

LOURDES

50th Anniversary
of HCPT

To serve in Lourdes

Volunteers testify

The Pilgrim's Magazine - 3,80€ - n.129 (141) - March-April 2006



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SANCTUAIRES NOTRE-DAME DE
LOURDES



When the American Volun

Marlene Watkins founded a movement of volunteers in North America associated with the Lourdes pilgrimage. Notably supported by Mother Angelica of the television network EWTN, this new Hospitality movement is developing at an extraordinary rate.



The American Volunteers have just created their own publication, Lourdes Letter.

Of the thousands of Hospitality members from around the world, just a few years ago less than 100 were from the United States. The impractical ship travel over one hundred years ago did not lend itself well to diocesan pilgrimages or hospitality service. Today, the same flights that bring pilgrims from around the globe to Lourdes can now bring hospitality members, too. The opportunity of hospitality service at the Sanctuary is not well known in the United States.

One pilgrim housewife waiting, with two sick women for the fourth day in a lengthy line at the Baths on a very crowded Ascension Thursday 2001, was pulled from the queue to help inside the Piscines and thus began what is now Lourdes Volunteers. Inspired by the profound privilege of service in the Baths that day led the newly devoted piscine handmaiden to the promise of a return the next year with ten good women from the United States. The first group of individual volunteers, including a Canadian, arrived in 2002 and then Hospitality

president, Mr. Gabriel Barbrey, invited the North Americans to form the first American hospitality and invite more to come and join in service. The following year, the Lourdes Hospitality requested that the apostolate be placed under the authority of a bishop.

Our Lady of Lourdes Hospitality North American Volunteers was elevated to a Public Association in the Catholic Church by Most Reverend James Moynihan of the Syracuse, New York Diocese on June 10, 2005. Lourdes Volunteers is a unique association of both Hospitality Stagiaries to welcome at the Sanctuary and those who accompany and care for small groups of special needs North American pilgrims to Lourdes. The mission of Lourdes Volunteers is to "extend the invitation of Mary the Mother of God to serve the sick and suffering at Lourdes and at home as exemplified by St. Bernadette in humility, simplicity and obedience."

In this spirit of need and appreciation for English-speaking people from across North America we now come in increasing numbers from Toronto to San Diego to serve Our Lady of Lourdes and her pilgrims at the Sanctuary.

teers organise themselves...

An inseparable family

Each North American Volunteer serves as an individual for Hospitality journeying as part of a small group of 16 to 30. Once arrived, they are welcomed by the Hospitality of Our Lady of Lourdes. Those who travel together to Lourdes share the privilege of service at the Sanctuary in one of the services: the Piscines (Baths), Accueils Marie Saint-Frai or Accueil Notre-Dame (The special hospital-like facilities at the Sanctuary). Many find new friends at Lourdes and return at the same time the next year to journey together. "We love it when Our Lady introduces us to her friends!" is a favourite expression of Lourdes Volunteers. Now, up to ten North American groups each year serve with Hospitality during selected weeks from April through October arriving from several locations throughout the United States. Volunteers connect from various states, the Canadian provinces and the Caribbean to meet fellow volunteers and make the international flight to Paris connecting to Lourdes. Many new friendships have been forged in service at Lourdes. Students from Franciscan University at Steubenville offer service at Lourdes each year (*photo below*). Sister Ann Marie Gill finds this opportunity for her students to be a very real way to experience our one, holy and Catholic apostolic Church. Students see and live the universal Church through a very tangible experience in Lourdes.



Father Dennis Gang, Austrian campus chaplain, notes that the young adults find that Our Lady has touched them in a very special way at Lourdes. They continue their service throughout the year after they return home. The men who volunteer in St. Joseph's service of the Hospitality of Our Lady of Lourdes (*above photo*) find the opportunity to meet other men from around the world in both physical and spiritual activity as a genuine blessing. Many accompany their wives or families to serve, but many also venture individually to come and join the international team at the Sanctuary. Dedicated and hard-working, they find the experience at Lourdes to be spiritually fulfilling and the time to actively live their faith in sincere service founded on love and prayer. Howard "Poncho" Harrell of Texas had never really found a personal connection to the Mother of God after his conversion into the Catholic Church over twenty years ago. However, after coming to Lourdes, he feels 'Our Lady placed her finger on his heart' while he was there to help her pilgrims. An unexpected bonus was an understanding of the Rosary as a way of peace and a newly found Marian devotion. "I wasn't sure why I was going to Lourdes, except that I felt I had to. After hearing about volunteering at Lourdes on EWTN television, I decided I needed to go and serve". Like Bernadette, they all respond to an anterior mysterious call, where the joy of loving is paramount.

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"Message of Lourdes"

At the heart of this magazine we publish a small letter of four pages entitled "Message of Lourdes". It is the first issue of a series in alphabetical form which will help us to prepare, and experience, the 150th anniversary of the Apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes. You may photocopy this letter and distribute it widely (and why not translate it into Chinese?...), so that the message of Lourdes may touch many hearts and radically change the world.

François Vayne

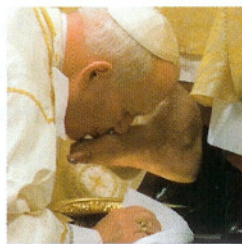
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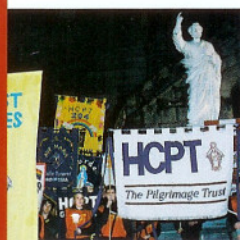
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www.lourdes-magazine.com

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SUBSCRIPTIONS (Form in the centre of this issue): British pounds 20/YEAR, 36/2 YEARS • US\$ (unchanged) 33/YEAR, 60/2 YEARS • Austr. 49/YEAR, 88/2 YEARS • Can\$ 45/YEAR, 81/2 YEARS • Euros 27/YEAR, 49/2 YEARS - Payment made payable to: Lourdes-Magazine - 1, avenue Mgr Théas - 65108 LOURDES CEDEX

A mass for the intentions of all our generous donors is celebrated on 11th of each month, at 11.15am, in the Rosary Basilica, in the Sanctuary of Lourdes.

■ **Front cover photo:** A moment of tenderness during an HCPT festive celebration in the Basilica of Pius X in the Sanctuary of Lourdes. HCPT is 50 years old this year. "Love of neighbour, grounded in the love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community at every level: from the local community to the particular Church and to the Church universal in its entirety. As a community, the Church must practice love." (Benedict XVI in his first Encyclical, paragraph 20). (Photo Vincent)