



The Raphael Recorder

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Welcome

Welcome to this fifth edition of the Raphael Recorder.

Many thanks to the contributors taking the time and making the effort to share experiences.

This is an account of the 70th miraculous cure in Lourdes recognised by the Church in 2018. Contrary to popular belief miracles are subject to rigorous scrutiny by medical experts.



Sr. Bernadette Moriau a religious sister was healed on 11th July 2008 after her pilgrimage to Lourdes. This healing was recognised on 11th February 2018 and is officially the 70th miracle attributed to the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Sister Bernadette was born on 23rd September 1939 in the North of France. At age 19 she entered the Nantes Convent to join the congregation of the Franciscan Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She graduated as a nurse in 1965. In 1966, when she was 27 years old she began suffering from lower back pain. There followed four operations and other treatments all without success. In 1975 she was no longer able to practice nursing.

Her neurological problems started in 1987, significantly reducing the distance she was able to walk. Medical treatments were virtually ineffective. She had a spinal neurostimulator fitted in 1992 and had to begin morphine medication in 1994. In 1998 she began suffering from sphincter disfunction. The rigid cervical-lumbar corset that she had started wearing in 1999 became a permanent feature. In 2005, her left foot developed an equinus contracture which meant she had to wear a splint. In July 2008, she joined her diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes and received the Sacrament of the Sick. On her return home, her condition was the same if not worse having been aggravated by exhaustion after the trip. On 11th July 2008, just at the time that the Eucharistic procession was taking place in Lourdes, she was in the chapel of her community for an hour of adoration. Around 17.45 she relived a moment that she had experienced in the Basilica of Saint Pius X, during the Blessing of the Sick. It was then that she felt an unusual sensation of calm and warmth spreading throughout her body. She heard an inner voice asking her to get rid of all her medical aids, corset and splint. She then noticed that her foot had returned to a normal position and that she could move it once again. All her sphincter disorders disappeared, and, on that same day, she stopped taking all her pain medication and using the spinal neurostimulator.

Examination by the Lourdes Medical Bureau found the unexplained nature of Sr Bernadette's healing to be unforeseen, instantaneous, complete and lasting within our current limits of scientific knowledge. Details were sent to the Bishop of Beauvais and on 11th February 2018, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Bishop declared the "prodigious-miraculous" nature and the divine sign of the healing of Sister Bernadette obtained through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes.

Cathy Daly Pilgrim

As a child I had always wanted to visit Lourdes but, coming from a family with very little money to spare, it was never an option. In 2019 I finally made it to Lourdes and, courtesy of Paul and Mary Affleck, I joined a group from St Thomas of Canterbury Church Woodford Green on the Raphael Pilgrimage.

Back in 1958 I was a pupil at St Angela's Ursuline Convent in Forest Gate and an all girls school. I was a member of the school choir and I was fourteen years old, the same age as Saint Bernadette when she saw Our Lady.

Throughout the Church there were great celebrations for Marian Year, the centenary of the apparitions at Lourdes, culminating in a grand concert held at the Royal Albert Hall. A special oratorio was written for the occasion which was to be performed by the massed choirs of the Ursuline Convents in the presence of the French Ambassador to Great Britain.

Also in the programme there was a performance by the French 'singing Priest'. Pere Aime Duval, entitled 'Tap Your Sabots Bernadette'. This was a very catchy tune which we girls had to learn.

We also had to learn The Marseillaise to honour the French Ambassador and I can still remember the words! As with most public performances of the times we opened with the National Anthem for which, of course, the audience stood. We followed this with the French National Anthem, the Marseillaise, and everyone sat down except for the Ambassador and his party in their box! I would imagine, that at that time, the British public was unaware of the significance of what we were singing.

It was a day of huge excitement for us girls to be performing at such an iconic venue and for years I kept my performer's



ticket which allowed me access to the dressing rooms. I wonder what became of it?

So back to Lourdes and there I was, sixty one years later, able to be there at last and it was worth the wait. I had my seventy fifth birthday while we were there and will have abiding memories of the kindness of fellow Raphael pilgrims and the wonderful atmosphere, especially the candlelight procession. I had intended to go as a helper but, unfortunately, I had a bad fall the week before we went and ended up as a 'helped' instead. I would like to say a very special thank you to the people who pushed me round in a wheelchair. You know who you are.

Typical
French
Sabots



From Jean Lugton Nurse & Pilgrim

The virus came as a shock to me as did the subsequent lockdown. It is hard not being able to do my usual activities and meet with friends but I have been meeting up on Zoom!! Now we can meet in small groups, I have met up with my friend Jan in her garden and I had a couple of friends for alfresco lunch in my garden. The garden is looking good and I have been spending time on it, weeding etc.

I was disappointed not to go to Lourdes this year, due to COVID 19. I greatly enjoyed the virtual reunion, the 'party pieces' and chance to chat and catch up with each other's news. So sad to hear about Mandy from Wolverhampton!! I hope she is getting the counselling she clearly needs! It was great to have the usual raffle (thanks to Kath) even though I didn't win anything. It was lovely to see Fr Leo in good form.

I have not been able to go into Marie Curie Hospice as usual as only essential clinical staff are allowed in. It has been hard for Marie Curie financially as they have missed lots of fundraising opportunities, including the big summer fete. However, I am involved in two research projects, working at home. One is a review of tele-health in palliative care and the second is an analysis of comments from some focus groups with Marie Curie community staff on how they are communicating with patients and families by phone and video instead of face-to-face. Their comments are really interesting. They are only doing essential home visiting and they and the clients are missing the face-to-face contacts but are finding phone and video more useful than they anticipated.



In tune with present times, Alfie, my cat, had a video appointment with the vet, which he loved! It was much less stressful than going to the vets and being poked and prodded there.

He has a slight discharge from his eyes which has responded well to antibiotics.

We are slowly coming out of lock-down in Scotland and 'Dishy' Sunak is promising the catering trade lots of help. It will be lovely to go to a restaurant again.

I have a new computer which is lovely. I have come out of the stone-age technically speaking, as I now have a smart phone, what's app. etc. I am gradually getting used to it but it would like me to do all sorts of things like 'Spotify' while I am trying to get to grips with the basics!

Did you know?

The liquid inside young coconuts can be used as a substitute for blood plasma.

The King of Hearts is the only king in a pack of cards without a moustache

Your fingernails grow faster on your dominant hand.

Marie Curie's 100-year-old belongings are still radioactive

The chicken and the ostrich are the closest living relatives of the Tyrannosaurus Rex.

Jean Lugton has thoughtfully provided this poem (abbreviated) as an insight as to how things are going in Scotland!

For translations please apply to the Scottish Office



Tae a virus in the style of Rabbe Burns

Twa months ago, we didna ken,
yer name or ocht about ye
But lots of things have changed since then,
I really must salute ye

Yer spreading rate is quite intense,
yer feeding like a gannet
Disruption caused, is so immense,
ye've shaken oor wee planet.

Corona used tae be a beer,
they garnished it wae limes
But noo it's filled us awe wae fear
These days, are scary times.

Nae shakin hawns, or peckin lips,
it's whit they awe advise
But scrub them weel, richt tae the tips,
that's how we'll awe survive

Our holidays have been pit aff
Noo that's the Jet2 patter
Pit oan yer thermals, have a laugh
And paddle ' doon the waater '

Ye might be gallus noo ma freen
As ye jump fae cup tae cup
But when we get oor vaccine made
Yer number will be up.

From Wenda & Julie Cordell

Pilgrims



It was so good to read the Raphael Recorder to hear all the positive news from people. I am beginning to get withdrawal symptoms from Lourdes I am really, really going to miss this year.

I would like to add a story to the next recorder.

Julie and I have been regularly to a duck pond and this is the first year because we haven't been able to do a lot else we have watched little baby ducks develop from very tiny to big and grown up. It has been lovely to watch them grow also we have seen baby swans which I have never seen before and also at that duck pond there has been a very strange looking duck we call it the Mohican duck because that's what it looks like and this week when we went, there were beautiful white birds sitting on the tree branches, all this we would never have experienced but for lock-down so it hasn't been all negative although I would give anything to be able to go to the theatre or cinema or just to socialise more but I guess that will come.

Also sadly we don't have access to zoom so wasn't able to watch the virtual reunion which would have been so great when you have another please let people know we are thinking of them and missing them .

From Paul Affleck

My association with Lourdes goes back a long way starting with happy memories of 1958; I was nine. A family friend and journalist working for the Universe invited and probably paid for my mother to accompany her for the centenary celebrations in Lourdes. I have three siblings and we children were farmed out to two aunts; my father needed to work. My elder brother stayed with a maiden aunt and I and my other brother and sister stayed with another aunt whose two bedroomed chalet style house in Dagenham already accommodated a family of six. I have no recollection of the sleeping arrangements but somehow we coped. We children were very excited: while my elder brother was treated to Sugar Puffs for breakfast and we had fried bread or bread and dripping. There were coin operated gas and electricity meters and you knew when the shilling ran out when the house was plunged into darkness.



Our family had little money and our host family even less.

We children treated our mother's absence as an adventure and hoped it would be repeated. It was, six years later, when my father was taken as a sick pilgrim to Lourdes. Cancer claimed him in 1965 and he died on 8th December of that year.

My secondary school was St Ignatius College run by the Jesuit Fathers in Stamford Hill, North London, famous then as now for its population of Hasidic Jews. The College encouraged sixth formers to go to Lourdes with the English National Pilgrimage. However, before I reached the sixth form I transferred to a new school, Campion, in Hornchurch.

It was not until 1991 by which time I was married with four children that I accepted an invitation to go to Lourdes as a volunteer helper. I found the experience rather too emotional and I did not feel I wanted to return.

On my first pilgrimage our meeting point was Victoria Railway Station in London. We had a dedicated platform and the scene which greeted me seemed one of total chaos. I stood back, very apprehensive, and there was a great bustle with five hundred souls embarking the train. We needed to bring everything for the journey and for the week away including sheets, blankets, pillows, pillowcases and medical supplies. There were tea urns, electric rings, biscuits and butter, cups, breakfast cereals and suitcases. While waiting for instructions I was approached by a lady pilgrim who asked me to help because she had forgotten to pack her medication. There was no prospect of her returning home without missing the train but I had noticed a branch of Boots on the station concourse. The pharmacist could not have been more helpful but before he could issue a temporary prescription he had to make checks with the lady's GP and ensure that she had correctly identified her medication and understood instructions for dosage. This took valuable time and although we had arrived in time to allow two hours before our train departed, we managed to board the train with less than five minutes to spare. At Dover West Station (now closed) we had to unload everything for the journey by ferry to Calais. When most people were off the train I was given the task of performing a 'sweep' to collect any items inadvertently forgotten. I was surprised at how much was left behind and the importance of labelling everything became immediately obvious.

Our train south was waiting at Calais Dock and we now undertook the task of transferring pilgrims and equipment onto this train.

The railway carriages for the sick were former WW2 troop trains designed for carrying injured military personnel. There was a central doorway with bunk beds either side. There were two lines of bunks with an aisle between and toilets at the end of the corridor.

The train set off at about seven o'clock in the evening and was destined to arrive twelve hours later at Lourdes. There was a compulsory stop outside Paris for the train to take on water but none of us was able to disembark. We helpers were given three-hour shifts and my second shift was from four in the morning till arrival. Our task was to assist the nurses by manoeuvring and helping those with reduced mobility to the toilet. For my sins I was allocated to the carriage reserved for ladies. I do not know why immobile people had been allocated top bunks but I recall the difficulty in a moving train helping someone down a small ladder along the narrow corridor to the waiting nurses sometimes using a wheelchair and sometimes not. I could not enter the toilet and so had to fetch and carry and I particularly remember dancing with Queenie with her feet on mine and inching our way up and down the corridor. Queenie was a stroke victim and one side of her body was paralysed. I learned a lot from Queenie who, despite her disabilities, demonstrated a sense of humour and humility. She told me her stroke happened on Christmas Day. Having gone to bed early on Christmas Eve to be able to get up early the next day to prepare the table and the Christmas Day meal she found she could just not move.

I was accustomed at work to giving orders and making decisions and it was almost therapeutic to be given instructions.

After a couple of late nights spent socialising we attended the International Mass on Sunday. The underground Basilica was very crowded and I was dispatched back to the Accueil Notre Dame for extra blankets (the building is now used for confessions, the medical bureau etc.) Having completed that task I was called over by one of our wheelchair pilgrims who said she was having difficulty breathing and could I take her to the open air. I managed to attract the attention of a nurse and the three of us left by the nearest exit, under the main organ. When outside the pilgrim, Margaret, promptly collapsed and the nurse uttered a word not normally heard in polite company and insisted I find a doctor. I managed to interrupt the Mass and appealed for a doctor. The French doctor who responded was Isobel but she was confined to a wheelchair. Isobel asked me to support her round the waist while she examined Margaret; the nurse was instructed to summon an ambulance. Margaret's heart had stopped beating and mercifully the efforts of Isobel, pummelling her chest, managed to get a weak heartbeat just as the ambulance arrived.

This was foreign territory for me. In my normal line of work in an office people did not collapse and die in front of me; in modern parlance I was out of my comfort zone. In the evening when starting my shift in the Accueil I was astonished to see Margaret back from hospital and in her bed. I looked at her and she looked at me and we both cried. I had to agree with her when she said I had thought she was dying. She said that she, too, thought she was dying but she had been very ill but she was surrounded by love.

It was this traumatic experience with Margaret that influenced my resolution not to come back to Lourdes.

What I did not know till later was that Margaret was a recovering heart and lung transplant patient. I learned this from her companion who was a straightforward heart transplant patient. Part of the treatment in hospital was a course of steroids and because prolonged use of steroids makes the bones brittle it is quite possible that Dr Isobel, acting as a Good Samaritan, could have punctured Margaret's lung in the attempt to get her heart beating again.

Isobel, too, visited Margaret in the Accueil and I learned from Isobel that she had been injured in a car accident in Paris the result of which she was paralysed from the waist down. She had not let this disability interfere with her career which included being a Member of the European Parliament.

It was this traumatic experience with Margaret that influenced my decision not to come back to Lourdes.

I was persuaded to change my mind about returning to Lourdes but I cannot recall how this happened. Indeed, in nearly thirty years since I have managed to visit Lourdes over one hundred and twenty times and each trip is different. Certain memories stick in my mind. To mitigate costs we shared rooms and on my second visit to Lourdes I shared with Mick. Mick was a London Policeman, very robust, tall, wide and while incredibly strong he was also very gentle. We did socialise a lot and late-night drinking always made getting up next day somewhat of an effort. With Mick, it seemed not to matter. I had retired about two in the morning. Mick followed two hours later and must have staggered against all four walls before collapsing onto his bed. I was rudely awaked about six o'clock when I felt warm soapy water on my face. Mick was in the shower, an 'L' shaped extension to our room. Lourdes hotels are not known for the provision of shower curtains and the force of the water ricocheted off Mick on a 90-degree angle and landed firmly in my face. Mick was blissfully unaware but apologised for waking me up; he was in a hurry and he was perilously late for his shift.

I had no alternative but to get up and to put the wet bedding as best I could over a dormant radiator. I dressed and followed Mick to the Accueil where there was a great kerfuffle.

An intruder had entered the building and took advantage of sick pilgrims being at breakfast. He was rummaging through handbags and helping himself to valuables, cash and passports. It took a couple of volunteers to stop the man and to restrain him. That was until Mick came on the scene. I arrived to see that Mick had collared the thief, literally. He held the man about nine inches off the ground while the man's legs flailed uselessly in his attempt to escape. Security was called and two gendarmes arrived, the man was handcuffed and the stolen property was recovered. Mick was the hero of the hour. We learned a lesson and stepped up our own security.

On another occasion I was assigned to night duty and at that time each pilgrimage was allocated its own kitchen. I had been out in the afternoon to buy items for a fry-up because part of the duty was to cook breakfast for the nurses about two in the morning. It had been a sultry night and pilgrims had difficulty getting to sleep. There was no wind and we had brought bacon from England. We were on the ground floor of the Accueil and the smell of bacon grilling is very alluring. It was not long before the sweet odour of grilling bacon wafted out of the kitchen into our ward and then upstairs where there were two floors of Italian pilgrimages suffering a fitful night. The Italians were woken by this awesome aroma and some even dreamed they had died and were in heaven being fed a celestial banquet.

I am afraid the pilgrimage and I got into trouble for disturbing other groups and our breakfast treats were promptly banned so that after the disturbance we could only serve sandwiches at night. At the same time, scouts from the Italian groups were sent to find where they could buy bacon and they went away saddened that bacon was not available in Lourdes.

I have to confess I am not a fan of the Baths. I find the operation while respectful is cumbersome. In particular I am not sure of the value in taking a person with mental disabilities and with low understanding to be stripped and plunged in a tub of cold water.

I recall an occasion when a 32 stone man came to the baths. Outside he was transferred from his bespoke electric wheelchair to a stretcher. Inside the vesting area he was undressed and moved onto a smaller plastic stretcher. It took a team of eight men to raise the man from floor level and down slippery steps to the bath. We struggled. Unfortunately, the man and his new stretcher were too big for the bath and he was laid across the bath whereupon a jug was filled with bath water and poured over the man. All this could have been done in safety in the vesting area but protocol did not allow it. Lourdes has been slow to address Health & Safety issues but it has recently adopted guidelines on H&S and on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults. A lot of the work had been undertaken by the British Lourdes Pilgrimage Directors and by HCPT to the benefit of Lourdes.

Inside the Baths the duties are rotated. You might start in the vesting area, move to bathing area behind a curtain and apply a wet towel to a pilgrim's waist and another team of two would lead the pilgrim to the top of the steps and prompt the person to remember their intentions, join them in a prayer and then guide them to the water. I was partnered with Mario, a young Italian, who became quite excited when a military man presented himself. 'Generalissimo' Mario hissed to me. In that session I taught Mario to say the Hail Mary while Mario taught me the Ave Maria in Italian.

Some pilgrims come to Lourdes particularly to visit the baths as the most. A Frenchman had come in, undressed and was waiting with the cold, wet towel wrapped round his waist. He was about to rush forward when we stopped him and suggested he take his time and to remember the intentions he had brought. He burst into tears and after a short while he composed himself and he entered the water. The Baths is an emotional place and it is difficult not to share peoples' grief.

What I had not expected was that man should wait an hour outside the Baths to thank me. His wife had died and he had promised her he would make a short pilgrimage to Lourdes in thanks giving for her life. Had I not stopped him he would have rushed through and not remembered his promise.



If you are going to have a cardiac arrest then Lourdes is a good place to be. Lourdes General Hospital has an excellent reputation as I discovered on a couple of occasions. I was asked to take a day trip and fly to Lourdes in the company of a doctor to repatriate a pilgrim who was with the Westminster Pilgrimage when he suffered his heart attack. Westminster Pilgrimage takes place in the third week of July and it was now the third week of September. The doctor, Sian, and I did not get off the aircraft as Carl was wheeled aboard. Sian sat with her patient and I sat with his wife. Once landed, my duties were to drive the entourage from Stansted to Charing Cross Hospital which, confusingly, is not in central London but in Hammersmith. Although our arrival was anticipated we were directed to a ward where houseman asked for the pack of patient's notes. Despite copious notes the doctor was not at all pleased since they were written in French. After three hours and now approaching midnight he pronounced Carl could not be treated till the morning when a French speaking doctor came on duty. Carl survived and has been back to Lourdes a number of times since.

On another occasion a fellow volunteer, Bob, took a phone call from home to say his younger brother had suffered a heart attack and died. The shock caused Bob to have an attack of his own. After a couple of months Bob was discharged from hospital but he used his time well and learned to speak Italian, always a useful language in Lourdes.

To be continued