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Exploring Disability, Spirituality and Community at Lourdes Sanctuary

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Jana Bennett: Good afternoon. Welcome to the 2023 Marian Forum I am Jana Bennett.

I'm from the Religious Studies Department and also a member of the International Marian Research Institute Steering Committee, and I'm very pleased to welcome you here this afternoon.

Before I get started talking a little bit about briefly about the Marian Forum and its history, I do want to make an announcement that I think will be relevant, perhaps especially to our guests who are online, but also to some of you in this room, which is that the International Marian Research Institute, um, has recently hired a, or, identified an executive director and information about that will be forthcoming in the next month, so please keep an eye out for that information.

I am sure that some of the Marianists and others who are here at this event will be delighted to hear that information.

But now a little bit more about the Marian Forum.

The Marian Forum was started in 2015 at the International Marian Research Institute, and you can still look at all the archives that are posted online.

And it was started to promote academic study of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

And of course it's connected to the charism of the Marianists who are the founders of this fine university.

In the past few years, as the International Marian Research Institute has transitioned to the College of Arts and Sciences, there's been a little bit of a shift in focus on the Marian Forum.

We still have an academic focus, but we've also been very concerted trying to invite undergraduates to the Marian Forum as well.

And we've been trying to offer on occasion some devotional practices that might be campus wide.

So last year, for example, we had a campus-wide pilgrimage that was related to last year's theme.

Our audience for the Marian Forum is our undergraduate students, our graduate students, our international audience of alumni and students in the International Marian Research Institute, and the Institute of Pastoral Initiatives, and also faculty and students from our sister Marianist institutions at Saint Mary's in San Antonio and Chaminade University in Hawaii.

So I think we're joined by a wide cohort of people all around the world all gathered this afternoon for conversation and study of Mary.

This year's theme is Mary and Healing, and it is in two parts.

So, following this afternoon's wonderful lecture with Dr. Hutter, I hope that you will come back on February 28 and join us at our second one, which will be in the Gathering Space just out here and will feature an interview with Professor Darden Bradshaw and Brother Mickey McGrath, which will be on art and healing and Mary.

So thank you very much.

And without further ado, I'm turning it over to Kayla.

Kayla Harris: One more person before we get to our speaker.

So good afternoon, everyone, to our attendees in person and online, I just want to say a quick note.

If you are here for PATH, there's a worksheet, and you will fill that out, and someone will check you out as you leave.

There's also more seats over here if you need them so you don't have to sit.

So, I'm here to introduce our speaker for Part One of the 2023 Marian Forum, on Mary and Healing.

Dr. Liz Hutter is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English in the College of Arts and Sciences, who has been here at the University of Dayton since 2018.

Professor Hutter and I first connected when we discussed her research interests around narratives of health and medicine.

Last summer, Professor Hutter was awarded the inaugural Marian Library Resident Fellowship, And she conducted research in the Marian Library on her topic: reading, writing, and seeing health and disability in community at Lourdes sanctuary.

In her proposal for her fellowship, she wrote, "Religious beliefs and spiritual practices play a role in how a person understands their illness or disability.

Moreover, religious institutions and spiritual communities are important sites for education about public health, promotion of health behaviors, and communication around ill and disabled bodies." As part of her continued work on this topic, first-year undergraduate students in Professor Hutter's Fall 2022 writing seminar course curated items from the Marian Library's collections for the current exhibit Rituals of Healing: Body, Mind, and Spirit.

After Professor Hutter's talk, our attendees here in person are invited to explore this exhibit, both in the Rose and Marian Library galleries.

And now I will turn it over to Professor Hutter.

Liz Hutter: Alright, thank you, Kayla, for the introduction, and thank you for the Marian Forum Committee for inviting me to present here today.

So, I'm glad to see a full audience, and I welcome those who are online also.

This presentation is being recorded if you need access to it later, and for anyone who needed copies of the slides, I can also provide those when requested.

So, in this presentation, I will first share with you how I came to the Lourdes Collection in the Marian Library.

Then I'll offer some perspective on the contrasting representations of being cured and healing that I see circulating in those materials.

And I will conclude by positioning the social dimension of Lourdes as a unique model for giving and receiving care.

And then finally, as a brief wrap-up, I'll preview the Rituals of Healing exhibit that Kayla introduced and which is on display downstairs.

So...whoops...oh.

Did I do something? [Inaudible] It was working a second ago. [Laughter] Assistant: Sorry. Hutter: That's okay. I can start.

Okay. There we go! Thank you.

Alright.

So, kinda just as an orientation.

So, Lourdes Sanctuary is a Marian shrine located in the southwestern corner of France, near the border with Spain.

I chose this image on the right to kinda locate its geographic features.

So, the Gave River flows alongside the sanctuary, and in the background are the Pyrenees Mountains.

So, Lourdes kinda sits kind of at the foothills of these, uh, these geographic features.

In 1858, a fourteen-year-old girl, Bernadette Soubirous, while gathering wood near a grotto near Lourdes, witnessed an apparition of the Blessed Virgin clothed in a white robe with a blue sash.

Over the course of eighteen appearances in a period of five months, this Lady, as Bernadette called her, revealed herself as the Immaculate Conception.

In one of the appearances, Mary instructed Bernadette to drink and wash from the spring, but seeing no water, Bernadette began to dig in the earth and uncovered a small spring.

Shortly after Mary's final appearance to Bernadette, stories began to circulate about- among the local residents about instances of cure associated with drinking or touching the water from the spring.

In 1860, the bishop officially validated the realness of Mary's appearances to Bernadette.

And now some 160 years later, Lourdes remains one of the most visited Catholic shrines in the world, some six million visitors per year.

So my interest in Lourdes as a scholar was piqued, as Kayla said, when she reached out to me about the Lourdes Collection and its possible usefulness for a course I was teaching about narrative and illness.

Sometimes a researcher will go into an archive already with questions formulated and use those questions to guide how they examine the artifacts.

In my case, I worked in the opposite direction.

I relied on what I found and read in these materials to guide the questions I wanted to explore.

So, while I knew I was interested in such topics as communication between the patient and healthcare providers or the ways in which different kinds of health information circulate, I did not have expectations as to what the collection would contain.

So, the Lourdes Collection did provide an eclectic and wide variety of materials.

So, postcards, photographs, case reports, pamphlets, books, and news clippings.

So, each of these three images is just trying to capture some of those materials.

So my cart on the left, there are collected the boxes and files that archival material is stored in, the row of photographs is, ah, postcards, sorry, in the middle, and then on this side are these news clippings that were part of what's called the sided file.

As folks who have worked in archives are aware, the materials in a collection afford an abundance of primary sources.

However, it's important to also keep in mind that collections are already curated in the sense that these materials have been collected, stored, and passed on or acquired by someone else.

And so I make this point again as a way to underscore how the questions I began to ask and the direction my research took shape as a result of what I was seeing in the collection.

The materials span kinda broadly the late nineteenth century up to a few things from the twenty-first century.

And then choosing images for this presentation, I tried to reflect this range of materials, although most of the photographs you'll see are from approximately the 1950s to 1970s, a period of time that coincided with- roughly coincided with the centenary celebration of Lourdes.

So, I was compelled, of course, by many of the artifacts I examined, but two in particular stood out.

So, starting with this one, when I first looked at this, my questions really were of a fact-finding nature.

I saw three stretchers lined up in front of a building.

I wondered who they were, why were they doing there? Was this a hospital? And then on the right-hand side there's another crowd of folks who seem to be trying to gain entrance.

With some admitted discomfort, I also registered, quite honestly, some surprise to see hospital stretchers lined up in this way.

As I knew the setting of Lourdes to be one associated with miracles and cures, I also started to wonder whether these persons thought they might be healed.

Were they in pain? Were they frightened? In short, as a scholar in literary and rhetorical studies, I found myself looking for a story that helped to explain who these persons were and how they came to be waiting in this slide.

So, my initial responses to a second artifact showed a different train of thought.

So, each one of the lines in this table gives the patient's name, residency, their presenting diagnosis, the age, and date of cure.

So, this string of data compressed a longer narrative of the person and the life they lived with their illness and recovery.

So, in this leaflet and on the backside, the list of cures continues.

In this leaflet, I was looking at the data that had been, had been compiled on some sixty-five cures.

As a technical communication scholar, I know that the ways in which information is organized impacts how someone will read and ultimately make decisions.

Like images, the visualization of data like this tells stories too. This layout of information about the miraculous cures at Lourdes led me to want to look for patterns in the information.

I wondered how the data for the table might have been collected, what decisions went into the collection process.

I also began to wonder for whose benefit was this particular information.

So pulling these images together exposed for me tensions or contradictions and how the illness- and how illness and disability are presented and represented at Lourdes and by whom. As scholars in many disciplines have asserted, Lourdes is a therapeutic landscape that does embody contrary ways of knowing about illness and competing explanations as to how a person is healed or cured.

There's the scientific and the spiritual, the individual and the collective, the real and the symbolic, physical and emotional, natural and realist- ritualistic, and so forth.

So exploring these tensions seemed to me worthwhile as a way to grapple with and understand more the intimate, complex, and dynamic experience of being ill or disabled in a place that is therapeutic.

At Lourdes, not all healings from illness are cures, and not all cures are miracles.

Only a small percentage of cures, of cures that occur at Lourdes are officially recognized as miracles.

Only seventy of the more [than] 7,000 reported cases with unexplainable cures have been identified by the Catholic Church as miracles.

Criteria for ascertaining an inexplicable cure include demonstration that the cure is complete, the cure is permanent, and the restoration of the person's health cannot be explained by medical intervention.

So, the documentation of a pilgrim's medical condition is extensive and moves through several levels of medical and religious institutional bodies.

At each level, there's painstaking attempts to verify the accuracy and legitimacy of the scientific evidence in the patient's dossier.

A case that has a possibility of being deemed unexplainable is first presented by a visiting physician at the Lourdes Medical Bureau, who will forward it to the International Committee of Lourdes for another review.

If all criteria are met, the case advances to the diocesan bishop, who confirms whether the cure is miraculous.

The evidence in these patient dossiers, it's much like a medical chart, but with the additional wi- but with additional certificates, reports, and notes from various authorities affirming the legitimacy of what has been documented.

Evidence takes the form of objective data, such as X-rays and laboratory test results, as well as the physician's own observations. Travis Dichoso, a medical student visiting Lourdes, observes that, quote, "The system of verification of these facts is so comprehensive and unbiased that each case is not a matter of believing or not believing, it is a matter of accepting verified incongruous facts that in the end point to an inexplicable cure." So, this image is an excerpt of one of many, many reports or case studies on the cases that went before these various boards.

So, this is one Vittorio Micheli, and he is, his condition was cancer of his hip.

So things that would often, you would often see in these dossiers are images, such as, sometimes they're X-rays, or sometimes they're images of the person, but usually the images are trying to establish them in their quote, "normal state," so they're doing activities, in this case, he's bending and lifting his leg and squatting, things that he could not have done when he was initially brought to Lourdes.

And then on the other side is just a representation of the first page, and so it lays out the table of contents.

At the point that, I think the data in this is like 1972, so this case was eventually deemed a cure, but I think this particular report was before it had been sent up to the bishop. So, across these multiple presentations of facts about the individual's illness are repeatedly questioned, reexamined, and debated, a cure narrative emerges, the plot line of which runs something like: a person with a severely debilitating disease and in a near-death state makes a visit to Lourdes and participates in one or more rituals.

Soon after being immersed in the bath, for example, the person experiences a sudden improvement in their physical health, and a short time later the patient is fully restored to their prior state of health, and does not experience any side effects or return of symptoms.

The ideology of a cure narrative exemplifies a biomedical model of illness or disability, in which, as Eli Clare, a disability advocate, describes, it seeks to return what is damaged, in this case, a diseased or ill body, to that former state of being.

While a desire for physical restoration is not inherently something bad to wish for, the medical model disability scholars emphasize places more value on the normal, disease-free body. For those living with a disability, one consequence of the medical model is stigmatization and isolation.

A normal body, such as this one, is more desirable than a disabled one.

So, disability scholars and advocates further make clear that a disability does not define a person, and while living with one may create and while living with a disability may create some restrictions or limitations, those restrictions are not inherent to the individual, but to the environment and the conditions in which that person lives and work[s], So, though an individual may have traveled to Lourdes as a pilgrim or as a tourist, in the hands of the Lourdes or other medical authorities, their ill or disabled body becomes an object of medical scrutiny.

So, this biomedical perspective of illness or disability really does maintain a strong presence in the ways in which Lourdes is talked about, both in the archive and news headlines and in other kinds of books and periodicals.

However, most visitors, despite that kind of popularity, most visitors do not experience a physical, physical cure, but their experience of healing nonetheless remains meaningful and is often transformative.

So the volume of materials and expertise dedicated to the verification of cures at Lourdes, I would suggest, overshadows and even pushes to the margin other narratives which showcase how Lourdes functions as a therapeutic and spiritual sanctuary.

(Oh. I must be doing something.) There we go. Alright.

So, I return to this image of the stretchers waiting in line to enter the baths.

So, when I began looking at the large material, I was struck by photographs that depicted crowds of individuals.

In this case, they are lining up.

In this image, the crowd is lying in stretchers or sitting in wheelchairs in the semicircle arrangement in front of an altar.

I believe this is one of the blessings.

And then, and then in this space, another space where there's a large crowd in the foreground, there's rows of disabled persons.

We see wheelchairs, we see stretchers, and then we see cushions.

And then the altar space in the center is open on all sides so that from any corner, the center is visible, and everyone has access to different spaces and is in a device that they feel comfortable with.

So across these images, I was seeing disability because I was seeing the technologies we associate with disability.

So the wheelchair, the stretcher, those- they're like a mattress kind of pad.

On the one hand, these assistive devices reinforce things like dependence or loss or difference, things familiarly associated with disability.

However, because these technologies and the persons using them were in the context of Lourdes, I saw facilities such as this, and this is St. Pius X, and it was built, I think around in the '60s, specifically to accommodate these large crowds.

I saw facilities such as this to accommodate visitors entering the church with a range of wheeled and other devices.

This kind of access is not a contemporary offering, so I also saw modes of transportation, such as this train car from the turn of the century that was built to accommodate persons traveling to Lourdes on stretchers.

And then the image on the right is depicting kinda again the ways in which persons are assisting in lifting and carrying the pilgrims to wherever they needed to go on-site.

So in contrast to a medical or biomedical model of illness where one focuses on the disease and its cure, I saw in this collection of photographs an environment that cultivated interdependence and support to permit the participation of all persons.

And because these persons could experience all the amenities of Lourdes as any other able-bodied visitor, the illness or disability wasn't stigmatized.

In this case, these persons were not patients, but a pilgrim, a tourist, a visitor, or whatever role they saw themselves in.

And this kind of experience is what is recognized as a social model of illness or disability.

(Kind of a transition.) To kinda pull these two contrasting depictions together, I bring it back to healing.

So, healing, Wilbur Gesler, a cultural geographer, writes, is a social activity.

It involves interactions among people who are playing various social roles.

So as a therapeutic and spiritual landscape, Lourdes is carefully built and organized to cultivate these relational ways of being present at Lourdes.

So here's an extended quote about this relational experience, and it's long, so I will read it.

But I think it's very vivid and captures things I think that could not have been captured in an image.

So, this is from Robert Orsi's *History and Presence* about his experience at Lourdes.

He writes, "The boundary between private and public experience is blurred in the places where the Virgin Mary is encountered.

Pilgrims speak aloud their deeply held needs, fears, and desires to the images of the Virgin, and they do so in the presence of others who see and hear them, too, just as the Blessed Mother does.

The spatial surround that buffers each individual's autonomy are erased as volunteers and family members offer physical support to pilgrims who cannot walk on their own, feed or wash themselves, or take care of their intimate bodily needs.

With strangers helping out, family members awkwardly carry the non-ambulatory to the final yards of the healing waters or sacred image or an object so that they may kiss or otherwise touch.

Strangers have offered me cups of cold water at shrines on hot days.

They provided me with what I needed but had not thought to bring: a taper with which to light candles, for example, a bottle to fill with holy water, or a towel to dry my face on a humid afternoon." So there were other, in other accounts of Lourdes, and particularly more contemporary ones, this description, I wouldn't say is terribly unique.

I feel like it's, it's the most vivid job of describing it, but there is a lot of emphasis - or in these it's kinda buried - but there is an emphasis on what it's like.

It was not so much the reasons for going to the shrine, but what it's like when they are on-site and being there, and a lot of them talk about the Lourdes is, it's like a very tightly packed schedule.

There's always something going on.

And so you're always moving in between different spaces, and you're encountering different persons.

And I think what struck me about this quote, I actually, honest to say, I have not been to Lourdes, so I am relying on these descriptions, but I think you don't even have to be there, you don't have to be sick or disabled.

And just by virtue, as he said, you're being handed a cup of water or someone, someone gives it to you or you give it to them, that sort of you're drawn into this kind of communal experience.

So, as I conclude, it is this social environment of Lourdes that Orsi delineates so vividly that I wish to single out towards one I think is least recognized or if recognized, underappreciated.

A social environment, environment, Gesler underscores, is marked by inequality and social relations that breaks down hierarchies, hierarchies of status and experience, and creates an interdependent support network.

So, aside from the quotes in the archive, I kinda came back.

These are two images that I initially had kind of glossed over.

But when I started thinking about, again, the social interactions that were happening, and when I started reading about the size of these, of the volunteer staff on site, I kinda came back to these images and looked at them differently.

So, I think initially like the image on the right I was thinking, "Oh, there's a patient in the middle, surrounded by what I assume to be medical professionals kinda staring at them and diagnosing them." But in fact this is, and that did happen, but this particular image, It's a mix of volunteers.

So the gentleman on the corner with the band around his arm is one of the official volunteers.

The label for this image talked about the woman whose back [is] to us.

She was also a regular volunteer.

So, I don't know much about the other persons, but I can only assume that they may have been a health provider in some way or a family member.

But I think this is the kind of they're not interact- they're talking to each other, the patient is lying there, but I think it's standing in for the kinds of relationships that can form.

There's also a statistic, and, actually, I could not find it, but the ratio of volunteers to patients is really high, something like six to one.

So, I think that image captures that.

And on the left is kind of another image, which again, we might take for granted.

Somehow these persons have to get into the baths and out.

And we have four gentlemen who are, it looks like they're putting into the water a man on a stretcher.

So by making this effort to recognize the ordinary interactions among those at Lourdes, we displace the medical histories of individuals, instead bringing into focus the labor of countless volunteers, laypersons, health professionals, clergy, tourists, who comprise an impressive, impressive support system at Lourdes.

Gesler further notes that these kinds of social experiences are exchanged informally among friends and pass to widening circles beyond Lourdes, thereby creating and accruing stories to engender a recurring cycle of bearing witness. As Lourdes is a therapeutic and spiritual destination, this kind of impact is particularly important for the person who is ill or disabled.

When a person leaves Lourdes, they may return to an under-funded healthcare system where they may return to living and working in built environments that are inadequately accessi- accessible or in which their medical condition isolates them.

So, the social experiences that Lourdes intentionally fosters, I offer, suggest a kind of model for thinking about how giving and receiving of care is a relational, communal activity that needs to be cultivated or intentionally cultivated, affirmed, and sustained.

(Transition, just wrapping up.) So, I end at the end kinda where I began, which was in the classroom.

So you will see in the Rituals of Healing exhibit and the Rose Gallery is the culmination of what students in my freshman writing seminar put together last fall.

So, while my presentation has been about Lourdes, my students took a broader view, and so they were thinking about, probably in some ways for the first time or intentionally thinking about things that they did or thought about that brought in however they defined healing, so a sense of comfort, a sense of belonging, some relief from pain, for example, and then we all, and kinda with thinking about that, we went into the Marian Library archive and they've looked at, touched, arranged, and described objects that they then curated to support a particular theme around healing and ritual that they came up with.

So I want to, I guess kinda use this time to also to kind of officially thank the students who are part of my class.

So they gave attention to explore a topic that they did not expect, I think, in a college writing course, and I admire their effort to work through an unfamiliar process in which the end result was difficult to see.

One thing I will say kinda from the point of view as a teacher, when I was designing the class that led to this exhibit.

I- there's a lot of writing that goes into an exhibit, and I think that kind of gets overshadowed by all the visual elements we see.

So, we'll walk around an exhibit and kind of look at things that catch our eye.

So, one thing that was important to me when I was designing the course was that students experience writing in a real and intimate way that's not just a transactional activity in between handing in a paper, for example, to the teacher.

A second goal is, I also wanted them to experience writing as something other than what they write often in college, or will be writing in college as argumentative essays.

So, the writing that they did in the exhibit are things like the exhibit labels and the wall claims.

And all of that was developed over, over many weeks.

And then finally, it was important to me, again, kind of as an instructor, that students were given access to primary sources that they were able to touch and handle.

So just speaking for me, like I had never set foot into an archive until I was a graduate student, so the ability or the opportunity for freshman to experience that, I thought, was really unique.

So, finally, then, if you see the visit, and I hope all can go downstairs, I thank Kayla Harris and Melanie Fields, my excellent collaborators who worked not only with me but also closely with my students.

And I extend deep admiration for the library folks who made the design of the exhibit so inviting and compelling.

So again, I hope you get to see it.

And then there's also the exhibit on the seventh floor in the Marian Library.

So, I may believe that brings us to the end, and I'm happy to elaborate on anything or just to hear your responses, or thoughts, questions, or comments.

Audience member: I appreciated the distinction between biological healing as opposed to perhaps other types of healing.

Did you see artifacts or things that might denote some, some other ways in which people experienced, I'm going to say, transformation, you know, in that, uh, line we had? Harris: And, Liz, can you just kind of repeat the question so the people online can hear? Hutter: Yes. Okay. So, to, the question is, were there other ways in which persons experienced the transformation that comes from...? Audience member: Outside of biological healing.

Hutter: Yeah, so I think, yeah, and I think it's, you know, it's funny, you find it kind of in these offhand comments, they're never like the main events, but it's things like that are described from a very emotional place, like a feeling of peace or comfort, whatever that might mean for the person.

It might be kind of just a calm also.

Some have reported or expressed - and this was a phrase that I saw - was, it might not be a physical miracle, but it was a miracle of grace in which they had some kind of renewal of their faith or an awareness of something that they had not seen before about their life and their vocation, for example.

Go ahead. Audience member: Did you see in any of the documents that you perused, any, was there any sort of discourse about how someone's faith would perhaps augment the kind of healing or even lead them to a cure? Was there any sort of- I suppose I was wondering if, in a space like that, if there's some- if there is an emphasis on sort of like the individual themselves being responsible in some way or facilitating this in the space? Does that make sense? Hutter: I think so.

So the question is, was there evidence or did I see anything in the archive that suggested kind of the faith of the individual as affecting a big part of...? Audience member: Yeah, if there was a sense of that from Lourdes itself, that the individual's own faith helped to propel their journey forward? Hutter: So, yeah, it's really mixed, and I guess I can't single out specifically, there's a real emphasis on, some of the persons who were, whose cures were deemed miracles weren't necessarily Catholic or a faith to begin with.

And maybe over the course of their life they did. Some were, of course.

So, I think, I think there's a real emphasis that, and even the doctors themselves, a lot of them did not, were not necessarily Catholic, for example, but came from other faiths.

So, I'm not sure, I guess I would say, I guess I didn't see or I can't, with the evidence I had, I couldn't, I can't really answer that in a very definitive way.

Audience member: You don't come across any disappointments, I guess, with maybe not getting what they really wanted or any, I guess, that other side of it? Hutter: So, I think that these are both good questions, because I think this is maybe a limitation of the archive. Audience member: Right, yeah.

Hutter: Yeah, because I think what was in the archive was more materials that were either created by or for an ecclesiastical audience.

So those own individual narratives would have to be in other places, like letters or journals.

So sometimes, though, on the postcard, they will say, the ones that had been sent to someone, sometimes there were really brief messages.

Not so much disappointment with experience, but they were disappointed at how many crowds or how large the crowds were or disappointment, yeah, that just it was tiring because the day was so busy.

But yeah, that's something I guess I was aware of early on that I wasn't, you know, my impulses, I want to know the individual's story, but I would say there was or at least I haven't gotten to that yet.

Moderator: Liz, I have a couple of things coming in from online.

Hutter: Okay. Sure.

Moderator: The first is in a story, a personal story, from someone who volunteered at Lourdes for many years, and he shared, at least during his period volunteering there, being a volunteer, you were not supposed to speak with the people there for healing, at least in his experience, the minimum words in order to help them have an encounter with Our Lady.

That was the encounter and the relationship that he felt he was, he was cultivating, that he had a very intimate relationship with the people who were seeking healing, but that it was not one that was, that involved spoken communication, that is was facilitating that other relationship of healing.

So I wanted to share that and then- Hutter: That's really fascinating. Moderator: Yeah.

I think it's the, yeah- Moderator: Yeah.

Hutter: and it is intimate, because it's touch.

It's that lifting or moving... Moderator: Yes, exactly, different types of engagement, right? And I have a couple of questions, I'll just do one, and then we can go back to the room and then come back to the next one maybe.

So, this is coming from Father Simon Mary, familiar to many of us in the Marian Library, yes, I wonder if the cure narratives documented the spiritual life of the person after the cure experience, analogous to the faith life of the Marian visionary, that might in turn be considered by the diocesan bishop in his assessment of the miraculous nature of their cure.

I guess it's more of an observation.

I don't know if you want to respond to that.

Hutter: Yeah. So again, the documentation, I haven't gone through of all the cases, but I feel like, from the ones I've seen, like the example of Vittorio, there's- it really is about, it's really about the biological facts.

And there's, I guess the faith of the person doesn't or isn't highlighted.

There's an emphasis on how they return to what if, whatever their prior job was or to their family life.

But in terms of a spiritual component, that was not, at least in the ones that I've seen so far, was not part of it, part of the record.

Audience member: Did you see a difference between, I think that there's a difference between qualitatively between narratives that were pulled by one person [inaudible] or who had followed a person versus [inaudible] strangers [inaudible]? Were there any differences based on whether someone self-identified as the [inaudible]? Hutter: I think that's hard to answer, too.

I would say not really.

I think it's because I think it was really more of an emotional kind of response, again, kind of a clarity of thought or a feeling of peace, that kind of thing.

In the archive, the narratives around disability really were, again, those case studies.

So, yeah, again, I just, those kinds of narratives I don't have access to.

It'd be interesting to see that.

And even in the, again, postcards are sort of very ephemeral, but those, I think only of one, of just a couple of them, like reference themselves as that. There was a postcard by someone who was ninety years old.

And so she talked about, she was there like in a wheelchair and so [inaudible], but I don't think she identified.

She didn't express anything about how that impacted her experience there. Audience member: Did you, like in looking at the postcards, and some of those ecclesiastical materials for church audiences, did you notice any visual themes that were carried throughout? Like what is, what are some of the images that people would clearly see and think "Lourdes" that you noted in looking at the volume of materials that

you did? Hutter: I think it's the image of the Immaculate Conception that I had in one of the earlier slides, kind of in that circle, and holding a rosary usually, I think.

And, yeah, and this one too.

So there are lots of variations, this is of the Grotto, so, the Immaculate Conception.

The statue is there and then people can compress it, ah, process in and through it.

So, yeah, I think that's what I would say.

Again, I had not been to Lourdes, but, I mean, the other side of this is the images that get promoted by way of the commercialization, and so I imagine there's a whole different array of images there.

So...yeah. On Zoom? Moderator: What somebody thought - I'll say just for time's sake - what one of the people were observing that there are many replica grottoes of Lourdes, including over at Mount St. John's... Hutter: Yeah.

Moderator: ...but there is a question, or maybe an encouragement, in a direction of scholarship on this, another - this is also from Father Simon Mary - um, asking, have you explored the relation between the communitarian/social effects of Lourdes and the message of the Virgin Mary during her communications with St. Bernadette at Lourdes? There's a through line? Hutter: Yeah. No, that would be a next step.

And I would say there have been like, yeah, very recent kinda studies actually coming out of, there was one study, on nursing education, and so it was nursing students who joined a pilgrimage, and it kinda connected this.

The social measures is giving care with kinda their spiritual lives.

So, and they, in that particular study, I think they documented the experience, there was a lot of, this is where the narratives would come out, their reflections on what they did, what they were feeling or seeing while there.

So, I would say it's probably yeah, like the- turning the corner on a way to explore that, to explore Lourdes kinda scholarly, yeah.

Yeah.

Harris: Where, where would you like to take this research next, like what are your next kind of questions or thoughts that you still want to explore? Hutter: So, I do think it goes back to the questions that are coming around, like around what are, are there differences in the way a disabled person identifies or describes their experience and ways in which they think about their disability? And narratives.

I think I am interested in, more than I realized, again, is in this volunteer.

So, the person who offered that experience as a volunteer, I don't think those stories, I haven't seen those kinds of experiences written about or published in a way that the stories about the cures are.

So, I think there's something there.

And I do see it as care-giving and kinda, you know, thinking back just to models of care outside of Lourdes, but just in a healthcare system, I think that that kind of interdependence is something to think differently about or to think more strategically about in our own healthcare system.

So, yeah. Yes. Audience member: I'm really interested in how the students experienced this.

Did they, did many of them have knowledge of miraculous healings, and how new was the concept for them, and what was their sort of path as they went through the class and learning about this? Hutter: Yeah.

So I- So, initially no, and they kinda self-volunteered these references.

A couple of them did, were familiar with Mary and Marian healing.

But in terms of Lourdes, particularly, that was not a familiar sanctuary to them.

So, I, you know, and this is a ca-, some of my students are presenting at the dean's showcase.

So, I think that would be, I would like to hear more about how they did, how they themselves processed what they were reading, and thinking about. We spent a lot of time in class talking about just this nature of ritual and kinda talking about how it's different than a habit and why they might participate in a ritual.

And written in, with that focus, there was some emphasis, like saying the Rosary was something we talked about or they brought up as an experience. In terms of healing too, kind of it really, as you'll see in the exhibit, the themes really are around this idea of comfort and the sources of comfort, family, for example. Though, there is a group that did work with Lourdes, and I think they focused on particularly, I believe, the water.

But I think for that group it was, all of this was new to them.

Sure. Audience member: You know, when I think of an archive, I think of it as like very solitary, often, like, you're in there, you're on your own, but I'm struck by the way that you're kind of creating that public-facing or social type of writing for your students.

You're also emphasizing at Lourdes, right, the social practices of care and the focus on that community? So, how do you see those two things kind of connecting here and, thinking specifically about the exhibit, how is that a model in student writing? Okay? Hutter: Okay.

So, that question, like we mentioned, repeat, I think, the other questions- So, the question was thinking about how the process of working in an archive kinda mirrors the social experience that one has at Lourdes and even in the exhibit. Was that? Okay.

Yeah.

So, actually, I like that conne- I hadn't really put first the archive as a social thing, but yeah, it very much is.

I think, I think it's all- Hm. I got to think about that one. That's- Looking at it from the perspective of the exhibit, working backwards, I think what was valuable, aside from the subject matter, was thinking about where does, what do you write about and what do you, like, what do people care about? And

because the experience [of] rituals and healing - we talked about this too - is so broad, it probably, you know, is universal.

We all are experiencing healing in some way.

But then how do you, how do you write about it? And writing about it though, wasn't- we started with kind of their personal experiences, but when we shifted to the artifacts that were in the collection, I think that was a little bit harder for them, because they were writing about things they knew, experiences they knew, but artifacts that they, that weren't familiar.

So, I'm, actually I don't think I'm answering your question, but I am thinking as I am- as I am speaking.

It is, but I do- a benefit to me- I guess for me is I do- you know, it was several years this kind of collaboration has been in the works, and I think every step of it was, is necessary, so for me to be able to go in, it wasn't just about my research, but the subject matter, the archive again opened up for me ways that students could write about things that were not accessible on the Internet exactly, for example, and that they could write about things and present them in a way that helped audiences relate to these very common or familiar experiences.

And yeah, there's something different about doing that with archival objects.

And I guess that's what I'm stuck with.

There's something about the archival nature or the arti- or the object-ness, that...

Audience member: And it is taking something that's public and taking it out of the archive...

Hutter: Yeah. Audience member: ...and putting it into something you put together.

There's something, there's something interesting about that. It just fascinates me.

Hutter: Yeah. So yeah, so more to think about.

Thank you.

Yeah.

Audience member: I don't know if you can answer this one.

Don't feel pressure really, but it is- it's a really interesting question.

Have any studies been done to analyze the relation between the higher levels of medical documentation now required and the percentage of healing as experience? I believe this underscores the importance of a previous comment in the chat about the primacy of the message over- of Lourdes, over the miracle, like that the miracles are almost secondary or tertiary to the message, the religious message of Lourdes.

Hutter: Yeah, and I, yeah, so I don't- I would not be able to answer that. Audience member: Yeah. Yeah.

Hutter: But- Audience member: Yeah. Yeah. I accept that.

Hutter: Yeah, that's very compelling.

to think about. Audience member: Yeah.

Yeah, my guess is, it probably would be doable, not necessarily with our records.

It would be a project with the medical bureau.

Hutter: I think that's what I was thinking.

I was like how would I go about answering that? Or, what would I need to look at to answer that?

Audience member: Yeah. It might be, to be honest, but it's a really interesting question, I thought. I know that the barriers have gotten much more significant as medicine has progressed. It's much harder... Hutter: Yeah.

Audience member: ...to get something confirmed.

(Or just proved.) Yeah.

(To try and answer that.) Yeah, true. Yeah. Hutter: Yeah, I do, there were, yeah. I think that here was an awareness, and in some ways that's, yeah, the documentation got more extensive because technology was such that it could have created healings and, yeah, the diagnostic technology was different.

So, yeah, I think that sort of as the technology involved evolved, the verification process also changed. Anything else? So, for the students.

have any of you been to Lourdes? I'm always curious now, because I haven't, and I, yeah. Moderator: Do you want to go now? Audience: I'm pretty sure [inaudible] Hutter: Has he talked about it? Audience member: Yeah, it was a very enjoyable trip for him, just that experience was very transformative for him, and I don't think he had healings there, but I think just the emotional and personal thing for him was changed when...

Hutter: Yeah.

And in some way, I think that any kind of, I mean, I guess it's kind of an arguable point, but a transformation of any kind could be perceived as healing too. It doesn't have to be healing from illness.

It could be something else that was lost and has been restored.

Yeah, so others were- yeah, go ahead.

Audience member: I've been there, and it's a remarkable place in a lot of different ways.

First of all, there's a huge amount of commercialization until you get there, like souvenirs and things like that from all kinds of people who have to make a living.

But then once you actually get onto the site of where the shrine is and such, it's, it's a very different feel, and, you know, the whole thing about medical healing miracles and things, I don't know how to explain that or understand it, but what was remarkable for me were the number of pilgrims and the number of people who were there, and the sense of serenity, and just... [to neighbor:] you were with me.

[Laughter] There was just a presence there that I had to just allow myself to experience without thinking or judgment or anything, just experience it, and it was pretty remarkable.

Hutter: Yeah.

Audience member: For those reasons, I went back to that.

Hutter: But I think there is that element of the indescribable where we don't quite yet have the words to describe what it feels like.

Did you ask me a question earlier? Okay.

I must have been hearing things.

Harris: I was going to say, if there's no other questions online or, or those of you who are getting PATH points, you are welcome.

We'll give Dr. Hutter a round of applause. [Applause] Working backwards.

You could turn in your worksheet on your way out, but again, you're all welcome to visit the exhibit down on the first floor as well as the seventh floor. Thank you again so much. Hutter: Yeah. Thank you.