

# Irish Trust Talk



SPRING 2015

Issue No 92

*“When I think about my week in Lourdes, I can't help but smile”*



# Trust Talk .....Digital

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# THE IRISH PILGRIMAGE TRUST

## THE IRISH PILGRIMAGE TRUST

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# A word from the Chair

James White



Dear Friends,

Easter 2015 is approaching at speed! Hosanna House trip is not far behind and Friendships weeks are coming into focus. April 5th will be here before we know it.

At this stage, flights and hotels are booked, awaiting the arrival of 1,100 happy people from Ireland who will join with 5,000 people from 12 countries who are following

in the footsteps of Brother Michael Strode who almost sixty years ago took off to Lourdes and saw the potential which today has matured into an organisation which will continue and grow. In his own words we are "Changing lives through Pilgrimage, sharing God's gifts of Love, Friendship and Joy" We are not only changing the lives of our guests but we are all changed by being part of the Trust family what ever part we play.

This year's theme is "Rejoice" What a great word. When you Google it you get the following definition:

It is to "feel or show great joy or delight" We can say with some confidence anyone who travels with the Trust will likely experience these feelings.

It's synonymous with happiness, pleasure, joy, gladness, delight, elation, cheer, jubilation, euphoria, celebration, revelry, merrymaking and festivity.

I can say over the years with the Trust I have felt all of these and more. So what an apt theme. Let us "Rejoice"

My thoughts are with all 46 Group leaders and Bernadette and her team in HQ who are battling with forms, passports, scheduling visits and the fund raising. I am sure some are wondering why they took it on. We should all stop and take a moment to recognise the generosity of this group of people. Their quiet commitment is second to none.

But those of us who have been there know why people give so much, it is because this is truly a sharing experience. This can only be explained in my view by the "family" unit that each group becomes. Each member will benefit from helping each other, whether we are guest, carer, leader, nurse, chaplain, staff, officer, trustee or benefactor. It is a real privilege.

This year we also bring for the first time Bishop Donal McKeown who was installed as Bishop of Derry on the 6th April 2014 to Lourdes with us. Let us ensure that he is made very welcome, whether at the Irish Mass, in your hotel or on the street. He will be celebrating his first anniversary with us!!

At this time of year we tend to concentrate on the Easter pilgrimage but at the same time our Hosanna House groups are getting ready for their June pilgrimage. We will bring 90 people to Lourdes for what is a very unique experience. If you are interested in traveling either as a guest or carer please let us know.

Also a very special part of the Trust's work is our friendship weeks. We have two super facilities, Kilcuan and Cois Cuain, each offering different opportunities and experiences. If you know of any one that would like to be part of this please let us know.

We will also be launching our 2016 cycle whilst in Lourdes this year. If you or any one you know might be interested please check out our website. It is brilliant fun and a real challenge to all the participants whether cyclists or part of the "back up" team. It's importance to the Trust can not be overestimated. It is vital to our fundraising effort. Please support if you can. In any one-year we give a weeks holiday to circa 1,100 young people whether in Lourdes or Ireland.

These are very challenging times for Charities in Ireland and your Trust is no different. We have just completed a revision of the Code of Practice and we have produced a Safeguarding manual, both of which will be up on the website shortly.

We have also signed up to the Code of Governance which will ensure we are following best practice at all times. Each of us can make sure this happens.

A couple of dates for your diary:

2016 Cycle will be launched in Lourdes at Easter.

2015 Camino de Santiago is set for 27th June

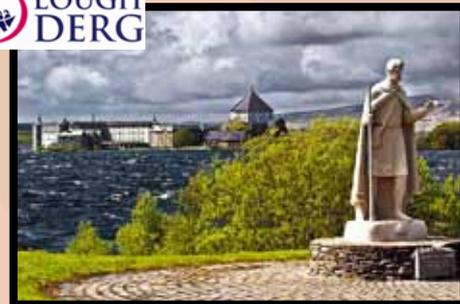
Lough Derg: 19th September 2015.

Wishing each and everyone the very best for 2015.

On behalf of the Trust thank you so much for being part of our family. Please spread the word about what we are about, there are many people who do not know us and are missing out on this very special group of people. This was very evident to us at our stand at the National Ploughing.

Our Lady of Lourdes ..... Pray for us.

Saint Bernadette ..... Pray for us.



**This year we are running the retreat on September 19th 2015. A date for your diary.**

**Contact: [info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com](mailto:info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com)  
or (091)796622 for details**

## *“When I think about my week in Lourdes, I can't help but smile”*

**Just by chance I was given the opportunity to go to Lourdes with Group 135.** At the time I wasn't really interested in going. It was advertised in our school, Colaiste na Sceilge, Cahersiveen, Co. Kerry that two students had the opportunity to go to Lourdes with the local Cahersiveen group, Group 135, led by Denis Daly. Our chaplain, Ms. Carroll went around to all the senior classes explaining to us that we should definitely apply to travel to Lourdes, as it's an experience not to be missed!



Caoimhe, Niamh and Julie

I wasn't sure, but ended up going because my friend, Julie wanted me to go with her. I knew it would be a good experience, but I didn't realise how good it would be!

That Easter Sunday morning, leaving for the Shannon Airport, I was so apprehensive. I knew none of the other carers (except Julie) and I hadn't met any of the guests. We had some time to chat with the guests to get to know them before we left for Lourdes. They were all so different. Some were shy, some out-going and chatty and others seemed like they needed a lot of care and attention, which was something I feared I wouldn't be able to deal with. I was so nervous in the airport I didn't know how I'd cope during the week as I'd never done anything like this before! We arrived safely that evening, had dinner and went to visit the Grotto for the first time. To be honest, I'm not the holiest of people and I know it sounds cheesy, but I really felt something there. Once you enter the gates to Rosary Square, it's like a new world.

Throughout the week we did so many brilliant things. We went to the baths; visited St. Bernadette's house; took a train around Lourdes; went to Gavarnie; we even had a fancy dress party and that was only a taste of what we did! We also had Mass every day and I never thought I'd say it, but

I absolutely loved Mass! It wasn't like our Masses at home, we had fun, we laughed, we danced and we sang along with all the songs!

When I think about my week in Lourdes, I can't help but smile. It was amazing to see the transformation that happened with some of the guests. Some got more confidence, some were very shy but became more out-going and others just smiled some more each day. The day we were going home, I didn't want to leave. I really had such an unbelievable time. Niamh Nelligan was a major reason why I really enjoyed my time in Lourdes. Julie and I helped care for all the guests but we mainly were with Niamh. Niamh was one of the happiest people I have ever met. Every morning she would wake up smiling and singing and even at the end of the week, when we were all tired and cranky, she kept us laughing with her random outbursts of sounds. These outbursts were mainly during mass when we were supposed to be quiet which we found very funny. Quoting her mom "Niamh was our little bird". She kept everyone in good humour. I was so sad leaving her at the end of the week.

When I try to explain to my friends and family my experience that I had, they will never truly understand what it was like, unless they go and experience it for themselves. My time in Lourdes wouldn't be half as good if I hadn't shared it with the people in Group 135. They really are the nicest people ever. They were so welcoming, friendly and extremely



funny. I don't think I could ever go again with another group because I wouldn't have half as much fun. I can't believe I almost didn't go; I would have missed out on what has definitely been one of the highlights of my year. I would advise ANYONE, if you get the chance to go to Lourdes, go, you won't regret it. Trust me.

**Caoimhe O'Sullivan,  
Transition year Student,  
Colaiste na Sceilge, Cahersiveen, Co. Kerry**

# The National Ploughing Championships 2014

At 07:10 on Tuesday morning 23rd September 2014, five members of the Trust led by Chairman James White arrived at the National Ploughing Championships site in Ratheniska, Stradbally, Co Laois. By 07:45 the group had opened up the Trust marquee on plot 640 and so began a 3-day unique chapter in the history of the Trust. This was the first time for The Irish Pilgrimage Trust to have a presence at the largest annual community based event in Ireland.



This story began 12 months earlier when the Group Leader of 175, Eoin Everard, made an initial approach to Anna May McHugh, Managing Director/Secretary of the National Ploughing Association of Ireland. On 20th March 2014 a letter arrived in head office from the NPA confirming that the Trust was approved to fundraise at the National



Ploughing Championships in September 2014, subject to the NPA's requirements. On 21st March our Board of Trustees approved our participation at the event and this was announced at the National Pre-Pilgrimage meeting in Lourdes the following day. Trust Chairman James White convened a meeting of regional representatives in Lourdes, held during our Easter Pilgrimage. The Lourdes meeting agreed that the primary aim of the Trust's participation at the National Ploughing Championships would be



to promote the Trust to the public, to the volunteers, guests and benefactors. A steering committee was established and held its first meeting in Portlaoise on 5th May.

The committee set to work organising a National Draw with the draw taking place at the Ploughing Championships on 25th September. The National Draw was the primary means of promoting the Trust's attendance at the National Ploughing Championships and also a means to raise much needed funds. An excellent range of prizes became available through

the work of the committee and members of the Trust with the main prize of a new Nissan Pulsar car provided by Nissan Ireland. The National Draw was



launched in Nowlan Park, Kilkenny by hurling legend Henry Shefflin and was promoted in national press, social media and local media throughout the country. Tickets were distributed and sold by Trust groups in each Region throughout the 32 counties.

Meantime, the event planning, management, organisation and promotion for the Ploughing got underway. Plot location, marquee dimensions, electrical and communication services, insurance, health and safety matters, quotations, cost monitoring and control, corporate sponsorship and donations became a part of each day. Facebook and Twitter promotions, local press and radio interviews, agricultural shows and summer fairs were all used to inform the public about our adventure. Monthly meetings reviewed progress, coordinated actions and approved designs. Detailed plans of the Trust's marquee and its projection of the Trust image were

## The National Ploughing Championships 2014

finalised. And then, Tea, coffee, milk, sugar, water, kettle, brochures, sandwiches, flyers, biros, videos, bunting, toilets, sweeping brush, screwdrivers, signs, flags and of course the Balloon! Volunteers were sought to 'man' the 'tent' for the 3-day event



And so, from 07:45 on Tuesday 23rd Sep to 18:30 on Thursday 25th Sep 2014 some 80 volunteers of the Irish Pilgrimage Trust worked a rota system to ensure that every one of the estimated 21,000 visitors whom we met at our tent at the National



Ploughing Championships were greeted with smiling faces. Our National Draw grossed almost €90,000. Our success is attributed to the kindness and generosity of our volunteers, guests and their families, our sponsors and supporters, and everyone who visited the 'tent'.



## CYCLE 2016: Launch in Lourdes



**The official launch of Cycle 2016, our next fundraising cycle to Lourdes, will take place in Lourdes on Thursday evening, 9th April 2015.**

We are looking forward to meeting many of our friends from previous years and anyone who may be considering participating in 2016. The venue for the launch will be announced in the Tatler and also during the Irish Trust Mass on Tuesday morning. The Cycle takes place in France from Saturday 19th March 2016 and arrives in Lourdes on Good Friday 25th March 2016.



***Application forms will be available at the launch. They will also be available from James McHugh at Head Office, Phone No. 091-796622 or from Pat Jordan who can be contacted directly on 087-8119454***



# Easter Week with Group 173 will never be forgotten



It was back in October 2013 when we, Clara Coll and Sinead Gallagher, two fourth year students from Pobail Scoil Falcarragh in Co. Donegal were asked to travel to Lourdes for a week during Easter 2014 with the Donegal Group 173.

We both jumped at the opportunity. We had heard so many stories from our sisters (both travelled as guests in 2013) of how Lourdes is such a wonderful experience; we still didn't really know what to expect!

On the 6th of October we had our first meeting with the group. Here, we finally got to meet the other members of Group 173. We went through the basic things such as forms to be filled in, check if passports were in date and fundraising ideas.

**Fundraising:** In August 2013 both our families organised a fundraising dance for the group in the local hotel, Ostan Lough Altan in Gortahork. We collected over €2,000 in order to help bring the young guests with us to Lourdes. We were lucky enough to have such good people in our community that contributed to our fundraising efforts. We held a Church Gate Collection in our local parish from which we raised €600. We also held a whist drive every Wednesday night in the community hall, from which we also raised €600. Through generous donations from various people we reached our target.

In late February we met again in Letterkenny. Our Group Leader, Alice Rose, talked us through the rules and what we were expected to complete during the week in Lourdes. On the 13th of April, Palm Sunday, all group members and the young people met in The Church of the Irish Martyrs in Letterkenny. This was our first time meeting the young people. Everyone was filled with excitement receiving their group hoodies and t-shirts realising that it was only one week until we set off.

**The time has come:** In the early hours of Easter Sunday morning the lights of a coach rolled into the car park in Letterkenny lighting up the darkness. We said our goodbyes and jumped on the bus and off we went to catch our 7am flight in Belfast Airport. We arrived at our hotel in Lourdes around mid-day and we were treated to lunch straight away. As we had lost a night's sleep due to travelling, we got as much sleep as we could after we were assigned our rooms. We shared a room for the week. After getting forty winks we went to Mass and then back to the hotel for dinner and it was then early to bed.

We couldn't have asked for a nicer group. We had a great mix of characters in our group. The guests had so much



enthusiasm and there was never a dull moment with Group 173. It made the week so much better to see the young people smiling and enjoying themselves all the time. We were always on the go, even though most of the time we were sleep deprived but we didn't care as we were enjoying ourselves too much. It wasn't easy with the alarm clock ringing at 7.30 am every morning but it was so worthwhile. During the week, we went to different Masses and some days had Mass in the hotel. Mass in Lourdes is so different. It's so much more fun and exciting. Everybody dance and sing along, even the priests' dress in crazy costumes. It was one of our main stand out moments of the trip. If only mass in Donegal could be as lively and exciting!

On Monday we went to the baths. In the evening we attended the HCPT concert in the Underground Basilica. It was so much fun. We truly enjoyed it, dancing and singing along with the group. That night we both attended the student helpers meeting. We mingled with student carers from other groups. We had a sing song and everybody was on their feet. As we would say in Donegal *"bhí craic ar dóigh again"* the craic was 90!



On Tuesday we went on a walking tour of Lourdes. We had an excellent tour guide in that of one Caitriona Coll! We visited the home of St. Bernadette and much, much more.

Wednesday was the day for the beach. Everybody was excited for it. We travelled to St Jean de Luz by the sea. It was a long bus journey but the weather was nice and it would have been a shame not to go to the seaside. We played games on the beach. We had a water fight and our poor group leader Alice Rose got soaked! Somehow the two youth helpers managed to stay dry!! Fr. Eddie Deeny said

# Eastern Region Youth Group

Group 752

Mass and let's just say it was the best Mass that we were ever at!

On Thursday we celebrated Mass in the Underground Basilica. Two of the guests from our group carried the Group 173 banner in the procession of the banners at the start of mass. In the afternoon we helped the young people decorate the group candle. That night we had a fancy dress party with the Newry Group 62, which the young people really enjoyed. Everyone dressed up and it was great craic. As student carers we were invited to partake in night duty with another carer. We talked and giggled until the early hours of Friday morning. Night duty was great craic and we don't know why some of the other carers might not like it!

Friday arrived and this was our last full day in Lourdes. From being on night duty the last night we got the morning off. So, we had a lie in and then went shopping. In the afternoon we went shopping with the guests and then the packing began. We brought the group candle down to the Grotto and lit it that night and this was a very special event.



We departed the hotel in the early hours of Saturday morning. The long journey back from the snow-capped Pyrenees to hills of Donegal began. There was a mixture of emotions in the air. People were happy to be going home but sad to be leaving. When we landed back in Belfast Airport, reality hit that the Group 173 journey was nearly over. We loaded onto the bus and the final few hours of our journey began. As the drop-off points came closer, goodbyes were said and hugs were given. As we got off the bus in Letterkenny, suddenly the week came to an end.

Clara: Firstly, a massive thank you to Group 173 and The Irish Pilgrimage Trust for giving me the opportunity to take part in this wonderful experience. I am so privileged to have been asked to spend that amazing week in Lourdes. It was a totally "baaaaarilliant" experience. Going to Lourdes I had no idea of what to expect, we were all individuals but as the week went on we grew closer and closer, by the end of the journey we were like a family. I made friendships that will last a lifetime. I hope to travel to Lourdes with The Irish Pilgrimage Trust again in the near future.

Sinead: It was an amazing experience. I really enjoyed the week and I would love to travel with The Irish Pilgrimage Trust again. I would recommend for anyone to volunteer as a carer. It was a week that I will never forget. I made friendships and memories that will last a lifetime.

*Clara Coll and Sinead Gallagher*



Youth Group 752 this year will be made up of Students from Newbridge College, Co Kildare, which is very exciting for their Group Leader Vivienne Connolly, as she first travelled to Lourdes as a Student carer from Newbridge College many years ago!

There are 10 young ladies, 2 young men, 2 Dominican priests and a teacher travelling from the college. As an introduction to the Trust, they have recently undertaken a preparation weekend in Cois Cuain, Co Wexford. During this weekend, one of the two male students, Joe Heffernan, celebrated his 18th birthday!



The Trust and the College are very proud of their strong partnership with over 30 past pupils having travelled to Lourdes over the last ten years. Long may it continue!



# Picture Gallery



# Picture Gallery



# My Week in Lourdes - Hosanna House

Liam Buttle

**I have been travelling to Hosanna House in Bartrés for the past 17 years.** First as a carer and then I graduated to group Leader of Group 513 which I presently do. I can very clearly recall my first visit with Fr. Hugh O'Byrne who invited me to come along with the group as a carer.

Yes of course I was so nervous going as I really didn't know what to expect and had no experience of dealing with people with special needs. On day one all fears disappeared very quickly and I was on auto pilot for the week. Thinking about my first visit and the memories that were created I am so happy to have taken part in such a life changing experience. It can get very emotional at times, as some pilgrims are really sick. But, they always keep their chins up no matter what. They make you appreciate how lucky we are to be in good health.



Hosanna House is a place that will hold a special place in my heart forever as I make friends young and old there on every trip. It is situated in such a tranquil setting in the foothills of the Pyrenees and to watch the sunrise and sunset is breathtaking. The group have the freedom to experience the beautiful walks in the gardens with a spiritual aspect, up to the sheepfold and on to Bartrés. There is something special about Hosanna House, something magical, that attracts me, and my fellow volunteers back every year. It has a surreal atmosphere there, one that I believe cannot be recreated.



The group participate in all activities at the grotto which are planned and pre booked before travelling. The grotto is another place where it is like a dream, the place is always shrouded in silence. Thousands of people flock here every day to give

praise and it is a beautiful place. You can just sit here for hours if you wanted to and just enjoy the peace.

The day trip is very popular and of course the daily picnics, the evening entertainment and of course the sports evening. Many of the helpers re-live their youth again and have great fun.

So, for me to describe Lourdes in a few words I would say very enjoyable, very tiring because of the early morning, life changing experience and of course inspiring. Would I go back? Yes in a heart beat.

Many of my friends ask me why I go to Lourdes each year, get up early every morning, and put myself through the rigours of working such a long day with an inherent lack of sleep. What I say to them is simple. I really love it.



In hindsight, looking back on the last few years, I couldn't have asked for more. Although, I feel exhausted, fatigued and worn-out every year, Lourdes has been, and will continue to be, a memorable experience for me. I don't think my experience in Lourdes would have had been as enjoyable if it wasn't for the group of people I was amongst.

I am really looking forward to, and planning my return for this year's pilgrimage.

## Great Joy in Northern Region

There was great joy in the Northern Region with the recent weddings of two group leaders.

**Janine Kelly** Group Leader of Group 67 married **Jarlath Laverty** in November 2014 and **Liam Morrow** Group Leader of Group 68 married **Fiona Gallagher** in January 2015. Everyone wishes both couples every happiness in their married lives and we look forward to meeting them in Lourdes at Easter.



# “It was my little Lourdes Miracle”

Elma Griffin

Easter Sunday 2014 as Conor and I travelled to meet the Group 135 bus in our local village, Conor stated with a degree of clarity that I have rarely if ever witnessed in him, “Mom, I’m nervous.” My son with the learning disability who speaks with a stutter and repeats himself particularly when anxious



had made this simple statement.

As a family we had played on the ‘hype’ for months prior to this impending departure so that Conor would want to travel to Lourdes with the Irish Pilgrimage Trust Group 135.

But in truth we really did not know what to expect. We had hoped it would serve to develop Conor’s independence and self esteem but that was a big ask.

We talked while waiting for the bus to arrive and when it came along he boarded with some trepidation and that was it. He was gone.

Over the next number of days when I tried to check in with him I got excited messages such as “Oh Mom we were dancing at Mass” or “I was a great goalie” all of which left me elated but yet curious about this pilgrimage that my son was on.

On Saturday evening, Conor alighted that bus again amidst a cloud of kisses and handshakes and a tangible air of comradeship, fellowship and love that was infectious. He said good bye. I could see he was torn. He didn’t want it to be over, yet he was tired and happy to be home.

He related stories, way into the night, from under drooping eyelids, still too excited to sleep. He spoke of magic tricks, water pistols and Kerry v’s Cork football games. He told us of desserts every day after dinner, Lourdes Mushroom Soup and TV in his bedroom. He dropped names like, Aidan, Denis, Ashley, Roisin, Noreen, Margaret Mary, John, Dermot, Zelig and Caoimhe and many more besides, like they were old family friends that we just ought to know.

He spoke of long walks and people who needed his help. He spoke about St. Bernadette. He told us about the young girl who told him she would “keep him in her heart forever.” And that was when he admitted that he might be in love! He spoke about how much fun he had with Fr Alan and then he asked “when can we go again?”

This has been such a great opportunity for us and I want to sincerely express my gratitude.

Yes it did serve to develop Conor’s self esteem and independence. It helped him to believe in himself, he felt

the fear and did it anyway. He learned of new places and new people. He learned about helping others. He had fun. He felt safe and well looked after. He was part of a club, a group, - **GROUP 135!**

As his Mom, it helped me to step back and realise Conors abilities instead of concentrating on his disabilities. I now know with confidence, that if surrounded by good people like those on the Irish Pilgrimage Trust and those who boarded that bus with him, Conor will be ok. That may not sound very important but it is a huge relief for any Mom of children with additional needs.



Oh my God! I can now remember that I forgot to mention all the background work that became so obvious in the end, the door names for his room with

pictures of his favourite things like tractors and diggers, or the scrap books and photographs that were painfully time consuming yet invaluable to us and the kids to jog the memories and lock the trip into our hearts. Oh look, I could go on and on. You all know what you did. It was hard work but Bless you All, ye did it for Conor.

It was my little Lourdes Miracle.

*Mile Buiochas.  
Elma Griffin.*

## Celebrations in South East



**Lisa Redmond** the new Group Leader of Group 92 married **Tom Brown** on Dec 29th. 2014.

# For the Archives: My Story My Time

Vinny Savage



**Firstly, I would like to state that this is 'my story' of 'my time' - the years I've been involved in the Trust.**

My name is Vinny Savage. I have a form of Cerebral Palsy and a good humour. I went to the vocational school in Nenagh where we were due to have a retreat given by a priest by the name of Fr. Fonsie Doran. I think he was a Redemptorist priest, and he was also involved in an organisation called the Irish Handicapped Children's Pilgrimage Trust, now known as the Irish Pilgrimage Trust. Fonsie asked myself and two other lads, Willie Barry and Michael Walsh if we would like to travel as guests to Lourdes with the Trust the following Easter. He was a brave man asking three young teenagers to travel, but he did and after a bit of hesitation we agreed.

We travelled with group 61 and did all the normal things that groups do while in Lourdes. We were also allowed to share a room together that made our week even more fun. Even now I can't put in print some of the things we got up too. Fonsie's right hand man that year was a man called Ian Bangham. Other names that come to mind were Anthea O'Grady and Moyna Troddyn.

Ian used to let the three musketeers take the odd stroll around the town on our own which we did with great excitement and sometimes devilment. One of the main things the group did that year was to compose a group song. It started off as follows: ***"We're Group 61 and we're the best! There's no doubt about it we beat all the rest. We've got Dr. Mary who is full of zest. We are the best group in the land"***.

As with all trips this one came to its end and we all went home. Years pass, as they do; I was now working in the Local Authority now known as Tipperary County Council. One day a phone call came from my old friend Ian Bangham who informed me that the trust were starting a new group to be known as the Jet Set, which would consist of young adolescents with various disabilities and would I be interested in going on the trip as a helper. My role in hindsight was a link between helper and guest; being someone who was a helper and had a disability. The group differed in that each day we had discussions about life with our disabilities and how it affected our daily lives. We had great craic that year. Another difference from a 'normal group' was at night time; the guests stayed up with the helpers! Fr. Fonsie was the chaplain and each night we had our night prayers and then went to our rooms. Fr. Fonsie would go off to bed and after ten or so minutes, when the coast was clear, with Fr. Fonsie asleep, all the helpers and guests would sneak back down stairs and the party would begin!

The following year Group 165 was born in North Tipperary and was joined with Group 114 from Birr and Group 108 to form the Midland's Region. Group 165 Leaders over the years have been Eileen Donnelly, Francis Walls, Matt Hanly, Michael Hanly, Mary Hogan, Michael Carroll and myself. I hope I haven't forgotten anyone and this year 2014, we figure is the 30th year that the group will have travelled to Lourdes,

taking guests from the North Tipperary and surrounding areas.

I fit into the line of group leaders after Matt Hanly. It was decided by the group, that as the Trust was basically set up to benefit people with disabilities, our group would put my name forward to be Group Leader for the coming year. It is fair to say that this idea went down better with some trustees at the time, than others and the debate began. This was the first time in the history of the Trust that a guest had 'volunteered' to take on the role of group leader. The question was could a lad with a physical disability take on the role as group leader? What would parents think if I turned up on the door step telling them that I was the leader of the group who was planning on taking their Johnny or Mary away from their home for a week? Would I be able to carry out the role as group leader to the full? Basically, could I organise the whole thing from start to finish? In the end I got the go ahead to be group leader.



The first year came and went, running into the second, third, fourth and so on; I must say I enjoyed my time as group leader. Funds were raised on time each year. Guests were found, though getting a little harder each year as time went on. The joy and relief you feel getting off the bus on the Saturday after a successful trip is second to none. The sadness looking back over the years is the loss of guests and helpers who have passed away. It would take a real good book to write all that has happened over the years as group leader/helper and that might be for another time.

Today, as Regional Chairman for the Midlands, I would like to thank the Irish Pilgrimage Trust for the trust they have placed in me over the years. I would like to thank all the past and present helpers, fund raisers and guests who have travelled with the group over the years. I would like to think that my dealings and time with the trust has helped to form the person I am today. Some would say 'a chancer'. I'll leave it there!

Oh! I nearly forgot the end of my story. As many helpers would tell you, one of the nicest things you can do as a helper is to take time out at night when all are in bed and go down to the Grotto for a quiet prayer. I've done that on numerous occasions asking for my own miracle. My miracle turned out to be a marriage, as I met my lovely wife Edel in Lourdes, she has also travelled for many years as a helper. If I forgot to put this in my story I'd be shot! Maybe time for another miracle!

## 2014 Ring of Kerry Charity Cycle raises over €1.5 million!

**On July 4th over 10,500 cyclists cycled the Ring of Kerry Charity Cycle and in the process raised a staggering €1,569,000 for local charities in Kerry.**

The event, now in its 32nd year, is the biggest one day charity fundraising event in Munster, attracting thousands of leisure cyclists who will experience a fun and rewarding day's cycling, completing 112 miles of the spectacular Ring of Kerry, while at the same time fundraising for worthy Kerry based Charities. To date the Ring of Kerry Cycle has raised over €8.4 million for Kerry Charities.

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust enjoys a close association with the Ring of Kerry Charity Cycle with many of our volunteers also involved with various aspects of the cycle, including medical, sweeps, management of stops as well as committee members Brendan Coffey (Group 66 and Cycle) and Chairperson Tim O'Brien (Group 66 and Cycle). Timo has been a long serving member of Group 66 (28 years) and acted as Chairperson of the Southern Region for many years.



Everyone associated with the cycle shop are delighted and proud that the 2014 Ring of Kerry Charity Cycle has been such an amazing success. We will remember everyone who helped make it happen in our prayers at the Grotto in Lourdes. A huge thank you to everyone who purchased the jersey. The registration for the 2015 ROK Charity Cycle is due to open in the coming weeks and it is sure to fill up quickly so watch the facebook page to avoid disappointment. There is a fantastic clip on youtube which will inspire you all to get the bike out again and start the training! Please check it out and spread the word.

We are most grateful to the committee for allowing the Southern Region to manage the Official Ring of Kerry Charity Shop in 2014 and with the help of some very hardworking volunteers we raised €60,000 through the sale of the cycle jerseys. The assistance of the following shops should also be acknowledged as they sold the ROK jerseys for us at no additional cost at a time that was already very busy for them.

David O'Sullivan, O'Sullivan Cycles, Killarney  
Joe O'Shea, O'Shea Cycles, Killorglin  
Eamon Casey, Casey Cycles, Cahersiveen  
Jim Cantillon, Kelliher's Hardware, Tralee  
Brian Finnegan, Finnegan's Cycle Shop, Kenmare



These 2 videos highlight how amazing things can happen when people work hard to raise money for charity.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3PU4HgrubU&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGKxoGrc0tQ&feature=youtu.be>

## Breaking News



This year the Trust is to be the "Nominated Charity" to benefit from the **2015 Sean Kelly Tour of Waterford Cycle**, which will take place next August.



# Last Will and Testament

I, the undersigned,  
.....

## Your Lasting Gift

Over the last year you may have been to Lourdes with us at Easter or in June or maybe experienced the wonder of a Friendship week in Kilcuan or Cois Cuain. You may have travelled some years past or you might have been one of our many supporters. Whatever your involvement please help us to keep the treasured memories continuing.

One way of doing this is to leave a gift in your will. A gift will help us to continue to give future generations of special guests the unique experience of an Irish Pilgrimage Trust holiday in Lourdes or to one of our holiday homes in Ireland.

May, a longtime supporter of the Irish Pilgrimage Trust, has left a gift in her will and says:- *“I’ve been going on pilgrimage to Lourdes for many years helping many amazing guests. I’ve seen at first hand the positive effects for both the special guests and for carers. The joy and magic is priceless! I really want this work to continue so that more guests and their families can benefit in the same way in the future”.*



**“With your help of a gift in your will, we can continue to offer this lifetime experience to future generations of special guests and their families for the years ahead.”**



Please contact us at [info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com](mailto:info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com) or on (091) 796622 for advice and information about how you can leave a gift to the Irish Pilgrimage Trust.

*“We are not called by God to do extraordinary things, but to do ordinary things with extraordinary love.”*

*Jean Vanier*