



ORDER OF MALTA  
AUSTRALIA

60<sup>th</sup> Annual Lourdes pilgrimage of the Order of Malta.  
160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Blessed Virgin Mary's  
first apparition to St Bernadette Soubirous.



# Lourdes

2018 Pilgrimage  
*"Do Whatever He Tells You..."*

**In 1858**, the Blessed Virgin appeared to young Bernadette Soubirous eighteen times in a grotto at Lourdes. Since then, the sanctuary built around it has become a sacred place for millions of pilgrims. All leave with renewed faith and hope.

**Since 1958**, the Order of Malta has conducted an annual pilgrimage to Lourdes around the first weekend of May. This 5-day programme is a spiritually rich mix of attending worship events with thousands participating; befriending Malades from Ireland and Members from forty-five countries; and personal prayer and reflection.

**In 2018**, the Order of Malta's Asia-Pacific Lourdes delegation included ninety-six pilgrims from (alphabetically) Australia, Hong Kong, Korea and Thailand. All Members of the Order are encouraged to make this Pilgrimage at least once during their Membership. Those who do report an enduring impact on their spirituality. They also meet first-hand the astounding global family of the Order of Malta.

## International Marial Candlelight Procession



### **Lord Jesus,**

***Thou hast seen fit to enlist me for Thy service  
amongst the Knights and Dames of Saint John  
of Jerusalem... be it mine to practise charity  
towards my neighbours, especially the poor  
and the sick...***

7,500 pilgrims, including 1500 sick and disabled from 45 countries, gathered from 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018 for the Order of Malta's 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Lourdes pilgrimage.

More importantly, 2018 marks the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Blessed Virgin's first appearance to young Bernadette.

*The stunning view of the Basilica gleaming gold and white in the morning sun, the twinkling stars of the myriad candles in the torch light procession.*

*The sound of thousands of voices filling the night with 'Ave Maria'. The peaceful faces of the Malades as they waited patiently... above all the spiritual reward of a weekend spent with Our Lord and Our Mother.*







## International Holy Sacrament Procession

One Order Member who was experiencing his first time in Lourdes was deeply moved by the Stations of the Cross and shared how despite the tidal wave of humanity present, he felt a deep and profound inner sense of peace and serenity throughout his pilgrimage.

English Confrere Hector spontaneously shared with me, a stranger, that he was overcome with waves of emotion during the Benediction.

Grand Master Fra' Giacomo Dall Torre del Tempio di Sanguinetto, in his address at the International Medal Ceremony, reflected on the significance of the Lourdes pilgrimage:

*We stand together here in Lourdes, which casts its own influence on us.*

*We meditate on the miracle of Bernadette, and the miracles that have been wrought here, so many times over so many years.*

*Since the wondrous apparition of Mary to the little 14 year old in 1858 - those experiences were to have a profound experience on the world.*

*We reflect on what a miracle is:*

*It may not be a cure... but it will be a grace that is given to all pilgrims who come here - the miracle of serenity in the love of the Virgin Mary...*

*The miracle of unconditional kindness to others, the miracle of tolerance...*

*The miracle that helps us to understand that we are part of the same great spiritual family - the very special family that is the Order of Malta.*

## International Ceremony of Medals



## Prayer

Each morning, Members of the Asia-Pacific (Australia, Hong Kong, Korea, Thailand) delegation, gathered to pray the Rosary.

The many accents and languages in which the Rosary was prayed reminded us all that the love of Mary for us, her children, is boundless and borderless.

Prayer each morning strengthened us for the day ahead. It was after Rosary that one pilgrim shared that she once heard a baby's repeated cry for her mother: 'Mama, Mama, Mama!'

She explained that in our repeated recitation of prayers to Our Lady in the Rosary, we too cry repeatedly to Mary our Mother, to pray for us.

A pilgrim reflecting on the Lourdes experience some days later shared: "We were always in the loving care of our Mother Mary." A member from Hong Kong assured fellow pilgrims: "Don't worry! Mother Lourdes will look after and take good care of you."

*Do whatever He tells you.*

Fr. Gerard McMorrow in his sermon at the Pilgrimage Opening Mass in the Crypt reminded us that St Bernadette was not canonised because she had visions of Blessed Mary, but because she had opened her heart to God's call. Lourdes invites us to open our hearts to the sick and the poor - to do whatever God tells us to do. What God is asking of us was revealed in the Gospel readings throughout the pilgrimage:

*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15 12-17.*







One pilgrim's experience of the deep love of God for us, was expressed in the following reflection:

*When I touch a Malade's frail fingers and see the weary eyes groping for focus, I feel the vulnerability, humility and resilient dignity of age. I distress because I do not have the words. But then she feels in my touch... my soul's hope to provide solace and her eyes smile gratefully from her soul.*

A Korean delegate shared simply yet profoundly; "Being of service with and for the sick makes me happy."

One pilgrim reflected on her experience at the moving Stations of the Cross:"

*I truly felt God's love on the journey, especially when I was invited to read prayers on The Way of the Cross. I felt that it was designed for me and it touched me so much and gave me strength and inspiration. I felt that my pain and suffering was nothing compared to the Lord's. Even through my sickness the Lord gave me periods of strength to serve. It was a blessing to become a Malade from Hong Kong.*

Our encounter with the sick in Lourdes was a Eucharistic moment. Christ was present whispering hope to the sick and courage to pilgrims. He cradled us in our pain and joy, singing and weeping, prayer and silence. Christ comforted us in the memory of loved ones back home who could not be present with us in Lourdes. Christ was present in the song of the birds, the cries of pain and the whisper of the wind.

We invited God to enter our lives, both through the intercession of Saint Bernadette and the Lourdes experience; only to discover God was already there.



## *God is in the ordinary*

Laughter is the music of the soul. Our social evenings in the hotel, the impromptu Irish concert and international parties provided opportunities for all to celebrate life with great joy - providing deep solace in the midst of woe.

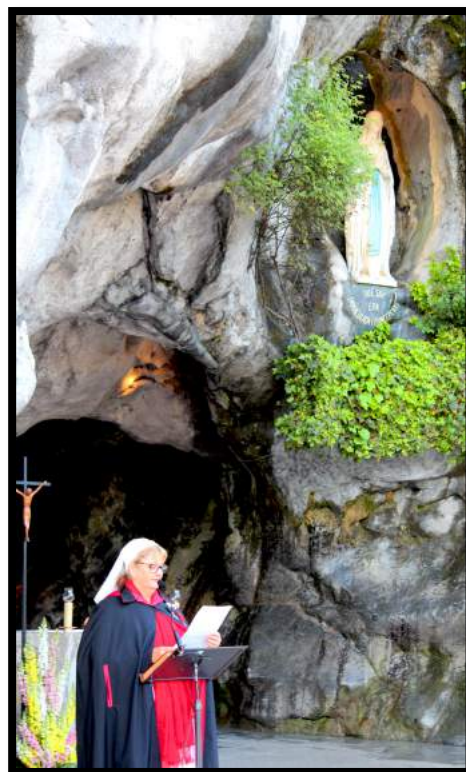
Irish Malade Joe shared a personal anecdote on the preciousness of life, recalling prior to departing for Lourdes when he said to his priest, that at 93 he's waiting in the departure lounge of life. His priest's reply: *"I'll pray your plane is delayed!"*

One of our Australian doctors shared the following Lourdes story: Handing over the night patients' briefing notes to the incoming nurse he said: *"We only lost one patient overnight!"* Horrified the nurse looked incredulously and asked: *"What happened?"* He replied, *"She never made it... (after a pause)... to Lourdes! She is home and very much alive in Ireland!"* This resurrection moment reminds us that miracles do happen at Lourdes!



Walking the Esplanade each evening I listened to the cacophony of voices with languages from across the globe. This Pentecost moment is testimony that love needs no language. God's love transcends borders.

There were no strangers at Lourdes - just different stories. One pilgrim reflected that Lourdes is "addictive". Lives are irrevocably changed. Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, God's presence, a deep sacramental moment, is made manifest. As one of our priests shared in his sermon: "They will know we are Christians by our love!"



## *Love one another*

One of our Members fought back tears as he shared how achingly beautiful was his encounter with God, through Mass celebrated in the sacred grotto of St Bernadette. The crisp cold air, birds singing in the treetops, voices united in song and prayer revealed the magnificence of God's creation. The Irish choir with voices of angels, led by blind musicians, was yet another of God's gifts to us in that incredible Lourdes experience.

Archbishop Becciu reminded pilgrims that we gather at the feet of Mary Immaculate in Lourdes, through Mass, prayer and love of the poor. Mary fully accepts us. Preeminent Mary's love is a window to the love of Christ.

**In Lourdes everything is centred on what matters. Christ matters, the sick and poor matters and the world matters.**





A highlight of the pilgrimage for many was the immersion in the sacred waters of Lourdes. In the vulnerability of our nakedness and fully immersed, we were washed of our sins in this Baptismal moment. We stood before our loving God, devoid of status, pride or possessions. This was a humbling reminder that we are called by name and through Baptism to spread God's love throughout the world. *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last"* John 15-16.



*I got nothing that I had asked for,  
but everything that I had hoped for.*

One pilgrim reflected that Lourdes was not a place to seek miracles or curing but a sanctuary for healing. In one of the many inspirational sermons provided to our delegation by our Irish priests we were reminded of the mystery of how God enters our lives through this reflection by an unknown Confederate soldier:

*I asked for strength that I might achieve; I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.*

*I asked for health that I might do greater things; I was given infirmity that I might do better things...*

*I got nothing that I had asked for,  
but everything that I had hoped for.*

*Almost despite myself my unspoken prayers were answered; I am, among all... most richly blessed.*

Hoping for a cure but receiving an even greater blessing was the theme of a personal story shared during the sermon at the final Australian Mass.

*Maria a pilgrim was hoping for a cure for cancer in Lourdes. In the midst of her desperation, her heart was both broken and broken open, by witnessing a child far sicker than she. It was at this moment she let go of her hope for a personal cure and replaced it with deep love and empathy for the dying child. In this intimate moment of love, in her fragility, God entered her life and paradoxically close to death she was born anew. Maria realised the miracle of Lourdes was not in receiving a cure but in the giving of unconditional love to others.*

The Order's Grand Master reminded us:

*The miracle of Lourdes is that of the presence of Christ revealed in the unconditional love of the Virgin Mary for us all; a love reciprocated in the unconditional kindness shown by pilgrims to others understand that we are part of the same great spiritual family - the very special family that is the Order of Malta.*





### *The Order of Malta*

Lourdes was a humble reminder to Members of the Order of our Mission to alleviate the suffering of the poor and sick, without judgment, distinction of religion, race or political persuasion.

Grand Master Fra' Giacomo, who was warmly welcomed by delegates to Lourdes, reassured Members of the Order that this was an important time for the Order. The revised Constitutional Charter will strengthen Order governance and ensure we meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

He stated that this revision will:

*"Protect the unique and traditional identity of our religious institution, it will guard the Order's charism, safeguard our identity and guarantee our continuing commitment to care of our neighbour."*

Members were also reminded that the religious character of the Order was not in question. The Order would not transform into a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) and we would remain faithful to the Order's inspiring principle: "Tuitio Fidei et Obsequium Pauperum" – Defence of the Faith and Care of the Poor and the Suffering.

### *A God of surprises*

Like Maria we too were reminded of our fragility and pain and also of the depth of God's love and deep joy in the life given to us: *I came that you may have life and Live it abundantly.*  
*John 10:10.*

In Lourdes I heard a child cry out in pain, a bird sing in unison with a choir, the urgency of the fast flowing river Gave de Pau muted by a 6,000 strong voice of pilgrims singing joyously at the Opening Mass. I heard the bells of the Basilica toll Ave Maria. Blind musicians played music which stirred the heart and the sick and healthy prayed with such deep joy and gratitude. I too saw children with bodies bent from illness. I looked deep into their eyes and what stared back at me was at times, pain, at times, acceptance, at times, deep love - and at times emotions only those in deep pain and suffering can understand.

Grand Master Fra' Giacomo reflected:

*"We have storms but we also have sun. We have dark times, but we also have times that are full of light. I see this pilgrimage as offering that strength, to weather the storms and find the light. Mary is offering us her maternal love through Bernadette. Let us go forward into that light together."*





## The International Pontifical Mass



### *The Mission continues*

The mission of Lourdes did not end with the conclusion of the pilgrimage. As one pilgrim reflected: *A holiday has an ending- a pilgrimage does not.*

Blessed Mary appeared not once but 18 times to St Bernadette. The world's sick and poor also cry out repeatedly to each and every one of us, to our Church and to our Order: *Mama! Mama! Mama!*

Throughout the pilgrimage our Members met with international delegations in the spirit of reciprocity to share new responses to emerging calls for help, globally.

Hospitallers and doctors from our region met with the CEO and CFO of CIOMAL, an Order of Malta entity based in Switzerland to discuss their work in serving those afflicted with leprosy in Cambodia.

Australian President Ian Marshall and Director of Communications Daniel Kwok met with the Scandinavian delegation to share the Order's Asia-Pacific regional project in Timor-Leste.

Another group met to discuss strategies to improve social cohesion and faith among our indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, Australia.

The Lourdes pilgrimage is a continual mission of love. Love has no international borders, no global language and no nationality. Through our Baptism we are all called to be faithful disciples of Jesus in our lives, our family and our spiritual family in the Order throughout the world.

*Jesus called the twelve apostles together and gave them power and authority over all demons and the ability to heal sicknesses. He sent the apostles out to tell about God's kingdom and to heal the sick.*

Luke 9:1-2







*May the light of the Virgin Mary  
shine upon us all.*

Our pilgrims have all now returned home as pilgrims do. The poor and sick continue to call- *Mama, Mama, Mama!* There are still storms and still sun, dark times and times of light.

Lourdes however has provided *strength to weather the storms and find the light.*

*Mary is offering us her maternal love through St Bernadette. Let us go forward into that light together. Δ*







## FACTS FROM LOURDES 2018

(4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> May)

### How many?

Total: 7500 participants including 1500 Malades,  
250 Priests, 380 nurses and doctors

In the Asia-Pacific delegation:

Australia (36), Hong Kong (50), Korea (9), Thailand (1)  
– including 2 Malades, 3 doctors

### How did our Members and volunteers assist the 60 Irish malades?

Set up ward, overnight medical shifts,  
ward duties (kitchen, cleaning, feeding),  
Transported wheelchaired Malades to  
Masses, Processions, Bath, shopping and outings,  
Performed at the Irish party.

We also manned the Global Fund for the Forgotten desk.

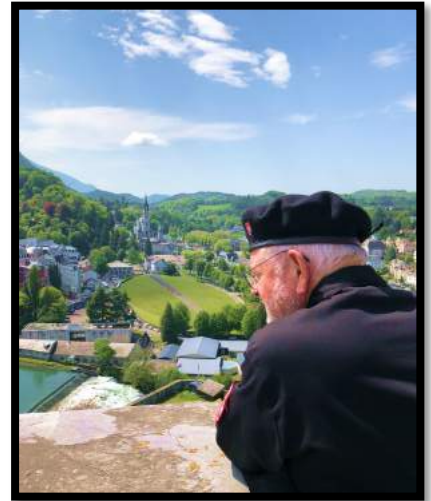
*We hope to see you in Lourdes next year!*











*This report is written  
by Noel Mifsud,  
a Member of the  
Order of Malta  
in Adelaide, Australia.*

*This was his first  
pilgrimage to Lourdes  
with the Order.*



*The artwork is designed  
by Joseph Grogan,  
a Young Order of Malta  
Volunteer from  
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*This was his second  
pilgrimage to Lourdes  
with the Order.*





**ORDER OF MALTA**  
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***Serving the Sick and Poor  
and Defending the Faith  
for over 900 years.***

To learn more about  
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