



The Raphael Recorder

Charity no
1098328

April 2020

Welcome

Welcome to the first of what is hoped will be the first of a number of newsletters written to keep one another in touch. Our mission is to take the sick and disabled to Lourdes, to care for them in every way during the pilgrimage and with them to offer prayers for all those who suffer in any way. We are naturally disappointed to be frustrated by the restrictions placed on travel due to the Corona virus.

Developments

It seems that as early as the beginning of March our pilgrimage to Lourdes in 2020 was not going to get off the ground. Recently France has urged all EU countries to keep their borders closed until September. Ms von der Leyen, President of the EU, has warned that the elderly and those with medical conditions might have to self-isolate until the end of the year. Indeed, she went further saying the sick may have to wait until an effective vaccine is developed. None of us knows when that might be! We have all become used to travel freely and because of the Coronavirus this may come to an end. As much as we might cherish them, package holidays and pilgrimages do not qualify as essential travel. We can but hope and pray that normality will return quickly and we will be able to revisit the shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes .

What is happening in Lourdes?

In essence, the whole town of Lourdes is closed. In the early stages of the pandemic, it had been hoped the Sanctuary might be able to stay open but sadly, this has not been the case. The incidence of the virus in Lourdes is very low but this is exceptional within France. Lourdes is relatively isolated and has about 18,000 inhabitants. It is the visitors, nearly five million in number, who swell the population and it is these who would unwittingly bring the virus to Lourdes. France initially banned gatherings of more than five hundred people and gradually that number has reduced to ten. This meant there was no possibility of holding the processions or any Masses either the International or private diocesan or group Masses. Under lockdown rules, hotels, bars, cafes and restaurants had to close.

Fr Leo



Every church in the country is closed for public worship and St Mary's Langho is no exception. Fr Leo continues to say Mass in the dining room of the presbytery although it is not broadcast on-line. Instead Fr Leo publishes his regular Sunday homily which is available on the St Mary's website. Doubtless Fr Leo will continue to accept Mass intentions.

Many of us are missing Fr Leo and his insights. He has undergone medical procedures at the beginning of the year and is waiting for news of any further treatment. Get well soon, Leo!



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Page 2

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The Sanctuary of Lourdes

At the present time the Sanctuary of Lourdes is closed to visitors. It is not possible to say when it is possible to re-open. While we wait, the Sanctuary is inviting participation in the prayers in Lourdes and is advertising the following program which is available on Lourdes TV.

Mass	10.00am	French
Mass	11.00am	Italian
Mass	17.00pm	English
Rosary	8.00am	Tamil
Rosary	9.00am	German
Rosary	11.30am	Vietnamese
Rosary	13.30pm	Polish
Rosary	14.30pm	Spanish
Rosary	15.00pm	English
Rosary	15.30pm	French
Rosary	18.00pm	Italian

We are encouraged, too, to place a prayer intention on the Lourdes website.
We are encouraged to make a donation towards the cost of the large candle which is kept burning at the Grotto.
We are also asked to recite a prayer for a virtual pilgrimage:

The Sanctuary invites us to recite a prayer for a virtual pilgrimage:

Our Lady of Lourdes,
You who revealed your presence to Bernadette
By simply saying "I am the Immaculate Conception",
Grant us the grace to be present with you at the Grotto of Massabielle.

We cannot be there today, but we are present in spirit with Bernadette and all the pilgrims from Lourdes who have gone before us.

You gave birth to the Saviour of the world,
Look tenderly on our world in her distress.

Open in us a path of hope,
Guide us to Him who is the Living Source,
Jesus, your Son, who teaches us to say

Our Father
Hail Mary
Glory be to the Father

Thank you

Thank you to all who have responded to the appeal for donations. A number of different organisations have appealed for funds specifically to support the NHS and other worthy causes and we recognise generosity has to be rationed. While we are not likely to better £25 million, nobody from Raphael has volunteered to walk round their garden one hundred times.

In recent times we have consciously spent more money in grants to those who would not otherwise be able to come with us. Sadly, our funds have become depleted and we risk losing the deposits payable to reserve flights which we are not now able to use

Please do not be shy: contributions to this 'Recorder' will be welcomed.

Raphael is very much a family pilgrimage where friendships are established and maintained. Please share your experiences on pilgrimage, the people you have met and the graces you have received.

Please send copy to Paul Affleck either by mail or e-mail.



director@raphaelpilgrimage.org.uk

By mail to 54 Kings Avenue
Woodford Green,
Essex.
IG8 0JF.