



The Raphaël Recorder

TWELFTH EDITION

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Welcome to this twelfth edition of the Raphael Recorder in a year when we are able to return to Lourdes. Travel arrangements, bookings for liturgies in Lourdes and St Savin are all in place. What we need now is for pilgrims to book places on the pilgrimage.

Even if you are wavering, please consider booking now. We have reserved flights with BA and unless we confirm our reservations by the middle of June, we will be obliged to pay for unused seats. We cannot afford that to happen.

The town of Lourdes is much quieter than usual and pilgrims are not flocking back to Lourdes. Last year HCPT cancelled its pilgrimage of 3,000 at Easter 2022 and only a select few were able to travel. The pilgrimages in May of the Archdiocese of Birmingham and the Diocese of Middleborough have joined forces this year to reduce costs and the Society of Our Lady of Lourdes is offering subsidies which other groups cannot afford. Getting insurance cover was one of the major difficulties but cost and uncertainties about reliability of travel plus the lingering worries about Covid and the war in Ukraine all conspired to discourage pilgrimage travel. In our case, our tour operator, Tangney Tours, is able to offer travel insurance to include existing conditions and the price of the pilgrimage is marginally cheaper than in 2019.

We would also draw your attention to the upcoming reunions. The first is on 21st May in Langho where Rachel and her team are preparing the normal feast. The second is in Wimbledon on 11th June where the catering provided by Bill Sathananthan is highly recommended.

The Diocese of Tarbes & Lourdes has a new bishop.

It was announced on 30th March 2022 that Pope Francis had approved the appointment of Monsignor Jean-Marc Micos as bishop of Tarbes & Lourdes. Aged 59 years the new bishop joins a long line of distinguished pastors. Indeed in the fifteen centuries of the diocese he is the seventy ninth bishop. His episcopal ordination takes place on 29th May in the Sanctuary of Lourdes. His inaugural Mass takes place the following day in Tarbes Cathedral.

He is a local having grown up in Saint Gaudens and followed a scientific degree course at the University of Toulouse. He followed this with twelve months in two schools in Glasgow after which he did his national service. It was then that he entered the St Cyprian Seminary in Toulouse. On 10th March 1991 aged 28 years he was ordained priest. Having spent seven years working in the diocese he was appointed seminay 'formateur' (teacher) for fifteen years and then a further six years as its father superior.



From Paul Affleck

Bishop Jean-Marc is a habitue of Lourdes having worked first when he was eighteen as a volunteer with his diocese. This was followed by work when he was a seminarian assisting each summer as a volunteer guide for day pilgrims. He says he was lucky, as with friends and neighbours, to profit from his living in proximity to Lourdes.

Qualifications to become a bishop include:

Aged at least 35 years

Having been a priest for five years

Have a diploma in theology.

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Bishop Jean-Marc succeeds Bishop Nicolas Brouvet as bishop of Tarbes & Lourdes. Bishop Nicolas may have been harshly judged since he had to cope with the decline in pilgrim numbers and the effects of the two major floods. He was 49 when appointed to Lourdes and when he first arrived his presence was obvious. He wanted to know the workings of all aspects of Lourdes and this meant greeting pilgrims at the railway station and the airport. He worked without being recognised on crowd control in the Sanctuary and in the baths. However he made mistakes and seemed to alienate volunteers when he appointed other, new, untrained volunteers who had their accommodation and meal costs subsidised.

He incurred the dismay of the Vatican when he successfully raised over ten million euro to pay for flood damage in a very short space of time giving the impression that the Sanctuary of Lourdes was concentrating on money raising and less on liturgy and spirituality.

Bishop Nicolas has been translated to the Diocese of Nimes, in the Rhone Valley.

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Having just returned from a short pilgrimage to Lourdes I am pleased to report that Lourdes is still there and back in business.

Lourdes was very quiet and the crowds at the International Mass on the Wednesday and at the processions were very small. There is still a Mass each day in English at 9.00am in chapel of Cosmos & Damien and the confessionals are manned for about four hours per day. The piscines or baths are not open for immersion in the water. There is, however, a simple ceremony of the Water which involves washing of hands and face and then drinking a modest amount of Lourdes water while keeping in mind your prayer intentions. Raphael has a similar liturgy as part of our regular programme.

The original site of the lower Stations of the Cross seems now to be reserved for coach parking and the way of the Cross itself has been placed in a cramped circle whereas more of the prairie might have been used.

The local prefecture has issued an edict to the effect that all places where liturgy is celebrated or indoor venues where people congregate should mitigate fire risk by having two entry and exit points. Where they do not pilgrims are not allowed to remain in their wheelchairs or, indeed, block the aisles or passageways. This particularly affects the Chapels in S Frai and the Chapel of the Poor Clares. This gives Sr Atilla from the Poor Clares the opportunity to be less welcoming than is charitable to those with compromised mobility.

There is no doubt that the shops, cafes, restaurants and hotels have all been suffering during the pandemic. The number of shuttered premises is ample evidence for this. Pilgrims from the English speaking world are few and far between and the only significant numbers will come in the last week of May when the Society of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Birmingham Archdiocese and Middleborough Diocese undertake their annual pilgrimage. There is then a gap till July and then another gap till the fourth week of August when Raphael sets off.

There might be some relief for hoteliers. There are reports of two hotels having been sold to developers to convert them into apartments or B&B accommodation. Other hotels have been requisitioned by the French government and are empty awaiting refugees from Ukraine.

A short history of Ukrainian Christianity

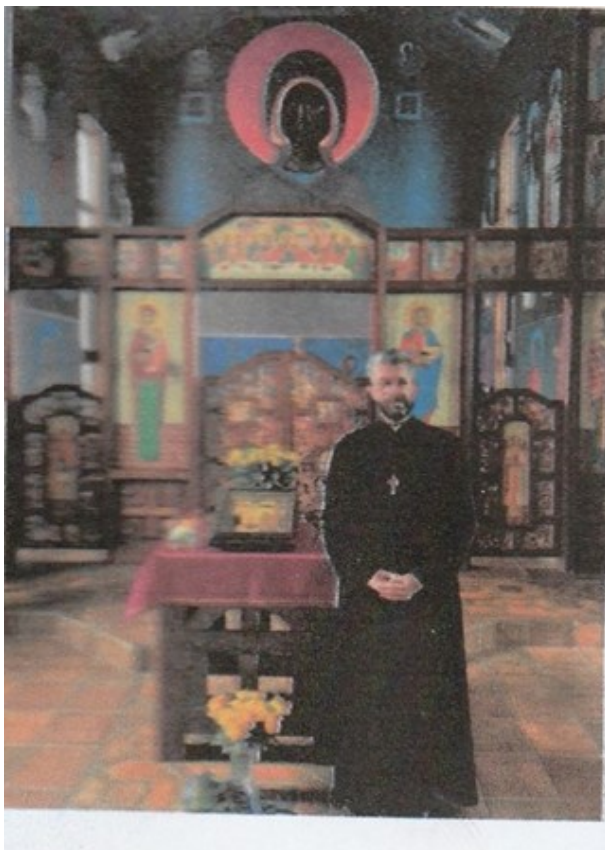
Christianity in the area of present-day Ukraine dates back to the apostolic period in the first century. According to the chronicles of the past, it was the apostle Andrew who came to the mountain where the city of Kyiv was founded a few centuries later. It is also important to mention the martyrdom of St. Clement, one of the first popes of Rome, who was sent to the marble quarries of present-day Crimea. The Ukrainian land remembers Christianity from its origins, but officially it is said that it was the baptism of the whole nation in 998 by the Kyiv prince, St. Volodmyr, that marked the creation of Christianity as a hierarchical church in Russia. Its history is linked to Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, which explains why this church has the Byzantine Rite.

Notwithstanding the great schism of 1054, the Ukrainian Church has always retained a link between Constantinople and Rome. In 1596 the Act of Union of Brest-Litovisk re-established the Eucharistic communion of the Ukrainian eparchies with Rome, while conforming their own liturgy, rites and customs. This was the official foundation of the Greek Catholic Church of Ukraine as it is today.

The church progressively extended itself over the whole of the territory of Ukraine and from there found those with pastoral needs and the faithful. The grand coup occurred in 1946 when a pseudo synod was convened by Stalin at which no bishop was allowed to participate and from which the liquidation of the Church was proclaimed. As a consequence 3,000 churches and 150 monasteries were confiscated. As a consequence bishops, priests and their faithful were forced into exile or to go 'underground'. From that moment till the fall of the Soviet Union the Greco Catholic Church was a clandestine organisation throughout the USSR. Thousands of priests and faithful were martyred in the Gulags. In 1991 the Catholic Cathedral of Lviv and 900 churches were returned to the Greco Catholics. On 21 August 2005, the seat of the Ukrainian Church was officially transferred from Lviv to Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, where the church is original.

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Fr Mykhailo Romaniuk

The Ukrainian chapel was built in 1968. This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the presence of the Ukrainians in Lourdes.

The chapel is manned by Fr Mykhailo Romaniuk who is assisted by two religious sisters bringing the life of prayer to his mission in Lourdes.

Fr Mykhailo says 'Our church includes eight million faithful in Ukraine and in the world. We have numerous vocations to the religious and consecrated life. During the lockdown we have organised the broadcast of all our celebrations on line on multimedia platforms so that the faithful can join us in prayer. In this time of war, it is ever more important that the faithful can reach the prayer from Lourdes on line and especially to pray in their own language,'

Daily programme for unaccompanied English speaking pilgrims in Lourdes.

Observant pilgrims in Lourdes will have noticed the Ukrainian church with its golden domes to the north of the Sanctuary of Lourdes and high above the town.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century Ukrainian catholic refugees have been coming on pilgrimage to Lourdes. There was some regret and disappointment not to find a Church following the byzantine rite. This is why in 1968 a chapel was allocated in the Rosary Basilica. Today in the first chapel on the left (where the procession statue of Our Lady is kept) there is still an icon on the back wall.

After the second world war a Ukrainian priest, Fr Vasyl Pryjma, who had been helping soldiers and who had himself been wounded in combat, promised Our Lord to build a church in honour of the Virgin Mary if he survived. He took up residence in Toulouse and began to come and pray regularly in Lourdes. He confided his intentions to Mgr Donze, then bishop of Tarbes & Lourdes. After fund raising from the whole world and collecting the necessary funds, he realised his project.

9.00am	Mass: Chapel of Cosmos & Damian
3.00pm	Rosary at the Grotto
5.00p,	Eucharistic procession
9.00pm	Torchlight procession
09.00am to 11.30am & 2.00pm to 4.30pm	Water gesture at the Baths
10.00am to 12.00pm & 3.30pm to 6.00pm	Confessions