



The Raphaël Recorder

Charity no

1098328

Dec 2020

SEVENTH EDITION

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

Welcome to the seventh edition of the Raphael Recorder.

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 continue to be disappointed and frustrated by the restrictions placed on travel due to the Corona virus.

This has been a year like no other many of us have experienced. The virus has assaulted our freedoms and we are not able to do what we want, where we want or when we want. Significantly it has changed the way we worship with social distancing restricting the celebration of the Mass and other liturgies. Funerals are restricted to thirty mourners while only fifteen can attend wedding celebrations. We and the Church have had to adapt and we have seen the introduction and adoption of software applications such as 'Zoom'. This enabled the trustees to broadcast a virtual pilgrimage and, thanks to the skills and efforts of the trustees 'Lourdes at Home' was an outstanding success. This newsletter has been published in order that we might keep in touch and, perhaps, learn a little about one another. The prospects for 2021 are not encouraging with many pilgrimage groups already having cancelled their travel plans for next year. Raphael has not made any firm decision although we have made a provisional booking with the Sanctuary for August.

Thanks to all who contributed to 'Lourdes at Home' and also to those who have supplied copy for the Raphael Recorder.

This edition sadly publishes an obituary for James Blair O'Shea who died in early August. He was the father of Catherine Beadle.

Blair, as he was generally known made six trips to Lourdes from 2007 till 2016 with Susan, his wife. Regrettably, pilgrimage records prior to 2007 were lost but it is known both Blair and Susan were each awarded a five year pin before 2007.

Fr Michael has written about his religious order, the Marists, or the Society of Mary.

We have an article from an artisan, Chris Ward, telling us about his work making stained glass. Chris has a website and is willing to take on commissions.

We also have a quiz from another pilgrim, Tony Cunningham, about British Prime Ministers and to make this more interesting there is a prize of £20 for the first correct answer sheet opened on 1st February.

As previously, I would encourage more people to put pen to paper and write something which is going to be of interest to fellow pilgrims.

Happy Christmas from the Trustees, Tracy, Kathleen & Francis and let us all look forward to a happier New Year.



From Fr Michael Coleman S.M.

'Not many people know that'.....

Sir Michael Caine was fascinated by unusual facts and often introduced them into conversation, ending with his favourite phrase ..."and not many people know that". There are many things connected with Lourdes about which you could say "and not many people know that".

As you may know I belong to the Society of Mary, better known as Marists, and we have some connections with Lourdes - and not many people know that!

To understand events it is always better to have some historical background. The French Revolution started 1789 and had a devastating effect on the whole of France and had its effects in even the remotest hamlets. One of the objectives was to get rid of religion and free people from the influence of the Church. The Abbey of Cluny owned one sixth of France and was immensely powerful. During the Revolution the Abbey was totally destroyed and only a few ruins are visible today. It was a time of great suffering but people survived and by 1811 Archbishop Fesch was Archbishop of Lyon, historically a very important diocese in France.

Things were settling down and people were returning to the Church but all seminaries, where priests attend for education, were closed.... strange things happen.... Archbishop Fesch happened to be the uncle of the Emperor Napoleon and was very keen to have the seminary of St Irenaeus in Lyon reopened. I have imagined the following conversation taking place... "Now listen here our Napoleon, I don't care what you say, but I want my seminary reopening". Napoleon, being a wise general, agreed with his uncle's wishes and St Irenaeus reopened in September 1812. This was a major event and young men who wanted to be priests came forward. Among them was, the now well known Jean Vianney, known today as the Curé d'Ars, and later canonised. Also attending St Irenaeus was a little known Jean Claude Colin who was to go on and found the Society of Mary. .

His inspiration was Mary and his followers were to take the loving service of Mary as their inspiration. In July 1816 twelve young men dedicated themselves to founding the Society of Mary but had to fulfil their obligations to their bishop. The ideal lived on despite some people changing their minds and others joining.

A very strange thing happened in 1836. Rome was faced with a very real difficulty. Captain Cook had discovered and mapped Oceania, the South Pacific, and various sects set out to bring religion to these remote places. Rome had no missionaries to send and then remembered that a group in Lyon who wanted to begin a Society of Mary had said that they would be prepared to undertake any work in the Church.... They were asked to become missionaries and as a result of their agreement so the Society of Mary was approved by the Church. In this simple request the Marists had been asked to take on the pastoral responsibility for Oceania which covered a sixth of the surface of the world..... not many people know that.

Eight men left Le Havre on Christmas Eve 1836 and it was November 1837 before Peter Chanel was landed on the island of Futuna, a mere speck of ten miles by three miles in the Pacific Ocean. Peter was no great success as a missionary and on 28th April 1841 he was beaten to death by some of the natives. When people went to Futuna to recover his body they found that the whole island was committed to the Catholic faith and have remained so to the present day. Peter was canonised in 1954. The spread of the Church from the seminary of St Irenaeus in Lyon is hard to imagine. It was not organised. For various reasons young priests set out to different parts of the world. In a relatively short time some had been made bishops and were desperate to establish seminaries and they needed priests to teach the students. What do you do? Do what we do today. Talk among our friends and ask for their help. Where would Raphael be today without such brilliant communication?

This happened and Marists helped in various seminaries including New Orleans and Nevers. Here they became the chaplains for Sisters of Charity of Nevers; the very nuns who were looking after the people in Lourdes. On 11th February 1858, Our Lady appeared to Bernadette Soubirous for the first time. We all have a good understanding of the history of Lourdes (during the lockdown take the opportunity to watch "The Song of Bernadette" - you can find it in YouTube) and refresh your memory. Bernadette decided to join the Sisters of Charity of Nevers and travelled to their motherhouse in Nevers in July 1866 where she lived an exemplary life. Her confessor was Fr Douce SM. (Not a lot of people know that....) and he ministered to her for the rest of her life. The tombstone of Bernadette Soubirous reads: Honoured in Lourdes in the year 1858 by several visitations of the Blessed Virgin. In religion Sister Marie-Bernard departed this life in the Mother House of the Sisters of Charity at Nevers on April 16th, 1879 in the 36th year of her age and in the 12th year of her Religious Profession. Fr Douce SM, her confessor, was involved in her cause for Canonization by preparing the case and supplying evidence. Bernadette's beatification took place in Rome June 14th, 1925. Her canonisation was December 8th, 1933. In the process for canonisation the deceased has to be identified. When Bernadette's body was exhumed it was found to be incorrupt and is venerated to this day in the convent chapel in Nevers.

In preparation for the centenary of the Apparitions in 1958 an Underground Basilica was constructed. It is a remarkable building and can seat 25,000 people. It was consecrated by Cardinal Roncalli, who later that year was consecrated as Pope John XXIII. In the altar stone are relics of three French saints from the time of Bernadette - John Vianney, Curé d' Ars and a member of the Third Order of Mary; Peter Chanel SM; and a Franciscan whose name I can never remember.... but two out of three saints are closely connected with the Society of Mary and that cannot be bad. Not a lot of people know that! In front of the Grotto of Massabielle is marked the exact spot where Bernadette knelt on February 11th, 1858. I always make a point of praying there. It is very significant and not a lot of people know about it!



Frs Michael & Leo together on the Prairie

5th August 2017.



During our pilgrimage Mass at St Savin it is customary for us to remember Raphaelites now in the celestial branch. In particular we call to mind those who have died recently. We remembered them, too, during our virtual pilgrimage, Lourdes at Home. May they rest in Peace!

Mr	Tony	Allen	Upminster
Miss	Lizzy	Boorer	Wimbledon
Mr	Frank	Corban	Blackburn
Mrs	Teresa	Donoghue	Edinburgh
Mrs	Shirley	Hughes	Wimbledon
Mrs	Rita	Lowe	Worsley
Mr	Blair	O'Shea	Worcester
Mr	Terry	Scahill	Blackburn
Mrs	Angela	Sims	Wimbledon
Mrs	Pamela	Thompson	Reading
Mrs	Joan	Townley	Burnley
Mr	Stanley	Young	Edinburgh

Blair O'Shea 1928 to 2020.

James Blair O'Shea was born on 18th January 1928, in Swansea, a delicate child weighing in at 10lb! He had a brother Bernard, now sadly deceased, and a sister Angela, sixteen years younger and who now lives in Australia.

Blair was mainly brought up by his grandmother as his mother ran the grocery shop for years and his father was at sea. From the age of about three, he would always walk down to the shop with his blind grandfather, Hugh, to deliver his grandmother's lunch. For years, they never knew what it was like to go to the shops for food as they just went and helped themselves. Even in the war with rationing, there was always plenty and some to share.

Blair went to St Illtyd's Primary School, across the road from home. He spent a year at the Grammar School in Swansea and during the war went to Prior Park, a prestige school run by the Christian Brothers, in Bath. He played Rugby and he did well at school.

After university in Swansea and his National Service Blair trained as a teacher. He came to Bromsgrove in 1961, arriving fresh faced, with two holdalls and the approach that if he didn't like it, he could easily move.

At the same time as moving to Bromsgrove he met up with an old friend, Jimmy, who had returned from America. Jimmy acted as a match-maker and go between, passing on information between Susan and Blair. This rekindled their relationship and led to Susan coming back from America and marrying Blair in 1962.

The O'Sheas had four children, Catherine, Andrew, Michael and Joanne.

His teaching career blossomed and he rose in the ranks to become head teacher at St Peter's School. He had a phenomenal memory, history, languages and Latin were his strong points. He was doing quizzes in lockdown with Michael and could answer all the language questions. Considering the last time he did any Latin was over 70 years ago; he was clearly taught in a way that things stuck.



Blair always enjoyed travelling and exploring. He had travelled widely in post war Europe and could tell you where he had been and helped plan your holidays to this day.

Lourdes was one of his last holidays together with Susan, and with his other family, the Raphael family. Everyone enjoyed the love and the laughter of those days. The family went to Lourdes in August, virtually, with Blair and Susan as the focus of a decade of the rosary, sitting there smiling, eating ice cream at St Savin. Everyone remembers that he will be with Susan again, but Sue's peace is gone now!

His values of love, tolerance, kindness, altruism, integrity, generosity and forgiveness were practiced by him daily.

Blair's legacy includes his genuine practice of the best values a human can aspire to and he has set the bar very high. He instilled in his children the importance of celebrating life, family and friendship as well as working hard for yourself and others.

He was a universalist who embraced others with warmth, kindness and compassion. A good judge of character who always acted with grace and dignity. Sadly, Susan died in 2017 and although Blair struggled, he was supported by friends and relatives who visited, cooked, or suffered his cooking, stayed over and made his life more joyful..

May he rest in peace.

A Quiz from Tony Cunningham, Pilgrim

I had a long teaching career. I taught several subjects but history was always my favourite. I have devised this quiz about Prime Ministers for entertainment during these lockdown days. The answers will be published in the next edition of the Raphael Recorder.



William Pitt



Duke of Wellington

1. Who is generally considered to have been the first Prime Minister?
2. Who was the only Prime Minister to have been assassinated?
3. Which Prime Minister was born in a flat above a grocery shop?
4. Which Prime Minister had English as his second language?
5. Which London railway station is named after a Prime Minister?
6. Which two brothers became Prime Ministers?
7. Which prime Minister published fifteen novels?
8. 'A sight to make surrounding nations stare
A kingdom entrusted to a schoolboy's care'
Which Prime Minister was the schoolboy?
9. Which 19th century Prime Minister fought a duel at Battersea Fields?
10. Which 20th century Prime Minister wrote this amusing verse about himself?
'Few thought he was even a starter
There were many who thought themselves smarter
But he ended P.M.
C.H. and O.M.
An Earl and a Knight of the Garter.
11. After which Prime Minister is a well-known beverage named?
12. Who was the last Prime Minister to sit in the House of Lords?
13. Which Prime Minister owned horses which won the Derby three times?
14. Which Prime minister was blind in one eye?
15. Which Prime Minister's grandfather founded a famous publishing business?
16. Which Prime Minister was born in Blenheim Palace?
17. Who was the first Labour Prime Minister?
18. Who was the only Prime Minister to serve four non-consecutive terms in office?
19. Who was the last Prime Minister to die in office?
20. How many Prime Ministers have there been during the reign of Queen Elizabeth II?



Harold Macmillan



Harold Wilson

Answer sheets can be mailed or e-mailed to the pilgrimage director.

From Chris Ward, Pilgrim



Hello. I am Chris Ward (Rachel's husband). I am a relative newcomer to the Pilgrimage, having made three trips to Lourdes with Raphael. Although Rachel has been helping to organise things for many years, I only volunteered as a helper for the time in 2017. It is not something I have ever done before and to be honest I felt a little out of my depth. The closest thing I have ever made that can be loosely called a Pilgrimage is to the 24 Hours of Le Mans. I suppose we all have our own versions of spiritual enrichment....

As you may have guessed, I'm someone who hasn't been brought up in a religious environment so I was also a little nervous as to what to expect and what was to be expected of me ahead of my first trip to Lourdes. However, any reservations I initially had were very quickly alleviated by the camaraderie and kindness of everyone on the Pilgrimage. It is clear from reading individual accounts in previous editions of the Raphael Recorder that each Pilgrimage to Lourdes is both a very individual and communal experience that is very much looked forward to each year. Despite a very public marriage proposal in the Padoue Hotel, I usually like to keep myself to myself, a result of several years working alone in a workshop with just a cat for company. It therefore came as a surprise to me to find that I was able to talk to anyone and everyone and get along so well with so many of you. That alone makes the trip something that I have really found beneficial. Added to the fact that I am able to contribute in a small way by helping Fran, Trevor and Rachel with day-to-day things means I do not feel like a spare part who finds the formalities a little alien.

So, from initially feeling like an "outsider" looking in as an observer, I quickly felt welcome and valued. In conclusion, whatever aspect of Lourdes it is that you look forward to and gain from, just listening, talking and participating can be of great reward.

I look forward to seeing you all again in 2021 (pending what happens over the year or so with COVID-19 of course)

Editor: The bee pictured top left is just one example of the work of Chris.

From Kath Scahill Trustee

Several years ago, Terry and I were on a shopping expedition with a group of Raphael pilgrims. We went up the Rue de la Grotte as far as La Rotonde cafe/restaurant and turned right along the Rue des Pyrénées where we visited a shop called La Fabrique. There is a Factory at the side of the shop where you can watch how the statues are made and a Statue Museum over the top. We bought the outdoor statues shown in the photograph to take home. After the pilgrimage, the statues were put away safely in the wardrobe until Terry could make a Grotto in our garden. Time passed and the statues were forgotten. In May 2020 during the first lockdown, whilst tidying and decluttering, I found the statues. Sadly, Terry is no longer here to build the grotto; I chose a shady niche in my back garden as their forever home where I see them every day.





Here is a quartet you may not wish to meet at night while out on a lonely country lane. Fortunately, we do know each of them and they are not all at evil spirits. From left to right they are Cheryl, Dawn, Tara and Kath. They were out celebrating Halloween and, doubtless, scaring the odd unsuspecting Christian.

The group followed a two hour car treasure hunt involving a sumptuous lunch while sporting fancy dress. The area searched was Pendle Hill notorious for the 1612 Witch Trials. The surrounding towns and villages are truly bewitching; where better to spend Halloween?

From Wenda Cordell, Pilgrim.



I would like to tell my journey with Lourdes. Before I came with Raphael I had been many years previously with the school when I was 13 years old. It was not a good experience I was very homesick and very seasick. As a child I was very shy with a terrible stammer with no knowledge or interest in boys. The French boys chased us everywhere and freaked me out so, all in all, it was not a good experience. I didn't really remember much about the place at all. So when I came with Raphael eight years ago I wondered if my previous memory would taint the way I saw Lourdes

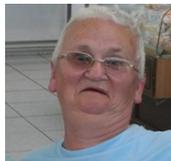
I could not have been more wrong if I had tried! My memory of that first trip with Raphael is priceless. Everyone was so friendly and I had many long chats into the wee hours of the night (I don't sleep well). There were lots of laughs, lots of spirituality, lots of healing and the whole place with its beautiful views overlooking the mountains and babbling brook just blew me away. I remember standing on the roof top of the Accueil where we were staying with the Gold Cross spreading its rays and thinking I could conquer the world; nothing could ever hurt me ever again (life hasn't always been easy). I had such a great time that first year that when it came to leave I was overcome with emotion probably because as I worked in a school and had been given special permission to come. Due to this I thought I would not be able to come again coupled with being a single parent on low income (we had been funded that year by the Raphael group in our church) I didn't ever think I would be able to come again and that thought was so overwhelmingly awful. However, the following year I was still working in the school but because the Reception Class goes back a week later than the rest of the school. With the permission from the Head Teacher and financial help from the Gilbert Thompson Memorial Fund we were able to come again. I thought the feeling I had had the previous year could never be repeated but to be honest it was even better. It was like coming home I completely understand how Paul feels, it's that feeling of complete peace and calm and wonder, if only you could bottle that and give it to the world our world would be a much better place.

Again everyone was wonderful. I remember being in the torchlight procession and having affinity with the people either side of me even though we didn't speak the same language it was amazing.

I don't know which is my favourite part but St Savin holds a very special place in my heart for the deep calm I feel there and the powerful sense of healing will always remain with me. After the Mass we enjoy a picnic on the green and watch eagles soar across the

Valley of the River Gave. I find the torchlight procession magical, so united, too, one day I would love to play my flute in Underground Basilica; there it would sound so amazing. I also can't leave out the Masses we celebrate in Lourdes and the fact that I get to play my beloved flute at them all with beautiful people. I also can't leave out the concert at the end of the week which is amazing it has everything you could wish for. I have never laughed so much and Mandy is amazing!! I also have to include our Priests, Father Michael and Father Leo who are with us and give a great balance of spirituality with fun.

To sum up Raphael is like family (in fact better than family). I hope, God willing, there will be many more happy trips in years to come as I and Julie both look forward to it each year and I for one cannot face the thought of never returning; that concept is too awful to bear.



From: Eileen Walton, Pilgrim

It was a great shame we could not go to Lourdes this year. As Wenda said in the last Recorder issue, we thoroughly enjoyed Lourdes at Home. However, earlier this year in August the three Essex girls (me, Wenda and Julie) sat in my garden in the lovely weather and walked down memory lane with my old photographs from days gone by. This year I was promised to be taken down to the baths Without my glasses I have difficulty seeing. so I would need the help of a sighted, caring handmaid to come to hold my hand in case I slip and fall in. I want the experience of the Baths. It would be memorable and lasting experience for all the right reasons.

PS: I'll be wearing my Liverpool FC shirt there.

Editor: The Baths are closed until further notice but Eileen might like to take a dip in the River Gave instead. I am ready and willing to help!

Culled from Church Newsletters

Our opening carol will be "Angels We Have Heard Get High".....

This afternoon there will be a meeting in the South and North ends of the church. Children will be baptized at both ends.....

This Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.....

New choir robes are currently needed, due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.....

The adult choir invites any member of the congregation who enjoys sinning to join the choir.

At the evening service tonight, the topic of the homily will be "What is Hell?" Come early and listen to our choir practice.



An elderly woman walked into her local Church. A friendly usher new to the job greeted her at the door and enquired where would she like to sit.

The front row was the reply.

Ah, you really do not want to do that, said the usher, the priest is really boring.

Do you know who I am, said the elderly lady.

No, said the usher.

I am the priest's mother.

Thinking quickly, the usher enquired if she knew who he was.

No, she replied.

Good! said the usher.