



The Raphaël Recorder

EIGHTH EDITION

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A Message from Tracy Ennis Chair of Raphael Trustees.

Dear Raphael Family,

It is wonderful that we are an amazing and supportive family and I thank you all for your encouragement over the past difficult year. I thought I'd give you a little news update.

My fellow Trustees, Kath Scahill and Francis Hindle, have asked me to continue as Chair of Trustees for another year, a role I don't think I do justice to, but I will continue to work for Raphael to the best of my ability. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Kath and Fran for their continued support, guidance, organisational skills and teamwork. Likewise, I want to take this opportunity to thank Paul Affleck, our Pilgrimage Director, for all he continually does in planning each trip to Lourdes and in the last year producing the Raphael Recorder and keeping us all up to date with what's going on within our Raphael family – this link has become invaluable. I also want to thank our wonderful Heads of Department – Fr Leo, Angela Searle, Catherine Beadle, Rachel Ward and Trevor McKean. Your continued support of Raphael is greatly appreciated, and Chris Woodward, our treasurer, his work is never-ending managing our finances and insurances. Lastly, I want to thank **all** who give up their time to help on each Pilgrimage and all who attend. Reading this last paragraph back it sounds like a speech from the Oscars but it's heartfelt.

I have good news! Mandy Southall and Jean Lugton have agreed to join us as Trustees - we welcome you both and will try not to scare you too much! We will be planning events through the year.



You will have heard our other news already from Paul, that the Trustees recently met with him and were in unanimous agreement that we needed to cancel our Pilgrimage to Lourdes again this year.

Whilst restrictions are slowly lifting in the UK and many of us are now getting vaccinated, we felt the situation was still too volatile to commit to travelling to France. The vaccination situation in France is not as advanced as the UK, and we were also mindful that our Nursing staff have been working extremely hard over the last 14 months and that we could not ask them to give up precious rest time to work in Lourdes. With this in mind, we will be planning another virtual Pilgrimage and regular virtual re-unions so we can all keep in touch and continue to give each other strength and love. Dates and information will be sent to you in good time.

I would ask for your continued prayers for our Pilgrimage and all we strive to achieve. God Bless you all and I look forward to seeing you on-line soon.

Tracy

Lourdes is Ready .

**By Lisa Dodd,
Operations Manager, Tangney Tours, Lourdes**

I have been living in Lourdes and working for Tangney Tours for over 15 years. Yes, we have COVID-19 in Lourdes too. It has meant having to adhere to protocols and restrictions in order to keep everyone safe and has led to a good deal of changes to daily life. For me, like many, looking back over the last 12 months, life is certainly not the same as it was. There are, of course, the more obvious alterations – a reduction in working hours, an increase in time to tackle activities we had never previously tried, the wearing of masks, home-schooling – and the discovery of a fantastic community spirit for those in need of help. Nestled alongside these, are the more subtle changes which are more specific to Lourdes. The Sanctuary authorities have connected thousands of pilgrims online. The grotto area is very quiet, yet still wonderfully prayerful. The absence of crowds is notable, but the candles go on burning, the rock is still standing and the water continues to flow. As I write, spring seems to be in full bloom and the domain is bright and beautiful. An outing to the town, once incredibly cosmopolitan, now meets with only familiar local faces on everyday business. For the moment we do not mistakenly overhear an Irish accent negotiating for cheese at the market or get caught in the middle of Italians conversing from opposite sides of the street. We are spared from having to seek out the solitary available parking space amid a sea of cars with far-away registration plates. There is one thing that these familiar local 'Lourdais' all seem to have in common – hope. All in Lourdes are looking to the future, all are preparing, all are planning. We are missing the pilgrims and the vibrancy and colour they bring. We are doing all we can to be ready for the day when the bustle returns, when you can feel God's work being carried out in the air all around. We will be delighted to hear groups singing their way down to the grotto, to see the carefully-crafted magnificent banners winding down the road showing the way to the trail of pilgrims behind.



We will be delighted to watch the professional photographers weave their way through Mass silently and expertly to capture their best shot, to wave at a bus-load of strangers as they pass on their way for a day out. We will be delighted, and we will be ready. Lourdes, like the rest of the world, has changed. However, Lourdes has not changed beyond recognition and Lourdes will be delighted and ready when the time comes to welcome the world again.

Editor's note: Our association with Tangney Tours goes back a long way. Lisa is the Operations Manager for the Lourdes office. She is married to Andy, a Liverpudlian, and they have two children. In the last couple of years Lisa and her colleague Linda, have been particularly helpful to Raphael. We had traditionally stored equipment such as wheelchairs, gazebos, groundsheets etc in a warehouse close to the Railway Station. Unfortunately, the owners of the warehouse went bust and were not able to be contacted meaning we risked losing all our equipment in a liquidator sale. It was impossible to do anything from a distance but Lisa stepped in keeping a close eye for any activity at the warehouse. She did manage to negotiate with assessors at the warehouse to remove our property which could be identified and moved it to a safe place. Her persistence saved our property and saved us some thousands of pounds should we have needed to buy replacements.

Thoughts from Rev Fr Leo Heakin

A family adopted a baby and sent round a picture announcing their good news. Underneath the picture were the words from the mother "I never carried you in my body, but I carried you in my heart." To me that was an echo of the words in the gospel about the first Christmas "Mary stored all these things in her heart and treasured them."

The first time I went to Lourdes with Raphael was September 1975. One of the ladies we took lived in a care home in Accrington. Meeting her at the reunion later that year (the first we had in the North) she said "Every night when they put me to bed I lie there and go through what we did in Lourdes every day. It reminds me of a happy time."

A pilgrimage is not just about the few days we spend together in Lourdes. That is the fuel that keeps the fire alive. The time we spend together changes each one of us. We grow in love of God. We learn to appreciate each other. We surprise ourselves in the way we help others. The prayers, the Masses, the laughter, the meals, even the quiet moments all leave their mark on us. We return home a little stronger than we were before ready to face "God knows what."

Well God "does know what." We did not know about the pandemic that was coming. We did not know we would not be able to go to Lourdes for a year or two. But we have the memories stored up in our hearts. The fuel that keeps the fire alight.

It is "The Rose." "Just remember in the winter hidden deep beneath the snow lies the seed that with the sun's love in the spring becomes the rose." Soon that seed with push its way up through the snow and blossom into a beautiful rose.



Rev Fr Leo Heakin

Coincidences?

Abraham Lincoln was elected to Congress in 1846.

John F Kennedy was elected to Congress in 1946.
Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860.
John F Kennedy was elected President in 1960.
Both were shot on a Friday and both shot in the head.

Lincoln's Secretary was named Kennedy.
Kennedy's Secretary was named Lincoln.
Both were succeeded by a man named Johnson.
Andrew Johnson who succeeded Lincoln was born in 1808.

Lyndon Johnson who succeeded Kennedy was born in 1908.

John Wilkes Booth (assassinated Lincoln) was born in 1839.

Lee Harvey Oswald (assassinated Kennedy) was born in 1939.

Lincoln was shot at the Theatre named 'Kennedy.'
Kennedy was shot in a car called 'Lincoln.'
Booth and Oswald were both assassinated before their trials.

A week before Lincoln was shot he visited Monroe, Maryland.

A week before Kennedy was shot he visited Monroe, Marilyn.

A short update on Lourdes.

As far as we are aware there are no pilgrimages going to Lourdes from the UK in 2021. The risks and consequent potential liabilities are just too great. Were we to set off with sick and disabled pilgrims and something went wrong we could well find our insurance was invalidated

The safety of our pilgrims is paramount and at this stage we do not know what advice for travel is in place for this year. Currently the advice is 'do not travel except in exceptional circumstances'. We do not know if or when the restrictions will be revised or eased.

Meanwhile the Sanctuary of Lourdes is planning to reopen at Easter but will only attract minimal numbers from France. There is now a Health Charter available on the Sanctuary website. There will be no international Masses.

Processions will resume but will require social distancing but be subject to limitations on attendance. Passage through the Grotto will be allowed but pilgrims may not touch the rock. A liturgy for the 'Passage' is in preparation.

The Piscines will be open but the baths are not in use. Pilgrims may enter to wash their faces but the Sanctuary is encouraging people to 'wash' at the fountains.

Answers to the Prime Minister Quiz.

Nobody achieved 20 correct answers, but a number gave a creditable performance. Thank you to Tony Cunningham for devising the quiz.

1. Sir Robert Walpole 1728 - 1742
2. Spencer Percival 1809-1812. The murderer John Bellingham, a man with a grievance, was tried and hanged a week later.
3. Margaret Thatcher 1979-1990.
4. David Lloyd George 1916-1922. The only Welsh prime minister.
5. Liverpool Street. Named after Robert Bank Pelham, 2nd Earl of Liverpool. 1812-1827.
6. Henry Pelham 1743-1754 and his elder brother Thomas Pelham, Duke of Newcastle 1754-1756 & 1757-1762
7. Benjamin Disraeli, 1868 & 1874-1880
8. The 'schoolboy' was William Pitt the Younger 1783-1801 & 1804-1806. He was the youngest prime minister to take office at age 24 having been Chancellor the Exchequer at 23. He went up to Cambridge at 14!
9. Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington 1828-1830. He demanded 'satisfaction' of the 9th Earl of Winchelsea for his remarks about Wellington's remarks on Catholic Emancipation.
10. Clement Attlee 1945-1951.
11. Earl Grey 1830-1834
12. Robert Gascogne-Cecil. 3rd Marquis of Salisbury. 1885, 1886-1892 & 1895-1902
13. Archibald Primrose, 5th Earl of Roseberry 1894-1795
14. Gordon Brown 2007-2010. The result of a rugby accident at school.
15. Harold McMillan 1957-1963
16. Winston Churchill 1940-1945 & 1951-1955
17. James Ramsay McDonald 1924 & 1929-1935
18. William Ewart Gladstone 1868-1874, 1880-1885, 1886 & 1892-1894
19. Viscount Palmerston 1855-1858 & 1859-1865. He was an Irish peer so could sit in the House of Commons throughout his career
20. 14. Churchill, Eden, MacMillan, Douglas-Hume, Wilson, Heath, Callaghan, Thatcher, Major, Blair, Brown, Cameron. May & Johnson



Miracles in Lourdes

Lourdes, an erstwhile sleepy unimportant town locked away in the foothills of the Pyrenean Mountains came to prominence just after tales of miraculous cures became generally known. The first to have been cured was Catherine Lapatie in 1858. Pilgrims flocked to the town to hear news of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin to a sickly fourteen year old girl and, too, of strange, inexplicable healings.

One hundred and sixty years and seventy accredited cures later, pilgrims still visit the shrine of Our Lady in Lourdes. Visitor numbers have diminished since 2008 when some eight million came to honour Our Lady of Lourdes despite road, rail and air travel making access easier.



Do pilgrims come in hope of a miracle and do they still occur? The answer to both questions is yes and yes. Now after one hundred and sixty three years there are seventy accredited cures, the last three occurring in the previous twenty years.

The dictionary defines a miracle as a wonder, a phenomenon or a marvel. The word comes from Latin meaning 'surprise' but for the Church there is a scientific and a spiritual significance. Another definition is 'a welcome event which is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency'.

There is the scientific fact of a cure and the spiritual sign. The Church defines a miracle as an extraordinary event believed to be due to a benevolent divine intervention to which spiritual significance is attached.

If the number of seventy cures occurring in over one hundred and sixty years seems low it is because there are very strict guidelines to be followed by teams of medical experts and by the Church. Because of the spiritual dimension, medical people do not proclaim cures. The criteria has to be robust because the Church and the Sanctuary of Lourdes do not want to build false hope nor, indeed, do they want to encourage people to claim cures falsely.

In Lourdes the path to assessing the veracity of a cure starts with the Bureau of Medical Observations the head of which organisation is Dr Alessandro Franciscis. Here evidence is gathered and passed to the International Medical Lourdes Committee. (CMIL). This august body reports to its two co-presidents, the Apostolic Delegate to the Sanctuary of Lourdes, Archbishop Herouard and a physician, Professor Jonquet. The Archbishop provides guidance about whether a cure can be related to the intercession of Our Lady but he does not vote on any of the medical aspects of the case. The International Medical Lourdes Committee (CMIL) has thirty five members and together this group has to examine evidence exhaustively to support claims that medically inexplicable cures have occurred. A medically inexplicable cure is judged according to the Lambertini Criteria established by Pope Benedict XIV in 1735 and still in use today. If the CMIL decides a cure is medically inexplicable, its findings are passed to the Bishop of the diocese in which the person cured resides. There is at least one Briton serving on the CMIL committee. He is Dr Kieran Moriarty former chief medical officer for the Salford Diocesan Pilgrimage. It requires a majority of two thirds to pass its conclusion to the relevant Bishop who convenes a Canonical Commission and from this comes the decision whether to recognise or not the claimed cure.

The case of Sister Bernadette Moriau whose cure happened on 11th July 2008 was the last to be declared a miracle and the formalities were concluded on 11th February 2018. (See The Raphael Recorder edition 5 published in July 2020).



There are no readily available statistics of the number of people who claim to have received a cure and whose case has been examined. We know that more than 80% of cures occur in females while the youngest cure was a two year old child.

Brief details of all seventy cures are displayed on panels on the second floor of the St John Paul II building.

I have worked as a volunteer with one gentleman, Vittorio, whose cure is number 63 in the list of accredited cures.

While not having 'seen' a cure personally I have been given anecdotal evidence of cures. The first was on a visit to Nevers where St Bernadette's incorrupt body lies in the Convent Chapel. I was leading a group and we were having breakfast at the Convent of St Gildard. Another visitor to the convent, a French lady, engaged me in conversation telling me of a recent event during the Pilgrimage from Marseille. The story is that a young refugee girl, paralysed from the waist down, was taken to the baths in a wheel-chair and was able to walk away from the baths unaided. The incident was authenticated by the Archbishop of Marseilles who was present at the time. The second incident was relayed to me by a husband and wife who I knew as Members of the Society of Our Lady of

Lourdes pilgrimage. Their grandchild had been stillborn and family members were invited to the family home to say goodbye to the child. The husband had brought some Lourdes water with him and moistened the lips of the child who started to cry.

I have an open mind but I like to believe both accounts. While both attribute cures in some way to Lourdes water, the Sanctuary of Lourdes is at pains to insist there is nothing special about the water in the Spring of Massabielle; it is plain water with no abnormal mineral content. If a person experiences healing it is due to Faith.

A LOURDES JOURNEY RECALLED

If my memory serves me correctly I recall some details of an interesting journey to Lourdes. We had set off from Westminster Cathedral by coach at 12.00 noon on 9th February 1984 to be present in Lourdes for the great celebrations of the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Things went well until we hit snow just north of Tours, which is exactly halfway to Lourdes from Calais. Our drivers proceeded with great care and the snow kept on snowing. After a while we came across a car at the side of the motorway and the drivers stopped to see if they could be of assistance. The car occupants, husband, wife and their very young baby, were most grateful. After some time it was agreed that the side of the motorway was no place to be and that the safest thing to do was for the mother and baby to board our coach and we would take them to the safety of the next service station. The husband would be very happy to follow in our tracks. All went well. The service station was reached safely. The family was reunited and the snow stopped shortly afterwards. Marvellous... and we still had the celebrations in Lourdes to look forward to.. A happy memory!.

M Coleman SM.



Christmas 2020 in West Essex by Wenda & Julie Cordell.

Our Christmas like everyone else's was quiet. You will not believe we were due to go out like we normally do but that obviously did not happen so we stayed indoors. Sarah (daughter) and I had vegan pizza and Julie had a takeaway bought the day before. I did make pigs in blankets for Julie and Sarah. It was actually really strange but somehow good too. We played a game in the afternoon and I had a video call with my youngest son and saw my two little grandsons charging around: all a bit surreal.

New year was very similar but somehow good too. I think not having to go out in the dark and cold was good although we do love going to the theatre. It was good just to sit in the warm and watch television, not that I would want to do it all the time and I am beginning to get a bit like climbing the walls.

We did get to go to one local show which was a real fluke really. My daughter Sarah tried to get tickets for the 20th of December. I tried to ring up for concessionary tickets but in the meantime those tickets were sold so we had to take tickets for the previous Tuesday. This worked out well because that Wednesday when we first wanted to book was the start of the new lock down. So if we had got the other tickets we would not have been able to go, ironic really. The show was really good, a bit of everything, panto jokes, singing, music and very safely organised; it was so lovely just to go out and feel normal again.

I have been driving my daughter Sarah to plumbing jobs; hopefully, she will get her driving licence back soon as it would be a lot easier for her to be able to drive again and build up her own business. Fingers crossed, she will hear very soon in the meantime I am chauffeuse amongst many caps I wear: cleaner, tutor, carer etc.

Well, hopefully the spring will come soon and things will look brighter with so many people getting the vaccine things should get easier and life later in the year can return to some kind of normal, even if it is a bit different to before.

God bless to everyone.

We hope to see you all at another zoom meeting very soon.

Wenda and Julie



Dr Alessandro de Franciscis

Dr Alessandro de Franciscis was born in Naples in 1955. His first visit to Lourdes was as a volunteer in 1973 whilst still at school. After school he became a student studying medicine in Italy and at Harvard but he has returned to Lourdes

each year since. In 2009 Bishop Perrier appointed Dr Franciscis as president of the Lourdes Bureau of Observations. This eminent body was established in 1883 to study and judge evidence of cures in Lourdes. In almost 140 years some 7,000 cases have been studied but only 70 have been recognised as miracles. (See page 6).

Dr Franciscis also heads the Lourdes Medical Bureau. This organisation welcomes doctors, dentists, nurses and pharmacists who come on an organised pilgrimage or who come to serve the sick without affiliating to any particular group.

Dr Franciscis has raised the profile of his role. His predecessor was a devout man but was rather shy. With the ability to speak five languages (including English) Dr Franciscis is able and does communicate with international visitors. Indeed, Dr Franciscis attended the conference of the British Lourdes Medical Association in October 2020 where he was guest speaker. One thing he established is a regular prayer group for medical experts giving them the opportunity to meet one another in Lourdes and to exchange experiences.

From Fiona Heakin , Pilgrim

What I did in Lockdown 1 – another Lourdes connection

A while ago in the Raphaël Recorder I wrote of my first pilgrimage to Lourdes, which my mother surprised me with in 1975, the year my brother Fr Dermot got ordained, and he came to join us in Lourdes. Writing that article made me think of my Mum more and I ferreted out her old wartime diaries from the loft. She had kept a diary every day from 1938 – 1942.



I showed them to my children who urged me to "do something with them". But what to do with a line a day diary? The writing is tiny and mostly in pencil, so even if I copied them no one would understand them. In fact, there were things I didn't understand myself. What was "Tenebrae" and why did she go to it for days on end to Salford Cathedral? What was "Mounts" where she went every Sunday evening? Why did she go see "Bishop Henshaw laid out?".

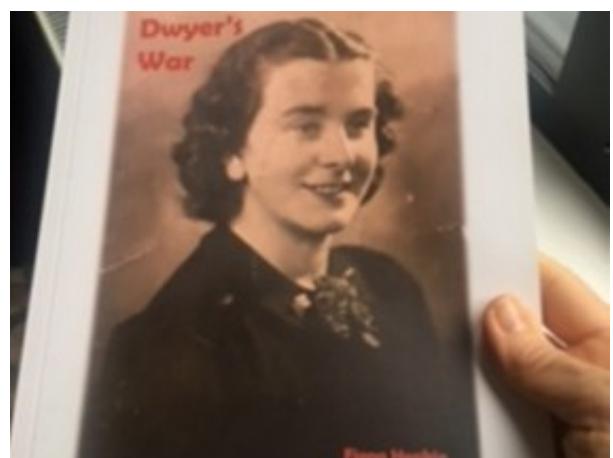
I thought a bit, and then realised there was only one solution to unlock these mysteries. It was a case of "Leo to the rescue". I'm sure my brother Leo won't mind me mentioning that he's *quite a few years* older than me, and thus his memories stretch a lot further back. Leo became my "consulting editor" in the task I set myself of writing a book based on these diaries. Other things were easier to understand. Her entry on 3rd September 1939 "War started" was as stark in its brevity as it was factually correct.

The previous year on October 4th she wrote "Worked till 4. Went for gas mask. Went to carnival at Mounts, won umbrella".

Wow! This was my Mum, mother of nine children (2 of them now priests) calmly approaching the onset of war and being more excited about church dances and winning raffles than she is about the approaching war.

Reading and writing the 1938 chapter became increasingly sad. Not only was war approaching, but I knew my Grandmother died that year. What I didn't know is that she went on pilgrimage to Lourdes that summer. On Thursday 29th July my Mum wrote that she "*Went to see Ma off to Lourdes*".

And what else did I find in my loft but a photo of "Ma" in Lourdes, decked out in best dress I know myself what a comfort it is to be in Lourdes and I knew for certain that the beautiful music, processions and masses at Lourdes would have given my Grandmother an inner strength, so that she could go back to Salford with a calm soul and face what was to happen.



Mrs Eileen Heakin



On 28th December my Mum wrote in her diary "Went to hospital. Ma died. RIP".

My mother sent (or took) all her nine children to Lourdes when they were teenagers. I think she strove to continue the link that had been set by her mother in the year before war tore Europe to pieces.

As for my book? I wrote it, got it printed and sent it as a surprise Christmas present to all of my Mother's children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. They loved it. It brought "Mum" and "Grandma" into focus as a young woman, facing a world on the brink of catastrophe with a lot of church going, Benedictions, Tenebrae and church dances. It renewed our respect for what that earlier generation of women had to go through.

From Mary Wiltshire, Retired Handmaid.

My active time with Raphael was a long time ago but those thirty plus years covered the happiest years of my life.

Let me tell you why it started. As a child I used to wash my dear Aunty Flo's back in her bath and chatter to her (my family would say I've never stopped). She used to take her sister who was disabled to Lourdes and taught me a lot.

I told my family I was going to go but didn't make it until I was 21. It knocked me over!

At 22, I married Trevor and started fifty four wonderful years of marriage. We had three super daughters and eventually we all finished up with Raphael.

At first, Trevor did not want to go. He said I loved Lourdes so much that it would disappoint me if he didn't feel the same. Also he said we couldn't afford it and had three young children to look after. Well, shortly



Trevor and Mary Wiltshire

after that he got an income tax rebate which paid for our visit and a close friend looked after the girls. (Never question Divine Intervention!) We came home with Trevor asking when we would go again.

A few years went by. My GP, Kenneth McGee, used to act as one of Raphael's Doctors. We came along as Handmaiden and Brancardier. We discovered joy in that little town. We became two members of the Raphael family. It was a long time to wait 'til next year! Suddenly there was a group of Raphaelites growing in Seaford.

After a few years, Monica Doyle who was the Chief Handmaiden, became ill and sadly died. Gilbert Thomson was then Pilgrimage Director and asked me to take on the role – he said I was bossy enough to get the job done- and I did- for 10 years!

There was very little privacy in the wards in the old Accueil and they were very crowded. On returning home one year I toured the many care and nursing homes to scrounge surplus screens. We cleaned, painted, and made new cotton curtains and we took them to Lourdes. On returning, Kenneth McGhee said they were great but by next year, they'd have been nicked by the Italians. "No they won't" I replied. "The curtains are in my suitcase!"

We blamed everything on the Italians! I believe that the curtains were not needed in the new Accueil.