

Diocese of Hallam Virtual Pilgrimage Blog

Monday 29th June 2020

Monday would normally be the first full day of the entire pilgrimage together in Lourdes.

We would usually start with one of the highlights of any pilgrimage, our Mass at the Grotto.

The last Mass at the Grotto each morning is at 9.45am and we've been fortunate to secure that for the last five or six years. The Mass is for all English speaking pilgrims in Lourdes and is often celebrated with an Irish Diocese, e.g. Galway, Derry, or Killaloe.



This year, instead, on our Virtual Pilgrimage, we join Fr. Lee Marshall who will celebrate Mass from the new St Vincent's Mission Hub, Sheffield on the theme of Forgiveness. This will be livestreamed at **10.00am**.

After the Grotto Mass we have our group photograph on the Rosary Basilica steps - one of the whole pilgrimage, one for Hallam Youth and one for our volunteer Helpers. Cecile and Olivier from Photo Durand are experts, not only at photography but at herding 450+ pilgrims into position and placing them in exactly the right way.



One of our Helpers, Thomas Lawson, has come up with a way to create a group photo virtually. If you would like to be part of that please email a photograph of yourself, with your face clearly visible, to Thomas using the email address hallam2020photo@hotmail.com before Tuesday evening. Please note for any photographs of children under 16 we will also need written parental consent..We will give details of how to obtain a copy of the Virtual Pilgrimage Group Photo after the end of the pilgrimage.

There's often a bit of time after the Group Photo to stop off at one of the cafes on the way back to the hotel for a coffee before lunch at 12 noon.

After lunch we have our Reconciliation Service. This takes place today so that pilgrims have the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation before our Mass with Anointing of the Sick.



We try to have this Service in the St Pius X (Underground) Basilica so that there is plenty of space for individual confession. Hallam Youth help animate this Service.

For our Virtual Pilgrimage, Mgr. Desmond Sexton leads us in our Reconciliation Service which will be broadcast at **3.00pm**. Young people from each of our diocesan High Schools play a part in this Service, as they would in Lourdes, and Fr. Desmond will explain how Pope Francis has encouraged us to make a Sincere Act of Contrition at a time when we are unable to go to confession due to the pandemic.. Please note that since this recording was made, some restrictions have been lifted and it is now possible for priests to advertise times for confession, with the usual requirements for social distancing, hygiene, etc..



Later on Monday afternoon, in Lourdes we would have had the opportunity for pilgrims to attend one of the two celebrations in the week of the Anglican Eucharist. We have been blessed for many years by the presence of Anglican Clergy on our pilgrimage. The Anglican Chaplains who have travelled with us for many years now, Margaret Oldroyd and Shan Rush, play a very important role and their presence is a very treasured part of our pilgrimage.

There may be time for a visit to a cafe again before dinner - the time pilgrims spend talking and socialising is a very important aspect of any pilgrimage.

The Torchlight Procession is one of the most famous aspects of Lourdes. We take part, as a Diocese, one night during our pilgrimage, although the procession itself takes place every night and pilgrims are able to participate whenever they wish.

We normally join together on Monday evening for our Torchlight Procession because pilgrims are rested from the early night before. We gather behind the Hallam Banner and Hallam Youth help push our Assisted Pilgrims in the procession (many elderly or infirm pilgrims use a wheelchair in Lourdes when they would not back home due to the heat and long distances).



As part of our Virtual Pilgrimage, we will have our Virtual Torchlight Procession tonight at **7.00pm**. **Light a candle and join us.**

Some of our Virtual Services have been easier to create than others. For the Torchlight Procession I had a vision in my head of a Virtual Torchlight Procession but I had no idea if it would be technically possible, or how long it would take to create. Beth has produced tonight's Virtual Torchlight Procession and all I'm going to say at this point is that I think it's very special indeed. Thank you to Beth and to everyone who contributed.

In Lourdes, each Mystery of the Rosary is introduced by one of the Chaplains.

My predecessor as Pilgrimage Director, Fr. Pat O'Connor, was made an Honorary Chaplain of the Sanctuary in recognition of his dedicated service to Lourdes and was given a Chaplain's Cross. We are very fortunate indeed to have an Honorary Chaplain announce each Joyful Mystery of the Rosary in our Virtual Procession



Finally, I just want to say a word of thanks to you all for the way in which you've engaged with, and entered into, our Virtual Pilgrimage. For many people, Sunday was a very difficult day as we expected to be in Lourdes.

Sunday morning I woke up with this image in my mind:-



An empty St. Bernadette's Church. Six months ago none of us could have anticipated that - we expected there would be 450 or so pilgrims from Hallam starting our pilgrimage.

St. Bernadette's Church might have been empty yesterday. Our own Churches around the Diocese will have been empty too since public worship can only start from early next month.

But it really struck me yesterday afternoon when I was reading the many messages and comments from people on the Virtual Pilgrimage that whilst these buildings may be empty, it is the People of God who are the Church. So, the Church in the Diocese of Hallam is very far from empty as people are using this opportunity (and have used many other online resources during this pandemic), to draw closer to Jesus. As our Church buildings begin to open, and we can start to gather once more in limited numbers, we look forward to this time next year when we will be in Lourdes together, and St Bernadette's Church will no longer be empty.

Thank you for your support and for taking part in our Virtual Pilgrimage.

Alex Prior
Pilgrimage Director

Readings for our Mass today

First Reading:- **Joel 2:12-18**

Psalm:

The Lord is compassion and love

Gospel:- **Luke 24:46-48**

Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe you are present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire you in my soul. Since I cannot receive you in Holy Communion now, at least spiritually come to my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen