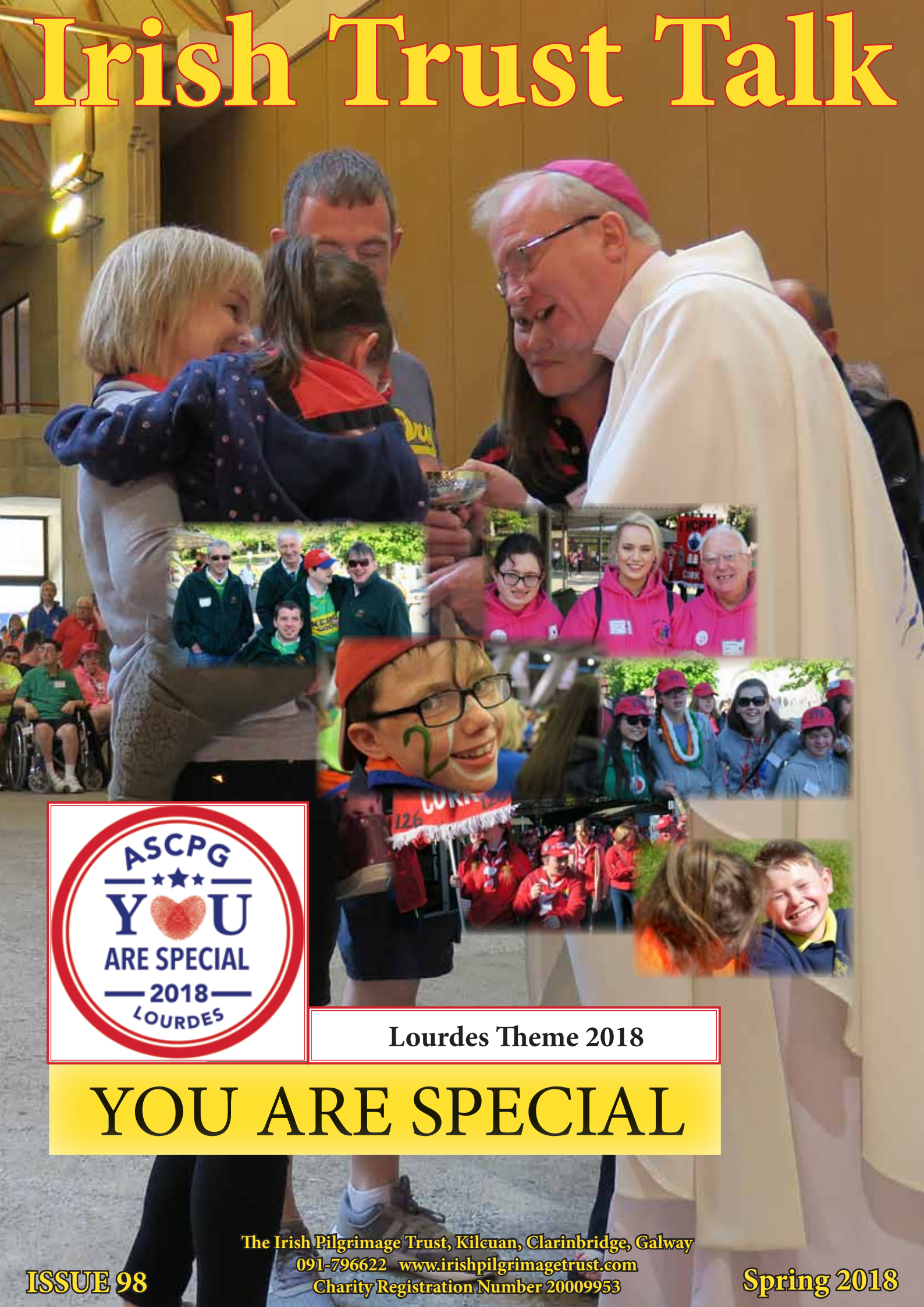


Irish Trust Talk



Lourdes Theme 2018

YOU ARE SPECIAL

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust

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The Irish Pilgrimage Trust

was established in 1972 to provide special pilgrimage holidays to Lourdes for children and young people with special needs.

The Trust continues to grow and now over 1,140 pilgrim carers and Guests of the Trust will fly out to Lourdes on Easter Sunday for the annual Easter pilgrimage. They will join the largest children's pilgrimage in the world for a very special week indeed.



The Trust is a Registered Charity, Charity Registered Number 20009953

DONATE

Our Volunteers fundraise to cover the costs of our young GUESTS

We receive NO STATE FUNDING

We rely on the generosity of our donors and the fundraising by our Volunteers to finance the work and activities of the Trust

**To DONATE Contact 091-796622 or email:
info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com**



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Hi everyone, and welcome to the Spring 2018 edition of the Trust Talk! Now that winter has (in theory) come to an end, our 2018 pilgrimage comes into sharper focus. The period between Christmas and Easter tends to be the busiest time of year for group fundraising. At this time of year, groups up and down the length and breadth of Ireland are organising bag-packs, manning (or should that be personing?) church gate collections, arranging pub quizzes, and sending begging letters to businesses in order to get the funds in to allow us all to travel on pilgrimage together on Easter Sunday. Our wonderful staff are making all the arrangements for the pilgrimage: they have booked and paid for our flights, reserved our hotels, booked our excursions in Lourdes, while also working night and day to ensure that all the young people who were selected to travel are ready to do so. Organising the pilgrimage is not a trivial task, and we are so fortunate to have so many capable and motivated people who help put it all together.

As 2018 is a cycle year, I cannot neglect to mention the preparations for our cycle to Lourdes. We have over 100 cyclists and a number of support volunteers who are working furiously to prepare for their week long cycle across France. The cycle is not only a wonderful week for those who participate, it is also an absolutely essential part of the fundraising activities of the Trust. The money that our cyclists and cycling volunteers raise goes directly to our pilgrimage costs. If we did not have this money we would not be able to bring the number of children that we bring to Lourdes, so on behalf of everybody involved in the Trust I want to say a big 'thank you' to all involved in this wonderful event.

While I have the chance, I must take the opportunity to plug the importance of fundraising and donations to all our readers. The Trust relies entirely on the generosity of its benefactors - we receive no statutory funding. I would ask you all to consider donating to the Trust: there is a 'Donate' button on the Irish Pilgrimage Trust website, or alternatively if you wish to donate you can do it directly to the office (details available on the website). We greatly appreciate your generosity and thank you for helping to keep the spirit of the Trust alive through your contributions.

A Word from the Chair

Denis McCarthy



We are very fortunate in The Irish Pilgrimage Trust to have such wonderful volunteers. All of our volunteers who travel on the Easter Pilgrimage pay their own way, take annual leave to be with us, and leave their families and friends for the week in order to travel with the pilgrimage for that special week. As we only have a handful of staff, the Trust is made up almost entirely of volunteers, and it is our volunteers who are the heartbeat of the organisation and have sustained us over the years and decades since we were founded in 1972. On behalf of our benefactors and the young people we serve I would like to say a big 'thank you' to our volunteers. I would especially like to welcome those volunteers who are joining us for the first time in 2018: I hope you all have an enjoyable and fulfilling pilgrimage with us this Easter.

The success and growth of the Trust has been made possible by a number of courageous acts: the courage of individuals to volunteer with the Trust, the courage of our fundraisers and benefactors, and the courage of our officers and staff who choose this occasionally difficult but always rewarding work. There is no doubt however that the most courageous act is that of the young people who say 'yes' to the invitation to travel on pilgrimage with us. All of our other activities hinge on this 'yes', and we thank God and Our Lady for giving us all the courage to do our own little bit to make our pilgrimage possible.

Next stop Easter!

Denis

Lourdes - The Irish Trust Mass - Tuesday



The Virgin Mary asked Bernadette to “Go and tell the Priests that a chapel should be build here and that people should come here in procession”



Group 751- Second Level Students - Pre Pilgrimage Thoughts

Michaela and Muireann Gormley are fifth year students in Mount St. Michael Secondary School, Claremorris and will be travelling to Lourdes for the first time in 2018 as student carers. They will join Group 751 along with some of their classmates from Claremorris and students from St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar. Throughout the week in Lourdes, the students will be assisting various groups from around the region.

This year, on Easter Sunday, I will be one of a group of twenty secondary school students travelling to Lourdes. Our Lourdes experience began in September in Mount St. Michael Secondary School, Claremorris. Fr. Mike Murphy joined all the fifth year classes together and talked to us about the Irish Pilgrimage Trust. He handed out the application forms. I really contemplated whether it was worth filling out at all. I was sure there were people in my year who would definitely be picked before me. I filled out the application form anyway, certain that there was no harm in trying. On the day that the responses to the Lourdes applications were sent out, our school became a hive of excitement! All our post came at different times and this fuelled our anticipation. When I got the letter to confirm that I was going to Lourdes it had just started like any other day. However, this was my golden ticket. Everyone now had an opportunity to learn about themselves and make new friends. I never imagined that I'd get the chance to practise my faith in a way beyond prayers or candles.

Undoubtedly, it was a little frightening when I finally realised that I really had been picked to go. I wasn't completely convinced that I was as talented as people who had gone before me. Our first meeting was in October. We didn't really

know the Castlebar girls who were forming the other half of the group that well, but it was amazing to see how quickly we all got to know one another. We all began to really enjoy our meetings. They were always full of chat and laughter. The time would just fly as we practised our songs and planned what we had to do next.

Each school was given the target of raising €7,500. Fundraising was eye opening; we have been blown away by people's generosity and support. I was pleasantly surprised at the sense of achievement I got from getting together as a group and being able to have such success in all our fundraising. As a result I also realised the importance of support from our communities. All our friends, families and neighbours were always so happy to help. I think making the St. Brigid's crosses, which was one of our biggest fundraisers, was also our biggest challenge. At first it seemed like we would never get enough made. We got there in the end, and by now I think we can all make them in our sleep!



After we were paired with our partners from the other school and assigned the groups we would be working with in Lourdes, the journey became even more real. I hope that when we get to Lourdes we ensure that the guests have as much fun as possible. I'm positive we will all work together so that the week is memorable for everyone involved. Sometimes it's easy for my mind to race ahead to what I've to do next, or I worry about what others think. During this pilgrimage I'm really looking forward to allowing myself to just be present to focus on the friendship and love of God surrounding us all.

HOSANNA HOUSE SUMMER 2018

APPLICATIONS are invited from adults with special needs who wish to be considered for our Hosanna House Summer Pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Forms must be submitted before
31st May 2018

FRIENDSHIP WEEKS, SUMMER 2018

APPLICATIONS are invited from young people with special needs who wish to be considered for our KILCUAN and COIS CUAIN Summer 2018 Friendship Weeks. Forms must be submitted before 31st May 2018

EASTER PILGRIMAGE 2019

To be considered for our Easter 2019 Pilgrimage / Holiday to Lourdes an application for must be submitted to our headquarters in Kilcuan on or before 31st OCTOBER 2018.

We welcome applications from young people with a:

Physical disability or illness or a learning disability (aged 11 - 30 years);

Serious illness up to age 11 years old accompanied by a parent or guardian (FAMILY GROUPS)

Applicants will not be excluded or discriminated against on the grounds of social or financial status, religion, nationality, racial or ethnic origin.

Easter 2018 - YOU ARE SPECIAL - ASCPG

The American Special Children's Pilgrimage Group will host the Easter 2018 international Trust Mass in Lourdes on Thursday morning. Rosemarie and Gerry Flood took some time out of their very busy schedule to tell us about this year's Theme, it's meaning for them and ASCPG

Anyone who has been on an Easter pilgrimage to Lourdes is aware of the immense planning that goes into every trip. And when you have the privilege of hosting the Trust Mass, there are a few extra layers of preparation -- coupled with excitement -- that fuels the months leading up to Easter Week. The **American Special Children's Pilgrimage Group** is the 2018 host, and they are indeed immersed in that extra preparation and excitement.

He served as ASCPG's patron for 16 years, and always made time in his jam-packed schedule for anything related to HCPT and Lourdes, a place that he described as *where heaven meets earth*. His heart gave out in January 2017, and he went home to the Lord.

"He wanted to be an integral part of the Trust Mass planning," continued Rosemarie, "and he began setting up meetings right after we returned from Lourdes in 2016. When he passed away last January, we were heartbroken. But as we began to think about a meaningful way to honour and remember him, it became clear to us." That honour has come in the form of this year's Easter Week theme: **You Are Special**. Steven's signature poem by the same name has been prayed and recited many times in Lourdes and around the world since he introduced it to us 16 years



ago (although he always wanted people to know that he didn't write it). It is a simple yet beautiful reminder that God has created each of us to be one of a kind, yet a perfect likeness of Himself. Our time in Lourdes is an amazing opportunity to affirm that we each have been given a special place and a special purpose by God, and that we should celebrate this at every turn. When we pray **You Are Special** at this year's Trust Mass, we will be reminded of this powerful message.

ASCPG, our sister organization in the United States, has actually been preparing for this upcoming Easter trip for the better part of two years. "Having hosted the 2008 Trust Mass, we more or less knew what to expect," said Rosemarie Flood, who with her husband Gerry co-founded ASCPG in 1995. "But what we *didn't* expect was that our dear friend Steven McDonald would start the journey with us, but not live to physically be with us in Lourdes in 2018."

Many of you have met or know of NYPD Detective Steven McDonald, who lived 30+ years as a quadriplegic after being shot as a young cop in Central Park, New York City. He became part of the HCPT/ASCPG family in 2002, and truly enjoyed every pilgrimage he participated in. His powerful story of love and forgiveness is engraved on the hearts of all who have ever heard him tell his story.

The 2018 Trust Mass will be led by Bishop Manny Cruz of the Archdiocese of Newark (now Steven's successor as ASCPG's patron), who has traveled on the Easter pilgrimage for the past several years. Fr. Peter Palmisano and Fr. Sam Citero are coordinating the liturgy with several other priests and deacons from the New York and New Jersey area. The members of ASCPG music ministry, led



by Shari Minetti and Len Entrabartola, are preparing a wonderful array of music for the Mass, the Candlelight Procession and other times throughout the week. And many others are working behind the scenes to produce resources, coordinate logistics and raise extra funds. With 22 special young guests, as well as additional musicians and youth group members for the Mass, the US contingent will be about 150 in total.



"It's been a bittersweet journey as we prepare for this year's pilgrimage without Steven," concluded Rosemarie, "because he would have just loved being involved in every facet of the planning. And he would have been smiling all week in Lourdes. But whether we are proclaiming '**You Are Special**' or singing 'Awesome God,' we can feel his hand guiding us. We hope everyone else will be able to feel him as well, and remember his message and his incredible witness of God's love and mercy in the world."



The Trust's 18th CYCLE TO LOURDES

Raising much needed funds to help finance the work and activities of The Irish Pilgrimage Trust



24th to 30th March 2018 - 7 consecutive days cycling through France to arrive in Lourdes on Good Friday



We're almost there!

When we launched CYCLE 2018 in Lourdes last Easter many of us wondered what the future held. Many loyal friends from past Cycles had indicated their decision not to travel on this occasion. Nonetheless we expressed a wish to see a 10% increase on 2016, this at a time of change. We had little need for concern however. The response has been remarkable, and our wildest hopes have been exceeded. On Saturday 24th March 2018 over 130 Cyclists and support crew will set off from Dinard in Brittany, northwestern France to cycle the 900km to Lourdes in seven days! The 18th biennial Cycle to Lourdes will be truly underway!

Writing these words we are mindful of the personal dedication, sacrifice and hard work of so many people who have brought us to this point. After many months of hard training, supported by loved ones, fundraising and preparation we are almost there. This past winter has been a particularly challenging one. The poor weather and difficult conditions have not been ideal for cycling and training for this event. As the saying goes – this is a marathon not a sprint! Yet everyone persisted and we are almost there. New friendships have been forged and old ones reconnected. Our practice cycles have been hives of excitement and anticipation for the journey ahead.

This year's cycle brings together a group of cyclists from the four corners of the country and places in between. With some 45 first time cyclists joining Cycle 2018 this is certainly a new year. It is also very heart-warming to see so many of our 'old hands' returning once again. Their experience and willingness to encourage and support the newer members helps to deepen the bonds within the team. It is also wonderful to learn that many former cyclists have encouraged new people to join and assisted them in their fundraising efforts. The enduring appeal of this event is a great testament not only to the Cycle itself but to the willingness of so many to reach out in this way for the good of others.



Of course the aim of the Cycle to Lourdes is to raise much needed funds to finance the work of the Trust.

While the cycle is an important fundraising event it is also a very special means of raising awareness of that work. Many people hear about the Trust for the first time due to participation, training and fundraising events organised by our cyclists.

The fruits of the cycle will be the happiness and smiles on the faces of the Trust's young Guests who experience a unique week in Lourdes during Easter. So many of our young guests face exceptional challenges in their daily lives and require additional support. The work of our Volunteers ensures that every young guest will have the very best possible experience, a unique week, very often life changing, while in the care of the Trust.

The route has been mapped out. The transport is arranged. Accommodation has been booked. Our bikes have been cleaned and serviced. Our bags will soon be packed. And so, we are almost there! Just a little matter of cycling almost 900 kilometres to Lourdes and our arrival there on Good Friday.





KILCUAN, Clarinbridge, Galway.

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust established two very unique holiday homes in Ireland for young people and adults with additional needs. KILCUAN in Clarinbridge, Galway and COIS CUAIN near Rosslare Harbour, Co. Wexford are available on a

self-catering basis throughout the year. We host a number of summer camps called Friendship Weeks in July and August each year. The homes are also available to other similar organisations for respite breaks throughout the year.

AVAILABILITY
KILCUAN is available on a self catering basis to organisations and groups serving people with special needs to provide respite holiday breaks.

For information on availability and rates contact James McHugh on 091-796622 or email: jmchugh@irishpilgrimagetrust.com

AVAILABILITY
COIS CUAIN is available on a self catering basis to families or organisations and groups serving people with special needs to provide respite holiday breaks.

For information on availability and rates please contact our office on 091-796622 or email: info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com



COIS CUAIN, Kilrane, Co. Wexford