



# Irish Trust Talk

Issue No 87

Autumn 2012



## FEATURES

- Message from James White our new Chairperson
- Lourdes 2012 - stories from Guests and students
- Friendship holidays in Kilcuan & Cois Cuain
- Christmas Cards 2012

# Trust Talk .....Digital

We are continuing to distribute the Trust Talk by email. If you are not currently receiving a copy, or you know someone who would like a copy by email please email us at [info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com](mailto:info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com) and we will add you to our list.

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*Christmas Cards are a very important source of advertising and income for the Irish Pilgrimage Trust. Our range is simple and uncomplicated and we hope that they will serve you well this year as you send greetings at Christmas.*

*See back the page of this issue for details.*

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**A NEW MUSICAL CD  
OF ALL OUR FAVOURITE  
LOURDES SONGS  
HAS JUST BEEN LAUNCHED  
AND IS AVAILABLE FROM  
HQ IN KILCUAN**



# THE IRISH PILGRIMAGE TRUST

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## Nurses Required

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust is always on the look out for nurses who would like to travel as a volunteer with a group on our pilgrimage at Easter. Are you or do you know of a nurse who might like to volunteer with Trust?

For further information please email:  
[info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com](mailto:info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com)  
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# Message from the Chairperson

James White



Dear Friends,

You are very welcome to our Autumn edition of Trust Talk. What a summer, as I am writing this I am on a friendship week in Cois Cuain and guess what, it is raining! We are hopeful that the sun will come out. But a lesson is to be learnt; not one of our guests has complained about the weather and every one has a smile.

Firstly I would like to say how honoured and privileged I am to be allowed to be Chairperson of this most fantastic organisation. For those of you who do not know me I have been a member of the Trust family since 1981 and over the years it has become part of the very fabric of my life. I have often wondered why this is so and am still wondering but I believe that there is something very positive that binds us all together and allows us to do what we do. As an organisation we include guests, carers, group leaders, benefactors, our families, regional officers, trustees and the office personnel. We are all different yet we combine our talents for the good of all, whether it is in Lourdes at Easter time, Hosanna House in the summer, Kilcuan or Cois Cuain. It is our mission to ensure that we allow this to continue and prosper for the coming generations.

If I had a wish it would be to make the “family” part of the trust stronger. For many who travel or stay with us the experience is just for the week, it would be my hope that this could be extended to the whole year. As an organisation we have so much to give as a collective and as a result so much to receive. Maybe as an individual part of the trust you might think where you can be part of the trust for a greater part of the year. Let us know what you can do. This year between Easter, Hosanna House, Kilcuan & Cois Cuain we will have impacted on 1800 people and their families. Each and everyone of us contributed to this.

As always there are challenges which have to be faced, in the current climate some of these are heightened. Each of these has equal importance as without one we can not function. The challenges are:

- To ensure we have enough Volunteers, Carers & Group leaders
- To ensure that we reach out to our potential Guests
- To ensure we have adequate funds
- To be true to our vision and mission statement.

But we have a great team both around the regions and in HQ. With your support the Irish Pilgrimage Trust will grow from strength to strength. We need you to support your local group leader, regional organisation and fund raising events. This support is needed all year round not just at Easter time, for the week of Hosanna House or the

Friendship Week. Remember the smile on each face of our guests, that is why!

In the Spirit of the Trust, 2012 was another hugely successful year on all fronts. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate John O'Reilly and thank him on your behalf for the selfless effort he put in in his three years as Trust Chairperson; during his stewardship the trust grew with the addition of Cois Cuain to the Trust, the Celebration of 40 years, a lot of very positive publicity, updating of the trusts policies making us a stronger and more robust organisation along many other smaller achievements. He deserves great thanks from us all. He along with his predecessors have left big shoes to fill.

In 2012, a Strategy committee was set up with task of standing back and taking a look at what we do and coming back with recommendations. Some of you will have filled out the questionnaire on way home from Lourdes. If you wish to submit to this group or be part of it contact Liam Ahern. We need to continually look at ourselves.

Our greatest success is the joy that the Trust brings to the guests, their families and ourselves each year as we pilgrimage together through out the year. Let us ensure that we continue this in 2012/13.

Every link in the chain is vital but perhaps the key is the group leader. I ask you do everything you can to support them, give out application forms, assist them with selection, volunteer as a carer or introduce a carer to them, help with fundraising, organise a fund raising event, let them know you are there for them. Ask what can you do.

In the coming year along with the many fundraising events that are held around the country you might note the following:

22nd September Irish Pilgrimage Trust one day retreat at Lough Derg, 10am to 4pm including Lunch!

June 2013, Compostela Walk in aid of the Trust. Watch this space. Great craic and good for you.

Please keep checking the website, Tom and the office staff are keeping it very live. Upcoming events and news will be featured there. Also feel free to post information yourself through the office.

Finally we have changed the name to Irish Pilgrimage Trust and this is currently going through the legals, please ensure you use this title in future.

Looking forward to working with you throughout the year and remember the trustees are there to help.

***Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us, Saint Bernadette, pray for us.***

# JOTTINGS



**“The Good, the Bad and the Ugly!”  
Group 62**



## **Nenagh Golf Club**

Vinny Savage, Chairperson, North Tipperary branch of the Irish Pilgrimage Trust presenting a scroll to Nenagh Golf Club Captain Sean Minogue & Lady Club Captain Breeda Fitzgibbon in appreciation of the Nenagh Golf Club's holding of the annual golf outing for the last twenty years. In excess of €65,000 has been raised by the club members over those years. All funds raised have gone towards paying the fares of young people with special needs, who have travelled to Lourdes with the Trust. The Local branch would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who sponsored, played in or was associated in any way with this fundraising event.



## **Group 173 Fundraiser**

Happy Birthday to Mrs Patsy Mc Greanaghan celebrated a fund raising birthday party recently in aid of the Irish Pilgrimage Trust. Total proceeds collected amounted to €1,330. Well done Patsy!

# “Friendship Week 11”

Kilcuan, Co Galway

by Aiden Grealis



At the end of the week upon reflection I realised just how much of what we had achieved, we managed to bring a little bit of Lourdes to Clarinbridge. This week started off on the Sunday and to be fair we didn't know what lay ahead of us, but we weren't long getting stuck in. We went on walks, bowling, took a day trip to Bunratty Castle, had ice-cream at the swings and in general we had a laugh at the craic with the young adults who sang and danced their hearts out every night. We may go as carers and volunteer our time to do these friendship weeks, but I can honestly say from the bottom of my heart that our special guests are not only wonderful people but an inspiration to us all.



I would like to thank all the adults and our youth group members who came and helped out. Ye truly are incredible with our guests. Nothing daunted ye, some of ye had no idea what to expect and knew

little about what each visitor's situation was but ye just related purely with a natural love.

All in all I believe that everyone wants to belong, to be loved and appreciated. Someone to laugh and fool around with.

Someone whose eyes light up, just for him or her and I really believe that is exactly what we achieved during our week with our young guests. Roll on

friendship week 11 2013!! Special thanks to Aiden Grealis and Ann-Marie Lardner from group 751 and Patricia Galvin from 306 and to all the wonderful carers from Castlebar, Claremorris and Sligo who gave their time and dedication to this week.



**Aidan Grealis**



# Lourdes with a Family Group

## Group 145

By Nicola Kiely

**Easter 2012** is one we will never forget. Since having twin girls Claire and Emma we have always stayed close to home, so when we decided to take our family of 4 to Lourdes this year, we knew we would have our work cut out.



Our girls, now 3 years old, have come so far together. Claire has a rare Brain Disorder called **Neuronal Migration Disorder**, which affects her development in every way. Every day we are learning how best to help Claire progress and achieve her full potential; making our home our safe haven as she has everything she needs for comfort, play, feeding and therapy. Emma has helped Claire every step of the way.

Sometime ago, I heard from a friend of a "Children's Week" in Lourdes each Easter and thought it could be a special experience for us as a family. I made enquiries with a travel agent and they put me in touch with the Irish Pilgrimage Trust. Even though we really wanted to travel to Lourdes, our great fear was the sheer terror of being so far away from home. But the Irish Pilgrimage Trust didn't only organise every stage of our trip in great detail, they made our dream possible and within a few days we had our passports ordered. We were to travel with Group 145, a family group which consisted of parents, children, siblings, a Group Leader and several experienced volunteers including a doctor, nurse and priest.

It all started with a home visit from our group leader, Gráinne and the group nurse Niamh, who explained in detail, every step of our trip to Lourdes. It was here that I realised the extent of the help and support we were to receive as they covered all areas to ensure we had confidence and peace of mind before we travelled.

I must admit it all seemed so easy, I just had to pack bags and organise passports for girls and Gráinne and her team would organise the rest. The week before we travelled I really began to panic and nearly called Gráinne to

cancel our trip as I was so overwhelmed at the risks we were taking, leaving our safety net! Nerves really kicked in and I cried as I was terrified that we had made an awful mistake, fearing we would never manage so far away from home! I'm so glad I didn't pull out as the week ahead was to be the best experience so far for us all as a family.

From the moment we arrived at Dublin airport on Easter Sunday, Gráinne and her team of carers were waiting to welcome, help, assist and support us in every way. When we arrived in our hotel that evening we were blown away by how calm, organised and friendly Lourdes was to be. This was to be our home for the next week and I can honestly say it felt like home that very first night!

Lourdes was transformed, decorated with colour, music and children of all ages (adults included!) bursting with energy and excitement. The Pilgrimage Trust, who from all corners of the globe, meet for what I can only describe as an all singing; all dancing; fun and love filled week of celebration and thanksgiving. Every day was planned to perfection with a perfect balance to suit everyone.

My favourite memories were being a part of the Irish Trust Mass celebrations on Tuesday, an experience I will cherish always as my two little girls made so many smile when they very proudly helped carry the gifts. What made the Mass so memorable was that everyone (well over 1,000 people) joined together to sing, dance, pray and celebrate. In our Group we were so lucky to have Fr. Seamus mind us, a job he did with such sincerity, warmth and fun. Every evening we would look forward to his time with us in our family fun tea room, gathering together for a cup of tea, a chat with other parents, a singsong and the prayer and reflection of the day. Every activity was suited to every age.



If I was to ask Claire and Emma what their best bits were, I'm sure they would both have a list as long as my arm! Emma would say the friends she made; the songs she learned; the trip to Zygoland; and most definitely the endless hours of fun she had at mealtimes hopping from table to table and building in confidence with every bite. Emma loved the

hustle and bustle of the airports – the journey was a real treat from start to finish.

As for Claire, I know exactly what she loved the most from the sparkle in her eye; the beautiful candle lit procession at night whereby she snuggled in her buggy as she listened to 1000's of people surrounding her in prayer both spoken and gently sung; her buddy Fr. Seamus, who made her chuckle with his singing; and the Baths experience where she was so very calm and aware that something very special was taking place. I had doubted my actions at first by choosing to carry her into the cold baths filled

# Lourdes with a Family Group

## Group 145

By Nicola Kiely

with blessed water, but instantly I knew by her relaxed and almost peaceful smile that she was delighted to share her experience with mammy - she was braver than me as we took the plunge together! Claire has always loved music and I think what she loved the most was the colourful Masses where we danced, sang, made music, blew bubbles and soaked up the vibrant atmosphere.

My husband Martin enjoyed each and every day in Lourdes. After a week of singing and dancing, the Group organised a princess and pirates party, where for the first time in history, Martin let himself go on the dance floor and joined in in every song and dance. I can't remember a time where he was so relaxed, away from home.



Being the youngest in the Group, the girls seemed to grow up so much during the week. We were surrounded by so many young people with varying disabilities and having

being securely wrapped up in our home since the girls were born; we were really unsure how meeting with older children, who may be similar to Claire in so many ways, would affect us.

Whatever challenges may lie ahead for Claire and Emma, I can honestly say that Lourdes 2012 has given us Strength, Hope, Determination and Courage to enjoy and embrace each and every challenge while being thankful for every blessing along the way. The only hard part of this journey was saying goodbye to all our very special friends whom we shall never forget.

My understanding is that the family group (Group 145) hadn't travelled in the last couple of years due to lack of family awareness of the Trusts work. I hope that by sharing our experience, it will not only highlight the amazing work the Irish Pilgrimage Trust does for over 500 young Irish people every year, but also encourage more families to take part in this very special Journey.

I understand that times are difficult and there isn't much spare cash around, but I would be grateful if you were in a position to support the Trust in anyway, so that they can continue this invaluable work. If not in a monetary way, maybe just by telling a friend or colleague of the positive experience that we have had and this will raise more awareness of the Irish Pilgrimage Trust.

Thank you so much for taking time to read about our experience as a family in Lourdes. I hope it helps raise awareness so that more families can receive a little hope and faith in what can sometimes be a very frightening world for families with a child with disability, illness or special needs.

*Best Wishes, Nicola, Martin, Claire and Emma Kiely*

# A week with Group 308

Last December I received a letter from the Irish Pilgrimage Trust saying that there was a vacancy for me to go to Lourdes at Easter. I was delighted & went with Group 308. On the 25th March last we had a pre-Lourdes meeting down in Cois Cuain, Kilrane Co. Wexford where I got to meet the other guests & carers who would be travelling with me.

On Easter Sunday I travelled to the "Slieverue pick up point" with my parents where I got the bus to Cork Airport. The plane then left that evening for Lourdes, but when we arrived it was bedtime so we headed straight to our hotel & to our beds.

On the Tuesday we had our Irish Trust Mass that morning & we had our candle-light procession later that night. We went bowling on the Wednesday & that night we went to a healing & reconciliation ceremony. Thursday was the day of the World Trust Mass where another girl & I carried the 308 group banner around the basilica where the Trust Mass was been held. The group & I travelled on a tour bus of Lourdes on Friday morning & that evening we had our fancy dress, which was tremendous fun where we shared our fancy dress party with 2 other groups who were staying in the hotel with us.

Our homecoming was on Saturday night where we had to pack our bags & head back to the airport nearby. We got back into Cork Airport shortly after midnight (Irish time) & got the bus from there to Co. Wexford with a few stops in between. It was about 3:30am when I got back to Slieverue to meet my parents & they brought me home from there.

My trip to Lourdes was much better than the time I went in 2007 & I had a very good time out there.

*Daniel O'Connell  
Group 308*





# From a Student's Perspective

*Nicolina Mylett*

In April of this year I, along with 19 other 5th year students went to Lourdes, as part of Youth Group 751. There were 10 students from St. Joseph's Secondary School Castlebar and 10 from Mount St. Michael's Secondary School in Claremorris. We became involved in the youth group through a programme that was set up in 2009 by Aiden Grealis and Fr. Michael Murphy which gives 5th year students the opportunity to travel to Lourdes for a week to work with people with disabilities. We had to apply for it and then 10 from each school would be selected. I'll never forget how excited I was when I found out that I had been



picked to go. We had to attend meetings once a month in preparation for the trip. The closer we got to the actual trip the more nervous I became.

We flew out from Shannon Airport on Easter Sunday and I was a bundle of nerves. I kept asking myself "what if I don't enjoy my week here". I was soon to realise there were no need for worries at all. I was in Group 109 during the day with one of the Claremorris students and they were all so lovely. They welcomed us in right away. We had different outings organised for each day, whether it was going to the zoo; going up to the mountains; or just shopping in the town, which was always enjoyable.



The things that stood out most for me was the atmosphere in Lourdes. The week we stayed there was electric. All the groups involved with the Irish

Pilgrimage Trust and UK Trust came over for that week. The more outrageous the style was over there, the better and everyone was just singing in their groups. Even Mass was like that! The priests would wear crazy hats in Church and everyone was singing and dancing along to all the songs. It really felt like a real celebration!

The best part of the trip for me was without a doubt getting to know the people with special needs. I think we all learned more from them than they did from us. They are constantly faced with obstacles in their daily lives yet they keep on smiling. They never complain and are full of life. Spending a week with them made me realise how materialistic our lives are. Everything is focused on how we look and if we're wearing the right clothes. The truly important things are overlooked, but these people are just so full of love and kindness it's impossible to ignore.

I constantly had a smile on my face in Lourdes because of them. They taught me to be more accepting and I feel I learned a lot about myself because of that week.



When it came to the end of the week we had to say our goodbyes to our groups; it was emotional! I don't think any of us realised how attached we had become to these people. In the space of just one week you care

so much for them because they are so open and they are just themselves, they don't try to impress you or act like someone they're not. This makes you become closer to them in such a short space of time. All of Group 751 were in tears when we said our goodbyes, we weren't fit to even talk afterwards!

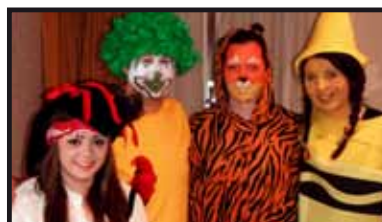
As well as becoming close to all those people, I became more connected with my faith. We reflected a lot during the week, which made us think about a lot of things and every night we visited the Grotto. In our teenage years I think we can forget about our religion and what we believe in but that trip made me realise I had distanced myself from that and I felt a stronger belief in it by the end of the week.



I find it hard to explain the Lourdes experience to people who have never been, as you can't describe in words how enjoyable it is. Even before I went, the girls who travelled the year before were saying to us that they couldn't explain how good it is. I couldn't grasp what they meant! But now that I have been there and experienced it for myself, I fully understand, it really is something you just have to go and do.

I can honestly say that the Lourdes trip was one of the most rewarding and best experiences of my life. I would recommend it to anyone as I can't ever see someone not enjoying themselves. I definitely plan on going back again in the near future!

*Nicolina Mylett*  
*Group 751*





# “Deep down in our hearts”

A Homily from 40th Anniversary Mass, Eastern Region  
by Fr. Michael Shortall

## “Deep, deep, a down down, deep down in our hearts”

Singing comes naturally to us when we are happy. Whether it is joyful days like today surrounded by family and friends or the simple contentment of being lost in something we are doing, we sing – we hum – we dance. It comes naturally to us, for in part, that is what we are – a song, a rhythm – it is an overflow of the energy that is life itself. It doesn't matter if we are in tune or not, whether we can keep the beat or not – it really doesn't. The world that dreams and strives for that 'X-Factor' may tell us that it matters but we know different. For we have been to a special place; and more importantly, we have shared in a singing and dancing that has a wonderful harmony all of its own.



*“Deep, deep, a down down, deep down in our hearts.”*

So can I invite you to close your eyes and listen to that music and to see once more the

grotto. The trees in the woods are growing high, the wellspring splashes. At night, with nothing but the sound of the river behind you, and the light of the candles, it is still a deeply quiet and peaceful place. What you see is what we all share – from the newest of guests who went last year, to the first carers and trustees forty years ago, to Bernadette herself over a hundred and fifty years ago. Nothing has changed and yet everything changes. It all changed because of a little girl who believed in “the beautiful lady” who appeared to her, to tell of God's love for each of us in Jesus Christ. It all changed because forty years ago the first carers and trustees had the vision and courage to create a movement, perhaps beyond anything they imagined. And it changes with every single person who travels with the Irish Pilgrimage trust and brings what is unique and lovable about them – whether they are a carer or a guest, whether the most skilful or the most dependent.

And so we give thanks – for the memories and the friendships we share. To share one of my stories (Group 175): the Irish for hand is Lamh, and as many of you know it is the name of a basic form of sign language. It is far simpler than the sign language and is based on our basic intuitions. It links symbols to our experiences and to the sights and the sounds of the child.

Some signs you will already know, such as the one for be quiet!! (Shh!!) Others signs will make sense if you think about it. For example, this (hands apart and moving in a turning motion) is a bus (representing the large steering wheel) and this (hands close together in a turning motion) is a car (representing a small steering wheel). Others signs are more intuitive. For example, this is love (hands across chest). This (hand to chin) is a man or a boy but this (hand to cheek) is a particular man – it is daddy, for a child will see their daddy shaving.

One person who used Lámh was Karen. When Karen was a guest in Lourdes she was no different from any other twenty-one year old woman – she loved the boys. With around 1,000 people in the Irish Pilgrimage trust, that makes for a lot of boys. Karen was in her element. She couldn't make up her mind to whom her attractions were going to settle. So out of fairness, she decided to love them all. So during the week, she would say, (shh.), (nod), (beard), (I), (hands cross chest), (You), which means “don't tell the others boys, it's our secret, I love you”. And then she would say it to another – and to another.

Karen communicated her affection through her hands and Jesus did the same. He spread the good news love through his healing hands laid on the sick in prayer; he spread out his hands on the cross in sacrifice and solidarity; he showed his reassuring wounded hands to the doubtful Thomas. And now, in the words of St. Teresa of Avila, Christ has no hands but yours. The Irish Pilgrimage Trust for forty years



has in its way been the healing, spread out, reassuring hands of Christ – where each of us have been told (I) (Love) (You).

So we give thanks for The Irish Pilgrimage Trust – for the vision of its first carers and

trustees, for the direction of its current leaders and trustees, for the dedication of the carers, cyclists and benefactors and most of all for the guests. We remember those who have gone before us to their heavenly home and them to look over us.

To return to the grotto: the wellspring still pours water since Bernadette scratched the surface of the dirty earth. Even the hardest of hearts can be scratched by the experience of the Irish Pilgrimage Trust ... and there too in each heart is to be found a well-spring that is God and it reaches ...

*“Deep, deep, a down down, deep down in our hearts”.*

# Elaine travelled with Group 136

This Easter I went to Lourdes as a student. Before I went, I heard different things about the trip, but one of the main things was just to enjoy the week!

There was something to look forward to every day and we were never bored, even at mass! We had mass every day but wow! Mass over there is nothing like your regular Sunday mass, it was brilliant! I looked forward to mass everyday in Lourdes. Everyone sings and dances and there are banners everywhere. Our leader had something different arranged for everyday like going to the prairie where we played games; football and rounders. There was a concert, singing, dancing, the holy baths, picnics in the hotel, constant games in the hotel, going to the grotto, the candle-light procession, fancy-dress and there were loads more, but basically everyday was packed full of things to do!

The first big thing I noticed was the amount of groups from Ireland. Each group has a number; mine was 136 and from the time we were in the airport, we all wore hoodies, caps and t-shirts with number 136 on them; proud to be with our group!

There's a song called 'Rise and Shine' that is the anthem for the week. Every group sings it. The majority of people in my group didn't know the dance at the start but this just makes it all the more fun because, in Lourdes, it doesn't matter if you make a mistake, or what you wear or what you look like because no one judges!

Before the trip, I only really knew one helper in my group. But I spent time with some of the helpers in our manual handling course and going to a few meetings so I got to know a few others through that. From Easter Sunday, not only did I know all 26 people in my group, but I was friends with each of them. As one of the helpers in my group said, we were like a family with our leader acting like our mam, and it's so true everyone in the group got on great!

At our Pre Lourdes meeting, our leader told us helpers that this wasn't a holiday for us we have to put the young people first. But I disagree with that, obviously



the week is all about the young people, but it's still enjoyable for us as much as it is for them. It may not be your average holiday but to spend time with complete strangers who end up being good friends, or to help the young people whether it was simply by pushing a wheelchair, helping to feed someone, playing games or simply just having fun, that, to me, is a holiday. Over there you were always enjoying yourself and you knew that the young people were too. It's an indescribable feeling to know that you've made someone happy and that alone to me was like a holiday!

The first few days of Lourdes, I was a bit apprehensive about joining in with everyone dancing especially one night, at a concert we had. But looking back, I wish I had've because like I said, no one judges what you look like so it doesn't matter whether you can dance or not, it is about being involved, once you join in in everything you can during the week, that's exactly what the week is all about!



I would recommend this week to anyone that is thinking of going. Even if you only go once, it's definitely a week you will remember forever! I am absolutely thrilled I went to Lourdes, I don't think I'll ever forget the week and I know I definitely will never forget the friends I've made over there. I've missed them from the time we left and I can honestly say I always will!!!

***Elaine,  
Group 136.***





# Picture Gallery





# A Letter from Rome

*Dominic McGrattan*

As I prepare for priesthood, I look back on the many formative experiences that have marked my journey through seminary. One of the most unique and memorable was Easter Week 2012, spent in Lourdes with the Irish Pilgrimage Trust. Participation in this pilgrimage is one of the many opportunities we seminarians at the Irish College in Rome are given to put the high ideals learned from Christ in the Gospels into practice in the pastoral realities we will encounter when we return to Ireland as priests. These opportunities permit us to serve God's people, using our talents and abilities to contribute to the building up of his Kingdom. They enable us to be formed by the people we serve, mindful that we can only be effective pastors if we learn from the wisdom



borne of experience.

I was privileged to be placed with Group 309, one of a small number of Jet Set groups, so-called because our pilgrims were largely young adults. They had a range of special needs, all of which were ably served by a sterling band of volunteer doctors, nurses, interpreters and carers. Our group actively participated in the many and varied events which ran through Easter Week. A highlight of the pilgrimage programme was the Trust Mass in the Basilica of Pius X. The liturgy was animated with colour, sound and movement and the theme of this year's pilgrimage, 'You are God's work of art', was reflected eloquently in Bishop Toal's homily, and in the music composed and performed by pilgrims from Scotland.

As a group, our days were punctuated with prayer led by our chaplain, Fr Kevin. All were spiritually uplifted by these encounters with Christ in prayer and the Eucharist, encounters which no doubt contributed to forming and strengthening bonds of communion within the group. Recreation and socialising ensured that fun was had by all and that the pilgrimage was imbued with a holiday atmosphere. Special moments were shared, moments which we will remember long after we return to the humdrum of our daily routines, memories which will sustain us through difficult times. One such moment was the blessing of two engaged couples among our volunteers, Gemma and Martin (who have since married this summer) and Kristina and Anthony

(preparing for marriage in the coming months). Their love and commitment to each other bore witness, in a very real way, to God's love at work in each of our lives.



In preparation for Easter, I had spent some days in silent retreat with my brother seminarians. My retreat director invited me to reflect on Mark's Gospel, especially the miracle stories. One of the things which struck me about Christ's healing miracles was a recurring pattern: in each encounter with sickness or need, Christ reached out, touched, healed and raised up. My director suggested to me that this healing action of Christ should be central to my future ministry as a priest. If ever I needed examples of how Christ continues that healing action in our Church today, I would have to look no further than the volunteers and pilgrims I journeyed with this Easter. Lourdes is a place which turns the wisdom of our world on its head. Through Mary and Bernadette, we are reminded of the wisdom of the Cross; that in our sufferings, we are brought all the closer into communion with Christ so that we can share in his freedom and joy. It was clear to me that each of us in Lourdes this Easter had been gifted with a renewed appreciation of that wisdom.

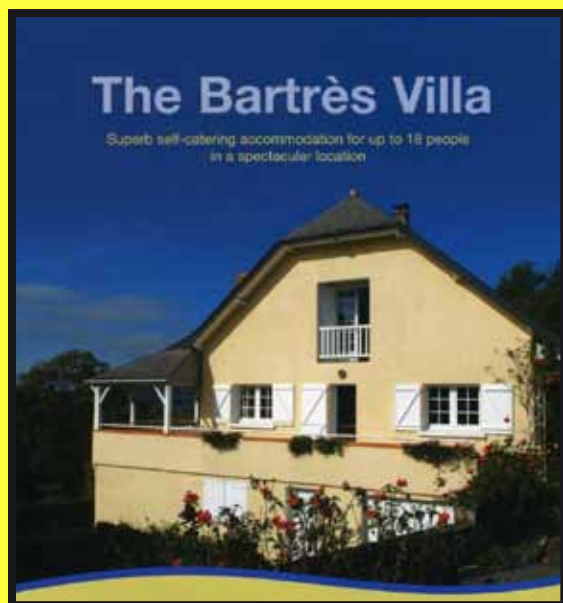
For the friends made, the insights and perspectives gained, and a renewed and deeper understanding of God's will for me and those I hope to serve, I will be forever grateful for my Irish Pilgrimage Trust Lourdes experience!

*Dominic*





## Your Private Retreat in the Pyrénées



Imagine a villa close to the pilgrimage destination of Lourdes, where you, your family or a group can enjoy peace, contemplation, relaxation, fun and adventure in the south of France.



A stay at the **Bartres Villa** is a new and unique way to experience Lourdes and surrounding areas in the spectacular foot hills of the Pyrénées. Within easy reach of the mountain village of Gavarnie and the Parc National des Pyrénées, it is situated just outside the village of Bartres, which is only 4 kilometres from Lourdes and the Lourdes Domaine. It is an ideal rental property for families or small groups who wish to explore the Pyrenees at any time of year.

The **Villa** is a self catering property that can accommodate up to 18 people, though no group is too small to stay there. The house is comfortably equipped with 1 large reception/dining room, large balcony, a spacious kitchen and a utility room with washing machine and dryer. There are a mix of 2, 3 and 4 bedded, ensuite bedrooms situated on 3 levels, with and a stair lift to the top floor. There is also a separate shower room and a separate toilet.



The Bartres Villa belongs to HCPT - The Pilgrimage Trust and can be booked by downloading a booking form from <http://www.hcpt.org.uk/bartres>.

## Adam Morgan's holiday in Cois Cuain, Co Wexford



Adam and his extended family enjoyed their holiday in the beautiful holiday house Cois Cuain in July 2012. As the house is so large and comfortable, Adam was able to invite along his Granny, Grandad, Aunt, Uncle, five cousins as well as his Mammy & Dad, his brother Dylan and sister Emily, 14 in total.



We received a lovely welcome from Maureen and Caroline on arrival and were in contact with Maureen whenever we had a query, day or night. Adam was able to run freely around the house and beautiful garden, because of the secure fencing and his older cousins was looking out for him.

We all enjoyed the beautiful beach St Helens, Johnstown Castle and Gardens. The Petting Farm was a great hit. The dads and older cousins were delighted with a sea fishing trip in Kilemore Quay. Adam loved the seal and the playground in Kilemore Quay.

With a superb sitting room with huge TV the kids enjoyed a movie and popcorn in the evenings and the grown ups relaxed in the spacious dining room and decking area. Thank you to The Irish Pilgrimage Trust for providing such a perfect holiday house. It was a wonderful opportunity for the whole family to get together and Adam was delighted with so many people to play with. Mammy got a great rest!



Please God the Morgan Family will be hitting the beach in Kilrane next year but we are asking Him for a little tiny bit more sun to top it all.

*Best wishes, Adam*

# Friends of the Trust

## AN INVITATION TO YOU

Dear Friend of the Trust,

I am taking this opportunity once again to write to you on behalf of the Trust.

The Trust thankfully is strong and vibrant and continuing to grow and prosper. We have more people than ever wishing to travel to Lourdes with us at Easter time and Hosanna House in June, both carer's and guests. Our houses at Kilcuan in Galway and Cois Cuain in Wexford are providing a great holiday spot for our guests and respite for their families and carer's. Last year we provided a break for 1,100 people, which does not include their families. Please see our website; [www.irishpilgrimagetrust.com](http://www.irishpilgrimagetrust.com) for any more information on what we are doing.

This year we are offering you the opportunity to become a Friend of the Trust.

*The Irish Pilgrimage Trust relies on the commitment, passion and enthusiasm of our most loyal supporters, in an effort to recognise this we are starting "the Friends of the Irish Pilgrimage Trust". By becoming a Friend, the support provided by you will help to secure the future of the Trust and enable our continuing work. We propose to recognise our Friends in Lourdes each year.*

As a friend we are asking you to give whatever support you can to your local group or region. The group leaders in particular require as much help and support as you can provide to assist them in bringing groups to Lourdes at Easter, with Hosanna house or to Kilcuan and Cois Cuain. Volunteering as a carer or introducing a carer, helping with fund raising, introducing potential guests, helping with friendship weeks etc, can achieve this.

We are also asking you to contribute €20 per annum to be recognised as a friend. Please find standing order form below.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours Sincerely

**Bernadette Connolly**  
**National Co-ordinator**

Please fill in all the details below to help keep our records accurate and return the form to:  
National Co-ordinator, The Irish Pilgrimage Trust, Kilcuan, Clarenbridge, Co. Galway.

Please use BLOCK CAPITALS

Name

Group Number

Address

Telephone

Please include me/us on the mailing list to receive a copy of the Trust Newsletter. Yes / No

I/we would like to make the following contribution to the Irish Pilgrimage Trust fund raising.  
By pledging to pay € ..... monthly / annually. Please circle as appropriate.

I/we have enclosed an annual cheque : € .....

I/we have completed the attached Bankers Order.

Eligible for tax refund to the Trust.

Any annual payment in excess of €250, see covering letter.

Please complete the top of this form and return to Kilcuan.

## BANKERS ORDER

To: The Manager

Bank: ..... Branch: .....

I/we authorise you to debit my/our account numbered: .....

With the sum of € .....

For the credit of The Irish Pilgrimage Trust:

AIB Bank, Lynch's Castle, Galway.

Sort Code: 937096

Account Number: 41444561

Please charge these payments to my/our account monthly/annually commencing with a payment on the first day of ..... 201..

Please do not charge my/our account with any fees as the Trust is a revenue approved "Eligible Charity" number CHY5992.

Account Name: .....

Authorised signature(s): ..... Date: .....

Please cancel all previous standing orders in favour of The Irish Pilgrimage Trust.



# A Story from North Tipperary

by Melissa Hogan

**I will let you in on a secret; I loved going on the Trust Easter Pilgrimage. From the time we got on the bus in Nenagh on Easter Sunday until we arrived back in Nenagh again on the following Saturday evening, it was a week of laughter, chat, fun and tears when we said our goodbyes on Saturday evening.**

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust is a registered charity that brings young



people with special needs to Lourdes at Easter time on a pilgrimage/holiday. There are about fifty groups from Ireland (north and south) each with an average of 11 young people and 11 helpers (carers) and we are **Group 165** and are honoured to be part of this wonderful pilgrimage. We fundraise every year to cover the costs of bringing our guests. We the helpers pay our own way. The group has a leader and a nurse and we are lucky to have a priest travelling with our group every year. The hard work is done from September to Easter through schools and individual families who look after young people with special needs wishing to join us for this most exciting week.

On Easter Sunday morning we travel to the Airport by bus (usually to Shannon) and while some of us may not have met more than once beforehand, by the time we reach the airport the bus is full of laughter and talk and we are all friends. The bags are checked in and we wait for the flight to be called. We arrive at Tarbes airport about two hours later. The bus journey to our hotel takes about twenty minutes. The rooms are allocated and the bags unpacked. We go to visit the GROTTO and then back to hotel for an early night.

Easter Monday, there was no sleep in, as we all arrived for breakfast on time. The sun was shining and we headed for the prairie (across the river from the Grotto) where we took in the 'stations of the cross'. Back to the hotel for lunch and then to "The city of the poor" for a beautiful Mass on a stone alter on the mountain. Then it's back to the town of Lourdes for ice cream in the sun. As Tuesday is the Trust gathering day, the singers in our group had to go for choir practice to St Bernadette's basilica.

No sleep in again on Tuesday morning, we had to get our faces painted and our colours on for our Irish Mass (colourful, great music and singing and yet prayerful) led by our own visiting bishop. "Rise and Shine" got everyone, young and old, wheelchairs and all, dancing on their feet. In the afternoon we took a trip up the mountain on the cable car, from where you can see the snow capped Pyrenees and Lourdes. Our stay was short-lived as the rain came pouring down and we decided to head back to the hotel. After a rest and shower we took part in the Candlelight procession which was hosted by Ireland, an amazing experience and ended in dancing and singing in the rain.

Another early morning on Wednesday, as we are heading for the beach in Saint Jean de Luz, with swim gear in one hand and picnic in the other, but alas, as we got off the bus the rain came down and we had to shelter under a canopy overlooking the beach, but as the saying goes, "God never closes one door without opening another", Fr. Gerry celebrated Mass, with Amazing Grace and Rise and Shine and the sun appeared again for our afternoon on the beach.

Another early morning on Thursday (God I'd love a lie-in), we had the Trust International Mass in the Underground Basilica, which was organised by the Scottish Trust in the spirit of the highlands with over 5000 people in groups from Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales, USA, Jamaica, Croatia, Bosnia, Slovakia and Romania.

In the afternoon we did the baths (cold and damp but worthwhile) and played football on the prairie. Thursday night is party night and we all dressed in our glad rags and with Group 110 (Derry) and Forever Friends for a night of singing dancing and music where everyone blossoms.

Friday morning, we got our first sleep in (half 8!) of the week, but by 10 am we had our group farewell Mass and then headed to the Grotto with our Group Candle, which was about six foot tall and weighed about 20



kgs, which we decorated with flowers and our petitions. This candle was lit at the Grotto and was still lighting after our departure. The afternoon was spent shopping for presents to take home to family

and friends and the last stop was McDonalds for our favourite lunch of the week (grub in the hotel was excellent). Friday night is our 'quiz' night and when finished it's down to the Grotto to say our last "Au revoirs" to Our Lady and St Bernadette.



Saturday morning the bags are packed and we say our goodbyes to the friends we will not see again until next year.

The bus arrives and we head to Tarbes airport for our flight home. When we arrive in Shannon, our parents come to meet us and our laughter turns to tears saying our goodbyes to all our new friends and we make our promises to keep in touch.

Roll on Easter 2013!

**Melissa**

# Christmas Cards 2012

**Christmas Cards** are a very important source of advertising and income for the Irish Pilgrimage Trust. Our range is simple and uncomplicated and we hope that they will serve you well this year as you send greetings to your friends and families at Christmas. Thank you for your donations and your purchase. It makes a huge difference.

**A**



**B**



**C**



**D**



Number of Packs required	Ref.	Title of Card	Cost (Roi & NI) (Excl. Postage)	Total (Incl. Postage)
	A	<i>Celtic Design</i>	€ 5.00/£5.00	
	B	<i>Christmas Children</i>	€ 5.00/£5.00	
	C	<i>Three Wise Men</i>	€ 5.00/£5.00	
	D	<i>Shepards &amp; Kings</i>	€ 5.00/£5.00	

**Postage and packing prices (Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland)**

For 1 pack add €1.35/£1.35

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For 4-6 packs add €6.00/£6.00

For 7-12 packs add €7.50/£7.50

Other costs on request.

Purchase Total:

Postage:

Donation:

Total:

In the case that your choice is not available please indicate your alternate choices in order of preference.



Please use BLOCK CAPITALS

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTAL CODE

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust  
Kilcuan  
Clarenbridge  
Co. Galway  
Tel. (091) 796622

Fax (091) 796916

Please send this order form together with completed label and payment to Kilcuan.