



The Raphaël Recorder

THIRTEENTH EDITION

Published from 54 Kings Avenue, Woodford Green. IG8 0JF.

Charity no

1098328

OCT 2022.

Welcome to this thirteenth edition of the Raphael Recorder in a year when we were able to return to Lourdes.

During the early months of 2022 there had been considerable debate whether our pilgrimage could take place at all. Airlines were rearranging their schedules many of which had been suspended during the pandemic. Protocols had to be established to accommodate Covid and its effects. The rules for entering France were changing and many aspiring pilgrims were nervous about travelling overseas. We needed to assess if we had sufficient help for our sick pilgrims both in terms of their nursing needs and whether we had enough abled bodied people to push pilgrims in their wheelchairs.

Knowing we were sharing the Padoue Hotel with the Catholic Association we contacted Stonyhurst College about the possibility of borrowing a priest and helpers. Our initial enquiries went unanswered because the Catholic Association could not be sure of the numbers on its pilgrimage. One of our particular concerns was that we would be without a priest since both Fr Leo and Fr Michael were undergoing treatment. While Fr Michael was able to schedule his treatment Fr Leo was not able to come and lead the pilgrimage. Fr Simon Blakesley from the CA was not able to delegate a priest to join us and celebrate Mass in accordance with our program. Instead, Fr Simon did invite us to join the Masses celebrated by the CA.

On 19th August a group of four helpers set off from the Northwest to travel overland to Lourdes. This was an advance party which was to prepare and ready our equipment stored in Lourdes ready for the pilgrimage



On the following Monday twenty five pilgrims flew to Lourdes from Stansted and another fifteen flew to Bordeaux from Manchester. Our flight plans had to be amended at the last moment within weeks of our trip after BA summarily cancelled our flights having offered us a generous deal in February. Stansted Airport presented its first challenge having given a dedicated check in lane. This was meant to be a fast track but some of us queued for an hour and a half while the check in clerk laboriously wrote down our passport numbers on an A4 sheet. This was totally unnecessary since we already had boarding cards and Ryanair already had our passport details on its computer. Because this took so long another lane had to be opened to avoid us missing our flight.

At Lourdes airport we were greeted by Jodine delegated by Tangney Tours to be with us during our week.



The group from the Northwest enjoyed a better experience at Manchester Airport. Check in, Security and passage through Manchester Airport was good. Pilgrims were taken through special assistance as a group, closely following Fr Michael on his mobility scooter. The Easyjet flight was on time with an opportunity to buy hot or cold drinks during the flight. Paul Millen from Tangney Tours met us at Bordeaux with a smooth three hour coach transfer to Lourdes including a comfort stop.

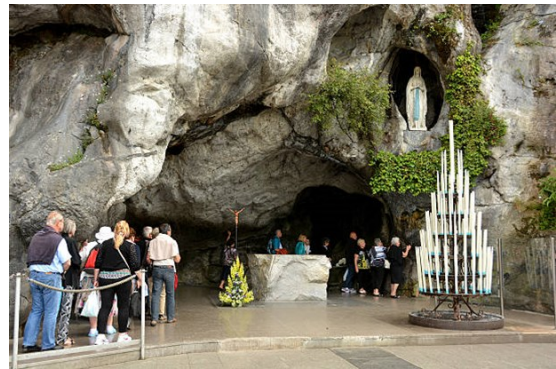
The two groups of fliers, one via Bordeaux and the other via Lourdes, arrived at The Hotel Padoue within ten minutes of one another. Our pilgrimage proper started with dinner followed by Mass in our makeshift chapel, a basement meeting room in the Padoue Hotel. This was followed by a welcome given by the director to the nine pilgrims new to Raphael and an introduction to Rachel, Trevor, Chris and the nurses. Despite the lateness of the hour some twenty expressed a wish to visit the Grotto before retiring.



With everyone refreshed the next day and with electric scooters having been delivered to Tom, Joyce and to Sheila and with Fr Michael and Mandy revving their personal scooters we enjoyed a leisurely stroll to the chapel of St Maximilian Kolbe for 10.30am Mass. All of our pilgrimage Masses were dedicated to Fr Leo and to Sarah both of whom are undergoing medical treatment. Following Mass we trooped to Rosary Square for our pilgrimage photograph and thence to lunch.

Our afternoon program took us to the prairie to remind ourselves of the story of Lourdes and Bernadette. After this we held our short water ceremony when we wash our hands and face with the water from the spring of Massabielle. This follows the instruction given to Bernadette to go to the Grotto and wash yourself there.

This was followed by our penitential service which had been prepared by Fr Leo and delivered by his brother, Kevin. A number of pilgrims were moved by the thoughts of Fr Leo and asked for the text to be shared and it is included in this Raphael Recorder on page 4..



Staying on the prairie we moved to the site of the lower Stations of the Cross. Readings were shared to include as many pilgrims as possible. The lower Way of the Cross is marked by seventeen marble statues sculpted by Maria De Fayco, a Dutch artist. The statues employ artistic licence and the viewer will note that the fingers and toes are out of proportion the rest of the body. Each statue costing 36,000 euro was sponsored by groups or individuals. The Association of British Lourdes Hospitalities (us) sponsored the seventh station, Jesus falls the second time. The Resurrection of Our Lord is the fifteenth station but numbers sixteen and seventeen are somewhat mysterious. Our liturgical exercises concluded with the whole pilgrimage making a passage through the Grotto followed by private prayer. We were preceded by a very much larger group from the Ivory Coast each wearing a uniform colourful costume. On Tuesday after dinner we gathered in the hotel bar for a quiz which had been prepared by Jack. An enjoyable evening with some very competitive Raphaelites; the winners were stupefied with their prizes. There was another quiz, a picture quiz which challenged us all including some who had done that same quiz beforehand.

Wednesday brings us to the ninth century Abbey Church of St Savin. Since our last visit in 2019 part of the nave has been isolated to avoid falling masonry landing on anyone unfortunate enough to be passing underneath. With a Mass attendance of around twenty and a Mass only every four weeks, St Savin has little cash to offset the cost of effecting repairs although there is a fund raising campaign in progress and there are hopes of attracting support from French Heritage funds.

Today we celebrate during of the Mass of Our Lady Health of the Sick our ceremony of healing when pilgrims are invited to be anointed. We hold a service during which we remember those Raphaelites recently deceased when we place a candle on the altar in their memory. Before Mass ends we hold our service of dedication to Our Lady and we recognise long service to the pilgrimage. This year a five year pin was awarded to Mary Punchard and Trevor was awarded a medal to commemorate his first thirty years of pilgrimage with Raphael and eleven years as Chief Brancardier

Martin who came principally to accompany his mother, Rosa, is a trained organist and we asked if he might play the fourteenth century organ in the Church. Permission was duly granted and Martin described the experience as a challenge with a small keyboard and unfamiliar organ stops. Nevertheless Martin was able to download some music from Bach onto his mobile phone and to overcome significant difficulties and provide an impromptu recital.

We were not able to transport our gazebos from storage and on such a hot day we had to rely on shade afforded by the Old Town Hall and school building. The lawn where we usually enjoy our picnic and occasional frolic was not available since what was left of the grass had not been maintained and was left as straw.

Very sadly and mysteriously Lyn suffered an accident in the garden of the Abbey. Somehow a stone penetrated her sandal and cut her foot sufficiently to warrant seven stitches at Lourdes General Hospital. Our nursing team had brought



their first aid kit and their temporary bandages were commended not only by the ambulance paramedics but also the hospital staff in A & E. Lyn is on the mend but still unable to walk on her injured foot, using crutches or hopping to get around slowly.

In the evening we joined 'Flambeau', the Torchlight procession. As on our last visit a group from Raphael joined the scratch choir in front of the Rosary Basilica. The Catholic Association provided volunteers help push pilgrims in wheelchairs. After processing, clergy are invited to congregate in front of the Rosary Basilica to join a general blessing. Fr Michael found himself in the company of priests from the Catholic Association many of whom he knew: a fortunate reunion.

Our programme on Thursday is more relaxed; our Mass was at four pm in one of our favourite locations, St Joseph's chapel. Wenda took up her flute again to accompany the singing. From here we moved across the esplanade to the St Pius X underground basilica for the blessing of the sick with benediction We could have joined the procession at its starting point, the Podium on the far side of the River Gave and opposite the Grotto.

Instead, we took the soft option of taking seats and watching the big screens is comfort. However, our banner did join the procession and was held proudly aloft by Julie with Bernard pushing her in her wheelchair.

After dinner we descended to the basement of the Hotel Padoue for our party night. This is normally an unscripted event of mayhem. We had scrounged an electric keyboard which Martin was asked either to accompany the act or drown out the noise of it.

Our compere was Sheila who between breaks in performances was conducting last minute rehearsals in adjoining rooms. As with the Good Old Days presented by Leonard Sachs, there were some old favourites. There was a shy maiden dancing, sporting a red wig and looking suspiciously like Rambo. There was, too, a young ballerina from Wolverhampton sporting an 'itsy bitsy teenie weenie yellow polka dot bikini' which might have shrunk since she last wore it. It was all good clean fun!

Friday required an early Mass to accommodate the Northwest group needing to leave the hotel by 8.30am. Linda from Tangney Tours accompanied us on the minibus taking us from Lourdes to Bordeaux. The minibus was aptly named since it only just accommodated our fifteen with their luggage. Linda also helped at check in. Pilgrims needing assistance were taken separately to the Departure Gate; the rest of the group walked a longer route to meet up with everyone before boarding. Once again the flight was on time with drinks available to purchase. On arrival at Manchester Airport, it was busy; the queue at Border Control moved quickly although there was a slight delay waiting for our suitcases at Baggage Reclaim.

The Southern group had time to finish shopping, buying candles and arranging Masses. There might have been time for a trip on the funicular railway but the cloud cover was low and visibility was poor.

There was a pleasant surprise when we learned Ryanair had contracted out its service back to Stansted to Lauda Air. However, the incoming flight was at least thirty minutes late and despite the total lack on announcements giving any meaningful information, we were still herded into the departure lounge early where there is only seating for about two thirds of passenger numbers. After an uneventful flight we arrived at Stansted about an

hour late and there were concerns were expressed by some about meeting connections to Peterborough and Birmingham.

Penitential Service Tuesday 23rd August, 2022

You remember the song; 'Oh, Lord, it's so hard to be humble when you are perfect in every way', I won't sing it for you.

The one thing that life teaches us is that we are not perfect in every way.

We no longer sit with the "best china" on the top shelf.

You are more likely to find us in the 'odds and ends' basket or sat on the "reject shelf.

You know how you see a painting and it looks a great work of art.

Then after a while dust and grime begin to cover it.

It gets harder to see the beauty of the painting underneath.

But the beauty is still there.

It is just more difficult to see.

Well, that is us. We are all a work of art.

God made each one of us. Now God does not make junk.

He makes only works of art.

He made you to be the person that you are.

There is nobody else in this world like you.

and for a while everyone can see that work of art.

But as time goes by, it becomes harder to see the masterpiece.

The dust and the grime begin to settle.

The beauty is lost.

Life takes its toll on each one of us.

We change, in some ways we grow better, in some ways worse.

Sometimes we surprise everybody; sometimes we disappoint.

So in Penitence we allow God to remove those layers of dust and grime.

we allow that work of art to be seen. That is called forgiveness.

Sometimes we are afraid to let go of the dust and the grime.

for one reason or another we don't want to change or are afraid of change.

At this moment in time, we just want to stay as we are.

In that case we need to remind ourselves that deep beneath the dust and the grime

there is still a beautiful work of art.
There is a beauty that is still there.
A beauty that God still sees and loves.
And God is very patient. He will wait until you are ready.
No matter what happens in life nothing can change the fact that you are
created in
the likeness and image of God.
Quite simply, God will not stop loving you.
And if God will not stop loving you, neither should any one of us.

Thank you, Lord, for forgiving all my faults and for bringing me closer to
you. With
the grace you have given me I shall really try to do better in the future.
And I shall
often turn to Our Lady to ask her to help me in this. Holy Mary, pray for
me.



Mary Wiltshire from Seaford was born on 23rd August 1937 and died on the morning of Friday 29th October aged 84 years having predicted her impending death to her daughters. It was four years earlier that her husband, Trevor, died after which Mary's health declined. Previously she had been treated for cancer and had been in remission but the disease recurred. Mary had sold the family home in Seaford and moved to a flat which was more manageable for her. As her illness progressed she took a place in a nursing home while keeping her flat to which she returned for short breaks.

The Wiltshires' last pilgrimage with Raphael was in 2014 but in their early lives they both played prominent parts in the management of the pilgrimage. While Trevor was director, Mary was chief handmaid and they formed an awesome partnership not only while in Lourdes but also organising a group from Seaford to come as helpers.

We have Mary to thank for the most recent renovation of the Pilgrimage Banner which was given by Sacred Heart Church in Edinburgh and is probably one hundred years old. In the last five years Mary also undertook to renew another banner used by the Society of Our Lady of Lourdes

while Trevor made a protective wooden case. Mary also introduced sewing classes in the nursing home to provide meaningful activity for her fellow residents.

In their eulogy delivered by the two Wiltshire daughters who said that at their father's requiem they had received applause from the congregation for the words they had spoken. Mary, their mother had warned them that if they did not get applause for what they said about her she would come back and haunt them.

She showed promise in art at school and won a scholarship to Grammar School but had to leave on her sixteenth birthday to take up work. She worked in an engineering company and worked her way from tea girl to PA to the managing director. Using her office skills she became Secretary to the Society of Catholic Students and this led to the College chaplain introducing her to Trevor; something he described as an 'arranged marriage'.

Mary had a passion for ballroom dancing and this led to another hitherto undiscovered talent, making dresses. Indeed she made her own wedding dress and those for her bridesmaids too.

It was an aunt who introduced Lourdes to Mary aged 21 in 1958. She was smitten but it was twenty years before she was able to return, this time with husband and two daughters in tow. She joined Raphael and the rest in history. Although Mary was diagnosed with cancer first in 1996 she did enjoy years of remission till 2017.

We successors to the Wiltshires owe it to the memory of their hard work to continue to support Raphael in these difficult times.



John Affleck was Paul Affleck's big brother.

John Robert Affleck was born in Ilford Maternity Hospital on 24th March, 1947. John's first five years were lived in a prefab in Hainault, Essex, beside the former wartime aerodrome at Fairlop. This provided a playground of adventure with abandoned air raid shelters which could be used as a den. In 1952 the Affleck family moved to a newly built house in Redbridge next to fields and the River Roding. John had started school but the move to Redbridge gave him the opportunity to choose if he might prefer a different school. John and school did not always get on together and so he jumped at the chance not appreciating he was leaving a modern school building to go to one already seventy years old with open fires, gas lighting and outdoor toilets but with a good reputation. John was a baby boomer and his junior school class boasted sixty one pupils.

As a child John became an altar server and then MC in our church which was a basic army hut which had been built by Polish refugees during World War II. John developed an interest in railway locomotives, specifically steam engines and many a happy hour was spent at the far end of the platform of Kings Cross Station trainspotting and recording engine numbers in Ian Allen books. In retirement John took the opportunity to go travelling; he was not one for DIY or for gardening. Hilary was always the practical one. John and Hilary travelled to far flung places such the US and to China. John joined the Society of Our Lady of Lourdes and the Raphael pilgrimage to Lourdes as a volunteer brancardier helping sick pilgrims in Lourdes. He also became a member of the Hospitality of Lourdes as a volunteer helper working in the sanctuary of Lourdes.

Earlier this year in the first week of February John suffered a stroke from which he never truly recovered On Sunday 9th October John was found to be unresponsive and, sadly, he died early the following morning. His Requiem takes place in Leeds on 31st October.

May John rest in peace.