



The Oblate Youth Service

Handbook in Lourdes





Introduction

Thank you for volunteering for the annual trip to Lourdes with the Oblate Youth Service. You'll be delighted you made the decision to come. Many of the other young people you will meet have made the trip many times before and if they have wanted to come back, hopefully you will too. Some of us have decided to put this booklet together, because over the years we have learned things from our experiences that we feel newcomers should know before they make the journey.

Firstly, and not to put a downer on things, this is not a relaxing holiday and you will return home more tired than you have ever been before!!

The enjoyment lies in the satisfaction you will get from spending an hour of your time in the evening talking to our Guests who may not have had the opportunity to be listened to for some time or in wheeling a sick child over to the Grotto and sensing them relax in a way they never have before. The list goes on, and everyone who has been before has their own list of things they remember and have enjoyed.

Our advice to you is to go with an open mind. Forget what other people have told you about the trip, your experience is unique. Along with that, no words can do justice to the feelings and experiences that you will bring home with you, so the chances are that if you have heard something, it's an understatement!

Our work revolves around the invalid (patient) section of the Oblate pilgrimage. We prefer to refer to the patients as our "Guests" and that is the term that is used in this booklet when referring to invalids/sick/patients.

Fr. Peter Clucas OMI – Executive Director, Oblate Youth Service



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What to Bring

The simple answer to this is – not too much!

Every year we watch people coming with enormous bags (especially the girls!) and every year they regret it. You are not picked up at your house and dropped at the hotel in Lourdes, and you will not have someone to carry your bags, you have to carry your bag.

Everybody must remember that while you are working in Lourdes, you will be wearing the OYS “Uniform”. This consists of: the OYS navy t-shirt, jeans or navy bottoms (Below the Knee) and comfy shoes/runners for during the day.

It should be noted that “Below the Knee” means just that, all shorts etc must be below the knee while in the Domaine. This is just out of respect to other pilgrims as well as to local custom.

For travelling you should wear something comfortable. Again, you will be carrying your bags around so remember that when picking your clothes. In general, comfortable light casual clothes are recommended.

Other advised items-

Sun cream

Camera

Comfortable shoes (Very important, you will be on your feet all day)

Swimwear

Small rucksack (for going to the beach, and maybe day to day)

Sun Hat

Sun glasses

Light Rain Gear



Please also remember to bring the various travel documents you will need:

- Your passport and European Health Insurance Card, (formerly the E 111) are the most important. Without these you will not be able to travel.
- Also you must bring proof of a travel / health insurance policy - the OYS does not take out a group insurance policy, so you **MUST** have your own personal travel / health insurance policy in order to be able to travel with the group.
- Finally, before you leave for Lourdes, you will be given a pack with various forms to be filled in. These forms are **COMPULSORY** if you wish to be allowed to work with the invalids.

What to Wear

Everybody - you will be provided with OYS t-shirts (which are navy) and a yellow armband. You must also wear the jeans or navy 'below-the-knee' shorts. You must wear these every day you are at work with the Guests. This is the OYS uniform that was mentioned earlier.

Girls - it's not a fashion show! Yes we will be going out in the evening but you will not be going clubbing or to any fancy parties. Most people will wear jeans and tops to the pub. There will not be occasions to wear minis and stilettos! On the last night some people do get a little more dressed up but you must always bear in mind that you are in Lourdes, where you must remain respectful to custom at all times.

Fellas - wear what you would at home on a hot day, however the rules below apply to you too, jeans / shorts (Navy) must be at least knee length.

In the Grotto area especially, you must wear clothes at / below knee level at all times and your shoulders must be covered.

Weather

The temperatures are usually around the mid 20's. However, as Lourdes is in the foothills of the Pyrenees you can expect occasional heavy showers. Some years it will rain two or three days and other years it doesn't rain at all. Its just luck! So bring light raingear with you. Alternatively, the OYS has a light rain jacket which is available for purchase for €25.



Money

Please be aware when you are budgeting for spending money that a few extra expenses will occur while you are in Lourdes. You will not need a lot of money, as most of your meals are included. However on the first and last days while we are travelling, you will need to buy your own lunch.

If it is your first time in Lourdes, you will have to purchase two OYS t-shirts (€5 each). You will also receive the blue OMI badge, the OYS enamel pin and your name badge. Your name badge should be worn at all times while working with the Guests.

As mentioned above, the OYS has a smart rain jacket, which is available for optional purchase for €25 which provides plenty of protection from the showers atypical of Lourdes.

Also, the hotel staff works very hard to look after us while we are there. At the end of the week, someone will collect €10 from you for a tip and this is shared between the kitchen, cleaning and dining room staff that look after us. This is not voluntary.

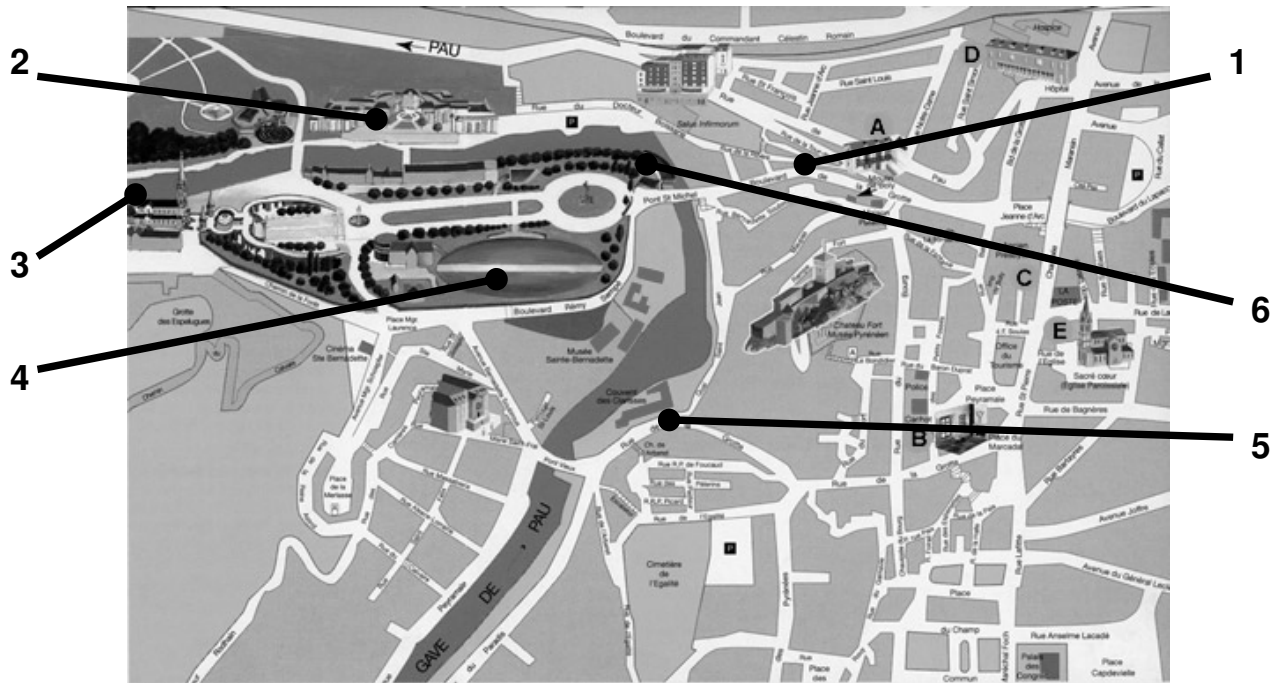
Every year we get a group photograph taken, copies of which will be available to buy if you wish before we leave Lourdes. Depending on how many copies we order, a photo will cost approximately €7/8.

All in all, these are the extra costs that you will have and in order to help you budget, we recommend that you keep around €30 for these and a few euro more for emergencies.

A Quick Tour of Important Places

Lourdes is a very old town, set high in the Pyrenees mountains. Many of the streets are very steep and narrow. It is easy to get lost if you don't know your way around, so for the first couple of days please try to stay with people who have been there before. Also, never, ever travel alone. Lourdes is a town just like any other in France, and crime does exist there. Don't make yourself an easy target.

During the pilgrimage, you will spend most of your time either in the hotel, the hospital, the Grotto, the Domaine or for a few hours in the evening a local cafe. While these are relatively close together, you will be doing a LOT of walking. Again, please bring sensible, comfortable shoes!



Map Showing Major Landmarks in Lourdes

- 1: Our Hotel
- 2: Hospital
- 3: Grotto
- 4: Underground Basilica of Pope Pius X
- 5: Café Au Roi Albert
- 6: Saint Michel (where we eat lunch during the day)

Behaviour

In General

While we do not want to sound like killjoys, it is unfortunately necessary to talk about general behaviour in this section. As you are well aware you are not on a personal holiday. You will be a member of the Oblate Youth Service, and your actions over the course of the ten days will reflect upon the group as a whole. We would ask you at all times, whether in uniform or out of it, to act in



a respectful manner, and to always be aware of the people around you. Many people make great sacrifices to travel to Lourdes, and you do not have the right to ruin their pilgrimage.

At the end of this booklet is a Code of Conduct and a Code of Behaviour for OYS members. It is requested that you read them carefully and that you fully understand the consequences of behaving in a manner which contravenes either of the codes or indeed of failing to comply with a reasonable request of a designated senior member of the OYS.

Another very important point is punctuality. Please remember that you are part of a large group for the week - we cannot afford to wait for stragglers every time we need to go somewhere. Remember also, if you're late to the hospital for any of the day's activities, that could mean a patient lying in bed unable to get up until you arrive to help. It could mean a patient sitting alone in their room with nobody to talk to. This is why senior members are very strict about punctuality. We are not slave drivers, or on a power trip, we are simply thinking about the welfare of the patients.

In the Hospital

You are not expected to tiptoe around the hospital and speak in whispers but please be aware that some patients need to rest during the day, so try to keep the noise at a reasonable level. Also, you will spend time in the courtyard in front of the hospital. Loud voices can carry to the wards above, and to the Grotto which is just across the river.

In the Domain

During the tour of Lourdes, you will be shown exactly what the Domaine is. Basically, when you walk through either St Josephs or St Michael's gate, or across the river from the Hospital, you enter the Domain. This is regarded as a sacred area, and you are expected to show respect accordingly. Speak quietly, if at all. Ladies, please make sure your shoulders are covered, and shorts or skirts are respectable. Gents, put your t-shirts on.

You are not allowed to smoke anywhere in the Domaine, even though it is out of doors.

In or near the Grotto

The Grotto is the most sacred place in Lourdes. Absolute silence is maintained at all times here except for participation at ceremonies at the Grotto. Please show the utmost respect here.



In the Hotel

The hotel is quite big and we will not be the only group there. You must be quiet and have respect for other residents. There is strictly no smoking in bedrooms. The people in your room the week after you, may be sick and do not need to be breathing in stale smoke.

We will eat breakfast and dinner there every day. You must be on time for dinner, as the hotel will not begin serving anyone until everyone is seated. You are not allowed in other people's room after 9pm. You may not be tired, but others might need to sleep.

Many groups who have shared hotels with us over the years have been apprehensive - nobody wants to share a hotel with 100 young people! Thankfully this has not been a problem and up to this time the group has always been praised for its thoughtfulness, and this can't be taken for granted. There are, however, a few simple ways to make sure other pilgrims don't hate us. The main one is to be quiet, especially when we return from the cafe at night. By 12:30 most of the hotel guests are asleep, and do not want to be woken by horseplay in the corridor outside their door. Also, you are young and fit. You do not need to take the lift up to your room, or down again. Use the stairs please, and leave the lift free for those who need it.

In the Cafe

After a long day's work, it is important to relax and wind down. We generally gather as a group in a nearby cafe, (Au Roi Albert), after dinner, for a chat and a singsong. Alcohol is served here.

However, **DRUNKENNESS WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**

Apart from the obvious health and safety risks you will be no help to the patients in the morning if you are not in a fit condition. It is your duty to be mature and to control your own intake of alcohol. However if a group leader sees anybody drinking too much or acting drunk, disciplinary measures will be taken. Under eighteens will not be allowed to drink, whether or not you do so at home unless we have written permission from parents or legal guardians.

Also, there is a strict curfew of 1 am, which means leaving the cafe at 12:30. You must be in your own hotel room by 1 am at the latest. This doesn't mean that you have to remain in the cafe until 12:30. If you are tired, you are welcome to leave at any time, but remember, do not walk anywhere in Lourdes on your own late at night.



Caring for the Guests

The entire reason for your being in Lourdes is to care for the patients who travel with the Oblate pilgrimage. For many of you, this will be your first time doing something like this, so here are a few pointers and a reminder for the rest of us.

In general good manners will get you a long way. Also if you try to put yourself in the shoes of our patients, it may be easier to understand how they feel. Here are some things you should always remember.

- Never be afraid to ask for help.
- You may come across unexpected situations. If you feel you are unable to deal with it - find someone who is. Do not panic and try not to make a patient feel uncomfortable in any way.
- In particular, when you are bringing a patient to the toilet – always have another person with you. Even most experienced staff and nurses have another person with them so do not go in on your own! Never bring a patient to the toilet if you do not feel comfortable doing so. Do not feel under any pressure, there are lots of people there who are trained to do so.
- Always close the door of the toilet when a patient is using it or the room door if they are changing. If a patient requires a bed bath, or is exposed for any reason on their bed, always use a screen to protect their privacy and dignity.
- Be aware that some of the patients may have a disability which may not be obvious e.g. deafness, blindness, etc.
- A patient might ask you to help them with their medicine, or to give them some tablets. You are NOT ALLOWED to give any patient ANY type of medicine, no matter how small or insignificant it might seem. Only nurses or doctors may dispense medicine.
- Do not pry into a person's private business, in general they will tell you all they want you to know.
- Always knock on a door before walking into a room.
- Try not to over-help a patient, let them be as independent as possible. If they are able to do something, let them. It can be embarrassing for them if you make them feel helpless.
- Make sure that the patient you are looking after has everything with them that they might need for that day / period of time that they might be out. E.g. rug cardigan, rain jacket, glasses, walking aid, stick. Also ensure that they don't leave anything behind at a mass or service.
- If you are told that a person in your care has Alzheimer's you must remain with them and keep them within arms length of you. If you need to leave them for any reason you should 'hand them over' to another member of the OYS, and make them aware of the situation.
- You are a volunteer in Lourdes; you are not to accept payment in any form. Patients are always very grateful for the assistance they receive, and sometimes try to give you money or substantial gifts. DO NOT



ACCEPT THEM. By all means, allow your patient to buy you a cup of tea or a coke, some might even buy you a small souvenir. You should know yourself what is acceptable and what is not. If in doubt, ask.

- There are some pieces of equipment used daily in Lourdes. You will receive full training on exactly how to use them when we reach Lourdes, but please never ever use them alone, and again do not be afraid to ask for help. We do not want to injure our patients. Here are a few pointers on the most common ones:

Wheelchairs

Again, the basic rule is to put yourself in the position of a person who uses a wheelchair. Many see it as an extension of their bodies; it is their legs after all.

- Never approach a patient from behind.
- Always introduce yourself before attempting to move a patient.
- Never lean or rest yourself on wheelchair.
- Make sure that the patient is sitting comfortably and that their feet and hands are in a safe position for moving.
- Before moving off, familiarise yourself with the chair's features, particularly the brakes. If in doubt ask someone, and the patient will generally be more than happy to explain how it works.
- Always try to get at eye level with patients when talking to them, get down on your knees or get a chair if you are talking to them, rather than talking down to them.
- Watch where you're going.
- Take it easy and don't drive too fast.
- When you stop, immediately apply the chair's brakes - no runaway patients please!
- You should be aware of your limits and do no attempt to push or pull someone who is too heavy for you.

Chariots

These are large three-wheeled chairs, used for bringing patients anywhere outside the hospital, such as on processions, or up the town. Any patient who is not in a wheelchair must travel in a chariot. Some patients have difficulty getting into a chariot, saying they would prefer to walk. They are not allowed to walk, as they may have overestimated their own stamina.

- If in doubt, ask for help.
- Helping patients into and out of chariots is always a two-person job, and sometimes even requires three.
- One person must always lock the chariot's front wheel between his/her feet to stabilise it, while the other or others, help the patient into the



chair. Always keep a firm grip of the patient's arm, with your other hand supporting their lower back as they climb into the chair.

- If your patient has trouble stepping up into the chair, immediately stop, and get someone else to help. It might be necessary to help lift the patient's feet onto the footrest.
- Some patients might have trouble with their balance. If this is the case, immediately stop, and get someone else to help. The third person will then stand on the other side of the chariot and assist the patient into the chair. This is to stop the patient falling away from you and over the chariot.
- Once the patient is seated comfortably, ensure their personal belongings are safe, and that they have enough blankets. These are available just inside the door of the hospital.
- Even if a patient refuses blankets, always have a couple sitting in the back of the chariot just in case. Some of the ceremonies are quite long, and the weather can change quickly in Lourdes.
- The chariot is always pulled behind you. Always keep both hands on the handle, and hold it against your backside. This way, when you come to a downhill slope your body is supporting the weight of the chariot, and it doesn't push past you.
- There should be one person pulling the chariot and one person behind, pushing it.
- When you stop, for whatever reason, immediately lock the front wheel between your two feet.
- Chariots are not allowed into the hospital, and never on the wards.
- If it took three people to assist the patient into the chariot, it's going to take three again to assist them out of it.
- Be realistic about your abilities. Do not attempt to pull heavy patients if you're not capable.

Blue chairs

These are used to transport patients in the hospital area only and for short journeys only, as they are quite uncomfortable. They are straight-backed metal chairs, with two small wheels at the back. Being pushed in one of these chairs can be quite a scary experience. Please remember this when you are pushing a patient in one.

- It is very easy to overbalance a blue chair so be careful.
- Using these chairs does require strength, more so than pulling chariots. If in doubt, stop immediately and ask someone to help.
- Always assist your patient into the chair. Keep a firm grip on their arm, and support their lower back, easing them down into a sitting position.
- Once the patient is seated, ensure that their feet are on the footplate, and that no articles of clothing, or handbag straps etc, are trailing.
- **WARN THE PATIENT THAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO TILT THEM BACK!** Being transported in a blue chair is scary enough - no sudden moves please!



- Stand behind the chair, with both hands on the handle and one foot on the kick plate. Push down with your foot and tilt gently back with both hands, until the chair is balanced on the wheels.
- Go slow!
- Keep checking that your patient hasn't slipped or changed position in the chair, or that their feet haven't fallen off the footrest.
- When setting the chair down, once again place your foot on the kick plate, and push down, to soften the jolt.
- Never leave a patient sitting in a blue chair for any longer than is absolutely necessary. These chairs are for transport only.

Hoists

Extremely heavy or immobile patients may need to be lifted into and out of bed using a hoist. This is like a sling which is wrapped round the patient's body and lifted with a hydraulic arm. Hoists are extremely dangerous if not used properly. There are designated hoist operators on the wards at all times. You are expressly forbidden to ever attempt to use a hoist unless you have been trained and are a designated person.

A Typical Day

Since the patients are only in Lourdes for four full days, we have to use our time well; hence the days are busy with ceremonies/activities throughout our time there.

Morning

In the morning there will be two shifts. The early shift arrives at the hospital at around 6:30 in the morning assist those patients who need help getting up, washing and dressing. This can be quite difficult work, and no first year is required to do it. However it is very rewarding, and you do form a very strong bond with the patient you're working with, so if feel you want to help on the early shift speak with Fr Peter or senior leaders whom will be made known to you.

The second shift arrives before 8am. When the second shift arrives, the early shift, take a short to have their breakfast. This is their only opportunity to get a bite to eat, so it is vital that the second shift arrives on time.

As soon as breakfast is finished, we must bring the patients downstairs and get them lined up as quickly as possible. When we travel to a ceremony, we always go in procession. The patients in wheelchairs will travel in their chairs; the rest will go in the chariots. These are the only two ways patients are



allowed to travel. You will be pulling a chariot or pushing a chair every time we go to a ceremony.

Once we reach the place where the ceremony is being held (which could be the Grotto, Rosary Square, the Underground Basilica, or elsewhere, you will hand over your patient to a brancardier or senior member of the OYS, who will line up all the patients. (try not to promise a patient that you will bring them on the return journey, as this may not be possible, but assure them that someone from the Youth Service will be there to help them at the time.) Once you have handed over your patient, find the rest of the OYS and stay with them. We always sit together at ceremonies. Attendance at all ceremonies is compulsory.

When the service has ended, take the first free patient (making sure they are actually with the Oblate pilgrimage!) and follow the rest of the group. Generally we will go back to the hospital, although this isn't always the case, so please check. Back at the hospital, some patients will want to lie down for a while, and many will want to use the bathroom. Generally though, most patients like to sit outside for a while, weather permitting of course. While waiting for lunch to be prepared, spend your time chatting to the patients. This is the most important work you will do while you are in Lourdes, simply spending time with our invalids (guests). You can chat to your mates over lunch, or later in the evening.

Lunch

We take our lunch in the refectory nearby, again in two shifts. These shifts will be determined on a day to day basis and you will be informed of what lunch you are on by your group coordinator. You generally receive 45 mins to an hour for lunch, depending on the day's timetable. You cannot afford to be late back from lunch, as the other shift might not be able to leave until you return, or we might be in a rush to get the patients ready for the afternoon activities.

Afternoon

The afternoons generally involve another ceremony, although we always allow for one free afternoon. This gives the patients opportunities to be taken up town to buy souvenirs, light candles, or simply rest for a while. Patients must never go off by themselves. Members of the OYS accompany patients on this afternoon. There are strict rules about taking patients up the town, which are discussed later.

Dinner

We eat dinner each evening in the hotel. Dinner is usually 7 o'clock, although this may vary depending on the day's itinerary. The hotel staff cannot serve dinner until the entire group is seated, so again, punctuality is essential.



There are usually some quick announcements to be made afterwards, since this is the only time of the day the entire group is together, so please remain in the dining room until excused.

Night

After dinner there might be some time to wash and change, then its back down to the hospital for the evening activity. On the night we take part in the torchlight procession, we are very pressed for time, so speed is of the essence. The other evening activities are usually in the hospital, and are much more relaxed, like a singsong, or a party.

It should be noted that each group will meet once a day at the discretion of the group coordinators. Attendance at these meetings is compulsory as very often information for the following day as well as the distribution of the lunch vouchers will occur at these meetings.

General Information

As you can see, we will be very busy while our patients are with us in Lourdes. However we have noticed time and time again, that those people who work the hardest and show the most enthusiasm seem to have a much better time than those who approach the activities half-heartedly. The more you put in, we promise, the more you will get out of your Lourdes experience.

On the other hand, we will have our hands full looking after our 120 Guests. We don't need any more! Please remember to take care of yourself. Get as much rest as you can, and if you are on medication please remember to keep taking it and bring enough with you. There are three doctors who are members of the OYS, who will be made known to you. If you feel at all unwell, please do not hesitate to approach them.

There is also a pastoral team, who will be available to have a quiet chat with you any time you want. Lourdes can be a very emotional place, and you might want to speak to someone about things that have been bothering you at home, or something that you might have encountered in Lourdes itself. You may choose to speak to a friend, or one of the pastoral team who are members of the OYS and will be made known to you. Please be assured that anything you say will be treated with the **UTMOST CONFIDENTIALITY**. It is very important that you gain something from Lourdes, as well as the patients.



The Ceremonies

Here are most of the ceremonies in which we participate. Don't worry if you don't remember them, you will be told each night after dinner, what is happening the next day.

Opening Ceremony

This is the first time all the Oblate pilgrims will gather on their Lourdes pilgrimage. This is when our Bishop and the Oblate Provincial will declare the Oblate Pilgrimage open, and the various key members of the pilgrimage will introduce themselves. It is quite a light-hearted ceremony; although there might be a collection, so beware!

At each main ceremony each day a collection is taken for the upkeep of the Grotto and other places of Lourdes.

Blessed Sacrament Procession

This procession takes place every afternoon during pilgrimage season in Lourdes, although we will take part in it only the once. We will walk with our patients, following the Blessed Sacrament from an altar on the Prairie, round the Domain, and finally into the Underground Basilica. The procession itself lasts about an hour and a half, but we generally spend a long time queuing up, waiting for it to begin, so this can sometimes be quite a long afternoon. The procession itself is lovely though, and we walk at quite a slow pace, which makes a change!

Mass at the Grotto

Once during the pilgrimage we will celebrate Mass at the Grotto. Traditionally our time slot for this mass has been early in the morning, so breakfast time can be hectic and rushed on this day. The mass itself generally lasts about 50 mins, although morning time in the Pyrenees can be very cold, so bring a jumper or jacket for this one. Also, please ensure that the patients wrap up warm and have extra blankets available for them.

Trip to the Baths

This is "our time slot" in the baths, where Oblate invalids are given priority. The majority of patients will want to take a bath, although it is not compulsory although no other activities are undertaken until all those patients who wanted to go to the baths have been and are back. You are of course, welcome to have a bath at this time too.



International Mass

This mass takes place every morning during pilgrimage season in Lourdes. It is held in the Underground Basilica. We walk in procession to the Mass with our patients. This is quite a long ceremony, and the Underground Basilica can be quite chilly in the mornings so again, wrap up, and make sure the patients have extra blankets. The International Mass is said in the main languages of the pilgrimages, English, French, Italian and Spanish. This ceremony can take anything up to 2 hours, but is an amazing spectacle with sometimes up to 25,000 pilgrims taking part.

Confessions

This ceremony is for the patients only and not the main body of pilgrims, who have their own penitential ceremony. We bring the patients to the small chapel of St Josephs, where a short penitential service is held, and then each patient will have the opportunity to confess in private. Out of respect for their privacy we generally wait outside the chapel for this stage of the ceremony, except for a few OYS members who will assist those patients who need it. If you wish you may receive confession at this time, but only after all the patients have confessed.

Torchlight Procession

This is one of the most powerful sights you will see during your time in Lourdes. Again, it is held every evening during pilgrimage season in Lourdes. We will walk in procession with our patients round the Domain, following the statue of Our Lady. Everybody carries a lighted candle, including patients, so please be extra vigilant at this time. Patients have been known to drop their candles! The procession ends in the Rosary Square, with the patients lining up at the steps of the Rosary Basilica. This can be quite a long ceremony, again anything up to 2 hours. This is generally a very tiring time for our patients, so we try to get them back to the hospital as quickly as possible once the ceremony is over.

Closing Ceremony

This is the final service we will share with our patients and the pilgrimage as a whole. Traditionally it is great fun, with lots of clapping and cheering. Bring your camera! This is when service medals are handed out, and religious articles bought during the week are blessed. The ceremony is generally short, but nobody ever seems in a hurry to leave afterwards! You might be asked at some stage to do something during any one of the above ceremonies. For example you might be asked to carry a candle, or do a reading, or even to carry the statue of Our Lady at the head of the Torchlight Procession! Our advice is - do it! You will not be sorry, and it will add to your whole experience.



On the other hand, there are things that we would never force anyone to do, such as working in the baths. This is a very difficult experience, both physically and spiritually, but anybody who has ever volunteered to do it has been glad they did. It is one of the most rewarding experiences to be had in Lourdes, but possibly not for everybody. If you feel you would like to volunteer to work in the baths for an afternoon, or would like to know more about it, feel free to approach your group coordinator, who will tell you who to contact.

Who's Who on the Pilgrimage?

Since we are such a big group, it has become necessary in recent years to divide our membership into smaller groups. We have found that it is much easier to get information across to everybody by having team coordinators explaining things to a group of 10, than to stand and shout at 100 people! It is also easier to get to know people in smaller groups and there will always be someone nearby to ask questions or simply to chat.

For this reason, on the first night in Lourdes, you will be placed in a group with a few others, and two team coordinators. These coordinators will be OYS members who have been in Lourdes a few times, and know how things work. They and your group will meet once a day to pass on information and to answer any questions you might have. The coordinators are NOT your bosses, and you are not there to be bossed around. However if they ask you to do something they will generally have a good reason for doing so. You will be introduced to various other members of the group on your first night also, the OYS committee, the medical, and pastoral team. These are all people who are here to help you. They will answer any questions you might have, and help in any way they can. They might have been in Lourdes a few times, but believe me, every one of them can remember feeling nervous and confused at some stage in Lourdes!

The Oblate Youth Service is only a small part of a huge team who volunteer to look after our patients in Lourdes. We share the workload with several other groups, each of which has their own duties:

Brancardiers

These are men on our pilgrimage who help with the day to day care of our patients. They organise the processions, and line up the chairs and chariots at the ceremonies. 'Brancardier' is also a term used to describe the men who work in the Grotto and other areas to ensure the smooth running of the ceremonies.



Handmaids

These are the women helpers on our pilgrimage who care for our invalids by their care and work in the wards and dining areas and always have tea available at any time of the day. They sometimes give you biscuits, so be nice to them!

Doctors/Nurses

Our doctors and nurses are there to look after the health care of all the patients (guests) on the Oblate Pilgrimage.

Care Assistants

The care assistants are similar to the nurses, except they are unable to give medicine. They help with bed baths, and toilet visits, and generally look after the wellbeing of the invalids.

A Brief History of Lourdes, the OMI and the Oblate Youth Service

Before the patients arrive in Lourdes, you will be taken on a tour of Lourdes. You will learn about why millions of people come to Lourdes every year and why so many return year after year. This is very important, as it will help you to understand why you are here, and what is being asked of you.

Here is a very brief history of Bernadette Soubirous and Lourdes.

Bernadette Soubirous was born on 7th January 1844 to François and Louise Soubirous, François was a miller in the small Pyrenean town of Lourdes. Bernadette's early childhood was a happy one, growing up in a very close, religious family. However, when she was ten, her father lost an eye in an accident at the mill and the family's fortunes changed. In 1857 François lost the mill, and the family was forced to move to a tiny cell in the 'Cachot', the former disused prison jail. Due to Bernadette's illness, she suffered from asthma and survived cholera and had been unable to go to school hence she could not read or write, and was unable to make her first Holy Communion with the children of her own age.

In January 1858, at 14 years old, Bernadette went with two friends to collect firewood. While crossing a stream at the place we now call the 'Grotto', she witnessed the first of 18 apparitions. She looked up and saw a 'lady dressed in white with a blue belt and a yellow rose on each foot'. During the apparitions, Bernadette prayed the Rosary with the lady, and spoke with her.



On 25th February, the 9th apparition, the lady urged Bernadette to 'drink from the spring', and pointed to a spot, which was just a muddy area. Bernadette dug into the ground, and eventually clear fresh spring water began to flow. Later on 1st March, a neighbour of Bernadette's, Catherine Latapie, washed her paralysed arm in the water, and was immediately cured; as was the eyesight of Louis Bouriette who had been blinded in one eye in a mine explosion. This spring still flows in the Grotto today.

On 4th March, the lady gave Bernadette a message for the parish priest, to build a chapel at the grotto. Fr Peyramale, however, was unbelieving, told Bernadette to ask the Lady's name. The Lady replied "QUE SOY ERA IMMACULADA CONCEPCIOU", meaning "I am the Immaculate Conception". Fr Peyramale was astonished and began to believe and wonder.

The last apparition occurred on the 16th June 1968, and four years later the Bishop of Tarbes, following a Church inquiry, declared the apparitions, and associated cures, to be genuine: "As a result, the Apparition, calling herself the Immaculate Conception, that Bernadette saw and heard, is the Most Holy Virgin Mary! Thus we write: the finger of God is here."

In 1866 Bernadette joined the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Nevers and received the name Sister Marie-Bernard. She died in the convent at 55 years of age on April 16th 1879. On 8th. December 1933, Pope Pius XI declared Bernadette of Lourdes a saint.

So since February 1858, people have been coming to Lourdes on pilgrimage. Many hundreds of people claim to have received cures, but only a fraction of these have been officially accepted as 'miracles' by the authorities of Lourdes after strenuous investigation. Every year, over 5 million pilgrims travel to Lourdes to pray at the Grotto, to light candles, and to wash in the water of the spring and carrying the prayers of their heart. Many of these people are able bodied, while many are very sick.

Oblates of Mary Immaculate and Lourdes

In 1883, Fr William Ring organised the first Oblate pilgrimage to Lourdes with pilgrims travelling together from Dublin and London, the first pilgrimage like many in the beginning travelled overland by train and ship. Since then, Oblates and pilgrims from have been travelling to Lourdes regularly apart from the war years. In 1980, Fr Peter, with another Oblate, Mossie Lyons was asked to travel with what was then known as the 'overland group' adults and young people travelling to Spain and then on to Lourdes. In 1981, eight young people joined with him from Edinburgh with this group to help care for the invalids of the Oblate pilgrimage.

The Oblate Youth Service (OYS) has evolved from this 'overland group' to what it is today and can trace its beginnings back to 1987 when the OYS was formed. The emphasis of the group is on the experience of 'service' to others



as well as each other in the light of the spirituality of St Eugene de Mazenod founder of the Oblates and a saint for the Church. Since then, the Oblate Youth Service has grown in both size and stature.

This year you will be part of a group of almost 100 young people, many of whom will have been to Lourdes before.

In recent years however, the Oblate Youth Service has developed. It was from this activity in Lourdes and looking at the gifts of the group that the realization was that maybe we could do a little more for others at home and possibly further a field.

It was from this small seed of hope that in October 2002 two members of the group went to Kenya for a month. In 2004 saw the involvement with 'Streetwise' a group that cares for children living on the streets, one of three projects that we have been involved with in South Africa since then; the others being 'Little Eden' which is home to 290 young people with severe physical and mental disabilities; and 'Sukumawenze' a hospice for AIDS / HIV and Tuberculosis patients.

We have also been involved with projects closer to home, both supporting existing programs, and in some cases, establishing our own.

Recently, in response to the needs and development of the group the Executive of the Oblate Youth Service came into being to be of service of the group, how we want and need to develop the OYS in the future.

This is a new and exciting time for the OYS. We would like you to become an active member of the Youth Service, continuing to give of your time and effort throughout the year, in the same spirit that you give it while in Lourdes.

We also want to know what you think. If you have any ideas, or know of any programs which you think would benefit from OYS cooperation, let us know.

In Lourdes we plan to explain to the entire group what the Executive Committee has been doing for the past year, and to give everybody the chance to tell us what they would like the OYS to become in the future. The OYS Executive Committee is there to represent you, so please don't be shy in letting us know what you think!



CODE OF BEHAVIOUR - OYS LOURDES

- The OYS uniform is to be worn for all pilgrimage activities
- OYS members will be suitably attired at all other times
- OYS members will present themselves for work on time and in fit condition to undertake assigned duties
- No alcohol shall be consumed during the hours of work under ANY circumstances
- OYS members under 18 years of age **will not** be permitted to consume alcohol for the duration of the trip except with the prior written consent of a parent/guardian
- Hours of work will be assigned by the Director in consultation with Section Leaders
- The reputation and integrity of the OYS shall be upheld and promoted at all times by all members
- Disciplinary proceedings will be brought against any OYS member not in compliance with the above or with the expressed wish of the Director/Section Leaders

The above is a summary, but not an exhaustive list, of the Code of Behaviour expected of OYS members. Instructions from the Director and Pilgrimage Section Leaders are to be complied with at all times.



OYS Code of Conduct

- All members of the OYS and those with whom they work will be treated with courtesy, respect and dignity
- The tasks required of OYS members will be appropriate to their age and capacity
- OYS members under 18 years of age will not be permitted to consume alcohol while participating in OYS activities, except with the prior written consent of a parent/guardian
- Accommodation will be assigned appropriately by gender, age or any particular requirements due to medical need
- Care will be taken to ensure that leaders do not work alone with those members who are under 18 years of age
- There will always be an appropriate duty leader on call and the rota will be made known to all OYS members
- Inappropriate language or sexually suggestive comments will not be permitted by OYS members
- Physical contact between OYS members will be of an appropriate nature at all times. Leaders will not undertake any task of a personal nature with/for members who are under 18 years of age
- Leaders will always engage with OYS members in an open manner and care will be taken not to show favouritism
- There will be clearly designated leaders in the OYS with whom OYS members can raise any concerns should they arise
- The OYS will have a designated person assigned to whose immediate attention all concerns and/or complaints can be brought
- The designated person will respond promptly to all concerns and liaise with the required civil and Church authorities
- All concerns and/or complaints will be followed through on in a timely and efficient manner



Mission Statement of the Oblate Youth Service

“Through our service we strengthen our faith”

Working together we are enriched as we use the gifts of our youth to serve those in need through the missionary spirit of St. Eugene de Mazenod

Goals of the Oblate Youth Service

1. Be a group which continues to evolve, progress and grow while maintaining our core values
2. Through our committed service we aim to ignite hope in the lives of those we aid
3. OYS members aim to respect those they serve, those that they serve with and the reputation of the group
4. OYS members aim to live their faith through their work