

Priest, Pilgrim, and the Sacrosanct: The Spiritual Guide and Francophone Canadian Pilgrimage to Medjugorje, in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Preliminary Findings) Sébastien Després (Memorial University of Newfoundland)

The doctoral research project for which I conducted fieldwork over the past year is an ethnographic study of the ways in which Roman Catholic priests hired as spiritual guides on organized group pilgrimages influence, and are influenced by, pilgrimage processes. Focusing on the priests who accompany groups of Francophone Canadian pilgrims to the Marian apparition shrine of Medjugorje, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I set out to examine the impact that these ritual experts have on the pilgrimages they accompany and to explore the reasons why they accept this responsibility. This report on the field research I have conducted details my participation as a pilgrim on the third-party-organized group pilgrimages in which I took part. This fieldwork was funded in part by CASCA through the Richard F. Salisbury Award and through a SSHRC doctoral award.