

WHY NEXT TO SANTIAGO?

By John M. Haffert

Left: The Vision of Our Lady to St. James in Her own lifetime, with pillar.



ERNMOST LINK WITH APOSTOLIC TIMES...and therefore with Our Lady who is the Mother of the Apostles, the Mother of the Church.

If Our Lady had appeared in Santiago itself the connection might be more evident, but Pontevedra was THE most important town near the landing place of the Saint's body, and on all the many pilgrimage roads of St. James...in all parts of the world...the only town with a Shrine of Our Lady related to those pilgrimages was, and is, in Pontevedra.

Perhaps the reader may not consider it important as to why Our Lady might have chosen this spot rather than any other in the world, but consider the significance of the tomb of the apostle nearby:

St. James was the brother of St. John, with whom Our Lady lived after the death of Our Lord. Our Lady appeared to St. James here in Iberia during Her own lifetime. The first, the oldest, and in many respects the most significant Shrine of Our Lady in all the world is the one on the spot of that visit to him who was to be the first apostle to die for Her Son.

AFTER ST. PETER'S

After the tomb of St. Peter in Rome, the tomb of St. James IS THE MOST IMPORTANT of any saint in the Christian world. The tomb of St. John in Ephesus was found empty. The bodies of most of the apostles have been lost. The tomb of St. James has been not only a center of great devotion throughout Christian history, but of great and continuing miracles. IT IS OUR WEST-

The Holy Year is celebrated in Rome (the city of St. Peter and St. Paul) every twenty-five years...and is a major event in the life of the Church.

PROOF OF IMPORTANCE

But the same "holy year", with the same privileges and indulgences, is celebrated in Santiago, the city of the tomb of St. James, WHENEVER the Feast of the Saint falls on a Sunday. (This will happen again in 1976). And while this is not to imply that Santiago is nearly as important as Rome, it is evidence of an importance greater perhaps than that of any other place in the world outside of Rome and the Holy Land. In a sense, it is the "reaching out" of the apostolic reality from Jerusalem and Rome to the border of the Atlantic Ocean...to the gateway to the new World which was opened by a ship from Spain.

It is where we of the West are closest to a major relic of Jesus transfigured on a mountain (before Peter, James and John) and suffering in a garden (apart with Peter, James and John).

Is it any wonder that His Mother, coming in our day to save all the world as Mother of the Church, should come here with Jesus to ask for the devotion of the Five First Saturdays... the appeal of a Motherly Heart even as the apparitions of Paray 250 years before were the "final appeal" of the love of the Heart of Jesus?

Pontevedra is an old name derived from the importance of its bridge on the old road to the tomb of St. James. Only a few miles from here the body of St. James was landed when his disciples brought it back from Jerusalem after the saint had been beheaded by Herod. Probably two of the reasons why they selected this place were:

1.) It was in the remotest part of Iberia...where Christians were relatively free from persecution;

2.) Here, St. James had given his last instructions to his disciples before returning to Jerusalem...and it was almost instinctive for them to bring the body back to the same place.

THE ONLY TOWN

I personally feel that Our Lady chose to appear here, to give the final conditions of Her Fatima message for the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart, because of St. James.