

Call to evangelise 'secular pilgrims' trekking Camino

Most hikers along the Way of Saint James are not motivated by faith, and the popularity of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela is an opportunity for evangelising them, a group of French and Spanish bishops has said in a pastoral letter.

"Many of them are secretly searching for something that will make them better and enrich them," the bishops said, adding that the pilgrimage could help them discover "the reason and purpose of existence".



Camino de Santiago de Compostela Bishop Marc Aillet of Bayonne in south-west France, who hosted the meeting of bishops from dioceses along the Camino de Santiago or Way of St James, said 70 per cent of hikers were not religious pilgrims, and travel companies were moving in to make the trip "a cultural and tourist route like any other".

To counter this, the bishops suggested that parishes along the Way should do more to support the pilgrims and strengthen their faith. "Go out along the route to evangelise, welcome all you meet, invite them to visit your churches, explain to them the faith and the art of your altars, open a space for dialogue, take care of them personally," the letter said.

It also suggested the final stamp in pilgrim passports should be one given by pilgrims' home parish on

return from the trip.

Above: Walkers on the Camino in Spain. Photo: Alex Bikfalvi via Flickr

The Tablet