that Mary was “like a real person but angelic and warm.” She writes that after this initial vision she started having numerous dreams of Mary, Jesus and Saint Anne. She felt very blessed and special because of these dreams. She also states that no one believed that the Virgin Mary had blessed her in the church and this hurt her, especially her family’s rejection of the vision. She asks in the letter why she never remembers what was said in her dreams. She describes her first vision of Saint Anne at the age of fifteen. She recounts that in her dream she was climbing up the statue of Saint Anne and touched the saint’s face. She states that such visions always troubled her because Saint Anne never spoke to her when she climbed up to her “like a lost child.” She recounts that she would cry with great emotion at the lack of response by Saint Anne. Later in the letter she describes an apparition of Saint Anne in her apartment in the middle of the

night. She affirms that it was not the statue but Saint Anne herself. The writer states, “she spoke to me from her heart but I cannot remember what she said. She glowed and she moved her hands to hold her veil when she spread her hands.”

Another woman who wrote a visionary account did not have any familiarity with Saint Anne. This American woman sent an office memo to the shrine in 1999 to ask for information and prayers. Her vision was one of Saint Anne and Saint Benedict and it took the form of a dream. It occurred during a time when her brother was having marital problems. She reports that her brother was having an affair with a coworker and this troubled the entire family. She states:

As I was praying I fell asleep. I did not know that my dream would lead me to an answer that would overwhelm myself. I dreamed about a man who appeared to be Saint Benedict. He looked at me but his mouth never moved. However, I could hear every word he speaks. I was told to tell my sister-in-law that she was also given a gift. A gift of understanding and compassion and this would come naturally to her. He directed me to go to a figure, as I turned around I saw a beautiful lady wearing a blue dress, she shines so bright like gold. As I looked up, I saw her beautiful face looking down at my sister-in-law. She carries a book that seems to be a bible with a baby on the other. The more I stared at the ladies face; I could feel her compassion toward my sister-in-law and the baby. She spoke to me but her lips were not moving. She told me to bring my sister-in-law and the baby to her and offer a white flower with a touch of yellow, at one of the churches. She gave me a detailed direction, how would my sister-in-law would offer the flower to her. However, as I looked down on her feet, her dress turned to copper. When I awoke my sister-in-law just came in. I told her my dream, she believed that it might be a message she had been waiting for. My sister-in-law and I searched for a store that happened to have an image of a lady who carries bible, a child, and a whiter flower with a touch of yellow in the child’s hand. We

found out her name was Saint Anne. It took us days of research to find the history of Saint Anne. I crossed one website who happens to have her shrines in Canada. As I read through the article and found the pictures, chills went down my spine because the blurry picture on the web is the lady on my dream.

In her memo the writer suggests that her story might sound a little crazy but affirms that the article she read on the Internet said that Saint Anne always performs miracles that help families stay together. The woman asked the shrine clergy to pray for them, stating that she was a sinner just like everyone else. The woman seemed to question the validity of her dreams stating, “If my dreams were true, I am flattered and honored that she appeared in my dream. It was a great experience for me.”

The last two visions to be described occurred during precarious pregnancies. Both writers are Canadian women who reported that their unborn babies’ lives were threatened and that doctors were unable to help them. It is not unusual for women to turn to Saint Anne in such circumstances, especially in times of difficulty conceiving or during pregnancies. What is rather unusual is that the women report visionary experiences.

The first letter, written in 2002, describes an apparition that took place in 1989. The letter was written at the request of a priest after the visionary had undertaken a pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré. The writer reports that she had difficulty conceiving her third child and that this pregnancy was problematic. She states that she had experienced a lot of pain and had gone to

her family doctor for an emergency ultrasound. The doctor discovered that she had an ectopic pregnancy and she was immediately sent to a specialist who advised her to terminate the pregnancy as soon as possible as her life was in danger.<sup>347</sup> The woman considered this procedure an abortion and refused to have the surgery. She reports that when she told her mother about her situation, her mother advised her to turn to Saint Anne and to leave everything in God's hands. The woman prayed for a week to Saint Anne. She writes:

Approximately one week passed by. It was early Sunday morning and I was lying in bed in a state of being half asleep and half awake when St. Anne appeared in front of me. I asked St. Anne to help me with my baby, and I promised to bring the baby to visit Sainte Anne de Beaupré after its birth. Later that day I became violently ill and I thought for sure I was losing the baby. My husband rushed me to the hospital. I worked at that hospital and when I found out who the specialist on call was, I was very upset because he had a reputation for doing many abortions. All I kept yelling was: "I want my baby," over and over again. After everyone calmed me down, I allowed the doctor to examine me internally. He gave me the wonderful news that the baby was in my womb. I was admitted into the hospital and put on intravenous in order to control my vomiting. The next morning they did an ultrasound, which confirmed that everything was fine. Four days later I was discharged from the hospital.

Her son was born in the summer of 1990 and the family traveled together to the shrine in the following summer. When her husband took their son into the shrine and stopped in front of the Miraculous Statue of Saint Anne, her son "raised both

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<sup>347</sup> An ectopic pregnancy is the development of a fertilized egg outside the womb, usually in the fallopian tubes.

arms up to St. Anne and spoke in a language we could not understand.” She reports that both she and her husband were in tears.

Another letter, written in 2003, documents some unusual phenomena. Saint Anne does not appear to a pregnant woman but rather sends assistance in a peculiar way. The letter describes a problematic pregnancy in which one of twin girls was much smaller than the other, with the problem diagnosed as a placental attachment issue. A specialist advised the woman that one of her twins would certainly die, which would in turn jeopardize the life of the second baby, and that surgery would not solve the problem. The woman reports that she started praying to Saint Anne as soon as she heard that her babies were in trouble. She states: “I knew in my heart that as I had done in the past, if I turned to Saint Anne, she could save my babies.” She writes that she prayed fervently to Saint Anne one night and fell asleep and then woke back up again. She saw “two balls that looked like fire” descending down onto her stomach. A few days after this vision the woman and her family went to the shrine, begging Saint Anne to save her babies, while making promises to the saint. The woman reports that the pilgrimage offered her renewed hope. Later that week she returned to the specialist and an ultrasound revealed that the smaller twin’s development had improved. She writes that she “knew at this moment I had my miracle. I thanked Saint Anne.” The woman informs us that both girls were born healthy and vibrant. They were baptized on the anniversary of the miracle.

### The Cry of Mary

As my first chapter indicated, pilgrimage usually conjures up notions of an individual's journey to a sacred place, here to the shrine of Sainte Anne de Beaupré. The present section discusses a different type of healing pilgrimage—the pilgrimage of Saint Anne herself vis-à-vis Colette Coulombe and their joint mission: “The Cry of Mary” or “Le Cri de Marie.”<sup>348</sup> This section of the chapter also discusses visions in a different way. Although Colette's visions are similar to other contemporary visions of Saint Anne, especially since they are related to religious healing, the apocalyptic content sets them apart from the other Saint Anne visionary experiences discussed thus far.

Colette Brassard was born in Saguenay, Quebec on August 25, 1930. She was seventy-eight years old when I first visited her on June 25, 2009. She told me that her experiences with Saint Anne are a lifetime story, a beautiful story of love with heaven, the saints, and especially Saint Anne. Colette describes much of her early life as a time of suffering. Her father was an alcoholic and the family often lived in fear. She recalls being so afraid that she would turn blue from holding her breath when her father came home drunk and smashed everything in sight. Her mother often had to ask for charity to support the family. When Colette was thirteen her mother, at the age of fifty-two, died of a heart attack. On the ninth

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<sup>348</sup> Coulombe published some of her life and visionary experiences in a devotional book. See Colette Coulombe, *Le cri de Marie!* (Québec, 2009).

day of her hospital stay, which was coincidentally July 26, the feast day of Saint Anne, Colette's mother called Colette into the room and told her that she would die that day. Colette says the nine days of her mother's hospital stay were a true novena. For Colette, such coincidences point to the veracity of her visions and mission. These coincidences are signs from heaven and Saint Anne herself. Before dying, Colette's mother told her three things: do not do anything bad, do not marry a man who drinks, and cry out to Saint Anne whenever you need her. After Colette's mother died, Colette spent one year of being angry, turning from her faith. She was angry because she wanted her mother. Moreover, she had believed that her mother would be healed, hoping for a miracle rather than her mother's death on St. Anne's feast day. One day, when Colette was nearly fifteen years old the Sisters of Divine Mercy came to their home asking for donations. Her father had nothing to give except his daughter. He told the nun that Colette would be lost forever if she did not go with her. The nun agreed to take Colette and she lived happily with the *Soeurs Antoniennes de Chicoutimi* for five years, preparing to become a nun herself.

Colette's first unusual experience with Saint Anne occurred at the age of twenty, three months before taking her final vows. She recounts that while she was sleeping in her cell the light turned on. She got up and turned it off. It happened again and she hid under the covers. Then she heard Saint Anne calling her, telling her to stand up. Saint Anne told her to look out at the street and see

all the lost souls. Saint Anne advised her that she must leave the convent to save souls and that she had a mission to accomplish. These experiences continued for some time and Colette decided to leave the convent.

Michael Carroll offers a provoking explanation about why some people have apparitions, which may relate to Colette's experiences of maternal loss and visionary experiences.<sup>349</sup> According to Carroll's psychoanalytic perspective, apparitions or hallucinations are shaped by infantile desires and wishes. He suggests that a Marian apparition may initially be an attempt to establish the presence of a reassuring loved mother figure, which for some reason has been lost. Carroll suggests that this pattern is common in accounts of apparitions and cites four well known Virgin Mary visionaries: Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes, Catherine Labouré in Paris, Lucia dos Santos at Fatima, and Ivanka Ivankovic at Medjugorje.<sup>350</sup> For example, Ivanka's mother died two months prior to the apparitions. Ivanka was the first of the seers to in Medjugorje to speak to the Virgin Mary, asking her about her mother. Ivanka was informed that her mother was safe in heaven.<sup>351</sup> Likewise, Catherine's mother died when she was only nine years old. She began receiving visions in 1830 at the age of twenty-four. In her

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<sup>349</sup> See Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986).

<sup>350</sup> Another interesting similarity among Colette, Lucia and Bernadette's life experiences is that their fathers all had a heavy dependence on alcohol.

<sup>351</sup> Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 181.



first visionary experience she identified the figure in her apparition as Saint Anne, not the Virgin Mary as later recorded by church authorities.<sup>352</sup>

Colette believed that God wanted her to marry and have children rather than enter the religious life. She started dating and fell in love with a man. Later, she discovered that this man was an alcoholic. Because of her experiences with her father and her mother's advice, she stopped seeing him. Soon after, she met her current husband, Victor Coulombe. Despite her inability to love him, she married him in January 1954. Over the course of her marriage she fell in love with him and they had seven children within ten years, of whom only five survived. They currently have nine grandchildren and live in Charlesbourg, a borough of Quebec City.

Colette believes that Saint Anne has intervened in her life many times, healing her children and herself. For example, her fourth child was born with a very small rectum and had trouble emptying her bowels. Colette recalls that she would have to go to the hospital frequently to have her bowels emptied. Her daughter would scream in pain during these procedures. This situation also posed difficulties for Colette since she had trouble getting someone to watch her other children. She gave Saint Anne an ultimatum – either heal her child or baby-sit for her! Ten days later her daughter was healed. Colette also reports that she herself had numerous illnesses that Saint Anne healed, including ovarian cancer.

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 168.

Colette explains that she had a cyst the size of a grapefruit on one ovary. She asked Saint Anne to heal her. Colette believes that Saint Anne has the keys to heaven and also has the power to heal, since heaven has a huge storage of body parts and various organs, to which Saint Anne has access. Colette affirms that it was Saint Anne who operated on her, giving her two new ovaries. In Colette's view, people take too many medications. All that one needs to do is ask Saint Anne for healing and medical intervention is not always necessary.

Colette perceives that life on earth is full of suffering. Life itself is a pilgrimage, ending when one dies and enters heaven. Humanity, Saint Anne told Colette, was created for happiness. People were created to become saints. Significantly, Colette's perspective on suffering is in line with Thomas Csordas' characterization of late twentieth century Catholicism, at least in its charismatic form. Csordas suggests that many Catholics have turned away from embracing suffering as an imitation of Christ's passion.<sup>353</sup> Instead, there has been a tendency to seek to alleviate suffering through divine healing as practiced by Jesus and described in the gospels. For Colette, happiness and the cessation of suffering occur only when one follows the teachings of Jesus, allowing oneself to be loved. How do we do this? According to Colette, a profound and sincere conversion to Jesus' heart is required. This conversion is the urgent mission of Saint Anne. Her

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<sup>353</sup> Thomas J. Csordas, *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 25.

goal is to convert souls before Jesus is forced to “shake the earth.” Colette believes that she had to endure great suffering in her life in order to complete her mission. Suffering not only purified her for this mission but it also enabled her to better understand others’ life experiences.

Colette recounts that the mission, “The Cry of Mary,” really began when Saint Anne came to her in her bedroom on June 3, 1990. Colette had returned earlier that evening from a meeting at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. As she was changing her clothes, she felt numbness in her body, similar to the paralysis she had suffered earlier in her life. She heard a voice calling her and telling her, “Don’t be afraid. It is your grandma Saint Anne who is speaking to you.” For one hour Saint Anne spoke to her. She told Colette that she wanted her to create a mission for her, a mission divided into three parts: Saint Anne Evenings (local meetings), Saint Anne Meetings (non-local retreats), and the Answers of Saint Anne (responding to letters). Colette was advised there were three important tasks that Saint Anne had to accomplish. First, Saint Anne had to help her daughter Mary save souls. Second, Saint Anne wanted to leave the basilica at Sainte Anne de Beaupré so that she could heal people, those who could not undertake a pilgrimage to the shrine. Third, Saint Anne wanted to be loved twelve months of the year—not just during July or on her feast day. To help Colette with her mission, Saint Anne promised her good health always. Colette told me that since that date, she has slept only three hours daily. She is never

tired or sick. Saint Anne also promised Colette a special gift—when Colette dies Saint Anne will meet her at the door of heaven and carry her in her arms, bringing her to her grandson Jesus.

On October 13, 1991 Colette received her first “big vision.” In this vision she saw Jesus, the Virgin Mary and Saint Anne. All three encouraged her to continue the mission that she had undertaken for Saint Anne. Prior to this vision, Colette describes her experiences with Saint Anne as inner locution, that is, she only heard the saint’s voice in her head. Colette always categorizes her experiences either as inner locutions, visions or apparitions. She says in visions “one sees clearly.” A vision is like a frame. You open the frame and you can see the actors. They are able to talk to you but you cannot touch them. In contrast, in an apparition they are right beside you and you can touch them. Colette has received numerous visions from Saint Anne, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, various saints, two of the seers from Medjugorje, and even Satan himself. She told me that Satan tried to prevent her from completing her mission on two occasions. In both instances Colette explained that Satan attacked her good health—first nearly blinding her and then causing cardiac issues. Saint Anne intervened on both occasions and healed her. Because of Colette’s many visionary experiences, she is unsure of whether she is really here on earth or in heaven. She sees herself as “neither here nor there” or “betwixt and between” worlds. She is, as Victor

Turner would suggest, a liminal entity.<sup>354</sup> Colette finds this experience very difficult to explain, not fully understanding it.

Colette reports that numerous healings and conversions have resulted from her mission. She has traveled throughout the world, spreading the message of Saint Anne. With various Catholic groups she has also traveled to major pilgrimage sites including Fatima, Medjugorje, Lourdes and Saint Anne d’Auray. She has also responded to millions of letters. Since the beginning of her mission, Colette claims that there have been over two thousand reports of healing. Healings have occurred at various meetings and even through the letters Colette writes to people. Some people claim to have been healed from various afflictions such as cancer, epilepsy, addictions or even a broken knee. Colette travels with three devotional objects that represent efficaciousness in healing at Sainte Anne de Beaupré: Saint Anne’s oil, Saint Anne’s relics and a small statue of Saint Anne. The statue is a reproduction of the Miraculous Statue at the shrine. The small vial of oil, which Colette claims is always refilled by Saint Anne herself, has been reported to have curative properties by many of the shrine’s pilgrims. Colette also travels with relics, but not an actual relic from the shrine, since she was not permitted to take one. Colette claims that Saint Anne gave her a medal, which she found on her kitchen table. She takes photographs of this medal, cuts them into roughly one inch pieces, and takes them to a priest at the shrine who then

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<sup>354</sup> See Turner, *The Ritual Process*.

places them in contact with the major relic of Saint Anne.<sup>355</sup> Individuals can then tape this image to their afflicted body part. In addition, since the release of Colette's video in the mid 1990s, which documents her mission, some individuals even claim to be healed simply by watching the video. The video itself is seen as imparting Saint Anne's power. For example, one woman wrote to Colette about her seventy-three year-old sister, who said that as she watched the video she felt a sensation in her body. When she stood up, she no longer felt any pain or stiffness from arthritis.



Figure 8. *Victor and Colette Coulombe, June 25, 2009.* Photo by the author.

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<sup>355</sup> In Colette's view, these replicas become empowered after touching the major relic, which she perceives of as being imbued with power. Only religious officials may touch the major relic.

On June 26, 2009, I made a visit to Our Lady of the Rosary shrine in Port Colbourne, Ontario. Here, where Colette had been invited to hold a retreat in commemoration of its twenty-fifth anniversary, I observed another type of healing ritual, one that does not usually happen to Colette. The entire experience was unnerving for myself. I had just exited my car and taken my young son Nikolai out of his seat. A woman whom I had met at the shrine the previous day, Theresa, came rushing over to the car. I heard horrible screaming coming from the building next to me, and asked Theresa what was going on. She told me that a woman was undergoing an exorcism. I could feel the color draining from my face. I thought North American Catholic exorcism was long dead in the Third Millennium.<sup>356</sup> Theresa saw that I was nervous. She placed both hands over my son's head and said, "Cover him with the blood of Christ." I did what any good ethnographer would do with a baby in tow: I observed from the safety of the shrine. To make matters worse, each time the woman being exorcised let out a blood curdling scream my son would imitate her, screaming all the louder. I kept asking myself, "Why am I so afraid?" I am a nominal Catholic who certainly does not believe in exorcism. Nonetheless, popular culture influences us. My feelings of fear originated from childhood. In my youth I had watched the movie "The Exorcist." As Micheal Cuneo suggests in his study of exorcism ministries in

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<sup>356</sup> According to Michael Cuneo, exorcism continues to be a "booming business" in the United States, especially among middle-class Americans. See Michael Cuneo, *American Exorcism: Expelling Demons in the Land of Plenty* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), xii.

America, without this novel and subsequent movie release in the early 1970s, the Catholic ritual of exorcism would likely have remained obsolete in the United States.<sup>357</sup> For me, the woman's screaming recalled memories of this childhood terror: a grotesque demon possessing the innocent child Regan. In addition, I could not see what was happening. I was worried about my son's safety. What would this woman being exorcised do? After a few minutes I was able to gather my wits about me and began watching what the other people were doing. Some people were fervently praying the Rosary at the shrine's replica of the Lourdes grotto. Others were in the same building where the exorcism was taking place. Their hands were raised high in the air while praying. A few women left the building and entered the shrine. They were filled with emotion: fear. Tears were streaming down their faces. After what seemed like an eternity, I heard loud applause. Colette, a young African priest and a young woman exited the makeshift confessional. The woman was quickly whisked away in a car, and I was told, taken home to rest after her ordeal. The exorcism had been a success.

I remembered the woman who was exorcised from the day before. She was in her early thirties. She had participated in reciting the Rosary with the group and had listened to Colette speaking about her experiences. The woman

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<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 269. Cuneo suggests that after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) Catholic liberals in the United States hoped to fully engage in the rational and secular modern world, "throwing off its medieval trappings" (5). He states: "In the newly relevant, streamlined, and culturally respectable Catholicism envisioned by liberals, there was hardly room for belief in the Virgin Mary or the saints, let alone spooky spirits and demons and exorcisms" (5).



was very unhealthy, frail and seemed distraught or distant, as though she was uncomfortable being at the shrine. She was just a little shorter than my own height of five feet and eleven inches, and I would be surprised if she weighed a hundred pounds. She looked like she was suffering from anorexia nervosa. However, others in the group did not share this diagnosis. They told me that the reason she was so thin was that she was possessed by demons. These demons purged all the food out of her body. How did this all happen? It was explained to me that when this woman's father died, she had embraced him. At the moment he died, all his demons were transferred to her. Healing, according to the group, could only occur through the ritual of exorcism, more commonly known in Charismatic Catholicism as the ritual of deliverance.<sup>358</sup>

Michael Cuneo would probably describe Colette as a Catholic Marianist and/or Apocalypticist. In his study of American Catholics he describes three factions of the Catholic Right: Conservatives, Traditionalists and Marianists.<sup>359</sup> These groups constitute a kind of Catholic underground made up of individuals in rebellion against the new comforts and freedoms of American Catholicism.

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<sup>358</sup> This type of healing ritual is discussed in the next chapter. I would not categorize Colette as a Charismatic Catholic, since the performance of this ritual was a rare occurrence for her. Moreover, she does not practice speaking in tongues (*glossalalia*) or "resting in the spirit," which are typical characteristics of Charismatics. However, many of the people at Our Lady of the Rosary shrine were Charismatics. See Csordas, *The Sacred Self* and Cuneo, *American Exorcism*.

<sup>359</sup> Michael W. Cuneo, *The Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999).

Cuneo suggests that Mystical Marianists or Apocalypticists turn to the exotic realm of miraculous apparitions and mystical prophecy. This group contends that the Virgin Mary has re-entered history with new messages of hope and warning for the suffering faithful.

Some scholars have explained the twentieth century rise in apparitions of the Virgin Mary as part of a phenomenon responding to social and political tensions. For example, E. Ann Matter suggests that “apocalyptic Marian piety is based in the deep-felt yearnings of the millions of Christians...is an antidote for the confusions of our world,” and it must be understood “as deeply entwined with the political and social changes of the twentieth century.”<sup>360</sup> Colette’s mission is ultimately concerned with social issues—issues that relate especially to couples and the raising of children. These include immodesty (especially women dressing provocatively), excessive materiality, divorce, adultery, premarital sex, and co-habitation outside marriage. For example, on October 13, 1991 at 2:10 a.m. Colette had a vision of Jesus. In this vision Jesus took her in a fishing boat along the Saint Lawrence River and said to Colette: “My children are living in sin. I will be forced to shake the earth.” He had messages for both priests and parents.<sup>361</sup> In the vision Jesus emphasized that parents must bring

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<sup>360</sup> E. Ann Matter, “Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in the Late Twentieth Century: Apocalyptic, Representation, Politics,” *Religion* 31 (2001): 141.

<sup>361</sup> Colette delivered the messages to the priests but would not elaborate on the contents of the messages saying only that they were personal.

their children back to the church and sacraments. They must hurry and do this because he is coming with his infinite justice and mercy. It is urgent that parents tell their children the truth completely. It is not enough to pray for them.

The apocalyptic language in Colette's visions, especially the themes of truth, sinfulness, urgency and conversion, resonates with other twentieth century visions such as those at Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina mentioned above in connection with the seer Ivanka. These serial apparitions began in 1981 and continue through today albeit in a modified form. In 1981 the Virgin Mary identified herself to six children stating, "I am the Queen of Peace." Her message was for immediate conversion in order to avoid the impending punishment of God:

Tell all my sons and daughters, tell all the world as soon as possible that I desire their conversion. The only word I tell the world is convert and do not delay. I will ask my son not to punish the world but that the world will be saved. You do not, and cannot, know what God will send to the world. Convert, renounce everything, be ready for everything, because this is all part of the conversion. Tell the world not to wait, it needs to convert. When God comes He will not be joking; I tell you that you must take my messages seriously."<sup>362</sup>

There are also similarities between Colette's visions and other North American visionaries' messages. On November 12, 1949 the Mother of God is said to have appeared to Mary Ann Van Hoof, a farm wife and mother of eight

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<sup>362</sup> Peter Batty, *Our Lady Queen of Peace, Queen of Apostles, Is Teaching Us the Way to the Truth and Life at Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, As Narrated by Fr. Tomislav Vlasic, OFM, Spiritual Director of the Visionaries* (Enfield, England: Pika Print, 1984), 7.

children outside the small village of Necedah, Wisconsin. For thirty-four years messages concerning youth, the Roman Catholic Church and the world were given to her. Like Colette, Mary Ann was told to “Bring the truth to all people.”<sup>363</sup> Veronica Leuken, also a housewife and mother of five, reported apparitions of the Virgin Mary, Jesus and other saints from 1970-1995 at Bayside, New York. The messages that Veronica received also contained dire warnings for humanity and urgent messages promoting conversion.<sup>364</sup> Significantly, Veronica had visions of Saint Anne. On September 7, 1973 she reported that she saw Saint Anne giving birth to the Virgin Mary. She also had visions of Saint Anne on July 25, 1973 related to child discipline and true direction. The message of Saint Anne to Veronica was as follows:

Oh how sad to look upon the homes of the earth! Whatever has become of motherhood? Bad example, such poor example I see in many homes. You must return to the simple life. The love of riches will destroy your souls. Involvement of the parents in worldly pursuits and living take them farther from the graces of Heaven. The greatest offences to the Father are the lack of discipline and true direction of many parents on earth today. You still have time to make restitution and atonement, and to save your children. You must bring them back to the Sacraments. You must be an example of modesty and true faith to them. Children will learn much by your example.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>363</sup>See “Welcome,” <http://www.queenoftheholyroaryshrine.com/Welcome%20Entry%20Page.htm> (accessed September 1, 2009) and Zimdars-Swartz.

<sup>364</sup> See Daniel Wojcik, “Polaroids from Heaven: Photography, Folk Religion, and the Miraculous Image Tradition at a Marian Apparition Site,” *Journal of American Folklore* 109 (1996): 129-148.

<sup>365</sup> “The Holy Bible on Child Discipline,” [www.tldm.org/News8/BibleChildDiscipline.htm](http://www.tldm.org/News8/BibleChildDiscipline.htm) (accessed on August 17, 2009).

Although Colette's mission contains similar elements to these other North American visions, there are two distinct differences. First, Colette was not instructed to build a shrine. Instead, Colette and Saint Anne journey to other places, whereas both Necedah and Bayside have become pilgrimage centers. Second, both Mary Ann and Veronica claimed to suffer the stigmata and other physical illnesses.<sup>366</sup> Cuneo notes that the stigmata, or the wounds of Christ, were considered authenticating marks of their respective ministries.<sup>367</sup> In contrast, Colette's complete bodily healing gives legitimacy to her mission.

Like a number of other contemporary visionaries, Colette has traveled throughout the world taking Saint Anne with her.<sup>368</sup> In this sense, both Colette and Saint Anne are pilgrims. Likewise, people travel to meet Colette. For those people unable to make the longer trip to Sainte Anne de Beaupré, places like Our Lady of the Rosary in Port Colbourne offer shorter alternative pilgrimages. Colette's power to heal comes from her special relationship with Saint Anne, a relationship that has developed through visionary experiences.

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<sup>366</sup> One of Colette's followers believes that Saint Anne's oil secretes from the palms of her hands. I asked Colette about this and she denied it.

<sup>367</sup> Cuneo, *The Smoke of Satan*, 167.

<sup>368</sup> See William A. Christian Jr., "Believers and Seers: The Expansion of an International Visionary Culture," In *L'anthropologie de la Méditerranée/Anthropology of the Mediterranean*, D. Alberta, A. Blok, C. Bromberger eds., 407-414 (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose/Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme, 2001).

## Conclusions

As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, visionary experiences of Anne likely occur much more frequently than they are reported. For all types of visions, those that gain social recognition are at the tip of the iceberg: “The seers not listened to and the messages unheard, voices calling in the desert, join the other lost matter, matter seen but not socially perceived, that surrounds us every day and in every aspect of our lives.”<sup>369</sup> Although there has been considerable scholarship on Marian visions, there has been very little attention paid to visionary experiences of Saint Anne. One of my objectives in writing this chapter was to collect visionary material and form a preliminary corpus for analysis. When I initially began thinking about Saint Anne visions, I was only aware of a few accounts. Future ethnographic studies at Saint Anne shrines in North America, Europe or India would likely reveal many more visionary reports. However, part of the problem in accessing these sources may be that people are simply uncomfortable talking about visionary experiences in general. As I mentioned earlier all visions go through a filtering process that begin with the

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<sup>369</sup> William A. Christian Jr., “Six Hundred Years of Visionaries in Spain: Those Believed and Those Ignored,” In *Challenging Authority: The Historical Study of Contentious Politics*, Michael P. Hanagan, Leslie Page Moch, and Wayne TeBrake eds., 107-119 (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1998), 118.

seer.<sup>370</sup> Many visions are never recounted. At the micro level, individuals may report their visions to family, friends or religious authorities. If an individual's visionary experiences are rejected or met with skepticism, chances are that the visions will not be reported. In addition, stories of local visions may be kept local—a “kind of compartmental knowledge.”<sup>371</sup> Such events may be of little interest outside a town or village, and therefore are not reported in the wider world of the media. Moreover, at the macro level, Pope Benedict XVI has recently instructed the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to establish new, more rigorous, criteria in a handbook or *vademecum*, in order to distinguish between “true” and “false” visions.<sup>372</sup> Bishops will now be required to apply “scientific, psychological and theological criteria.” The first imposed requirement for visionaries will be silence. If they refuse to obey, church officials will take this

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<sup>370</sup>See William A. Christian Jr., "Islands in the Sea: The Public and Private Distribution of Knowledge of Religious Visions," In *Visualizing the Invisible; Visionary Technologies in Religious and Cultural Contexts*, Lisa Bitel, ed., Special Issue of *Visual Resources*, 25:1-2 (March 2009):153-165.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>372</sup> The guideline for the approval of apparitions was last issued in 1978. See Simon Caldwell, “Pope orders bishops to root out false claims of visions,” *Telegraph* January 12, 2009, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/vaticancityandhollysee/4223793/Pope-orders-bishops-to-root-out-false-claims-of-visions.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/vaticancityandhollysee/4223793/Pope-orders-bishops-to-root-out-false-claims-of-visions.html) (accessed August 19, 2009).

as a sign that their claims are false. All these filtering processes pose challenges for the collection of visionary data.<sup>373</sup>

As this study has revealed, visionary experiences are an important aspect of the Saint Anne tradition. Visions in the ancient and early modern world were “effective” visions—visions with social recognition and consequences. The ancient visions of Saint Anne recorded in early Christian literature not only reflect devotion to Saint Anne in the Roman Catholic tradition, but they were also influential for the doctrine of Mary’s Immaculate Conception. Early modern visions in France, Italy, India and Sri Lanka established or revitalized local traditions. Males are most often associated with the building of shrines. The exceptions, of course, are the young shepherdess in Italy and the Brahmin woman in India. The Brahmin woman’s vision seems to offer secondary support for a male’s vision, support, which is likely, related more to her caste than gender. Visions of Saint Anne, especially those at Ste-Anne-d’Auray, are very similar to later Marian apparitions insofar as they also led to the founding of other pilgrimage healing shrines in France such as Laus, Lourdes or La Salette.<sup>374</sup> Sainte Anne de Beaupré came into being only as a result of such visions. It was

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<sup>373</sup> Compare Christian’s “Islands in the Sea” and “Six Hundred Years of Visionaries in Spain.”

<sup>374</sup> The Roman Catholic Church officially recognized Notre Dame du Laus on May 4, 2008. The Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to Benoîte Rencurel, a young shepherdess, in 1664. See Henry Samuel, “New Vatican Shrine ‘could rival Lourdes,’” *The Independent.ie*, May 5, 2008, < <http://www.independent.ie/world-news/Europe/new-vatican-shrine-could-rival-lourdes-1367036.html> > (accessed August 28, 2009).



French settlers who transported these models for encounters with divine personae to North America.<sup>375</sup>

Images or statues of Saint Anne are frequently linked to a reoccurring feature of visionary experiences. The legends associated with Sainte-Anne-la-Palud, Sainte-Anne-d’Auray and the shrine in Sri Lanka all depict the “finding” of statues, which are a tangible means of authenticating visions. At Sainte-Anne-la-Palud the fishermen found a statue of Saint Anne in their nets, which offered proof to legendary stories about Anne’s visions. At Sainte-Anne-d’Auray Nicholaizic also uncovered a statue after having serial visions, making the invisible (visions) present to others. Similarly, the Portuguese traveler found a statue which lead to the construction of a shrine. Images of Saint Anne have been associated with unusual phenomena in visionary encounters, especially in the United States. For example, both the statue in New York and the icon in Pennsylvania were reported to have curative properties while weeping tears or myrrh. Further, as we have seen an American woman described an illuminated statue in her son-in-law’s hospital room.

Much like devotional expressions, visionary experiences of Saint Anne are media of engagement through which individuals derive power from the divine realm, gaining power and authority in their earthly situations. As we have seen

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<sup>375</sup> Colette Coulombe believes that she is the second Saint Anne visionary in history, the first being Nicholaizic.

in women's visionary experiences in the medieval period, visions provided women with agency. Visions enabled women to engage in religious and social discourses that were otherwise generally restricted to men. Visions gave women authority to speak about marriage, doctrine or imminent social situations such as epidemics or reforms. In the contemporary period we see the same notion of agency either directed toward a particular family unit or society as a whole. For example, a vision of Saint Anne enabled an American woman to speak openly about her brother's troubled marriage. The visionary experience gave the woman authority to intervene in an otherwise private matter. The visions of Coulombe and Leuken are directed toward humanity in general. Visions of Saint Anne empower these women to speak with authority about contemporary social issues affecting family units.

A common theme found in visions is religious healing. In many of the visionary experiences agency in the therapeutic process is attributed to Saint Anne. She may appear herself, performing ovarian surgery as in the case of Colette Coulombe. Or, Saint Anne may appear symbolically, as balls of healing fire entering the womb to save an unborn child. Some of the earliest traditions about Saint Anne focused primarily on healing and the image of Saint Anne as healer originates from visionary experiences, as we have seen in the Breton legends. Personal visions, especially those associated with miraculous cures generally occur after a shrine has come into existence. Sainte Anne de Beaupré is

also a place known for healing. Many visions associated with Sainte Anne de Beaupré are innately personal and are most often related to some form of religious healing.

Like many Marian apparitions, visions of Saint Anne are reported to occur in dreams or in a waking state. They can occur in holy places or domestic spaces. Saint Anne may appear herself—in the form of a person, statue, or some other symbolic form offering hope, protection, healing and renewal to her devotees. The majority of visions of Saint Anne, especially those in Canada and the United States, tend to be of a private genre that lacks broad social relevance. In these cases, visions of Saint Anne are relevant only to the seer and they do not proclaim a wider message for society. In contrast, Colette Coulombe's visions contain urgent messages for society as a whole. Although there is an imminent sense of impending divine judgment in Colette's visions, her mission is largely focused on religious healing. Importantly, the second of Saint Anne's tasks outlined in "The Cry of Mary" is to leave the confines of the basilica at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. In this task Saint Anne's objective is to heal people who cannot undertake a pilgrimage to the shrine. Overall, Anne's primary concern is for the individual and family. She is a personal saint who is known by her devotees as a specialist for various problems, especially health related issues. Ultimately, it is at the intersection of the extraordinary, divine world with the ordinary, mundane world that both healing and visions take place.

## Chapter Four

### *Good Saint Anne: Human Suffering and the Production of Meaning*

*The same evening that this diagnosis came out, my husband walked into my room and said, “How would you like to go to St. Anne’s Shrine, in Quebec?” I asked him, “Who is St. Anne?” He replied, “I don’t really know, but I remember that someone told me a long time ago that there is a Shrine outside of Quebec called ‘St. Anne’s Shrine’ and many people receive cures there” ... I think that the day my husband came into my room and said, “Let’s go to St. Anne,” my life took on new meaning. Not only did I receive a physical cure, I received the Catholic faith.<sup>376</sup>*

Devotion to the saints, as Orsi posits, has been an essential component of the Catholic experience of suffering and sickness for centuries.<sup>377</sup> Despite scientific and biomedical advances, many Catholics have retained beliefs about the healing power of saints into the twenty-first century. Sick individuals continue to make pilgrimages to healing shrines throughout the world in hopes of finding a cure. The sick or their caregivers continue to light candles, anoint the body with holy oil or water, pin medals to chests and fervently pray to the saints. Amanda Porterfield points out that Catholics continue to participate in a relatively unbroken tradition of healing that reaches back to antiquity.<sup>378</sup> Despite

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<sup>376</sup> An excerpt from a letter to the shrine at Sainte Anne de Beaupré dated in 1969 by an American woman who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

<sup>377</sup> Robert Orsi, “The Cult of the Saints and the Reimagination of the Space and Time of Sickness in Twentieth-Century American Catholicism,” In *Religion and Healing in America*. Linda Barnes and Susan Sered eds., 29-47 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 29.

<sup>378</sup> Amanda Porterfield, *Healing in the Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 180.

the longevity of these practices, Orsi notes that the role of the saints in mediating the Catholic experience of sickness has received very little attention by scholars.<sup>379</sup> David Hufford and Mary Ann Bucklin suggest that while public interest in the spiritual aspects of health and healing in the United States is evident in the media and popular literature, academic study of the topic is largely conditioned by the Weberian assumption that the modern world is disenchanted. Moreover, they postulate that even “specifically churchly healings,” such as those found at Lourdes or Sainte Anne de Beaupré, are biased by theological issues of modernity.<sup>380</sup>

This chapter examines peoples’ various written and/or oral narratives about encounters of healing at the Saint Anne de Beaupré shrine. My analysis includes letters written to the shrine between in 2000 and 2004, petitions written during 2007-2008 and interviews conducted during my fieldwork. Such narratives are stories about lived experience. They are central for understanding healing and illness insofar as they provide a window into people’s lives and experiences. The approach of this study focuses on particular men and women in

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<sup>379</sup> See Orsi, “The Cult of the Saints.”

<sup>380</sup> See David Hufford and Mary Ann Bucklin, “The Spirit of Spiritual in the United States,” In *Spiritual Transformation and Healing: Anthropological, Theological, Neuroscientific, and Clinical Perspectives*, Joan Koss-Chioino and Philip Hefner eds., 25-42 (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006), 38. Hufford and Bucklin suggest that healing practices are biased by Protestant definitions of the spiritual, which exclude saints or souls (spirits): “Nonetheless, such beliefs and practices refer to a more complex social world of spirit than does the Protestant definition. The fact that these practices are generally omitted from the spirituality-religion-and-health literature reflects the fact that the Protestant definition is conventional” (31).

particular situations and the interpretation of their own practices. The aim of this chapter is neither to characterize how religious healing “biologically works,” nor to describe what illness or healing “feels like.” Instead, the goal is to “focus on how dimensions of the perceived world are ‘unmade,’ broken down or altered, as a result of serious illness, as well as on the restitutive processes of the “remaking’ of the world.”<sup>381</sup>

The retellings of healing experiences are often moving. As a researcher I often found it difficult to remain emotionally detached from others’ stories. As Arthur Frank has suggested, listening to the voices of those who suffer is difficult: “These voices bespeak conditions of embodiment that most of us would rather forget our own vulnerability to.”<sup>382</sup> For example, at the shrine, I had spoken to a woman who had recently had a large section of her left breast removed. She had undertaken a pilgrimage to the shrine to pray to Saint Anne for healing. Immediately after returning home, she was to begin radiation therapy. Listening to her story, I realized that I needed to set up an appointment to have my own breast lumps examined, a mammogram I had kept putting off. Hearing grown men and women sob—sometimes uncontrollably—was also challenging. I was often moved to tears. In this sense, the storyteller and the

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<sup>381</sup> Byron Good, *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 131.

<sup>382</sup> Arthur Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 125.

ethnographer are vulnerable: we both put ourselves “out there” in the ethnographic endeavor.

It was also a tremendous privilege to momentarily peer into another person’s private life, sharing in a very intimate way the desperation, sadness and profound sense of hope in their given situations. The majority of people I interviewed eagerly shared their healing stories with me. Some people perceived that recounting their healing experiences was a testimony of faith and therefore often told their stories publicly. For other people, recounting narratives about healing provided the opportunity to share privately and attempt to make sense of their own experiences. For example, one man I interviewed told me that he had not yet shared with anyone his story of being healed from colon cancer. I only encountered one instance in which an individual did not want to share their pilgrimage experiences. This woman had come to the shrine seeking a cure for her aging mother who was in a wheelchair and suffered from arthritis. As an Aide, I had helped this woman with her mother during Mass earlier in the morning and was somewhat surprised at her aloofness when I went to speak with them later in the day. When I asked them about their reasons for coming to Sainte Anne de Beaupré, the daughter responded somewhat abruptly that they had traveled from Western Canada to find a cure for her mother’s pain. A friend had informed them that many people received cures at the shrine. After researching the shrine on the Internet, they had decided to make the pilgrimage

to Sainte Anne de Beaupré. I was curtly informed that her mother had not been cured here at the shrine, and that they had previously traveled to Lourdes, unsuccessfully for the same health issue.

### **Religious Healing: Narratives, Healing and Pilgrimage**

The following section offers a brief sketch of some of the key issues in the study of religious healing, beginning with Arthur Kleinman’s pivotal scholarship in the 1980s.<sup>383</sup> His work is important insofar as he endeavors to understand non-medical healing in terms of culture. He suggests that Western biomedicine is one cultural system among many that offers an “explanatory model” of human sickness.<sup>384</sup> Health care systems, he notes, are “are created by a collective view and shared pattern of usage operating on a local level, but seen and used somewhat differently by different social groups, families and individuals.”<sup>385</sup> Kleinman notes in his study that “folk medicine” is often classified into sacred

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<sup>383</sup> Meredith McGuire’s work also represents an early approach to the study of religious healing in the 1980s. Her work focused primarily on ritual and symbolism among various healing groups in New Jersey. See Meredith McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1988).

<sup>384</sup> See Arthur Kleinman, *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture: An Exploration of the Borderland between Anthropology, Medicine, and Psychiatry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, 139. For many individuals, the Roman Catholic Church’s collective rituals and devotions offer one example of an alternative health care system. God, Jesus, Mary and Saint Anne play an integral role in the Catholic experience of sickness and healing.



and secular parts; however, the division between “folk medicine” and “professional medicine” is often blurred.<sup>386</sup>

Kleinman’s study also distinguishes between illness and disease and curing and healing.<sup>387</sup> He notes that a key axiom in medical anthropology is the dichotomy between the two traits of sickness. “Disease” is a malfunctioning of biological and/or psychological processes, while “illness” refers to the psychosocial experience and meaning of disease. Further, he suggests that illness is the “innately human experience of symptoms and suffering.”<sup>388</sup> “Curing,” according to Kleinman, is the elimination of disease as defined by the biomedical system, while “healing” is the broader restoration of wholeness – with or without a cure. Thus, a person may be healed but not necessarily cured. Or, alternatively, a person may become cured while being healed. Kleinman states that cross-cultural studies indicate that healing refers to two related but distinguishable clinical tasks:

The establishment of effective control of disordered biological and psychological processes, which I shall refer to as the “curing of disease,” and the provision of personal and social meaning for the

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 59. Various narratives about Catholic experiences of healing are also blurred – distinctions between Western biomedicine and “sacred healing” are not always made. Moreover, Western biomedicine and various forms of Catholic healing are often used in conjunction with one another.

<sup>387</sup> In the course of my fieldwork, individuals used the terms curing, healing and miracle interchangeably. They did not make the same type of distinctions made by Kleinman.

<sup>388</sup> Arthur Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing & the Human Condition* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 3.

life problems created by sickness, which I shall refer to as the “healing of illness.” These activities constitute the chief goal of health care systems.<sup>389</sup>

Kleinman offers three types of illness meanings: symptom, cultural significance and life world. The first type is symptom meaning—these are standardized “truths” in local cultural systems. Local forms of common-sense knowledge, such as a breast lump may indicate cancer, “contribute to our shared appreciation of what sickness is and what is meant when a person expresses the sickness experience through established patterns of gestures, facial expressions, and sounds or words.”<sup>390</sup> The second type of illness meaning is culturally specific—symptoms and disorders are marked by cultural salience in different societies and historical periods (such as leprosy, the Black Death, witchcraft or mental illness).<sup>391</sup> The meanings of symptoms are dependent on local knowledge about the body and its pathologies. Moreover, Kleinman suggests that certain disorders such as AIDS have brought particular cultural meaning to the person: the “painful...stigmata of venereal sin”.<sup>392</sup> Life world as meaning is the third type. Kleinman posits that this type of meaning is crucial to understanding chronic illness:

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<sup>389</sup> Kleinman, *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture*, 82.

<sup>390</sup> Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives*, 10-11.

<sup>391</sup> For an example of the changing ethos of American Catholics regarding suffering and illness see Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 19-47.

<sup>392</sup> Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives*, 21-22.

Acting like a sponge, illness soaks up personal and social significance from the world of the sick person. Unlike cultural meanings of illness that carry significance *to* the sick person, this third, intimate type of meaning transfers vital significance from the person's life to the illness experience.<sup>393</sup>

Kleinman suggests that people order their experiences of illnesses through personal narratives that recount what their illness means to them and to others. An illness narrative is a story that people tell to give coherence to events and human suffering:

The plot lines, core metaphors, and rhetorical devices that structure the illness narratives are drawn from cultural and personal models for arranging experiences in meaningful ways and for effectively communicating those meanings. Over the long course of chronic disorder, these model texts shape and even create experience. The personal narrative does not merely reflect illness experience, but rather it contributes to the experience of symptoms and suffering.<sup>394</sup>

Like Kleinman, Cheryl Mattingly and Linda Garro explore narrative as a vehicle to give meaning to illness experiences.<sup>395</sup> These authors demonstrate how narratives from healers and patients serve to illuminate aspects of healing that might not otherwise be recognized, suggesting that the “illness narrative” genre has had a powerful influence in the cross-cultural study of illness and healing. Mattingly and Garro note that narratives are a constructive process, grounded in

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<sup>393</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>395</sup> See Cheryl Mattingly and Linda Garro eds., *Narrative in the Cultural Construction of Illness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

a specific cultural setting, social interaction and history: text, meaning and context are intertwined. Life histories are valuable for examining how illness shapes a person's sense of identity and selfhood. As a means to understand narratives, one must move beyond the text to examine the social world in which the story is being told. Mattingly and Garro propose that meaning in illness narratives is in important ways "emergent and situated, rather than already given by social and cultural structures."<sup>396</sup>

Narratives of illness may be recounted orally or in written form. Orsi's examination of the role of saints in the Catholic experience of sickness and suffering is centered on written narratives sent to the shrine of Blessed Margaret of Castello in Louisville, Kentucky.<sup>397</sup> Using letters he demonstrates how individuals use the cult of the saints to create, interpret, and inhabit spaces and times of sickness. Orsi suggests that the act of writing letters is a means to re-create the world or manipulate the space of sickness, which has been unmade by suffering. Moreover, he posits that the mailing of a letter to a faraway place parallels going on a pilgrimage, creating an opening in the bounded world of sickness.

In recent scholarship on religion and healing, Linda Barnes and Susan Sered have argued that the term "healing" is a complex and contested word in

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<sup>396</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>397</sup> See Orsi, "The Cult of the Saints."

the United States.<sup>398</sup> It has had multiple meanings in a variety of medical, religious and historical contexts. Barnes and Sered describe the multifaceted nature of healing in America:

It can mean the direct, unequivocal, and scientifically measurable cure of physical illness. It can mean the alleviation of pain or other symptoms. It also can mean coping, coming to terms with, or learning to live with that which one cannot change (including physical illness and emotional trauma). Healing can mean integration and connection among the elements of one's being, reestablishment of self-worth, connection with one's tradition, or personal empowerment. Healing can be about repairing one's relationships with friends, relations, ancestors, the community, the world, the Earth, and/or God. It can refer to developing a sense of well-being or wholeness, whether emotional, social, spiritual, physical, or in relation to other aspects of being that are valued by a particular group. Healing can be about purification, repenting from sin, the cleaning up of one's negative karma, entry into a path of purity, abstinence, or more daily living, eternal salvation, or submission to God's will.<sup>399</sup>

As Jill Dubisch and Michael Winkelman observe, healing can be an important dimension of pilgrimage. They suggest that pilgrimage epitomizes the belief in the power of place, noting: "pilgrimage's movement into sacred space involves engagement with special energies and powers, often embedded in the

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<sup>398</sup> Linda Barnes and Susan Sered, "Introduction," In *Religion and Healing in America*, Linda Barnes and Susan Sered eds., 3-26 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 10.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

landscape and agriculture.”<sup>400</sup> Records of healing, *ex-votos* and stories about healing all provide evidence of a shrine’s healing powers. Like Barnes and Sered, Dubisch and Winkelman suggest that the term “healing” encompasses a broad range of meanings. Some pilgrims, they note, seek cures for very specific ailments. Other pilgrims search for healing in a communal or global sense or in a spiritual or psychological sense. Dubisch and Winkelman propose that the healing dynamics embodied in pilgrimage include: (1) a physical journey with social, symbolic and physical effects; (2) an act of personal empowerment; (3) an assertion of the individual’s identity in relationship to sacred “others” that integrates self with collective models; (4) the particularization of individual suffering within broader frameworks that provide meaning; (5) a sense of social solidarity from an active connection with a community of fellow pilgrims; and (6) an alteration of consciousness, eliciting psycho-physiological dynamics to support a range of bodily healing responses.

### **The Wounded Storyteller and the Crucified Christ**

Healing, according to Csordas, “at its most human is not an escape into irreality and mystification, but an intensification of the encounter between suffering and hope at the moment in which it finds a voice, where the anguished

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<sup>400</sup> Dubisch and Winkelman, “Introduction,” xviii. Likewise, geographer Allison Williams has recently written about therapeutic landscapes and healing, using Sainte Anne de Beaupré as a case study. See Allison Williams, “Spiritual Therapeutic Landscapes and Healing: A Case Study of St. Anne de Beaupre,” *Social Science & Medicine* 70 (2010) 1633-1640.

clash of bare life and raw existence emerges from muteness into language.”<sup>401</sup> In a similar fashion, Frank suggests that people who tell stories about their illness experiences are wounded storytellers. Serious illness, he posits, “is a loss of the ‘destination and map’ that had previously guided the ill person’s life: ill people have “to think differently.”<sup>402</sup> Stories are not just about illness but are told through a wounded body. Such embodied stories, Frank posits, have two sides: personal and social. The personal aspect about telling stories is giving voice to the body itself, since it is inarticulate. The social aspect is the act of telling the story to someone. Frank proposes: “The wounded storyteller is a moral witness, re-enchanting a disenchanting world.”<sup>403</sup> Through the act of telling one’s story, the storyteller is able to re-enchant his or her life. For those who listen to the story, the storyteller re-enchants all life.

### **Sarah’s Story**

I first noticed Sarah and Michael, a married couple in their mid-thirties, enthusiastically walking toward the Miraculous Statue with three enormous beautiful bouquets of roses. It was rather unusual to see anyone carrying so many flowers into the shrine, so, I eagerly caught up to them, asking what they intended to do with the flowers. I was informed that they had returned to the

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<sup>401</sup> Thomas Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 11.

<sup>402</sup> Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller*, 1.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

shrine exactly one year after the date of Sarah’s healing to give thanks to Saint Anne, the Virgin Mary and Jesus. Agreeing to tell me their story, they set a time later in the day to meet. Sarah’s story about illness and chronic pain illustrates several of the healing dynamics of pilgrimage that Dubisch and Winkelman have outlined, and Sarah herself exemplifies Frank’s “wounded storyteller.”

Sarah’s illness story begins with a workplace injury in 1994. While working as a veterinary technician, she was handling a very large and rambunctious dog, who was often out of control and nervous. As Sarah was walking the dog, she bent over, and the dog took off sideways. She heard a huge popping sound in her back, went numb, and experienced horrible pain. Thinking that she had simply pulled a large group of muscles in her back, Sarah continued working. Despite a noticeable limp, she finished her shift. Sarah attributes her stubborn resistance to seeking medical help to her Scottish-Irish background: “You don’t go and see a doctor unless your arm has been cut off.”

Sarah’s doctor later explained to her that as the day progressed, a disc had prolapsed and pressed against nerves, causing more damage and paralysis. By the time her shift ended, Sarah could barely walk. She continued to think that her injury was just a back strain – not serious. While she was driving home, she went to lift her leg to shift gears, and her leg would not function: “It just gave out. I had no strength. I couldn’t control it. It scared me and I almost crashed into another car.” This was the first indication that she had severely injured herself.



Sarah managed to drive home with one leg, entered the house and “died on the couch.” Michael was working at the time, and he kept trying to call home but she did not answer the phone. When he came home and saw her, he knew something was seriously wrong with her. The next day she was unable to walk at all and Michael took her to the Emergency Room at their local hospital. It is at this point that Sarah’s story about biomedical intervention begins.

Sarah’s medical story is intertwined with stories about Workers’ Compensation in the United States.<sup>404</sup> In her experience, Workers’ Compensation is not a fair system. Employees automatically receive coverage when they are initially hurt, but from that point onward, “everything is allowed to be contested and re-contested regardless of your evidence or diagnostic proof.” Moreover, she asserts that she received minimal treatment by medical professionals because her case was an insurance claim through Workers Compensation. For example, during the first year of her treatments, she only received x-rays on her back. Such x-rays, she suggests, do not reveal soft tissue damage, and doctors subsequently diagnosed her with a spinal and disc injury. Sarah firmly believes that if it had not been a Workers’ Compensation insurance claim, she would have received an MRI<sup>405</sup> scan, which would have immediately revealed her injuries. Her treatment consisted of four to five months of bed rest and anti-inflammatory medication.

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<sup>404</sup> Both informants asked me not to include their State of residence.

<sup>405</sup> Acronym for magnetic resonance imaging.

Doctors did not treat the pain she was experiencing, which she said was incredible: “Right from the very beginning I was denied pain management.”

At the end of the year, Sarah was required to return to work, but with permanent restrictions. Working was difficult, and she knew something was still seriously wrong with her: “One portion of my back, which was the sacroiliac joint, where the hip joint attaches to the sacrum, I was still in excruciating pain, and I was having burning, horrible radiating pain down into my leg and butt.” She continued to tell her doctor that something was still wrong. But because of the Workers’ Compensation issues, she explains, she was dissuaded from further medical care. Her doctor advised her to wait six to nine months, returning then if the pain persisted.

Sarah waited a year, “toughing it out.” The pain and disability became worse. She also began to lose the function of her leg again. Her doctor sent her to a neurologist, who called Workers’ Compensation to ensure her visit would be covered, and told Sarah that there was nothing wrong with her. Despite his diagnosis, the neurologist referred her to an orthopedic surgeon for further follow-up. Sarah waited six months to see this doctor. At this point, it had been approximately two and a half years since her injury. She had been walking on “a ripped joint” all that time, making it worse and damaging the nerves beyond repair. Finally, however, Sarah was taken seriously and treated with respect. Previously, she had been called “a liar” and “a faker:” “It was incredibly

humiliating, not to mention that the pain and suffering was getting worse.” Sarah asserted that for two and a half years she was ignored and “shoved out of the office as quick as possible.” Finally, however, an orthopedic surgeon diagnosed her properly and she went to a rehabilitation expert, who offered her treatment options.

Unfortunately, Sarah stated, the damage had already been done and it had been too long since her injury to repair it. Her injury had impaired her entire left body function. She could not spend more than twenty minutes in any position. She lived for thirteen years in a constant state of shifting positions, sitting, standing and lying-down. This pain affected her entire life: “I couldn’t work. In essence, I couldn’t live. My poor husband had to do everything.”

Despite her diagnosis, Workers’ Compensation repeatedly forced her back to work. Sarah complied simply because Workers’ Compensation threatened not to pay for her medical bills. Her doctor offered various treatments or surgeries to fix the joint, despite the chronic damage. Workers’ Compensation continued to refuse to pay for new procedures or drugs. Sarah claimed: “I was not treated like a human being and my suffering was made a thousand times worse than it should have been.” Throughout her thirteen-year ordeal, she did not only have to worry about her physical condition, but also about whether or not Workers’ Compensation would deny her claims. She asserted that every time her doctor prescribed a new treatment, surgery or drug, “they would force me to fight” for

coverage over a six to nine month period. For example, when her doctor prescribed anti-inflammatory drugs, Sarah had to hire an attorney and fight for nine months to force Workers' Compensation to cover the costs of that prescription.

I felt like I was fighting for my life as I was receiving the very least amount of care, disregarding what my doctor wanted to do for me and every time I had to fight them in court for something as simple as a prescription for a drug change. And this is the hard part because this is where the psychological suffering comes from. I was just telling my husband the other day that my testimony is hard to tell because it makes me relive this, but I am doing this for God, so people know.

Sarah explained that after four to five years of treatment, steroids in some of the medications she was prescribed caused extreme and rapid weight gain. Despite her doctor's statement that it was normal for some people to gain weight on these drugs, Workers' Compensation disagreed, and took her to court. She felt like the "Crucified Christ," being unable to defend herself:

It would crucify me. I would testify and all I would have was the truth, and they would have teams and teams of lawyers. They were hired to absolutely decimate me. They would call me a liar and a cheat and a faker, even though the evidence said otherwise—even though the doctors explained what was happening with medications. They would spend fifteen minutes discussing my medical records and an hour taking me apart. They implied, "Don't you think you're crippled because you're fat? You can't walk cause you're fat. If you weren't such a gluttonous stress-eater, you wouldn't be crippled."

At this point in the interview, I shut off the tape recorder at Sarah's request. She was crying uncontrollably, recalling these experiences. Michael and

I looked at each other, trying to maintain our own composure. He nodded for me to turn the recorder back on. Michael continued for her, telling me that such comments made by the Workers' Compensation lawyers had a profoundly negative impact on his wife. Sarah, he noted, is very sensitive about her weight. He asserted that she was required to be examined by independent doctors who would testify that she was obese. The tape recorder was shut off again when Sarah heard the word "obese."

Sarah continued her story, stating that she perceived God's presence throughout her ordeal. For instance, she mentioned that the normal waiting list for specialists could be up to one year, whereas she would only wait three months. She also credited God for giving her strength: "It was the grace of God that gave me the strength to get up every day and face this. I can say very truthfully that I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you if it hadn't been for the grace of God."

Sarah recounted that she would often cry because she was in so much physical pain. She acknowledged that she was on the verge of a nervous breakdown: "I was like a catatonic crying machine. So that was my life." She took pain medication sparingly because it made her violently ill. She compared the level of sickness to an individual receiving chemotherapy. She experienced vomiting, weakness, shaking and inability to eat. If her pain became unbearable

enough to cause thoughts of suicide, she would take some medication, despite knowing that it would make her sick.

Desperate for pain relief, Sarah tried experimental ligament injections. Such procedures, she stated, felt like “acid eating me alive.” The pain was excruciating, and she received twelve to fifty injections at a time, weekly for a period of three months. These injections did eliminate some of the pain she was experiencing. She no longer experienced the “piercing, stabbing pain” that she had felt with every step she took. However, she exchanged this pain for another one—a weather-related pain that crippled her even more so that she could not leave home.<sup>406</sup> She asserted that the weather sensitive pain became the most overwhelming of all the pain she had experienced: “Rain, snow, cold, humidity killed me.” Sarah received acupuncture treatments, which offered her some relief. Eventually, she notes, these treatments too stopped being effective. Using a cane, she was only able to walk twenty steps without needing to take a rest. Sarah was desperate, so she underwent thirteen surgeries without general anesthesia, since Workers’ Compensation would only cover a local anesthetic. Her doctor thought this surgery was torture, and he would constantly apologize for causing her pain. She recounted that she would place a rolled-up washcloth

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<sup>406</sup> Sarah is referring to changes in barometric pressure, which affects the sympathetic nervous system or scar tissue.

into her mouth to help muffle her screams. She admitted she made some “unearthly noises,” during these procedures, but God helped her to remain sane.

Sarah acknowledged that she suffered horribly during her thirteen-year ordeal—physically, psychologically and spiritually. She stated: “The suffering was so deep that it went beyond my soul into my spirit.” Sarah received very little support or compassion from her family. She had been raised in a strict military family, where stoicism was the norm: “Never let anything in life beat you down.” Her only support was Michael. Since she had difficulty walking, she was unable to attend church. She suffered in silence, never even telling friends about the amount of pain she experienced.

Sarah recounted that when she came to Saint Anne de Beaupré in 2007, she had no hope in medical science. She believed there was no cure for her condition. She was at the point of breakdown, seriously contemplating suicide. She told Michael that she did not know for how long she would be able to carry on in this condition—a thought that scared them both. They had decided to come to the shrine in order to search for information about Michael’s ancestors who came from France. In addition, Sarah had heard that it was a beautiful church. They did not come to the shrine for healing, especially since Sarah was a United Methodist Protestant and Michael was a non-practicing Roman Catholic. Moreover, they informed me that they had nearly cancelled their trip the night

prior to coming, since Sarah had been in so much pain, and was unsure of whether or not she could endure the long drive to Québec.

Their arrival at Sainte Anne de Beaupré was, according to Sarah, the beginning of her healing story. She stated that when she initially saw the shrine, “her spirit leaped.” She sat on a bench in the courtyard, while Michael looked around the shrine, taking pictures. While waiting for him, she claimed that she heard “the sweetest voice” calling out her name. Recalling this moment, tears began to flow again. She continued her story, while crying softly. She said that she had looked around, thinking that a mother was calling out for her child with the same name. Sarah continued to sit and heard her name again. She realized what was happening – she was hearing her name in her spirit, not with her ears. Sarah admitted that this was the first time she had ever experienced this type of phenomenon: “It is a very ethereal thing to hear with what I call your spirit ears.” She believed that it was Saint Anne calling out to her. Sarah stated that it was the first time she had ever heard the “real compassionate love of a mother.” Sarah had not known such love in her family – unconditional love was foreign to her. Her parents had always demanded and expected perfection. As she gazed up at the statue of Saint Anne holding the Virgin Mary, she thought that the statue embodied a loving portrayal of a mother.

Recalling how she had felt beaten down by others, Sarah asked Michael to leave the room. At this point in our interview she then talked about how close



she had been to ending her life, acknowledging that it hurt to admit this reality. Michael did not know how close she had been to committing suicide: “I was actually seriously thinking about taking my life. I was probably within a month. I had so much self-loathing and so much lack of self-worth, so much humility but not in a good sense. I hated myself then.” She recounts that she felt rejection again and again, not even feeling worthy enough to enter the shrine. The only thing she had left was “a little flicker of hope.” Michael had told her that Sainte Anne de Beaupré was known as a place of healing. She thought that it was wonderful that people had been healed, but she did not expect healing for herself. Moreover, she did not want to “give God the chance to reject her too” by not healing her. God’s rejection “would end it,” and would have been the “last straw” for Sarah.

Sarah believes that God asked Saint Anne to call out to her. After hearing her name the second time, Sarah got up and started walking toward the entrance of the shrine. She climbed the stairs, dragging her bad leg up each step. Again, she heard Saint Anne calling her. As she opened the door to the shrine, she started shaking. Reaching for the holy water, she blessed herself and her joint. She recalled that when the water touched her joint, she felt a strange sensation, a feeling that is difficult to describe—“like a menthol feeling, like peppermint on your tongue.” She remembered looking up at the two large pillars in the shrine

with all the crutches and canes. In the “deepest part of my spirit I just knew God was going to heal me.”

As Sarah continued her story, she paused, and told me that it was difficult to articulate her experience. “Words are inadequate,” she said, to describe all the things she had experienced. She recalled that she began to shake, feeling the power of God: “I felt it come down on me and I felt it in me.” She felt herself being pulled to the left, toward the Miraculous Statue. She scurried to get there. She kneeled at the statue, throwing down her cane and cried out to God. Her memories of this experience are vague, and she cannot remember exactly what she had said while kneeling at the statue. She felt her thirteen years of suffering and called out to God. She felt God’s power and shook. She felt his unconditional love. Saint Anne held her closely, while God healed her. Sarah suggests that she had “a block” in her, one that had protected her over the last thirteen years. She recalls begging God not to take it away as it was all she had to keep her going. At this point, she knew she had received a spiritual and physical healing. She felt a “cold soothing numbness” come back into her bad leg.

Sarah believes that her physical healing was an “after effect” of God’s love. In other words, the spiritual healing produced the physical healing. She suggested that she was in a “trance-like” state for twenty-four hours, a state given by God to protect her mind from what had just happened to her. She knew she had been healed but continued to use her cane, despite not feeling any pain.

The cane had become an extension of her body, but instead of using it for support, after the experience in the shrine, she used it as a walking stick. At the hotel that night, she slept for the first time in thirteen years, without turning even once. When she awoke the next morning, she did not even realize that she had slept uninterrupted. She felt fantastic and smiled because she felt good. Michael noticed that something was different, but he was busy working on his computer. They decided to go for a walk through old Québec. Sarah walked one mile up an old cobblestone hill without pain. Sarah and Michael looked at each other in amazement, realizing what she had just accomplished. Grabbing each other, they jumped up and down with joy, despite the fact that everyone in the surrounding cafés was looking at them oddly. Slowly, Sarah began to realize what had happened to her at the shrine the previous day: “God put me in a cocoon in my mind to help my mind come together enough” to fathom the experience, since she was so fragile.

At this point in telling her story, Sarah was joyful. Her tears were tears of happiness. Though Sarah did not feel pain in her sacroiliac joint, her muscles were atrophied. She suggested that God had left them weak so that her traumatized mind could catch up with her body. She asserted that God had continued to be with her, helping with her rehabilitation over the last year. She did not see a doctor. She began rehabilitating her weakened muscles by walking

daily, beginning with thirty steps the first day; forty steps the second day, and one year later walking eight and a half miles.

As a result of her healing, Sarah has dedicated her life to serving God. Sarah tells other people about her healing. She is grateful that God “reached into my hell and rescued me.” She has begun playing the fiddle to honor God and Saint Anne, and she returned to the shrine to play for them as an act of thanksgiving. Sarah perceives that Saint Anne is her spiritual grandmother, a mother figure who shows her unconditional love. Michael has also been transformed by Sarah’s healing. In an email he sent me shortly after returning home, he admitted that he was still in shock over Sarah’s healing: “I would never have believed it myself if I had not witnessed it.” Although he used to attend church with Sarah, he suggested that he only went along with the mechanics of religion, asserting that he did not believe in miracles:

I am new to Christ. Sarah attended church for most of her life. My family is Catholic but my parents never went to church. So, I did not grow up with Christ in my home. I used to attend church with Sarah but I was going along more with the mechanics of it. I also tend to question things for explanations. I did not believe in miracles. There had to be an explanation for everything. However, Sarah’s healing has changed that. I knew what the medical issues were; I knew that she would only get worse and not better, and I knew that there was really no hope for her. To have her start walking normally without any logical explanation, really changed the way I view miracles.

Sarah’s story illustrates the multifaceted nature of religious healing. Her story is not just about a physical healing. Her experience empowered her,

enabling her to regain her former sense of self-worth. It also renewed her faith in God, since God did not forget her in her desperate time of need. She also formed a relationship with Saint Anne, a bond in which Sarah intimately experiences unconditional love. Through retelling her story, Sarah re-enchants her life, making it meaningful. For those who hear her story, especially Michael, she re-enchants all life.

### **Healing and Saint Anne**

Accounts of various cures, miracles and healings, like Sarah's story, have been reported for over 350 years at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. The shrine's administrator published in the *Jesuit Relations* in 1667 and 1680 the first cures at the church of Saint-Anne-du-Petit-Cap. Today, people continue to write to the church reporting various favors or healings obtained through Saint Anne. Sometimes letters document healings that took place in the distant past, while others discuss healings that occurred at the time of writing the letter. People write about their own healings as well as those of others—family members, neighbors, friends and even complete strangers. People may either document their healing experiences in writing or verbally, while at the shrine. Some letters imply that pilgrims were encouraged by religious authorities to write about their cures. Members of the Équipe Pastorale des Jeunes at the shrine also document

various cures reported by pilgrims throughout each pilgrimage season.<sup>407</sup> Reports of cures are also housed in the shrine's archives. Additionally, there are thousands of letters, documents and newspaper articles saved in the archives depicting various cures. While writing his book on healings at the shrine, Gerard Desrochers notes: "But, there are so many testimonies! I had to scrutinize a host of files meticulously gathered over the years and preserved in our archives."<sup>408</sup> Unlike Lourdes, there is no medical committee at Sainte Anne de Beaupré that appraises cures.<sup>409</sup> A priest informed me that there was no need to verify cures—people just know Saint Anne's reputation as a healer.<sup>410</sup> A number of accounts of

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<sup>407</sup> Each year the shrine publishes a report on the various pastoral activities during the pilgrimage season. Included in this report is a Dossier des Faveurs, which is prepared by the members of the Équipe Pastorale des Jeunes. This group talks to numerous pilgrims, and later records various testimonies. Members of the Équipe may also see pilgrims leaving various *ex-votos* at the shrine, and they write about their observations in the report. The following indicates the number of recorded favors granted (reported in brackets) during six pilgrimage seasons: 2002 (48); 2003 (36); 2004 (39); 2005 (33); 2006 (47), and 2007 (42).

<sup>408</sup> Desrochers, *Healings through Good Saint Anne*, xi.

<sup>409</sup> For comparison with Lourdes see Harris, *Lourdes*.

<sup>410</sup> Although there is no medical committee that examines the authenticity of cures, evidence in the archives suggests that cures were scrutinized in the 1950s. People who claimed a cure via Saint Anne were asked to complete a "Questionnaire Relative to a Cure." They were asked to include their full name and address; information regarding the sickness and cure, and to include three witnesses, the name of their pastor, and their doctor's name. Although contemporary letters about cures are not scrutinized in the same way, they do go through an official filtering process before being placed in the archives.

cures have also been published in devotional literature such as the *Annals of Saint Anne/La Revue Sainte Anne*.<sup>411</sup>

Pilgrims report that healings can be gradual, temporary or instantaneous. They can occur during pilgrimage or while at home. The majority of the pilgrims I interviewed experienced gradual healing, occurring over days, months and even years. For example, I had noticed a visibly unhappy woman in a motor scooter with an American pilgrimage group in 2007. One year later, I interviewed this same woman, seeing her remarkable physical transformation. She had lost a considerable amount of weight, appeared happy, and was walking effortlessly throughout the shrine grounds. She informed me that prior to her pilgrimage in 2007, she had suffered from a variety of health issues including obesity, arthritis and knee problems. She told me that she had been either bedridden or in a wheelchair for 15-20 years. Over the course of one year, she had been able to lose 100 pounds. Saint Anne, she credits, curbed her appetite. As a consequence of her weight loss, she could now kneel, climb stairs, and was entirely mobile, being able to walk like anyone else. Although this woman had not initially made the pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré for herself, instead praying for others' health, she believes she experienced a gradual healing.

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<sup>411</sup> Some people have claimed various cures by applying copies of the *Annals* to injuries or painful body parts. Alternatively, other people promise to subscribe to the *Annals* if they receive a cure. For examples see Hufford, "Ste. Anne de Beaupré" and Bowman, "Sainte Anne de Beaupré."

Some pilgrims report “cures” that have temporary effects. One letter describes how a woman had momentarily experienced relief from a sprained ankle. She explains that as she walked up near the altar she felt the swelling in her foot disappear and she felt a “snap, crackle, pop” effect. She began to walk without limping up until she exited the shrine: “Inside, I could walk without limping, but outside I still had the limp.”

Although one priest I spoke to had never witnessed a “miracle” firsthand, he suggested that others have seen instantaneous cures. One woman wrote to the shrine describing her instantaneous cure from Reflex Sympathetic Disorder.<sup>412</sup> This woman explained that she felt herself “drawn” toward Saint Anne de Beaupré, despite not knowing much about the shrine. Upon entering the shrine, she sobbed uncontrollably when she saw the “two enormous marble pillars that were lined with the crutches and braces of people who had been healed at St. Anne’s.” Standing in front of the Miraculous Statue, she asked God to give her peace and strength to cope with her disease. She explained that while standing at the statue she “felt a tremendous draining from my head to my feet, as though everything was being pulled out of me.” She also felt as though Saint Anne was standing there with her arms around her. Kneeling at the statue, she felt movement in her toes—for the first time in many years. She writes that she

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<sup>412</sup> Reflex Sympathetic Disorder is an incurable chronic pain condition affecting the arms, hands, legs or feet.



took off her orthopedic shoe and brace, wiggled her toes and rotated her foot without pain. She left the church walking unaided – her daughter carried her leg brace and her husband carried her crutches. When she awoke the next morning she states: “My foot had not inverted or twisted, it was perfectly straight completely free of all pain. I could use my hands. My leg and foot circulation had returned. The atrophied muscles in my legs had regenerated...every debilitating symptom was gone.”

As the above narrative indicates, upon entering the main entrance of the basilica, visitors can observe various *ex-votos* displayed on two tall pillars – wooden and metal canes, crutches and other supports. Pilgrims and visitors are immediately introduced to the healing possibilities at the shrine. Alison Williams suggests: “The location of these ‘ex-votos’ at the entrance to the Basilica symbolizes the miraculous power of St. Anne, and the possibilities for healing and health.”<sup>413</sup> Throughout the pilgrimage season, pilgrims continue to leave their *ex-votos* at these pillars in the form of Rosaries, braces, eye-patches, glasses and even an empty can of beer. New *ex-votos* are removed daily from the shrine so that they do not accumulate and become a safety hazard. Currently, the most common types of *ex-votos* left by pilgrims are flowers, rosaries, photographs and monetary offerings. The majority is left at the Miraculous Statue; however, pilgrims do leave *ex-votos* throughout the interior and exterior of the shrine. The

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<sup>413</sup> Williams, “Spiritual Therapeutic Landscapes and Healing,” 1637.

shrine also displays various older *ex-votos* such as paintings, carvings or jewelry in its Musée de Sainte Anne.

Dubisch and Winkelman suggest: “Pilgrimage is about everyday concerns and about the expression, and the search for resolution, of the human experience of suffering.”<sup>414</sup> Various reports written by pilgrims suggest that human suffering can take several forms. It can be social, physical, psychological or spiritual. Many people travel to this shrine seeking healing from contemporary problems such as alcoholism, drug addictions, gambling addictions, anorexia nervosa or infertility issues. Pilgrimage can also involve a more general quest for therapy, for self-transformation, meaning, identity or personal empowerment.

### **Devotional Expressions in the Context of Healing**

Pilgrims often utilize various devotions in the context of religious healing. Jacqueline Le Calvé notes in her comparative study of Sainte Anne de Beaupré and Sainte Anne d’Auray that the use of oil, water and religious metals is deemed efficacious by pilgrims in religious healing: “La pratique est indissociable de la croyance et les objets ont, à leur yeux, un ‘plus,’ une qualité

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<sup>414</sup> Dubisch and Winkelman, “Introduction,” xi.

intrinsèque supérieure, bénéfique, positive, celle qui exauce, qui apporte la guérison.”<sup>415</sup>

During my fieldwork I observed numerous devotional practices performed by pilgrims as a means to facilitate religious healing. Such practices included prayer, writing petitions, touching relics, attending Mass or Confession, lighting candles, climbing the stairs of the Scala Santa, drinking from Saint Anne’s fountain or purchasing Saint Anne’s oil at the store. The shrine also offers special days dedicated to sick individuals. Sick individuals, especially those in wheelchairs, sit at the front of the church. Because sick people often feel marginalized and unnoticed in society, they are given special seating at the church. A priest explained to me that Saint Anne has a special place in her heart for the sick, and this is one reason why they are given preferential treatment at the shrine. Many sick individuals make pilgrimages to the shrine during the

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<sup>415</sup> Jacqueline Le Calvé, “De Sainte-Anne d’Auray à Saint-Anne de Beaupré: santé et guérisons dans les suppliques et les rituels pèlerins,” *Gestions religieuses de la santé*, F. Lautman and J. Maître eds., 177-193 (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1993), 189. English translation: Practice is indistinguishable from faith and in their eyes objects have a “plus,” an intrinsic superior quality, beneficial, positive, one which grants, one which heals.

Novena, hoping for a cure.<sup>416</sup> Some people turn to the shrine in obvious desperation—during the Anointing of the Sick I saw one young woman in a wheelchair, who was unable to hold back her tears when the priest came to anoint her. The priest was also moved and momentarily stopped, giving her a hug. Sometimes, pilgrims do not ask for a cure for their illness or handicap. The sick often pray for others instead. Or, alternatively, they might ask Saint Anne simply for the ability and health to return to her shrine next year.

The relics of Saint Anne are important devotional expressions in religious healing at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. Priests from the shrine will also celebrate a healing Mass in other communities, and they bring the shrine's relics with them.

One letter describes a priest placing the relic on an ill infant in Nova Scotia:

At this time you placed the relic of Ste. Anne on the baby's heart. She was the Down Syndrome child with 4 holes in the heart waiting for a heart operation. The baby and her parents went to Halifax in July and was told the good news that they couldn't find the holes.

There are numerous reports of various healings attributed to the use of relics. Throughout the shrine there are several relics that people either touch, kiss or pray near. After Mass, priests will offer pilgrims the opportunity to venerate

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<sup>416</sup> Hufford mentions in his study in the 1980s that numbers of invalids exceeded a thousand. I did not observe this many sick pilgrims during the Novenas of 2007 and 2008. There were several hundred people in wheelchairs. Several informants told me that the number of sick pilgrims has decreased over the years at the shrine, especially American pilgrims. It was explained to me that because of recent health care legislation, patients cannot leave their hospital or nursing home beds for the nine days of the Novena or they risk losing their beds. In addition, traveling costs to the shrine have increased because of high fuel prices.

relics. One by one pilgrims advance to the front of the shrine and either kiss or touch the relics. Pilgrims will also ask priests to press the relic onto an afflicted body part—head, ear, eyes, chest, leg, foot, arm or hand. I remember one man saying in a Bronx accent, “My back Father, my back!” During the Novena I had the opportunity to help one young Nigerian priest with the veneration of the relics. There was a large crowd on that evening so the Aides of Sainte Anne were asked to assist the priests. As I walked through the crowd with this priest, I felt as though people were swarming us. Pilgrims were all eager to touch or kiss the relic. I felt as though I was suffocating with all the bodies pressing toward us. The priest that I was assisting with was a smaller man, and I encircled my arms around him to keep him at a safe distance from the pilgrims, who might, in their fervor, have unknowingly crushed us with their weight.

Although the use of Saint Anne’s spring or fountain is not officially sanctioned, one often sees pilgrims drinking the water or bathing afflicted body parts at the spring.<sup>417</sup> Throughout the pilgrimage season pilgrims fill up various containers with water from the spring to take home. Generally, pilgrims who participate in such devotional activities are of an Italian or French Creole background.

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<sup>417</sup> Priests at the shrine do not think that the water itself has curative properties. Pilgrims are encouraged to take Holy Water that has been blessed from the interior of the shrine.



Figure 9. *Saint Anne's Spring*. Pilgrims collecting water to take home. Pilgrims also bottle water at the store and at Saint Anne's fountain. Photo by the author.

Based on observation, I suspect that some pilgrims perceive that Saint Anne's fountain has therapeutic value. However, there are very few reports in the archives suggesting that the water itself is efficacious. I suspect this absence represents an official bias—such letters are discarded because they do not reflect the church's current position.<sup>418</sup> Reports that are saved usually discuss the use of Saint Anne's water in conjunction with an officially sanctioned therapeutic

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<sup>418</sup> In the 1950s, when the shrine asked about issues “relative to a cure,” pilgrims were asked various questions including whether or not they made use of medals, oil, the Annals or Saint Anne's water to obtain their respective cure. Pilgrims often responded affirmatively to one or every devotional practices.

medium—Saint Anne’s oil. One report, written in the context of various other healings, describes how Saint Anne’s holy water functioned to warn an American woman about a heart condition. She writes that in the year 2000 she experienced “anxiety attacks,” which consisted of chest pains, sweat spells, nausea, pain in her jaw, ears, diarrhea and other symptoms. The woman states:

These lasted for over ten hours at my home and I was alone. I passed out twice, hitting my head on the wall as I hit my bed. I kept calling to God; I even remember thinking “is this what it feels like to die” very peaceful and calm. The pain intensified, never relenting. I found myself in front of my kitchen window and on the window sill there was my holy water from St. Anne. I opened it and took a large handful and placed it on my chest (where the pain was worse). Immediately the water felt like fire on me and I began to burn. I thought to myself “what did you do now” water does not burn like this. I went back to my room and fell across my bed; exhausted I fell asleep.

She suggests that when she awoke the next day she felt better. Although she kept experiencing symptoms all week, she did not seek medical help. Driving to work one day she heard a little voice in her head telling her that if she did not get off the highway, someone was going to die. Concerned, she finally went to the hospital. She was informed that her symptoms had been one heart attack after another. She underwent surgery that involved inserting a new aortic valve and a triple bypass. The writer believes that God was with her during this time, from the “same day that my holy water turned to fire.” While recovering in the hospital the writer reports that she also developed pneumonia. She asked her daughter to bring her the holy water and she rubbed her back with it. She

concludes her letter: “I shared this vial of holy water with the lady in my room telling her my own story and the power of prayer and faith.” This example demonstrates not only how devotional expressions are handed down to members of younger generations within a family, but it also illustrates how these devotions are transmitted to others outside the family.

Many people write about the therapeutic value of Saint Anne’s oil. They apply this oil to afflicted body parts. For example, a letter from an American man explains the efficacy of Saint Anne’s oil in healing kidney and bladder problems. The man relates that he visited the shrine while on a business trip in Montréal. While he was at the shrine, he purchased the oil from the store. He writes:

Last year I was ill and hospitalized two times with kidney and bladder problems. I had problems which medicine did not seem to help. I had brought back some small bottles of oil from your Shrine. Within days the oil cured me. I feel that I am another miracle of St. Anne. I pray to her daily. I am still having health problems, but am confident that She will see me through to restored health.

Some priests also write about the efficacy of Saint Anne’s oil. One priest, who made his first pilgrimage to the shrine in 2003, was so moved by his own pilgrimage experiences that he started a monthly healing Mass in his own parish in the United States. He writes:

As a result of my visit to St. Anne de Beaupré, I have begun a monthly healing mass dedicated to St. Anne. I bless all who come with oil from your shrine and invoke St. Anne’s intercession. We have had several miracles including a couple who could not have children conceiving a child and a man cured of cancer while seriously ill. We will continue these masses and are confident in St. Anne’s help.



As the above example suggests, pilgrims report that Saint Anne's oil is efficacious in treating various cancers. One woman reports that Saint Anne's oil assisted in reversing a diagnosis of skin cancer. Praying daily, she crossed the cancerous spot on her face with the oil. She believed that Saint Anne had the ability to change the diagnosis. Returning to the surgeon, she discovered that she did not have skin cancer but sun damage. In another example, a family describes the use of Saint Anne's oil in healing a family pet. Their puppy, a wired-hair fox terrier, had a cyst removed from its back. During the examination, a swollen lymph gland was discovered on the pup's right leg. The family writes that cancer cells were found—"the results were heartbreaking." They all prayed for their dog and used Saint Anne's oil every day, rubbing it on the pup's leg, cyst and head. In addition, they also used Lourdes' water. The letter states that during the dog's next examination, the swelling had gone down and there were no more signs of cancer.

Occasionally, people also write about their experiences with Saint Anne's oil on the Internet. A 62-year-old woman recovering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, wrote in her blog, "Identity Crisis," a post entitled "St. Anne's Oil." In this post she reminisces about her childhood experiences of wandering around the downtown area of New Haven, Connecticut, alone at the age of 10, while her mother worked an extra shift. She ponders about what might have happened if

she had used Saint Anne's oil as a child. Recounting visiting one of her favorite stores, the St. Thomas Gift Shop, she writes:

Off to the side of one of the shelves, near the cash register was a special podium. On this podium sat the blessed of blessed articles, St. Anne's Oil. This tiny bottle of oil sat next to a drawing and statue of St. Anne, mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Legend had it that if you had any ailment and you rubbed the liquid on it, you would immediately be healed. Testimonies on pieces of paper sat next to the drawing of St. Anne. Testimonies that verified how people who had their eyesight restored when applying the oil on their eyelids, while others reported healing of paralysis when rubbing the oil on the affected limbs and people with severe arthritis reported pain subsiding when the oil was applied. It was a tiny 2 or 3 ounce bottle that contained a thick yellow liquid. It was a magic liquid. I was familiar with it because this same bottle sat on my mother's bureau next to her bobby pin box. I'm not sure how my mother came to own it, but it was a "hands off policy" at home. No touching the oil. Interesting. There were so many ailments in my family, but not of the physical kind. I even wondered as a kid if maybe, just maybe if I applied this oil to my head, would I be smarter? Or my face, prettier? I'll never know. If I had known then what I know now, I would have swallowed the whole bottle. Might have saved on some therapy bills.<sup>419</sup>

When devotees of Saint Anne are hospitalized, they often take devotional objects associated with her such as medals, rosaries, candles or cards to the hospital. Orsi suggests that such objects are ways in which the sick "restructure the alien space of hospitals."<sup>420</sup> Moreover, he notes, the devout perceive that it is not the doctors who heal "but the saints who empower and enable doctors to

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<sup>419</sup> Suzy Pafka, "St. Anne's Oil." Wednesday November 15, 2006 <<http://suzy-identity.crisis.blogspot.com/2006/11/stannes-oil.html>> (accessed June 30, 2010).

<sup>420</sup> Orsi, "The Cult of the Saints," 68.

heal.”<sup>421</sup> During an interview at Sainte Anne de Beaupré, Jeremy, a First Nations man in his mid 50s recounted his experiences of colon cancer, describing the way in which a medal healed him in conjunction with medical treatment. Jeremy initially went to the doctor for back pain, thinking the doctor would prescribe some medication. Doctors discovered that Jeremy had colon cancer and 4-5 feet of his bowel was surgically removed. They also found a large inoperable tumor in his abdomen. Jeremy underwent chemotherapy and radiation therapy as a means to reduce the size of the tumor. Midway through his treatments, Jeremy undertook a pilgrimage to the shrine; he went to Mass; prayed at the Miraculous Statue, and used holy water all over his body. Jeremy informed me that he has made many pilgrimages to the shrine, coming annually for twelve years with his pilgrimage group. He thought of his cancer as a headache—it was something that would go away. Jeremy was determined to live, to see his children grow up. While Jeremy was in the hospital family members would place various medals and prayer cards all over his body. He would also recite each prayer card daily and cry out to each saint for help. According to Jeremy, the saints came to him in the hospital, reassuring him that he would be healed. One medal, encased in a sealed prayer card, was placed under his back near the location of his tumor.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

<sup>422</sup> He told me that it was a cancer medal. It was most likely a Saint Peregrine medal, the patron saint of cancer.

Jeremy affirms that after he had finished his radiation treatments, the sealed card had turned reddish-brown in color. He believes that this residue was his cancer, especially since the card still seemed intact—the seal was not broken. According to his family, the medal had “done its job.” Jeremy’s tumor had decreased in size so that the doctors were able to remove it. Jeremy believes that Saint Anne had a lot to do with his healing, as he prayed to her many times. His brother gave the medal to Sainte Anne de Beaupré as an *ex-voto*.

### **Caring for Others: The Feminization of Religious Healing**

Many women turn to Saint Anne for the health of themselves and others. Barnes and Sered note that in American society women are sick more often than men, take more medicine than men, visit the doctor more regularly than men and are more likely to assess their overall health as poor.<sup>423</sup> Orsi suggests that the history of modern medicine should be understood through the lens of gender, since the majority of “medical subjects” have been women. He states: “Modern medicine encouraged women to be preoccupied with their bodies, training them to identify a wide range of internal sensations and existential distresses...as organic complaints to be diagnosed and treated by male medical

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<sup>423</sup> Barnes and Sered, “Introduction,” 19.

practitioners.”<sup>424</sup> Barnes and Sered suggest that various social factors impact women’s bodies:

Explanations for why women are sicker (especially when, as in the case in the United States, women outlive men) include the double load of paid work and housework; the feminization of poverty; relentless responsibilities of caring for sick children, aging parents, and other family members; cultural expectations that women are weaker than men; increasing medicalization of women’s bodies (especially in relation to menstruation, menopause, pregnancy and childbirth); a tendency to treat women’s bodies as “unique” or “exceptional” (in comparison with male bodies, which are treated as normative); repeated traumas of the threat and reality of sexual violence; harmful fashions such as high heels or extreme dieting; and the stress caused by systematic exclusion from the arenas of power where the economic, military, and political decisions that affect everyone’s lives are made.<sup>425</sup>

Dubisch and Winkelman suggest that gender is an important element of pilgrimage related to issues of empowerment. Special concerns of women, such as fertility and childbirth, often lead them to engage in pilgrimage. Moreover, Dubisch and Winkelman postulate that there is an intimate relationship between women’s bodies and pilgrimage. Susan Morrison emphasizes this element in her study of women pilgrims in late medieval England:

Many women traveled for the sake of the family, which was often centered on the woman’s body, the body which could have sex, reproduce, carry a child, give birth and lactate. But if this body

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<sup>424</sup> Orsi, *Thank You, Saint Jude*, 148. Orsi also notes that immigrant women were encouraged to either see clergymen or doctors for the causes of and remedies for various ailments. As women moved more into the medical domain they lost their own healing authority in the home (see pgs. 149-150).

<sup>425</sup> Barnes and Sered, “Introduction,” 19.

could not function properly – if it were sterile, if the child it carried miscarried, if the child it carried died or was sickly, if the body could not heal after birth, if the body could not produce milk to feed the child—then the body, a metonymy for a healthy, functioning family, needed to be cured. The woman’s body, then, stands for the family. If the woman’s body is healed, so is the family....It symbolizes the state of her family’s health.<sup>426</sup>

At Sainte Anne de Beaupré I met with several women who undertook annual pilgrimages to the shrine as part of a promise made to Saint Anne in gratitude for the conception of their children. One of these women had made pilgrimages for twenty years. In the Roman Catholic tradition, since at least the late medieval period, Saint Anne has been perceived as a symbol of fertility. In their study of Saint Anne in late medieval society, Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn note that Saint Anne was believed to promote fertility because she gave birth to Mary in her old age.<sup>427</sup> In the Jewish tradition, Rachel, the biblical matriarch and wife of Jacob, serves as a similar symbol. Susan Sered has noted that many Israeli women make pilgrimages to Rachel’s tomb because they have had difficulty conceiving or suffered miscarriages. Sered suggests that women

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<sup>426</sup> Susan Morrison, *Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England: Private Piety as Public Performance* (London: Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group, 2000), 3. Christian also notes that in Juan de Robles’s account of miracles of Saint Anne in Tendilla, Spain, the saint “rendered sterile women fertile.” See Christian, *Local Religion*, 245 n. 26.

<sup>427</sup> Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, “Introduction,” In *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society*, Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn eds., 1-68 (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1990). 48.

seek Rachel's help because she also suffered infertility. Rachel "understands" women's suffering and infertility.<sup>428</sup>

Likewise, many pilgrims continue to turn to Saint Anne for conception.<sup>429</sup> One woman, Angela, reported to me an unusual encounter in 1993 with a female pilgrim. At that time Angela had been pregnant, the other woman pilgrim had asked to place various medals on Angela's stomach, perceiving that a pregnant womb could enhance the medals' efficacy. The woman told Angela that she would give the medals to her daughter, who had suffered miscarriages and was having difficulty carrying a pregnancy to full-term. The following year, the woman returned to the shrine, and told Angela that her daughter had given birth to a son, the only child she would be able to carry due to complications at birth. For the grandmother, this was a miracle.

There are many petitions left at the shrine by pilgrims who seek either children or grandchildren. For example, one woman writes: "Saint Anne, mother of all. Help us always and grant us a child and we promise to be good and loving parents." One can occasionally see baby booties, pictures or soothers left at the shrine as ex-votos given by parents. Despite the official Vatican teachings

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<sup>428</sup> Susan Sered, "Exile, Illness, and Gender in Israeli Pilgrimage," In *Pilgrimage and Healing*, Jill Dubisch and Michael Winkelmann eds., 69-89 (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2005), 76-77.

<sup>429</sup> In contrast, a few pilgrims asked Saint Anne to pray for specific women who have had abortions or they might ask Saint Anne to help "end abortion mills."

prohibiting artificial means of conception for Catholics, some pilgrims do seek advanced medical treatment for conception.<sup>430</sup> Sometimes, divine and medical intervention is sought concurrently, as indicated by this mother's petition: "Please help my daughter...to find peace. She is trying to have a second child so badly. Two in-vitro and \$30,000 got no where. Please help her to live with it if she can't have any more or please give her another baby."

Some people send letters to the shrine describing their infertility stories, crediting Saint Anne for the conception of their children. For example, in a letter written during 2002 a woman explains that her reproductive system was affected by the removal of a tumor on her pituitary gland in 1979. She and her husband traveled to the shrine on their honeymoon, and they wrote a petition to Saint Anne asking that they might some day have a family together. Their assumption was that this family would include adopted children. The woman writes that exactly nine months after visiting the shrine their twins were born, followed by two other children in later years. They attribute their children to the intervention of Saint Anne stating: "We are overwhelmed by God blessing us with four beautiful children. Thank you Saint Anne!" Although women most often view

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<sup>430</sup> The Vatican has recently condemned medical advances in infertility treatments such as in-vitro fertilization or intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI). In the case of infertility, women are not encouraged to seek such artificial means to conceive. All technical procedures that replace the conjugal act in reproduction are prohibited. However, the Vatican does seem to approve of Viagra and fertility drugs as a means to "aid the conjugal act and its fertility." See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Dignitas Personae," September 8, 2008.



Saint Anne as a symbol of fertility, men also view Saint Anne in this same manner. In a letter written during 2002, one young American woman was instructed by her father to turn to Saint Anne for her fertility issues. She writes that she followed her father's advice, conceived, gave birth and named her daughter after Saint Anne.

Lena Gemzöe's study of pilgrimage at Fatima, Portugal focuses on the link between healing, the Virgin Mary and female pilgrims.<sup>431</sup> She notes that healing, in the broad sense of promoting health and life for oneself and one's family, is a central theme in women's religious experience. Postulating that healing itself is feminized, she suggests that prayers and vows are embedded in the concrete activities of mothering and caring:

Aspects of mothering and caretaking are clearly reflected in women's vows, which involve worrying about, struggling for, and taking on responsibility for others' health and well-being. Caretaking and women's vows that arise in the context of care are deeply involved with physicality: feeding, nurturing, and cleaning human bodies. It is the experience of this real mothering and caring that women introduce in their devotion to Mary and that makes it meaningful.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> See Lena Gemzöe, "Caring for Others: Mary, Death, and the Feminization of Religion in Portugal," In *Moved By Mary: The Power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, Anna-Karina Hermkens, Willy Jansen and Catrien Notermans eds., 149-163 (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009) and "The Feminization of Healing in Pilgrimage to Fátima," In *Pilgrimage and Healing*, Jill Dubisch and Michael Winkelmann eds., 25-48 (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2005).

<sup>432</sup> Gemzöe, "Caring for Others," 154-155.

Likewise, writing about rural Spain in the sixteenth century, Christian suggests that as mother saints, both the Virgin Mary and Saint Anne “were particularly appropriate helpers for mothers with sick and injured children.”<sup>433</sup> The same type of relationship continues to exist between mothers and Saint Anne. Many narratives written to the shrine at Sainte Anne de Beaupré focuses on the activities of mothering and caring for others. For example, one letter recounts a mother’s pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré in thanksgiving for her 15-year-old son who had been in a coma for three months after a skateboard accident. The letter writer claims, a few days after her initial pilgrimage, her son awoke from his coma. Similarly, a couple turned to Saint Anne when their young daughter was in a car accident. Two weeks after they made their pilgrimage to Saint Anne de Beaupré, their daughter awoke from her coma. Pilgrims also leave numerous petitions at the shrine asking Saint Anne to intercede in various children’s illnesses or diseases such as thyroid problems, juvenile arthritis, cancer, leukemia, mental illness, vision problems, autism, anxiety or various handicaps. One mother pleads for a miracle for her son: “Dear Saint Anne. I beg of you a miracle cleansing for my son, David. Please Saint Anne we cannot do this alone. Pray with us to our sweet Jesus that David will be cured. A broken-hearted Mom. With all my love and thanks to you.”

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<sup>433</sup> Christian, *Local Religion*, 98.



Figure 10. *Mother and Son, Novena 2007*. Photo by Robert Wagenhoffer.

Women also bring their children to the shrine to attend the Anointing of the Sick service. In particular I recall a mother with a teenaged son in a wheelchair. I do not know the origins of the boy's handicap but the mother had brought him to the shrine, and they participated in various pilgrimage activities. What I found so striking about this family was the mother. Although the woman was almost the same size as her son, she would sit him on her lap during Mass so that he would not have to sit in the front of the church with the adults in wheelchairs. Before the Eucharist the mother would lift her son up; cradle him in

her arms, and walk him up the aisle of the basilica; effortlessly placing him in his wheelchair, so he could participate in rest of the service. Her love and tender care for her son was obvious to all. She always appeared calm, joyful and smiled all the time despite her son's handicap. Perhaps pilgrimage to the shrine empowered the woman, giving her a sense of peace. I could see that her son was happy too. During the evening Candlelight Procession, he lifted his candle high up in the air and smiled during singing of the refrain "*Laudate Annam*" (Praise to Anne).

Mothers also seek the help of Saint Anne in healing broken families. One petition left at the statue asks Saint Anne for an "amicable divorce, happiness, help for anxiety, healing of heart, and life problems." Some requests address dire situations as recorded in this petition left at the statue: "I ask that my c-section goes well because I have to watch two children by myself because my spouse left me for another woman at eight months pregnant. I want to be happy again." Similar requests are also recorded in the shrine's Book of Peace:

To the miraculous St. Ane De Beupere. I am a mother of five children who has a heavy one to carry, but I know God won't let me carry that I can't. I need your help beloved St, Ane. My children are not going to school properly. I want their happiness when I'm not here in this world. I have two grandchildren. Please bless them Lord for [...] sickness that's been bothering them. Let my children love one another even [...] they have their own family.

As the previous petition suggests, grandmothers often seek the help of Saint Anne, which is particularly appropriate given the saint's status as the

grandmother of Jesus. One woman writes that Saint Anne interceded on behalf of her handicapped grandson who had been ill for two months. Another grandmother wrote a letter to the shrine, as promised for the healing of her young granddaughter, who “took a cold in her chest” at three months of age. Elderly women also seek help for themselves so that they can continue to care for their spouses. One letter attributes the use of a Saint Anne relic in an unidentified cure:

I am writing to tell you the blessing you gave me a blessing me with Good St. Ann relic cured me so am sending you one hundred dollar for to help you a the shrine also the Sacred Heart and Saint Threasa I was praying to them the year 2000 gave me and my husband is also sick with a weak heart and kidney failure so I say by for now God bless you and we love you cause if St Ann had not cure me I would have to put him in a nursing home their be fourth four year in marriage...

Writing about devotion to the Virgin Mary in Portugal, Gemzöe argues that “women construct a direct and personal relationship to Mary and they give attention to aspects of Mary that make her similar to ordinary women, thus elaborating an anthropocentric view of Mary.”<sup>434</sup> Such an approach, she asserts, strives to bring Mary “down to earth,” making her more accessible to women. The theme of Mary as Mother allows a woman to construct an intimate and spiritual relationship with Mary. Like Virgin Mary devotees, women also develop intimate and spiritual relationships with Saint Anne. One letter in

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<sup>434</sup> Gemzöe, “Feminization of Healing in Fátima,” 41.

particular exemplifies the ways in which some devotees develop cherished life-long relationships with Saint Anne, especially in the context of illness. This letter, written in 2001 by an American woman, depicts not only the ways in which Saint Anne has been meaningful in experiences of healing, but it also affectionately characterizes Saint Anne as a “secret friend.”

Since I was a small child, I have turned to St. Anne in times of great need. I would like you to have my testimony of how St. Anne has touched my life.

When I was six, I fell out of a car and had a fractured skull. My parents went to the chapel in the hospital, and made a promise to St. Anne that if I was all right, they would come for ten years. When they returned to my bed, the Doctors said the fracture is gone. For ten years we made the trip from Massachusetts to Canada. (Thank you St. Anne).

In 1969, I was pregnant for my first child and fell down a flight of stairs! I made the promise to come to the Shrine. My son was born perfect. (Thank you St. Anne).

In 1983, I was scheduled for surgery for growths on my vocal cords. I knew I had to see St. Anne before the operation. When I drank the water in front of the old church it burned my throat. I remember telling my mother how scared I was that the water burned. She drank some and said the water was ok. After the surgery, the Doctor came to me and said “No Cancer...and no new growths.” (Thank you St. Anne).

When my daughter became pregnant with her first child we were so happy to learn that she was having twins, but the joy was soon replaced with fear when the Doctor said one twin was much smaller than the other, and he didn’t think the second twin would make it. Again I promised to make the long trip, and again, both were born healthy. (Thank you St. Anne).

Her next pregnancy they said the baby would be born with Downs Syndrome. With every ultra-sound, I promised her that God would

take care of the baby. They wanted her to have an abortion – they were so sure!! They kept pointing to the x-rays. We prayed! I watched my baby, with tears coming down her cheeks say, “Mom, abortion is not an option – if God blesses us with a Down’s baby he must think I can handle it.” I was crying, but not from sadness, but from pride, in the woman that she had become. Once again I made the promise, and made the trip. I left St. Anne a picture of my beautiful new healthy grandson. (Thank you St. Anne).

Just this year, I went to my Doctor’s for a regular physical and was told he felt a lump in my thyroid gland. After many tests and ultrasounds, sure enough, there was a lump. When the Doctor called himself, I knew I was in trouble. He said, “Do you have a surgeon?” I said I did. He said, “Get a biopsy done!” I called and made the appointment and packed a bag to go to Canada and my secret friend St. Anne.

On August 1, 2001 I sat in front of her beautiful statue, and I thanked her for all the blessings throughout my life. For all the favors and times she interceded on my behalf. I thanked her for always being just a prayer away, and I prayed that she continued to help my family deal with this problem should it be cancer. I went out and drank from the spring, I felt no burning, but just coming to the shrine made me calm and worry free. I just knew she would help me.

When I returned to the States, I went to the biopsy. The surgeon said, “I can’t find it!!” I see it here on the x-ray, but I can’t feel it!!” Back to the hospital – More tests! I was smiling and almost laughing, because all the Doctors couldn’t figure out where the lump went – But St. Anne knew!!!

There are so many other times that I have prayed to St. Anne and she interceded. I have not had an easy life, but without faith and devotion to St. Anne I would not have lived. THANK YOU ST. ANNE.

Many pilgrims refer to Saint Anne as “my mother” or “my grandmother.”

As Gemzöe’s suggests for the Virgin Mary, these familial terms of reference appear to be a means to make Saint Anne more accessible. When I asked pilgrims

why they had such strong devotion toward Saint Anne rather than for the Virgin Mary, Jesus or other saints, they informed me that they felt a strong connection to Saint Anne because she is a grandmother figure. Many people told me that grandmothers are always loving, caring and less strict than other parental figures. During the course of my fieldwork I observed numerous women stroking, holding or kissing the statue of Saint Anne. Women also often blow kisses up toward Saint Anne. Sometimes women are overwrought with emotion at the statue. Several women had tears streaming down their faces upon arriving at the statue. Displays of affection toward Saint Anne are not limited to women but are also enacted by men. For example, during the Novena I saw one man gently touching the statue, while sobbing and praying. I later found out that this man had just lost his wife and he had turned to Saint Anne for healing from bereavement.

### **Social Healing**

Dubisch and Winkelman suggest that one form of healing that takes place in pilgrimage is the healing of social status.<sup>435</sup> Such healing, they note, can be viewed in the context of social suffering. Kleinman, Veena Das and Margaret Lock posit that suffering is a social experience resulting from “what political, economic and institutional power does to people and, reciprocally, from how

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<sup>435</sup> See Dubisch and Winkelman, “Introduction,” xxvii-xxviii.



these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems.”<sup>436</sup> Although social suffering occurs across a wide range of people, it primarily affects those who are poor, powerless and marginalized. Barnes and Sered postulate that a variety of historical social inequalities in the United States have generated “structural violence,” resulting in the “affliction of not only the body personal but also the body social.”<sup>437</sup> Several studies emphasize the social healing processes of pilgrimage.<sup>438</sup> Healing can clearly involve much more than physical ailments. It can encompass various life problems, social alienation, spiritual loss, and the fragmentation of the self.

Many pilgrims at Sainte Anne de Beaupré write petitions about issues related to world peace.<sup>439</sup> They ask Saint Anne to intercede in worldly affairs – to make their world or home community a better place to live. People may mention specific communities, provinces, states or countries, and in petitions from 2007 I saw requests for peace in the Middle East, Sri Lanka, Haiti, South Africa, Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia and Lebanon. Likely reflecting his own community environment,

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<sup>436</sup>Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das and Margaret Lock eds., *Social Suffering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), ix.

<sup>437</sup> Barnes and Sered, “Introduction,” 17.

<sup>438</sup> For recent examples at Marian pilgrimage sites see Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans, *Moved by Mary*. Also see Barnes and Sered, *Religion and Healing in America* and Dubisch and Winkelmann, *Pilgrimage and Healing*.

<sup>439</sup> Pilgrims’ emphasis on writing about peace was likely influenced by the pastoral theme in 2007: “Give us peace in our time.”

one male youth wrote: “I dream of no violence in the street.” Pilgrims ask for protection for soldiers, especially American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. They ask that Saint Anne assist soldiers in their duties: “To cease fire, find peace and return home.” Some American pilgrims implore Saint Anne to bless and protect the United States of America, and guide leaders of the world in making decisions that lead to peace. One American asked Saint Anne to make politicians “tell the truth.” Young adults are also concerned: “I pray that when I grow old and have children of my own, that they wouldn’t live in a world of terror and hate. That they would be able to see smiles and laughter.” One letter describes an American male trying to make sense of his world in the context of September 11, 2001. He writes to the shrine about his “sad broken heart,” and his renewed sense of hope for humanity after listening to a taped Novena, which he had purchased at the shrine. He believes that Saint Anne intervened in our world “to protect 7000 [sic] murdered souls and bring them to God.” Writing to a priest, he states:

Father all of a sudden excitement races in my being hope, hope, hope. We do have hope. Thank you beautiful gentle dear St. Anne on that terrible day filled with terror for so many innocent people. Am I presumptuous to believe that dear holy Grandmother you gathered those souls and took them to Jesus.

People ask Saint Anne for healing because they feel alienated from others. Frequently, this sense of estrangement occurs within family units, and pilgrims ask for family reconciliations: “Please bless and heal our family during our

vacation. There is so much anger and pain.” Sometimes this alienation is caused by religion. Occasionally, petitions will perpetuate this alienation: “For conversion of Muslims to Christianity.” One Muslim asked for peace, advising that Muslims share the same faith, through belief that Jesus is a prophet in the Islamic tradition. Similarly, a Jehovah’s Witness asked for peace, noting that as a Jehovah’s Witness he was welcomed at the shrine, even though at other times in his life he has not been welcomed by Christians. Other pilgrims feel alienation from their communities. A teenager writes:

It is so hard in my life but you were always there. There are people that don’t like me at school because I did something in the past, but I have no idea what I did to get them so angry. I struggle to have friends but I am being crushed. Friends are moving away and probably soon I will have no friends at all. So I ask you to help me so I can have a better life.

Pilgrims turn to Saint Anne in order to gain empowerment in dealing with various social institutions. One woman recounted a favor granted to her sister who was dealing with the school system and her 16-year-old autistic son. She stated that her nephew’s school did not have a program for him and refused to teach him. The boy’s family was in the process of suing the school, but had not heard from the lawyer in months. The woman had undertaken a pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré, bringing her sister and nephew some holy water from the shrine and a prayer card. She wrote that her sister was “exhausted and frustrated and feels that no one is being very helpful to her at this difficult time.” Her sister had blessed herself with the holy water, and she immediately sensed

“a feeling of peace and comfort.” On that same day, the woman stated, the lawyer called and set up an appointment to meet with them. In another example, a woman wrote that Saint Anne empowered her to deal with the medical system, challenging doctors about her daughter’s health and medical treatment. She recounted that her 29-year-old daughter, who was wheelchair bound and epileptic, suffered great bouts of depression during her menstrual periods. The mother believed that her daughter needed to be placed back on her “nerve pill,” which the doctor had taken her off nearly four years previously. The mother prayed to Saint Anne for help. She writes:

Saint Anne is the answers. Right away I knew. I knew it was to go back on her old pill of 4 years ago. First the Dr. said, I don’t no if it would help. So I went to see another Dr. So he said all right. She of her nerve pill. She is 100 percent better no more blue doing much better. So St. Anne had told me what to do and I love her for this with all my heart.

Pilgrims seek personal transformation and/or conversion for themselves or others. Many parents ask Saint Anne for help in bringing their children back to church: “Our son has left the church and we are praying that he will come back. Our two beautiful grandchildren are not baptized and it breaks our hearts.” One woman writes about her daughter’s renewal of faith as a consequence of her pilgrimage experiences at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. She states that her 32-year-old daughter had traveled with herself and her husband, while vacationing in Québec. She writes that although raised a Roman Catholic, her daughter had turned to “one of those evangelistic preachers who don’t like Catholics.” The

mother convinced her daughter to go to the shrine to see its architecture, because the daughter claimed she did not want to visit “some dumb statue.” During Mass, the mother recounts that her daughter “saw the statue.” She says that her daughter was transformed before her eyes: “After Mass she was stuck like glue to her spot mesmerized by the devotion to Good St. Anne.” The following day her daughter purchased a rosary and a book about Saint Anne from the store. Since the time of their pilgrimage, her daughter has started praying the Rosary with her own daughter, the granddaughter of the letter-writer.

Some pilgrims ask for a personal spiritual transformation while at the shrine: “Dear Gramma Saint Anne, take off this dark suit I have on me, put on your white on me so my life will be brighter forever.” Other people may receive a spiritual transformation, even without requesting one. One Canadian woman wrote to the shrine, seeking advice and/or confirmation about a possible spiritual healing. She explained that she had attended a special healing Mass in her community that was conducted by priests from Sainte Anne de Beaupré. She noticed after the service that she had an unusual mark below her eye. Initially, the woman did not view this mark as a sign of healing: “When I got in the house my husband noticed I had black under my eye. I thought it was smoke from the candle but it wouldn’t come off. My eye was black and blue as if I banged into something or someone hit me.” While at work, a coworker told her that she must have experienced a healing. The writer suggested that she had prayed for her eye

during the candlelight procession because she had a “gut feeling something was wrong.” The woman writes that after a month the blackness disappeared, being replaced by a red mark. She understands this mark as a manifestation of spiritual healing, and describes it as “a very special gift of faith that I am to share and reach out to others.” Contrary to “her personality,” she now shares her story with others; teaches religious classes to children, and encourages others to make pilgrimages to Sainte Anne de Beaupré

Spiritual healing may also lead to conversion. Jason Makos writes about his pilgrimage experiences to the shrine, which he believes contributed to his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church and his subsequent vocation as a priest. He recounts that he was raised in a Greek Orthodox environment but distanced himself from his religious tradition, as he grew older. In the summer of 1995 a friend invited him to go on a pilgrimage to Saint Joseph’s Oratory and Sainte Anne de Beaupré. He agreed to travel with his friend but did not want to attend any services stating: “I just wanted to see the countryside of Canada.”<sup>440</sup>

He describes his conversion experience at Sainte Anne de Beaupré:

It is impossible to miss the two immense steeples of Sainte Anne’s Basilica that overpower the skyline of Quebec. After arriving and admiring this aesthetic wonder from the outside, I felt compelled to go inside and marvel at its beauty. As I entered the church, however, I was overwhelmed not by the beauty of marble or wood, but the loving gaze of Christ. The warmth I felt can only be

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<sup>440</sup> Jason Makos, “Take the Risk,” *The Pontifical North American College Magazine*. Winter (2002): 27.

described as “coming home” after a long time away. From the moment I could never deny this divine presence, which I had tried to do for so long.<sup>441</sup>

Many petitions reflect contemporary social concerns such as addictions. Pilgrims write about sexual (pornography), food, alcohol, drug and nicotine addictions. They ask Saint Anne to heal their own addictions as well as those of others. Parents and grandparents often petition Saint Anne to heal their children or grandchildren of various drug and alcohol addictions: “Dear Saint Anne: please pray for my granddaughter [full name] born [exact date] for her struggle with drugs and alcohol. May she find peace and happiness.” Moreover, some pilgrims view drugs and alcohol as demons to be avoided. Sometimes children invoke Saint Anne’s intercession for parents who work too much: “I am doing this for my dad. I love him. He lives at work!” Other children ask Saint Anne to help their parents quit smoking: “Please help my mom stop smoking” or “Please help my dad stop smoking.”

Pilgrims seek healing from issues related to homosexuality. Some pilgrims seek healing within the Roman Catholic Church itself: “I have fallen away from the church which stirs up hatred of gay people. I pray God to heal the church of its homophobia.” In the Roman Catholic Church homosexual acts are perceived as contrary to natural law and are therefore considered “as acts of grave

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<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

depravity.”<sup>442</sup> Homosexual desires are deemed to be “intrinsically disordered” but not themselves sinful.<sup>443</sup> Although the American Psychiatric Association no longer considers homosexuality as a “mental disorder,” the notion that it can be healed or cured continues to exist within some branches of Christianity.<sup>444</sup> For example, an article published in the *Christian Century* by an anonymous writer ponders his own “struggles” with homosexuality, noting that there was no “quick fix” for him: “So was it reasonable to expect a sudden cure from homosexuality? Would God sanctify me the way I turn on a light switch?...I am on a journey of healing.”<sup>445</sup> Tanya Erzen’s study of the Ex-Gay Movement demonstrates how ex-gay men have found sexual healing through identity transformation and conversion.<sup>446</sup> The Roman Catholic Church’s teachings about homosexuality have been disputed among Catholics, including lay people and

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<sup>442</sup> See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992), paragraph 2357.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

<sup>444</sup> J. J. Conger, “Proceedings of the American Psychological Association, Incorporated, for the year 1974: Minutes of the annual meeting of the Council of Representatives,” *American Psychologist* 30 (1975): 620-651.

<sup>445</sup> Unknown author, “The Road to Healing,” *Christian Century* 51/4 (2007): 58.

<sup>446</sup>Tanya Erzen, “Sexual Healing: Self-Help and Therapeutic Christianity in the Ex-Gay Movement,” In *Religion and Healing*, Linda Barnes and Susan Sered eds., 265-280 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).



ordained clergy.<sup>447</sup> Some Roman Catholic parents write petitions to Saint Anne, seeking healing for their children: “Son free from homosexuality.” Other pilgrims seek healing for themselves. For example, the following petition, left at the Miraculous Statue, asked for the healing of “Chris” and was signed by “Chris:” “For Chris to find his true meaning in life, to find what he is truly looking for and for him to come to his true sexuality and healed of this homosexuality.”

### **Human Suffering and the Demonic**

Some people turn to pilgrimage sites seeking help for conditions that biomedicine does not address or recognize such as demonic possession. For example, Jill Dubisch’s study of a pilgrimage site on the Aegean island of Tinos, Greece, describes a young woman crawling on her knees toward the Church of the Madonna of the Annunciation, seeking relief from possession.<sup>448</sup> Moreover, as Loring Danforth suggests, religious healing offers the only hope for individuals who believe they are possessed, since doctors and drugs are perceived to be therapeutically ineffective.<sup>449</sup> The notion that the Devil and/or demons cause human suffering and illness is not representative of the majority of

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<sup>447</sup> For discussion of homosexuality as counter culture within the Jesuit order see: Peter McDonough and Eugene Bianchi, *Passionate Uncertainty: Inside the American Jesuits* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>448</sup> For this account of possession see Chapter 4 of Jill Dubisch, *In a Different Place*.

<sup>449</sup> Loring Danforth, *Firewalking and Religious Healing: The Anastenaria of Greece and the American Firewalking Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 76-77.

Catholics at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. I did not discover any letters in the archives depicting healing from possession. However, as I mentioned earlier, the letters sent to the shrine go through a filtering process so it is possible that people do in fact write about such healing experiences. There were only two instances in my fieldwork in which pilgrims informed me that either they themselves or others had suffered from demonic possession or had been tempted by devils.<sup>450</sup> The first occasion occurred early in fieldwork when a 62-year-old man spoke to me about his pilgrimage to the shrine. This man seemed to be angry with the world around him, especially with people of other faith traditions such as Judaism or Islam. After asking me my religious background, he seemed to relax and speak more openly. He told me that he had come to Sainte Anne de Beaupré to speak to a priest because throughout his life he felt tempted by the devil. He informed me that he often felt torn between good and evil impulses. Temptation to do evil seemed to be a recurring problem for him. After our brief conversation, he kissed my hand and thanked me for taking the time to listen to him. The second occasion occurred at the end of my fieldwork, and this experience, involving the young woman at our Lady of the Rosary who was exorcised during Colette Coulombe's mission, is recounted in the previous chapter.

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<sup>450</sup> There is a third example that I have excluded under this discussion of religious healing. I met with a woman who lived in the locale who claimed that many of the priests at Sainte Anne de Beaupré were under the influence of Satan. She appeared to be very angry with church officials, believing that the shrine belonged to the people and should be made available to everyone at all times.

Barnes and Sered's recent compilation of essays on religious healing in America consciously rejects exorcism as a type of healing practice. They omit it claiming: "We do not wish to romanticize religious healing."<sup>451</sup> Moreover, they do not perceive that exorcism can have any therapeutic value insofar as it valorizes suffering and may actually reinforce the inequities of structural violence. Similarly, in his examination of women at the Medjugorje shrine between 1984 and 1990, Mart Bax suggests that refusal to provide rites of exorcism reinforces the disequilibrium in women's lives:

If the experience of demonology was a way in which women asserted power as well as relieved social tensions of the past, it is clear that in the current situation women are being deprived of power as priests and other males refuse to legitimize their interpretation of events. By choosing a medical interpretation of the women's experiences, men have reasserted, and perhaps intensified, their economic, social and religious dominance and control.<sup>452</sup>

Three scholars have examined the efficacy of ritual in spirit possession among Catholics in the United States—Meredith McGuire, Michael Cuneo and Thomas Csordas. McGuire's ethnographic research in the 1980s found that exorcism was widely practiced in the Christian suburban non-biomedical healing groups she studied in New Jersey. She observed: "Casting out evil spirits is an

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<sup>451</sup> Barnes and Sered, "Introduction," 18.

<sup>452</sup> Mart Bax, "Female Suffering, Local Power Relations, and Religious Tourism: A Case Study from Yugoslavia," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 6/2 (1992): 123-124.

integral part of much ordinary Christian healing.”<sup>453</sup> In her study she examined the use of ritual language and symbols in religious healing. She suggests that ritual language may be central to understanding how healing is accomplished. For instance, McGuire suggests that some words, such as “Jesus,” are believed to have special efficacy in exorcising demons.

Agreeing with Barnes and Sered, Cuneo suggests that exorcism can sometimes be fatal and he cites several cases in which people have died at the hands of others during exorcism rituals.<sup>454</sup> However, Cuneo also suggests that he met with several people who claimed that their lives had significantly improved as a result of undergoing an exorcism. He observed that most people who sought out an exorcism were suffering from some psychological or emotional problem. Such people were convinced that their problem was caused by demons. Cuneo proposes that exorcism is a “ritualized placebo, a placebo writ large, one that engages its participants on levels to which more conventional therapeutic procedures could scarcely aspire.”<sup>455</sup>

Csordas offers a more nuanced understanding of exorcism. He postulates that the placebo effect is a kind of “biocultural black box” mechanism—nothing

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<sup>453</sup> McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, 214.

<sup>454</sup> Cuneo, *American Exorcism*, 279-280.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

more than a label for a poorly understood process of therapeutic efficacy.<sup>456</sup> In his examination of American Catholic Charismatics, Csordas postulates that healing sessions are treated as a form of discourse that activates and gives meaningful form to endogenous physiological and psychological healing processes in a patient.<sup>457</sup> A rhetorical analysis of healing is meant to provide a meaning-centered account of how ritual therapy works—not necessarily how well it works. According to Csordas, the discourse of ritual therapy has three basic components: predisposition, empowerment and transformation. The overall effect of therapy is to redirect the patient’s attention to various aspects in his or her life in such a manner as to create a new meaning for that life, and a transformed sense of himself or herself as a whole and well person. Using the example of the possessed woman at Our Lady of the Rosary, I briefly illustrate these tasks. The first task involves the rhetoric of predisposition. The suffering woman must be persuaded that healing is possible. She must believe the group’s claims are coherent and legitimate. Moreover, there must be a willingness on her part to be healed. The rhetoric of empowerment must persuade the woman that therapy is efficacious. She must be convinced that she is experiencing the healing

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<sup>456</sup> Csordas, *The Sacred Self*, 3.

<sup>457</sup>Thomas Csordas, “The Rhetoric of Transformation in Ritual Healing,” *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 7 (1983): 333-375.

effects of spiritual power. She must believe that Saint Anne and Jesus<sup>458</sup> have the power to expel whatever evil spirits might be oppressing her. Often manifestations of evil spirits take the form of emotions such as anger, bitterness, sadness, hatred, resentment, rejection or fear. The goal of the ritual of exorcism is to discern which spirits are oppressing the woman, “bind them,” and then “cast them” out. The spirit usually gives some sign that it has left. Such a manifestation of departure is understood as a necessary criterion of a successful deliverance or exorcism. Each of the woman’s screams signaled the expulsion of a spirit—the release of emotion. The final task is the rhetoric of transformation. The woman must be persuaded to change. She must accept the cognitive, affective, behavioral transformation that constitutes healing within the religious system. Through observations of healing sessions, Csordas concludes that what actually happens is a process of incremental change or a reconstruction of the self, the creation of a sacred self. The afflicted self is transformed into a self that is healthy, whole and holy. Ritual healing, according to Csordas, is not instantaneous and does not involve a sudden miraculous cure. Rather, it is akin to planting a seed—it is a gradual transformation. In the case of the woman at Our Lady of the Rosary, I do not know if this healing ritual was therapeutic for

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<sup>458</sup> For historical Jesus as exorcist see Amanda R. Witmer, *Jesus, A Jewish Galilean Exorcist: A Socio-political and Anthropological Investigation*, Diss. McMaster University (Hamilton: McMaster, 2009).

the woman as I was unable to talk to her. However, I did see her smile for the first time as she left the shrine.

### **The End of Suffering and the Perfect Healing**

Bobbie McKay and Lewis Musil's study of spiritual healing in mainstream religious congregations in the United States found that many narratives about healing without cures involve stories about people dying. Such stories, they suggest, "reflect the stated difference between curing and healing: curing is not necessary to the process of healing."<sup>459</sup> Moreover, McKay and Musil note that family members or caregivers are also involved in the healing process "through the catalyst of imminent death and the unique possibilities for relationship it offers."<sup>460</sup> This process of healing is evident in an example from Sainte Anne de Beaupré. A woman, writing on behalf of her deceased sister, describes the ways in which Saint Anne intervened in her sister's disease and eventual death. This experience not only helped the writer cope with her sister's death but it also assisted her sister in the dying process. The letter recounts that the sister was initially treated for breast cancer, which eventually spread throughout her body. In this example, Saint Anne does not cure the disease, but rather eliminates some

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<sup>459</sup> Bobbie McKay and Lewis Musil, "The 'Spiritual Healing Project': A Study of the Meaning of Spiritual Healing in the United Church of Christ," In *Religion and Healing in America*, Linda Barnes and Susan Sered eds., 49-57 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 53.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

of the more painful symptoms. The woman affirms that her sister did not experience headaches, convulsions, paralysis or suffering, symptoms which are often associated with cancer. Moreover, her sister was able to accept her death, making her own funeral arrangements. Due to Saint Anne's intervention, the writer believes that her sister died peacefully and with dignity.

McGuire's examination of Christian groups in suburban America suggests that many Christians interpret death as an ultimate healing—the perfect healing. McGuire suggests that this interpretation is not merely a rationalization for the therapeutic failure of biomedicine but rather “if the primary goal of healing is to bring people closer to God, then death—the threshold to eternal union with God—is a perfect healing.”<sup>461</sup> Although the following three examples do not explicitly characterize death as the perfect healing, this concept is implicit in these narratives from Sainte Anne de Beaupré.

The first example is a letter written in 2000 by a religious American man who describes himself as a “wandering friar.” In this narrative he describes his prayers offered on behalf of two women who were suffering. He appears to deeply care for these women suggesting that the sacrifices of these two sisters had made it possible for him to study for the priesthood. It is unclear in the letter if these women are religious nuns, family or simply lay persons, “sisters in Christ.” The man recounts in his letter that he often turns to Saint Anne when he

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<sup>461</sup> McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America*, 76.



sees others suffering. Perceiving death as the process of being “taken home,” he writes:

I turned to St. Anne as I had when my invalid sister, Karen, was suffering so much that I prayed if it is God’s holy will she be taken Home and now I found myself again praying to St. Anne, asking God to take Lucy Sue Home. My prayers were answered when, on December 14<sup>th</sup> Lucy Sue died a peaceful death.

The second example is a letter written by another American man in 2000. He recounts his experiences of two pilgrimages to Sainte Anne de Beaupré in the context of his wife’s chronic illness and eventual death. The letter itself is beautifully written. It does not tell us what illness his wife suffered from; only that modern medicine could not do any more to help her. In contrast to the majority of letters written to the shrine, this letter is addressed to his deceased wife rather than to a priest. The writer indicates that his pilgrimage experiences with Saint Anne strengthened his own faith. The motivation for the pilgrimage was to help his wife cope with her death, hoping that she would “acquire some peaceful acceptance.” He writes that he was inspired by Saint Anne’s shrine because he and his wife had visited it together before her illness, and he remembered all the miracles that were recorded at the shrine. He undertook the first pilgrimage during the summer, believing that his wife could be with him spiritually. Writing about his own religious experiences, he states that after Mass he sat very close to the statue of Saint Anne and prayed:

I began to actually feel that St. Anne was hearing me....I am stating that I began to experience an inner thought that was causing me to

know, repeat know, that St. Anne heard and would act on our petition. It was a feeling that I had never had before and as I looked up at the face of the statue I could almost see a look of understanding! I seemed to see a slight smile of acknowledgement and I felt sure she had heard and would know what to do to help you the most.

After he had returned home he recounts that his wife was much more peaceful. She had fewer fears and doubts, which she credited to the intervention of Saint Anne. The man writes that during her illness his wife had many “ups and downs.” Sensing that his wife was again feeling discouraged, he offered to return to the shrine. She responded that she wanted to go with him so he did not make the trip since she was unable to travel. In the fall of the following year, he awoke one morning, knowing that he would travel to the shrine once again:

There was no debate or question: I was going, that’s all there was to it! As I’m sure you know first hand “Good St. Anne” doesn’t fool around! There was no thinking about it, no wondering if I should go, there was just this “knowledge” I was on my way. That I’d just start packing!!!

In his letter he suggests that this pilgrimage was very much like the one he had made the previous year. His prayers were similar in nature, asking Saint Anne to give his wife comfort, faith and acceptance. As in the case of his previous pilgrimage, he knew Saint Anne would answer his prayers in “a way that would be best” for his wife. His letter indicates that he felt a closeness to Saint Anne: “Saint Anne and I were now almost on a first name basis!” He writes that on his way home he knew that Saint Anne had once again intervened. When he called home he was told that his wife was dying. While driving, he states that

he went through “an emotional rollercoaster.” He writes: “I went from a deep sadness due to losing you to a gladness that your suffering had ended and then to a realization that I was witnessing an immediate and miraculous answer to my prayerful pilgrimage.”

The third example is a letter written to the shrine by an American nurse in 2002. She begins her narrative by stating that she wants tell the shrine about “a miracle obtained from Good St. Anne.” She believes that Saint Anne intervened in a patient’s dreams, which led to her baptism before death. The nurse tells us that she herself started going on annual pilgrimages to Sainte Anne de Beaupré four years prior to this event. As part of her daily devotion, she began to pray for one patient in the hospital. She chose Ellie, a 32-year-old woman, who was in the last stages of leukemia. The nurse describes Ellie’s situation and family as follows:

Her husband had to quit his job to stay at home and take care of Ellie and their three children. They had a boy 7, and two girls 9 and 11. The family lived two hours away from the hospital and they had no car. The hospital made arrangements for bus transportation and meal tickets, so the family could come on weekends to visit Ellie. The staff all said that the family was as poor as church mice and just as good. The kids were well-mannered, very kind and sharing. The husband was polite and devoted father and husband. Ellie’s condition worsened. One night we knew she only had hours to live. Her family was called but couldn’t come until the next day.

The woman writes that another nurse was taking care of Ellie on the night she died. Ellie asked this nurse if she knew anything about dreams. Ellie told the nurse that she kept having the same dream repeatedly, which frightened her so

much that she did not want to go to sleep. The nurse questioned her about the dream and Ellie told her that a big snake was chasing her. The nurse then asked her if she believed in God. Ellie simply replied: “Yes.” The nurse inquired further asking if she was a Roman Catholic, and Ellie responded: “No but I always wanted to be a Catholic.” The nurse then asked her if she had been baptized and Ellie answered: “No.” The nurse offered to call a priest immediately and have her baptized but Ellie wanted to wait for her family to arrive. Given the nurse’s medical experience she knew that Ellie did not have much time to live. After Ellie fell asleep, the nurse took a cup of water from the bathroom and baptized Ellie herself. Ellie awoke, noticing that she was wet. The nurse did not admit to Ellie that she had baptized her. Instead, she blamed the wetness on the removal of some medical equipment. Ellie died before her family arrived the next day. The woman who wrote the letter to the shrine firmly believes that Saint Anne was responsible for Ellie’s dreams, and for the actions of the nurse on the night Ellie died.

### **Conclusions**

As this chapter suggests, among pilgrims to Sainte Anne de Beaupré devotion to Saint Anne is an essential component of the human experiences of suffering, illness and even death. Orsi notes that in mid-twentieth century American Catholicism, physical distress was perceived as an individual’s opportunity for spiritual growth: “Pain purged and disciplined the ego, stripping

it of its pride and self-love; it disclosed the emptiness of the world. Without it, human beings remained pagans; in physical distress, they might find their way back to the church, and to sanctity.”<sup>462</sup> In short, pain was understood as being sent by God. It had a purpose; it was meaningful, and was therefore good. Understood in these terms, the problem of human suffering in the world was solved. Moreover, as Orsi notes, this Catholic ethos cannot be attributed simply to European heritage. Instead, it emerged as part of American Catholic identity:

American Catholics in these years were enraptured and enthralled by physical distress. They presented themselves to the rest of the nation as a people experienced in pain. This is what set Catholics apart and above others: in such an elitism of pain, rebelling against illness, whining and complaining were seen as characteristically Protestant responses, while Catholics were stronger, better able to endure, better prepared to suffer...Pain served in this way as both a test of Catholic presence in the United States and a guarantee of it.<sup>463</sup>

Such notions about human suffering are not limited to the mid-twentieth century American Catholic experience. They are rooted in early Christian experiences of suffering as characterized in the Hebrew Bible, notably in the Book of Job. Porterfield suggests:

The beliefs and practices associated with Christian healing changed profoundly through Christianity’s expansions and incorporations into many different cultures and through influences derived from numerous sources, including modern science. Yet, persisting through these experiences, Christian healing carried the idea,

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<sup>462</sup> Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 21.

<sup>463</sup> Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 158.

derived through Judaism, that sin and evil were the cause of suffering. In some cases, suffering was caused by sinful behavior in the person who suffered. This was God’s way of teaching people to repent and obey him. In other cases, innocent people suffered because of the sin of others and the forces of evil surrounding them. Either way, suffering was important and could be explained and redeemed and healed.<sup>464</sup>

Like its American counterpart, suffering shaped the Canadian Catholic experience, though differently. Beginning in the 1840s, a devotional revolution, with a strong emphasis on suffering, spread throughout the Canadian Catholic Church in response to the growing threat of secularization.<sup>465</sup> Terrance Fay suggests that while both French and English speaking Catholics enjoyed a strong identity in the Catholic Church, processes of secularization had weakened Protestant identity.<sup>466</sup> Ultramontane bishops Bourget of Montreal, Fleming of St. John’s, and Lynch of Toronto, initiated the devotional revolution. Fay notes:

Roman devotions such as the rosary, processions, pilgrimages, evening vespers, and consecrations of the home to the Sacred Heart of Jesus became popular among faithful Catholics. Sensing their new-found solidarity against secularization, Catholics believed that the Church was central for them in education, health care, and social welfare.<sup>467</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> Porterfield, *Healing in the Christian Tradition*, 185.

<sup>465</sup> The “devotional revolution” in North America paralleled a similar process in Ireland. See Emmet Larkin, “The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-75,” *American Historical Review* 77/3: 625-652.

<sup>466</sup> Terrance J. Fay, *A History of Canadian Catholics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 270-272.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

Brian Clark's study of Irish Catholics in Toronto illustrates some of the ways this devotional revolution emphasized suffering, especially through the growing emphasis on the necessity of union with the suffering Christ. Clark suggests: "One of the more spectacular manifestations of this veneration of the suffering Christ was the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus."<sup>468</sup> Devotion to the Virgin Mary also focused on Christ's suffering: "Mary's graces and spiritual favors, purchased through her sacrifice and suffering, led her devotees to Christ crucified."<sup>469</sup> Through recitation of the Rosary, the laity was encouraged to associate Mary's sufferings with Jesus' sacrifice and offers of salvation. Through such devotions, suffering was perceived as the way to salvation for Canadian Catholics.

Today, the majority of Catholics do not passively accept suffering. This is evident not only in various stories and narratives written by pilgrims but also in Catholic thought in general. For instance, Michael Gauvreau's study of Quebec's Quiet Revolution discusses various challenges posed by Catholic youth. In the 1960s, the focus of suffering in religious education was debated. Some Catholic modernizers "were adamant that the teaching of religion must frankly eschew notions of sin, suffering, and moral exhortations, to focus on Christianity as a

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<sup>468</sup> Brian Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism: Lay Voluntary Associations and the Creation of an Irish-Catholic Community in Toronto, 1850-1895* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 66.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

‘psychology’ linked to living human realities.”<sup>470</sup> Other modernizers, such as Ginette Deschêne, a catechism teacher in Montreal, suggested that there was a need to remove the crucifix from classrooms, since it did not reflect modern values. She stated that the image of the suffering Christ taught students “a morality of failure,” “a cult of mortification,” and “a religion of boredom.”<sup>471</sup>

Overall, the meaning attributed to human suffering seems to have shifted in contemporary Catholicism. With the loss of cultural and religious meaning, people actively struggle against the threat of meaninglessness in the twenty-first century. As Orsi notes, “any notion that the Christian response to pain and suffering is one of passive acceptance must be revised.”<sup>472</sup> The idea that God sends illness persists, but is only rarely expressed. There are very few petitions left at Sainte Anne de Beaupré that thank God for suffering. Instead, the majority of petitions seek the elimination of suffering in individuals’ lives. In general, people explain the etiology of physical suffering as biological. It is their bodies that fail them, not God. Various illnesses, diseases and injuries are explained in terms of biomedicine. Other forms of suffering, such as poverty, oppression, or various inequalities are rooted in social relationships or statuses, and perceived as being caused by other people. Though the cause of suffering is no longer

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<sup>470</sup> Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec’s Quiet Revolution*, 166-167.

<sup>471</sup> Cited in Gauvreau, *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>472</sup> Orsi, “The Cult of the Saints,” 40.



attributed to the divine realm, individuals perceive that the extraordinary can nonetheless intervene in the mundane world, to end human suffering.

Narratives suggest that Anne is perceived as a powerful saint who has the capacity to heal those who suffer physically, psychologically and spiritually. Pilgrims postulate that Anne is efficacious as a healer. Although those who most often turn to Saint Anne for healing are women, men, too, have come to her in their times of suffering. Relative to men, women are more likely to facilitate the healing process in their roles as mothers, wives or sisters. In Orsi's study of Saint Jude, he observed that it was only women who used devotional objects in spaces of sickness. He states: "Not a single account is preserved in any of the Shrine's publications of a man's using the cult's devotional objects for the physical relief of another stricken person."<sup>473</sup> Since women have written the majority of the archived letters at Sainte Anne de Beaupré, I have very little information about men's experience. I suspect that some men do bring devotional objects associated with Saint Anne to other sick people, especially men who believe that they have experienced personal healing through Saint Anne or men who have a strong devotion to her. Men do use Saint Anne devotional objects, such as oil, medals or holy water, as a means to facilitate personal healing. Men also pray to Saint Anne for other people, especially family members. Narratives imply that in their role as caregivers, women are more likely than men to bring devotional objects from

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<sup>473</sup> Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 170.

Sainte Anne de Beaupré to others. They may even share their own devotional objects and stories with other women in hospitals.

Most often, people seek Saint Anne’s intercession through prayer. They petition Saint Anne to intercede on their behalf. Many pilgrims believe that it is through Saint Anne’s request to Jesus that healing occurs. As many pilgrims queried: What grandson could refuse his grandmother’s wishes? Although Jesus is seen as the healer in many instances, some devotees attribute this power to Saint Anne alone. All credit is given to Saint Anne: her status is equated to that of Jesus. She is believed to have the divine power to heal, without Jesus’ intervention. By creating cogent connections with Saint Anne, pilgrims invest power in her relics, water, oil, statue or medals. In turn, this power is diffused, empowering the individual. Saint Anne, according to some pilgrims, is the healer *par excellence*.

Who heals? Who receives healing? What devotional expressions are efficacious? These questions pose challenges to official orthodoxy and orthopraxy.<sup>474</sup> As Orsi suggests, “healing in the Catholic tradition is best understood, then, as the focus of multiple contests and conflicts.”<sup>475</sup> The autonomy of the persona of Saint Anne is tempered through her physical location in the shrine. Prior to the fire in 1926, the first Miraculous Statue was the

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<sup>474</sup> Respectively, I understand these terms to mean “correct belief” and “correct action.”

<sup>475</sup> Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 163.

pinnacle of pilgrims' attention, being situated directly in front of the altar. With the construction of a new basilica and carving of a new Miraculous Statue, Saint Anne lost her prior place of distinction. Upon entering the nave of the basilica, attention is now drawn toward the high altar and its striking baldachin. Immediately, one's focal point becomes the Eucharist and the figure of Christ. Saint Anne's Miraculous Statue is now located to the left of the altar, in the north transept. Clergy also temper Saint Anne's autonomy by continually reminding pilgrims of her ability to *only* intercede on behalf of people in prayers. This message is reinforced in prayers published by the shrine:

Saint Anne, we are aware of your powerful intercession before God. Treat us with goodness and be kind to those who are dear to us. Show us the way to Jesus. We wish to tell him of our love, sing the praises and receive his Spirit. We are counting on your prayer to obtain light, strength and faithfulness.<sup>476</sup>

According to various homilies given at the shrine, Saint Anne does not have the capacity to heal on her own accord. Rather, only Jesus and God have the power to heal. However, this portrayal of Saint Anne is ambiguous in some hymns. For example: "Sweet Grandmother, by healing, you, the lame do restore. And the blind 'fore you kneeling, see your statue once more."<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> "A Pilgrim's Prayer," *Sanctuaire Sainte-Anne de Beaupré: Messes, prières et chants* (Québec: Saint Anne de Beaupré, 2004).

<sup>477</sup> Stanza from the hymn: "Pray for your Children Dear." *Ibid.*, 159.

The Eucharist is central to Catholic instruction at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. Rituals, such as the Anointing of the Sick, are secondary. Orsi suggests that the official definition of the sacrament of Extreme Unction unintentionally expresses the ambivalent history of healing in the Catholic tradition: “Although the sick body was anointed with oils and water in the sacrament in a most impressive display of religious power, sick people and their families were explicitly cautioned *not* to expect physical healing of the rituals.”<sup>478</sup> This notion is reinforced in homilies at Sainte Anne de Beaupré. Despite the fact that many pilgrims journey to the shrine for healing, clergy tend to downplay the importance of the miraculous or healing in homilies. Pilgrims are encouraged to renew or increase personal faith instead of seeking a healing, cure or miracle. I was told that the reason priests emphasize the development of faith over and against healing is that many pilgrims do not receive healing. Downplaying the significance of miracles is a means for the church to maintain its authority and control in times when Saint Anne seems to have been oblivious to her faithful. Likewise, pilgrims are reminded to have their purchased religious objects blessed by priests. If they are not blessed, they are not considered efficacious from the perspective of the clergy. While the church outwardly appears to control devotional practices, it also seems to accommodate some “unofficial” devotions, especially the use of water. Blessed holy water is available for

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<sup>478</sup> Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 163.

pilgrims' use inside the vestibule of the shrine. One rarely sees pilgrims bottle this water, though some pilgrims use it while at the shrine. More often, pilgrims take water from Saint Anne's spring. As mentioned earlier, the official view is that this water does not have curative properties. However, the site of Saint Anne's spring is clearly marked outside the memorial chapel. Pipes into the store now carry the spring's water, so that it can also be accessed in the winter months. By identifying the water, the shrine "outwardly" attempts to channel and manage devotional expressions, despite its "official" view. This process parallels that recognized by Lawrence Taylor in his study of Irish Catholic pilgrimage sites:

The quest for a cure has, of course, always been a prime individual motivator—propelling the seeker from one occasion to another. This is understood by religious regimes, which generally seek to harness that motivation, appropriate the power of a cure or the expectation of a cure, in the service of their own institutional goals. Organized pilgrimage—whether to wells, graves, relics or apparitions—has always tapped this current.<sup>479</sup>

Orsi suggests that devotion to Saint Jude "inverted the illness meanings available in culture: isolation became connection, hopelessness hope, submission confidence, silence voice."<sup>480</sup> Similarly, Saint Anne devotional healing expressions turn the cultural experience of illness inside out. Pilgrimage to Sainte

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<sup>479</sup> Lawrence J. Taylor, *Occasions of Faith: An Anthropology of Irish Catholics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 245.

<sup>480</sup> Orsi, *Thank You, Saint Jude*, 183.

Anne de Beaupré, a place between heaven and earth, not only enables pilgrims to re-enchant their worlds, it also offers possibilities of healing. Despite the shrine's emphasis on downplaying the miraculous or religious healing and its attempts to control devotional expressions, pilgrims continue to turn to Saint Anne in the modern world, especially in crisis situations. Devotional expressions in the context of healing are a type of holistic healing, not replacing biomedicine but complementing it.

## Chapter Five

### *Moved by Anne: The Future of Pilgrimage in the Modern World*<sup>481</sup>

*It is turtles all the way down.*<sup>482</sup>

In the introduction of this study, I suggested that I was moved by the simple act of entering the shrine of Sainte Anne de Beaupré and that I was perplexed by my own emotional response. Since that time, I have been “moved by Anne” numerous times throughout my fieldwork experience and writing this study. In my experience, this “movement” has been physical, emotional, intellectual and sometimes even imaginative. A key issue throughout this research has focused on the ways people are “moved by Anne.” Anne moves individuals in various ways—this movement may be physical, somatic, psychological, emotive, spiritual, intellectual or imaginative. As this study has indicated, the meaning of Anne is multifaceted. She means different things to different people. For some people, a visit to Sainte Anne de Beaupré is meaningful because of its cultural, religious and historical elements. For other people, this visit can be an empowering experience, which not only transforms the self but the known world around them. To illustrate that “cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete,” Clifford Geertz wrote:

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<sup>481</sup> This title is a conscious echo of the Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans book, *Moved by Mary: The Power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, since there are numerous similarities between the Virgin Mary and Saint Anne.

<sup>482</sup>Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture*, 29.

There is an Indian story—at least I heard it as an Indian story—about an Englishman who, having been told that the world rested on a platform which rested on the back of an elephant which rested in turn on the back of a turtle, asked (perhaps he was an ethnographer; it is the way they behave), what did the turtle rest on? Another turtle. And that turtle? “Ah Sahib, after that it is turtles all the way down.”<sup>483</sup>

If turtles symbolize “culture,” we soon realize that explaining one aspect of culture will inevitably lead to questions about another aspect and another—the process is never-ending. Just as cultural analysis is incomplete, so too is an understanding of the ways in which people are “moved by Anne.” Finding meaning in fieldwork is akin to peeling away the layers of an artichoke—each layer has new meaning but you just cannot seem to grasp the heart of the artichoke to find an all encompassing significance—meaning is fluid, contested, emergent and changing.<sup>484</sup>

People are often “moved by Anne” through stories. Narratives are oral or written forms of communication, which may recount events, transmit or create tradition or simply convey data. Narratives make take the form of travel or educational brochures, devotional literature, records of miraculous events, petitions, prayers, letters, life histories or newspaper articles. Regardless of the genre, narratives move people toward Anne. The physical act of writing,

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<sup>483</sup> Ibid., 28-29.

<sup>484</sup> This is, of course, a pattern in itself.



speaking, hearing or seeing is movement, the transmission of information from one place to another: it communicates something about Anne to others.



Figure 11. *Moved by Anne*. A pilgrim, who carries a single red rose, sheds a single tear as she greets Saint Anne. Photo by the author.

Narratives about Anne may be innately private and relevant only to one individual. Such narratives may involve communication between the domains of heaven and earth, taking the form of prayer, devotional expressions and accounts of visionary experiences or religious healing. Often narratives take the form of letters written to Sainte Anne de Beaupré that describe illness or healing experiences. Orsi proposes that mailing a letter to a distant place parallels the

undertaking of a pilgrimage.<sup>485</sup> Although these narratives might be shared with others, such as family, friends, parish priests or the shrine, they have limited social relevance. Much like visionary experiences, some narratives may be effective, having a wider impact on society. Miraculous stories at Sainte-Anne-du-Petit-Cap in the seventeenth century had both private and social relevance. It is impossible to discern how such stories were meaningful to the individual since there are no first hand accounts. These stories were filtered, edited and shaped to promote clerical interests in the emerging colonial community. Such stories were effective in not only shaping the cult of Saint Anne in Canada and the pilgrimage experience, but also in defining and unifying the colonial community as French and Catholic. Contemporary stories are much more limited in exposure but they can also have some social effects insofar as they move beyond private experiences. The visionary experiences of Colette Coulombe and her mission *Le Cri de Marie* have social impact albeit in a restricted sense. For those who listen to Colette's story, such narratives may be empowering. Likewise, contemporary healing stories have the potential to be effective if they are conveyed to others. Sarah's story, in which she figures as the wounded storyteller and the crucified Christ, suggests that such stories have the potential to be meaningful, by re-enchanting the storyteller's world. Moreover, for those who listen to her story, the storyteller re-enchants all life.

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<sup>485</sup> See Orsi, "The Cult of the Saints," 40.

People are “moved by Anne” through the undertaking of a journey to Sainte Anne de Beaupré. The Turner’s model for studying pilgrimage proposes that people are “moved by Anne” through the concepts of liminality and *communitas*. Pilgrimage sites, understood as a form of institutionalized or symbolic antistructure, represent a threshold, “a place and movement in and out of time.”<sup>486</sup> Although some people experience liminality and *communitas* in pilgrimage, it does not account for everyone’s experiences. The pilgrimage experience is not *sui generis*. A focus on individual motivations is pivotal for understanding the ways in which people are “moved by Anne.” Moreover, as Eade and Sallnow have demonstrated pilgrimage sites are an “arena for competing religious and secular discourses.”<sup>487</sup> From the earliest miraculous stories at Petit-Cap to contemporary stories about Anne, Sainte Anne de Beaupré is far from being a harmonious *axis mundi*. The meaning and significance of pilgrimage has been and continues to be contested between pilgrims and religious officials, locals and religious officials, tourists and pilgrims and among volunteers.

In order to understand the dynamics at Sainte Anne de Beaupré today, this study has focused on individual motivations and pilgrimage’s connections to tourism, suggesting that visitors are inspired by a variety of motivations, which

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<sup>486</sup> Turner, “Pilgrimage as Social Processes,” 182.

<sup>487</sup> Eade and Sallnow, “Introduction,” 2.

are often mixed, blurring the boundaries between sacred/profane, pilgrimage/tourism and pilgrim/tourist. Recent scholarship has challenged these scholarly constructed categories. Cohen notes that pilgrimage is often indistinguishable from tourism—the categories of pilgrim-tourist and traveler-tourist are “empirically blurred.”<sup>488</sup> Coleman points out in his study of Walsingham, England’s Nazareth that there are many different types of visitors and that “heritage seekers” are also pilgrims. He suggests that for some visitors “the boundaries between tourism and pilgrimage have become attenuated if not impossible to detect.”<sup>489</sup> Moreover, as Tomasi notes, organized pilgrimages are often organized in the same manner as tourism insofar as they involve such large numbers of people.<sup>490</sup> Badone and Roseman postulate that the dichotomy between pilgrimage and tourism involves conjectures about the beliefs and motivations of travelers.<sup>491</sup> As Smith points out, contemporary ideas of a pilgrim as a religious traveler and the tourist as a vacationer are culturally constructed polarities.<sup>492</sup> Badone suggests that both pilgrimage and tourism are related forms

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<sup>488</sup> Cohen, “Pilgrimage and Tourism,” 57.

<sup>489</sup> Coleman, “Pilgrimage to ‘England’s Nazareth,’” 61.

<sup>490</sup> Tomasi, “Homo Viator,” 21.

<sup>491</sup> Badone and Roseman, “Approaches to the Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism,” 4.

<sup>492</sup> See Smith, “Introduction.”

of voluntary travel—people travel to places where they perceive various intangible or tangible “goods” are to be located.<sup>493</sup>

Travel that is not explicitly connected with religious institutions can nonetheless be concerned with the search for something beyond the everyday—liminality, *communitas*, transcendence, spirituality, presence, recreation of the self—whatever we want to call it, and therefore the distinction between pilgrimage and tourism breaks down, at Sainte Anne de Beaupré and elsewhere. A personal example illustrates this phenomenon. A few months ago I traveled with my son, Nikolai, and my husband John, to the Great Smokey Mountains National Park in Tennessee. As John, Nikolai and I walked down the path from Clingman’s Dome, we noticed several people gathered together. A mother bear had left her two young cubs in a tree and was foraging for food near the path. Watching the bear was a liminal experience and a sense of *communitas* was obvious among the observers. Together, we were observing something beyond our everyday experiences. As I was holding Nikolai in my arms, away from danger, I told him that we were very lucky to see such a special sight. After all, not everyone sees bears on their trek up the mountain. A woman who was standing beside me heard me speaking to my son. Acknowledging my comment she said: “Thank you Jesus.” We both shared the same “extraordinary” experience in a non-religious context but we interpreted our experiences

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<sup>493</sup> See Badone, “Conventional and Unconventional Pilgrimages.”

differently. Although I did not interpret my experience within a Christian framework, my interpretation involved a similar recognition of the “special” character of the occasion. For both myself and the woman next to me, the sighting of the bear represented a privileged opportunity to connect with a force—conceptualized as God or nature—which we perceived to be outside of and larger than ourselves. It is this type of experience, whether situated inside or outside of institutionalized religion, that constitutes transcendence.

Places like Sainte Anne de Beaupré do not function simply as places of worship. They are also historical, cultural, religious heritage and educational sites. Olsen and Dallen point out that the increasing number of visitors to religious sites relates to the overall growth of cultural and heritage tourism.<sup>494</sup> With the growing number of tourists visiting the shrine, religious officials at Saint Anne de Beaupré are working toward capitalizing on the growing religious tourism industry, providing a variety of “goods” to the shrine’s visitors. As this study has revealed, people travel to the shrine for various reasons—often these motivations are mixed. Occasionally, some people who do not initially appear religiously motivated report religious experiences as a consequence of their journey. As the Turners wisely observed: “A tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist.”<sup>495</sup> Incorporating a broad interpretation of religion, meaningful

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<sup>494</sup> Olsen and Dallen, “Tourism and Religious Journeys,” 1.

<sup>495</sup> Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 20.

and valuable experiences are inherent in all forms of travel—regardless of individual motivations.

Studies about conventional pilgrimage sites generally focus on an actual journey to a physical place: “Pilgrimage sites themselves shape the pilgrimage, and the particular nature and history of the site shapes its power, including its ability to heal.”<sup>496</sup> Other types of journeys exist as well—the journey does not need to be a physical one. Some people undertake pilgrimages by means of the Internet or other forms of media. As Helland, MacWilliams and Bowman pointed out, virtual pilgrimages can be just as meaningful and empowering.<sup>497</sup> Further, the power of place can move beyond the confines of Sainte Anne de Beaupré, being transported through relics, masses celebrated elsewhere by priests from the shrine and the mission of the visionary Colette Coulombe. The shrine acts like a radio transmitter: the locus of power is inherent in the shrine but power is also transmitted outward. Moreover, while some people perceive that the pilgrimage site itself is empowering, other people are empowered through the physical journey to reach the shrine as Frey observed. In addition, in connection with the Santiago de Compostela, meaning often evolves after the return

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<sup>496</sup> Dubisch and Winkelmann, “Introduction,” xviii.

<sup>497</sup> See Helland, “Popular Religion and the World Wide Web;” MacWilliams, “Virtual Pilgrimage to Ireland’s Croagh Patrick” and Bowman, “Sainte Anne de Beaupré.”

home.<sup>498</sup> For the young couple that completed the *Chemin des Sanctuaires*, the pilgrimage experience continued, transforming their daily lives over the course of a year.

Individuals are “moved by Anne” through various devotional expressions. Even those people who simply observe others are moved in some way. Observation itself communicates something about Anne and people react differently: it may evoke admiration, curiosity, confusion or even disgust. Saint Anne devotional expressions are similar to those directed toward the Virgin Mary. They share similar practices, meanings and functions. The “official” church approves the majority of devotional expressions at Sainte Anne de Beaupré, which correspond to traditional practices and teachings at the shrine. Even devotional expressions such as water from Saint Anne’s fountain are “unofficially” approved. To broadly characterize Saint Anne devotions, I have used the term “devotional expression.” This term does not reduce devotions to simply practices but rather perceives them as media of engagement.

Some scholars characterize Roman Catholic devotions as perceived “goods.” Kane suggests that devotions are part of a religious economy.<sup>499</sup> Various “goods” or “product lines” are made available by religious “firms.” In

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<sup>498</sup> See Frey, “Stories of the Return” and *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago*, 178-179.

<sup>499</sup> See Kane, “Marian Devotions Since 1940.”



turn, people anticipate temporal or spiritual rewards from devotional activities. Both Kane and Orsi use the term “lived religion” to describe such practices, but Orsi postulates that it is not just about practice.<sup>500</sup> It is about ideas, gestures, imaginings: all as media of engagement in this world. Orsi argues that religion should be understood as a network of relationships between heaven and earth—relationships of presence.<sup>501</sup> As Taves observes, devotions presume relationships—they provide a means of interacting with the divine realm.<sup>502</sup> Relationships or the potential of relationships, therefore, are also perceived as desirable “goods” that attract people to pilgrimage sites.

Devotional objects are used not only to communicate with the divine realm, but also as a means to access its power. Scholars have examined how people tap into divine power using religious objects. As Armstrong suggests, it is people’s behavior toward objects that makes them something more than they outwardly appear.<sup>503</sup> Like Armstrong’s work, McDannell’s study of material culture explores the ways in which religious objects achieve “affective presence.”<sup>504</sup> Objects are deemed powerful by not only by religious authorities

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<sup>500</sup> See Kane above and Orsi, *The Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street*, xxi.

<sup>501</sup> See Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth* and “Abundant History.”

<sup>502</sup> Taves, *The Household of Faith*, 47.

<sup>503</sup> See Armstrong, *The Powers of Presence*.

<sup>504</sup> See McDannell, *Material Christianity*.

but also by individuals. Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans offer a nuanced understanding of how individuals empower themselves and form relationships with the Virgin Mary, suggesting that power or presence is invested in her through devotional activities.<sup>505</sup> Effective empowerment, they observe, can only work by creating “cogent connections.” In order to obtain Mary’s power, individuals must first invest power in her through the strategies of reciprocity, conflating categories and appropriating identities.

Just as people form relationships with Mary, they also form similar relationships with Anne. Power is invested and diffused through Anne by forming cogent connections to her through the media of devotional expressions. Through these cogent connections, individuals re-enchant their worlds, making Saint Anne *really real*. At Saint Anne de Beaupré there are three forms of devotional expressions: private, collective and service. While private and collective devotions tend to be employed for self-benefit, devotions of service are performed on behalf of Saint Anne. Effective empowerment is also achieved through a fourth cogent connection: discourse about the suffering body. Saint Anne’s presence is communicated not only in the body of the volunteer but also through the suffering pilgrim.

Individuals are “moved by Anne” through visionary experiences. Visions of Saint Anne are similar in character to those of the Virgin Mary. This study

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<sup>505</sup> See Hermkens, Jansen and Notermans, “Introduction.”

incorporates scholarship on Marian visions as an analytical tool, since there are no previous studies that focus primarily on visionary experiences of Saint Anne. The term visionary experience encompasses a broad understanding of visionary phenomena, not limiting such experiences to what is seen or heard. Rather than focusing on the “epiphany” itself, I examine individual experiences and their interpretation of such experiences.<sup>506</sup> My goal is to encounter the ways in which visionary experiences of Saint Anne have been meaningful and empowering.

The majority of visionary experiences are never reported. Although most scholarship has focused on visionary experiences of the Virgin Mary, individuals also report seeing other divine figures, saints and other deceased people. In general, visionary experiences can be either social or private in nature. Private visions are limited in exposure and they tend to be relevant only to the seer or local community. They generally occur in the context of religious orders or miraculous healing stories. In contrast, social visions are effective: they have social relevance and consequences—they move people into action. Christian outlines three types of social visions in his study of Spanish visionary phenomena.<sup>507</sup> The first type attracts immediate public appeal for some type of verification. They are significant for a community or society as a whole and they often lead to the construction of shrines. In such visionary experiences divine

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<sup>506</sup>See Valtchinova, “Introduction: Ethno-Graphing ‘Divine Intervention.’”

<sup>507</sup> See Christian, *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain*.

figures appear “in the flesh” to one or more seers, and they communicate something. The second type, signs, includes images with unusual properties such as moving, sweating, bleeding or weeping statues. The third type involves the “miraculous” finding of statues or paintings.

Historical visionary experiences of Saint Anne tend to be social, and they are similar in characteristic to Christian’s typology of visions. Visionary experiences relating to Anne in the ancient and early modern world were effective visions. They were important not only for the development of the cult of Saint Anne in general, but for the establishment or revitalization of sacred or monastic spaces. Visionary experiences were also effective as a form of discourse in medieval and early modern Europe, providing some women a legitimate means to engage in religious and social debates—realms that were generally restricted to men. The earliest visions of Saint Anne in North America were connected to religious healing. Although they were generally private in nature, some had temporal social effects. The visionary experiences of Charles Chiniquy in the early nineteenth century not only involve religious healing, but they also attracted the attention of other people who subsequently undertook pilgrimages to Sainte Anne de Beaupré.<sup>508</sup>

While men reported the majority of early visionary experiences associated with Saint Anne, contemporary visions tend to be reported by women. Most

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<sup>508</sup> See Chiniquy, *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*.

contemporary visions are private and are associated with healing. There are only seven letters at the shrine that involve visions. However, it is most likely that the majority of reported or unreported visionary experiences happen to women and focus on healing, especially since the majority of pilgrims at the shrine are women and Sainte Anne de Beaupré is perceived as a place of healing. Although Colette Coulombe's visions are similar to other contemporary visions of Saint Anne, especially since they are related to healing, the apocalyptic aspect and serial nature sets them apart from other visions of Saint Anne. The apocalyptic overtones of Coulombe's visions resonate with contemporary visions of the Virgin Mary, especially in North America.<sup>509</sup> Despite similarities, there are distinct differences. Unlike the Necedah and Bayside visions, Coulombe was never instructed to build a shrine. Instead, Coulombe takes her mission to many different places. Moreover, in contrast to other seers who claim to suffer physically, Coulombe's complete bodily healing gives legitimacy to her mission.

People are "moved by Anne" through the universal human experience of suffering. Suffering moves people toward Anne in search of its causes, meaning and cessation. Devotional expressions at Saint Anne de Beaupré and various other shrines are a key aspect in Roman Catholic experiences of suffering,

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<sup>509</sup> See Matter, "Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in the Late Twentieth Century."

healing and even death.<sup>510</sup> Like western biomedicine, Catholic culture offers both an explanatory model of sickness and avenues toward healing.<sup>511</sup> Although the majority of Catholics explain the etiology of sickness in terms of physiological or psychological processes, some Catholics explain sickness in terms of sin or Satan. Central to Catholic avenues of healing are relationships, devotional expressions and empowerment. The majority of pilgrims at Sainte Anne de Beaupré use both biomedicine and religious healing simultaneously in a complementary fashion.

The term healing encompasses a broad range of meanings and it is almost always connected to some form of suffering.<sup>512</sup> Pilgrims describe various forms of suffering: social, psychological, physical or spiritual. Following Kleinman, this study understands healing as the restoration of wholeness. An individual may be healed but not necessarily cured. Alternatively, a person may be cured while being healed. Pilgrims travel to Sainte Anne de Beaupré for very specific illnesses, but pilgrimage may also involve a more general quest for therapy, self-transformation, meaning, identity or personal empowerment.

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<sup>510</sup> See Orsi, “The Cult of the Saints and the Reimagination of the Space and Time of Sickness in Twentieth Century American Catholicism.”

<sup>511</sup> See Kleinman, *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture*.

<sup>512</sup> See Barnes and Sered, “Introduction” and Dubisch and Winkelman, “Introduction.”

As several scholars have observed, healing, pilgrimage and empowerment are closely connected to gender.<sup>513</sup> Special concerns of women often lead them to pilgrimage. At Sainte Anne de Beaupré women undertake pilgrimages relating to issues pertaining to childbirth, fertility, mothering and caring for others. Women develop intimate and spiritual relationships with Anne, just as they do with Mary.<sup>514</sup> As a mother and grandmother figure that had fertility issues, raised a child and dealt with everyday concerns, including the death of her grandson, Anne is accessible to women: they share similar life experiences.

This study, *Encountering Anne: Journeys to Sainte Anne de Beaupré*, has attempted to understand the ways people are “moved by Anne.” It focused on the themes of pilgrimage, devotional expressions, visionary experiences and religious healing. It is a particular collaborative story about a particular group of people at a particular point in time. It is by no means conclusive. Generally, this study adds to our knowledge base about (1) the role of pilgrimage in secular society; (2) the similarities between tourism and pilgrimage; (3) the role of saint devotion in North American Catholicism; (4) the relationships among religion, healing and the body, and (5) the social context and function of visionary

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<sup>513</sup> See Barnes and Sered, Introduction; Orsi, *Thank You, Saint Jude*; Morrison, *Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England*; Ashley and Sheingorn, “Introduction;” Sered, “Exile, Illness, and Gender in Israeli Pilgrimage;” Gemzöe, “Caring for Others: Mary Death, and the Feminization of Religious Healing” and “The Feminization of Healing in Pilgrimage to Fátima.”

<sup>514</sup> See Gemzöe, “The Feminization of Healing in Pilgrimage to Fátima,” 41.

experiences. Specifically, this study contributes to our knowledge about Saint Anne and Sainte Anne de Beaupré. Although there has been considerable social scientific scholarship in recent years on North American Catholicism and on pilgrimage to Marian shrines, there is very little scholarship on devotional practices associated with Saint Anne. While there have been some previous historical studies on Sainte Anne de Beaupré, the majority of the literature is written from a religiously pious stance. Moreover, there is little sociological or anthropological literature on this shrine aside from some unpublished theses and a few journal articles. Future studies at Sainte Anne de Beaupré and on devotion to Saint Anne would not only enhance and build upon this study, as outlined below.

My work has only offered a glimpse of the First Nations' relationship to Saint Anne. The First Nations people have played an important role in the history of pilgrimage at the shrine, which is highlighted at the shrine on First Nations' Sunday in June. Although I focus on Mi'kmac pilgrimage groups, other bands of the First Nations also undertake pilgrimages to Sainte Anne de Beaupré, including the Hurons, Montagnais, Mohawks and several other groups. Additional interviews with other groups of First Nations people would contribute to our understanding of the First Nations' relationships with Saint Anne, Sainte Anne de Beaupré and the larger Roman Catholic Church. Further, ethnographic fieldwork at other Saint Anne pilgrimage sites, such as Lac Sainte



Anne in the province of Alberta would contribute not only to our knowledge about First Nations' relations with Saint Anne but also to our understanding of religious healing. At Lac Sainte Anne the lake water, originally known by First Nations people as "Big Medicine Lake," attracts thousands of pilgrims a year, being known for its curative properties.<sup>515</sup>

In addition to First Nations groups, other ethnic groups such as the Romany people could be investigated. This study has not focused on the Romanies, who were once a major pilgrimage group during the Novena. An investigation of Romany pilgrims would contribute to our knowledge of the Romany people and their relationship with female saints, especially Saint Anne. An examination would also draw attention to the influence of Protestantism, particularly Pentecostalism and its effect on Romany identity. As Ronald Lee points out, the Novena at Sainte Anne de Beaupré was once an annual gathering for Canadian Romany, and outdoor activities such as camping and open-air feasts served as reminders of their nomadic existence.<sup>516</sup> Lee also noted in his article that the Romanies did not bring sick or handicapped pilgrims with them to the shrine. Instead, Lee suggests that the Romany "come as their emissaries,"

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<sup>515</sup> See Brad Olsen, *Sacred Places North America: 108 Destinations* (San Francisco: Consortium of Collective Consciousness, 2008): 177-178 and Steve Simon, *Healing Waters: The Pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995).

<sup>516</sup> See Lee, "Dance Gypsy, Pray Gypsy." In comparison, Badone suggests that Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer "has the quality of 'home' for Romany pilgrims to a greater extent than the places where they live everyday." See Badone, "Pilgrimage, tourism and *The da Vinci code* at Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France," 40.

praying for the sick and bringing home devotional objects for them.<sup>517</sup> In contrast, some Romany pilgrims do seek religious healing at Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France.<sup>518</sup> An examination of Romany pilgrimages to Sainte Anne de Beaupré would contribute to our knowledge about Romany identity and religious healing.

Continued studies on the different types of pilgrimage at Sainte Anne de Beaupré would broaden our understanding of pilgrimage and its relationship to tourism. While this study has focused primarily on the experiences of the religiously oriented people who undertake a journey to Sainte Anne de Beaupré, future studies on the tourist experience would be valuable to deconstruct pilgrim/tourist or pilgrimage/tourism dichotomies. As Badone has pointed out, both pilgrimage and tourism are voluntary forms of travel that are meaningful, valuable and empowering.<sup>519</sup> Many people participate in the *Chemin des Sanctuaires*, linking Sainte Anne de Beaupré and the Oratoire Saint-Joseph, and the shrine has recently promoted this type of walking pilgrimage. Ethnographic fieldwork, including participant-observation on the *Chemin*, would add to our understanding of contemporary pilgrimage at Sainte Anne de Beaupré and its

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<sup>517</sup> Lee, “Dance Gypsy, Pray Gypsy” 16.

<sup>518</sup> See Badone, “Pilgrimage, tourism and *The da Vinci code* at Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France.”

<sup>519</sup> See Badone, “Conventional and Unconventional Pilgrimages.”

relationship to other pilgrimage sites such as *Santiago de Compostela*. As Sainte Anne de Beaupré enters more into cyberspace, future studies on the dynamics of pilgrimage may alter how we study conventional pilgrimage sites. Apolito points out in his study of the Virgin Mary and the Internet that “a new type of pilgrimage has become possible on the Web, and it’s quite attractive, allowing one to reach the venerated image instantly; it could even make the physical trip unnecessary.”<sup>520</sup> Moreover, studies that focus on “virtual pilgrimages” may uncover new ways of being religious or spiritual in the modern world.

The present study has focused on visionary experiences of Saint Anne, offering a foundational corpus of the visions associated with her. However, not all Saint Anne visionary experiences have been included in this study. While some accounts cannot be historically verified,<sup>521</sup> other visionary experiences continue to emerge.<sup>522</sup> Additional interviews with Colette Coulombe would add

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<sup>520</sup> Apolito, *The Internet and the Madonna*, 155.

<sup>521</sup> For example, there are stories connecting visionary experiences with finding Saint Anne relics. Another tradition in France holds that the body of Saint Anne was brought to Apt by followers of Jesus and buried in a cave under the church of Saint Mary. Her body supposedly remained hidden until the reign of Charlemagne. Tradition holds that the vision of a fourteen-year old boy, who was blind, deaf and dumb, led to the discovery of the relics in an ancient crypt. See Joan Carroll Cruz, *Relics* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1984).

<sup>522</sup> For example, William Christian recently drew my attention to a visionary experience in Entrevaux, France, which attracted public attention (Personal correspondence, October 30, 2009 and March 24, 2010). In this visionary encounter, a statue of Saint Anne in the town’s tavern began to bleed after its finger was broken off on December 23, 1953. See also Marcel Lévêque, *Mon Curé chez les Visionnaires* (Paris: La Colombe, 1956), 18.

to our understanding of contemporary North American visionary experiences. As previously mentioned, accounts of Coulombe’s visionary experiences have been recently made available on the Internet,<sup>523</sup> and an examination of how the Internet has impacted her mission would be fruitful. Moreover, interviews with people who attend Coulombe’s missions would add to our understanding of how people interpret and find meaning in visionary experiences. In addition, other pilgrimage sites around the world that are associated with Saint Anne could be investigated as a means to locate other visionaries.

As this study suggests, healing is an important aspect of pilgrimage. At Sainte Anne de Beaupré there have been accounts of healing for over three and a half centuries. My study has only been able to focus on narratives of healing over the short span of a few years. Many other healing stories have been and continue to be reported. An examination of how ideas about healing have changed over the years as modern medicine has advanced would not only add to our understanding of the role of the cult of the saints in religious healing, but also its relationship to contemporary ideas about holistic healing and complementary or alternative medicine.

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that people are “moved by Anne” in five different ways. The first movement is through stories about Anne. Regardless of the type of story, narratives move people toward Anne. The

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<sup>523</sup> See “Mission de Sainte Anne – “Le Cri de Marie!” <<http://missiondesainteanne.wordpress.com/>> (accessed June 9, 2011).

transmission of information from one place to another communicates something about her. The second movement is through undertaking a journey to Sainte Anne de Beaupré. This may involve the physical or virtual movement of visitors, both to and at the shrine or it may also include the journey of Saint Anne herself through her relics or the mission of Colette Coulombe. The third movement includes investing and diffusing power through Anne by forming cogent connections to her through the media of devotional expressions. The fourth movement involves visionary experiences. While a private vision may be a moving experience for an individual, social visions may mobilize larger groups of people. The final form of movement is the universal experience of human suffering. Individuals are both moved to and by Anne in search of healing. As a whole, these forms of movement suggest that people are “moved by Anne” in order to gain empowerment. Such movements re-enchant the mundane world, empowering both the divine and individual. Sainte Anne de Beaupré is a place between heaven and earth, an intersection of the earthly world with the heavenly realm. Ultimately, it is in the interstices of the extraordinary, divine world and the ordinary, mundane world that both healing and visionary experiences take place.

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