



Taking My God for a Walk: A Publisher on Pilgrimage

Tony Collins

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This is an entertaining, informative, and moving account of one man's push down the Camino de Santiago.

In *Taking My God for a Walk*, veteran publisher Tony Collins sets off down the Camino de Santiago, using his considerable knowledge as a pilgrim's staff. This religious travel journal is by turns playful, erudite, and pensive, certain to appeal to both seekers and skeptics.

At a crossroads in his career and his personal life, Collins decided to undertake a sabbatical to walk the Way of Saint James. It was both a curious and a fitting choice for Collins, a Christian who spent his career publishing religious works but who calls himself a critical skeptic throughout the book. Spurts of yearning, awe, and distaste for those who would declare modern people "spiritually arid" characterize the text, which is about careful seeking and resisting urges to plow through activities—even those meant to offer respite.

Covering the pilgrimage route in just over a month—a length of time that, Collins admits, seems too swift—Collins imparts the history of the famed towns and villages that he passes through. He records stimulating conversations with fellow pilgrims and robustly celebrates local fare, from wine fountains to smelly cheeses. Droll comments about "unbelievably untidy shrines" come alongside meditations on the works of other religious writers, and on the notion of religiosity itself. Even at its most didactic, this is a jovial, invigorating text.

Those who yearn to walk the Camino themselves will be charmed and inspired by Collins's journey, which doesn't promise miracles but does indicate that peace is available to those who truly seek it. His minor mishaps and lessons learned spill into good advice to tuck between the pages of guidebooks, and his assurances that the path is populated by fellow travelers bearing wonderful stories are a push toward starting out.

Collins notes that in his publishing career, he evaluates manuscripts with one preliminary measure: does it "merit the felling of a tree?" The answer is certainly yes with *Taking My God for a Walk*, an entertaining, informative, and moving glimpse at an increasingly popular pilgrimage.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (Winter 2017)

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