



# A Longing for Lourdes

A FAMILY'S FAITH IS STRENGTHENED  
THANKS TO A SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRY

**Kathy Schulz**  
*Contributor*

**A**t the urging of Monsignor Richard Shirley, the seed was planted back in 2005 for the Schulz family to visit Lourdes, France. Our first daughter, Jenna Schulz, was experiencing idiopathic seizures, that were relentless and which continue today.

Our family had planned the trip back in 2006 when doctors from Driscoll Children's Hospital were monitoring Jenna and later by Texas Children's Hospital in Houston. We had our passports ready and then the night before we were to board our transatlantic flight, Jenna had to be hospitalized for a delayed swallow reflex which resulted in aspiration. We had to cancel the trip.

Years later, after having two more children, normal concerns for raising a special needs child surfaced. As

Jenna grew, critical pediatric milestones were missed. At age three, Jenna started school in Portland under the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD). PPCD helps kids to prepare for the school environment. As time passed, our worst fears were alleviated and our best hopes emerged.

Today, Jenna is 14; Cole is 11 and Natalie is 9-years-old. As a family, we decided to move forward with our long-awaited trip to Lourdes. After lengthy research and prayer, we discovered North American Lourdes Volunteers. Lourdes volunteers bring the seriously ill and disabled to Lourdes. The organization lovingly serves Mary and her pilgrims both in the sanctuaries of France and back at home through living and sharing the Gospel message of Lourdes. We set our sights on a June 2018 Special Needs Pilgrimage.

With Jenna totally dependent for care, non-verbal,

The Schultz family (from left) Cole, Jenna, Rob, Natalie and Kathy are sightseeing at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary in Lourdes thanks to North American Lourdes Volunteers.

*Mary Suddath,  
North American  
Lourdes Hospitality  
medical volunteer*




and non-ambulatory, the thought of taking a plane to Europe was daunting. Trips to San Antonio in the past had been overwhelming. With doctor and nurse volunteers on our pilgrimage, God paved the way.

Our experience was beyond our dreams. For over ten years we had a longing to make the pilgrimage. In the past, we had just dreamed of running away from our suffering, but our trip to Lourdes helped us to embrace suffering. Changes happened both interior and exterior. Prayer and holiness increased internally, and externally our devotion to Mary and unity in the Body of Christ was revealed. The love we encountered at home and abroad truly increased our Catholic faith. We were able to see life through a “new” lens.

The pilgrimage felt like a real miracle

with signs and wonders. During our one week stay, we honestly felt like “heaven met earth.” We found true peace. Seeing everybody pray to Mary was breathtaking. We truly walked in the Body of Christ during the candlelight procession and the Eucharistic procession. Partaking in the sacrament of reconciliation and the baths was most cleansing, spiritually. The message of the Lourdes: prayer, penance, and poverty have changed our family forever.

St. Bernadette of Lourdes pray for us!  
Our Lady of Lourdes pray for us!

“When our Lady asked Bernadette if she would be so kind as to return to the Grotto, the young soon-to-be saint did as she was asked. In St. Bernadette, God gives us a model of obedience, humility, and cooperation. Will you be so kind as to go there?” 

A Virtual Pilgrimage will be offered at Most Precious Blood Parish on Nov. 7 from 6:30-8 p.m.; Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish on Nov. 9 from 6:30-8 p.m.; and Corpus Christi Cathedral on Nov. 10 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. This Virtual Pilgrimage is a 90-minute prayerful experience of drawing nearer to God in the company of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Bernadette. There will be projected images of what pilgrims would see in Lourdes; music similar to what pilgrims hear in Lourdes; a piece of the Grotto rock from Lourdes; precious water from the Grotto spring; Eucharistic blessing as in Lourdes; and Candlelight Rosary Procession. Virtual Pilgrimages are offered in parishes, schools, prisons and to groups across America and beyond. For more information call Kathy Schulz at (361) 244-1786 or email [robkathyschulz@me.com](mailto:robkathyschulz@me.com).



The Breton Calvary Cross overlooking the basilica's from the St. Michael gate entrance to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes.

*North American Lourdes Hospitality Volunteer*