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Walking the Paths of Fr John Sullivan: A Potential Irish Pilgrimage Route and Trail for the Sick and Needy

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Abstract

Spiritual tourism is said to be growing in popularity globally, and so is the interest in the development of products and services to meet the needs and expectation of this growing market segment. Scholars are equally interested in the development of niche faith-based markets and products, as evident in the most recent international conference on niche market formation for faith-based tourism that took place in Malta on the 20th of October 2017. However, it is equally evident on a global scale that destinations that are host to ecclesiastical heritages are increasingly developing and redeveloping new and old products respectively, such as pilgrimage routes and trails. Likewise, in the Irish context, this growing desire has been exemplified in the re-development of medieval pilgrim paths, with Ireland adopting the slogan '*Pilgrims Paths' Ireland's answer to Camino de Santiago*'. Thus, there is a huge potential for the development of a niche product and market, along the 'paths' walked by the blessed Fr John O'Sullivan, and that were, and still associated with his healings and acts of kindness. Thus, this path could be developed or redeveloped as a pilgrimage route and trail for the sick and needy. Crucial given that historically one of the places where he spent most of his life and the church in which he worshiped served as a pilgrimage site in the medieval era but is still in existence today on the grounds of the renowned Jesuit institution (Clongowes wood college) and is home to his former burial site, and his tomb that use to serve as a pilgrimage destination. Thus, these places associated with his journeying have a rich spiritual history and a pilgrimage tradition. And the testimonials recorded of his acts of healing since the 1920's till date, with the most recent healing credited to his intercession in 2016 and approved by pope Francis himself, suggests the timeliness for the development of this product. Crucial in that there is growing number of pilgrims who are in need of bodily healing who embark on pilgrimages associated with curative powers. Thus, providing a product that appeals to a specialised section of the population, especially in the Irish context.

Selected reading

International Conference on Niche Market Formation for Faith-based Tourism: Issues and Policies in Faith-based Travel Businesses. Malta, 20th of October 2017.

<https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/events/umevents/2017/10/nichemarketformationforfaith-basedtourism>