

BUT COLLECTIONS BOXES APPEAR

PREY

SHRINE OF THE TIMES: Pilgrims are now being asked for donations at the Donegal site



ALL'S WELL: Now everything costs money at shrine



Meanwhile, the people around the Rosses area of Co. Donegal don't know what to make of Joe Coleman himself.

"It's all about money these days," a resident of Loughanure said.

A local man said he and his neighbours would prefer the site to remain "a peaceful place where people come to pray and meditate."

Visions

"But a lot of different people have been coming here for the past two years since Joe Coleman claimed he saw the visions."

"They are all caught up with apparitions. They want to see visions. They are all mad if you ask me."

"And that boy Joe Coleman has been here a good bit too. Last time he was there was two weeks before he appeared in Knock."

"People around here do not want huge crowds like that arriving at our little shrine."

Meanwhile, Holy Joe's own website has been hijacked by a joker.

A cartoon on joecoleman-apparitions.com has Joe claiming that "Charlie Haughey will appear at L'Ecrivain [top Dublin restaurant] on 25th December, 2012."

More daft claims appear when you click on the bubble-caption, most of them predicting "apparitions" by the late Taoiseach:

"Holy Shit! Charlie Haughey will appear at Christ Church on the 16th of October, 2012."

Coleman has complained on radio and in newspapers of people "mocking him" over his predictions and has compared nosey reporters to the people who persecuted Jesus.

Non-believers

But like all charismatic people, the self-styled mystic has attracted the attention of non-believers.

Coleman has admitted on Joe Duffy's Liveline that he accepts "donations" from people who come to him for healing.

And he was forced to admit that he had charged a girl €40 after she rang up to tackle him over his claims that he "never took a penny."

He has also admitted during the week that his plane fares and

accommodation are paid by friends.

Alan Dempsey, from Mountmellick, Co Laois, says he met Coleman and a friend last Easter on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje with his mother and three friends.

"They didn't even go on the pilgrimage walks. We were all going up Apparition Hill and they stayed behind."

Dempsey wondered just why Coleman and his friend were on a trip to Medjugorje.

"Curiosity got the better of me and I sat down to speak to them. They said they got their flights paid by people in Ireland. They even got spending money."

"If you have a gift from God, you heal people and you don't charge."

"And all this stuff about Our Lady being angry. Anger is not an emotion you would associate with the Mother of God. She's always been serene."

Dempsey didn't go to Mr Coleman's events at Knock last weekend or on October 11, "because I didn't want to see the shrine desecrated."

"But I read your report about the people being trampled and it only confirmed what I thought."

"Our Lady doesn't want that happening. They're making a mockery of Our Lady and everything Catholics believe in."

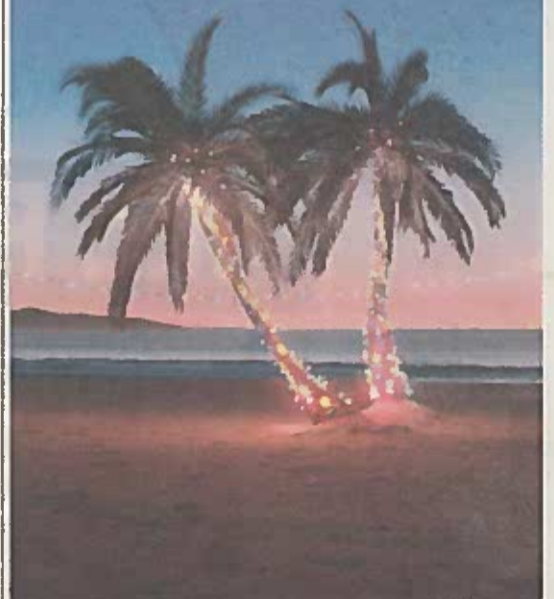
Last weekend, Coleman said that a "boy from the travelling community" had been cured of blindness, a claim which was later rubbished by the travellers' organisation, Pavee Point.

Coleman himself claims to be "disabled" following an accident while he was working as a roofer, and lives on Social Welfare Disability Benefit as well as his cash "donations."

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