



Irish Trust Talk

Spring 2014

Issue No 90

*"Go tell the priests to come
here in procession and
build a chapel here."*

"Give me joy in my heart".

Trust TalkDigital

We are continuing to distribute the Trust Talk by e-mail. If you are not currently receiving a copy, or you know someone who would like a copy by e-mail please e-mail us at info@irishpilgrimagestrust.com and we will add you to our list.

If you would prefer to receive a copy of Trust Talk by post, please send us your full name and address.

I would like to receive a copy of
Trust Talk BY POST:

Name:

Postal Address:

OR

I would like to receive a copy
of Trust Talk BY E-MAIL:

My e-mail address is:

or e-mail:

info@irishpilgrimagestrust.com



Safeguarding Officers



Liam Ahern



Mary Dunnion

Designated Trustees with responsibility for the safety, welfare and protection of our guests

Contents

	3
A Word from the Chair	4
Jottings	5
A Weekend in Cois Cuain	6
Double Ordination	7
Creating Archives	8
Easter Week in Lourdes	9
Picture Gallery	10
A Students Story	12
Jason recalls his first pilgrimage	13
Hosanna House	13
DUH Croatia from first principles	14
Trust Update	15
Thank You	16

THE IRISH PILGRIMAGE TRUST

THE IRISH PILGRIMAGE TRUST

Kilcuan,
Clarinbridge,
Co. Galway
Tel: 091 796622
Fax: 091 796916

E-mail: info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com

Web: www.irishpilgrimagetrust.com

Chairperson: James White

E-mail: jameswhite10@gmail.com

National Co-ordinator: Bernadette Connolly

E-mail: bconnolly@irishpilgrimagetrust.com

Kilcuan Manager: James McHugh

E-mail: jmchugh@irishpilgrimagetrust.com

Administrator: Maureen O'Loan

E-mail: moloan@irishpilgrimagetrust.com

Administrator: Zoe O'Dea

E-mail: zodea@irishpilgrimagetrust.com

Cycle Organiser: Pat Jordan

E-mail: pjordan@irishpilgrimagetrust.com

Board Members

James White	Chairperson
Liam Ahern	Vice Chairperson Safeguarding Officer
Damian McNicholl	Treasurer
Fr Michael McGrath	Trust Chaplain
Mary Clancy	Honorary Secretary
Dr. Bridget Keane	Trust Doctor
Teresa Lee	Trust Nurse
Denis McCarthy	PRO
John O'Reilly	Archives/History
Tom Doyle	Safety Officer Trust Talk Editor
Helen Kirwan	New Group Leader Training Merchandise
Annette McDermott	Hosanna House/JetSet
Aidan Grealis	Student Co-ordinator
Mary Dunnion	Safeguarding Officer
Caroline Bennett	HCPT representative



Charity No.: 5992

A word from the Chair

James White



Dear Friends,

Easter 2014 is coming fast, Hosanna House trip is not far behind and Friendships weeks are coming into focus. The Trust is now truly a year round operation!

The task of bringing 1,100 of us to Lourdes is all in place with flights booked from Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Shannon and hotels awaiting our arrival. Regretfully again this year we will have groups travelling early in the morning and late

at night but this cannot be avoided due to cost. I hope all those travelling will understand and try and make it as comfortable as possible for our guests.

This year we are celebrating a special anniversary, that is the 30th year of the biennial cycle. It is no exaggeration to say that without this phenomenal fund raising event we would have struggled over the years to have been able to give the gift to our guests of this very special week in Lourdes. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our cyclists and back up teams over the years, many who keep returning and I believe a few have been there since the beginning. They not only put themselves through a rigorous training program but also raise significant funds. I am sure no one will mind if I give a special mention to two people whose inspiration, generosity and selflessness has ensured that this event has lasted 30 years and is still going strong. Of course I refer to Pat Jordon and Dr. Michael McGloin. On behalf of all in the Trust, past present and future a huge Thank You to you all!

Speaking of Anniversaries, The South East region are celebrating their 40th anniversary. It is amazing to think the small group that travelled in 1974 has handed on such a legacy to us. 40 years ago one group travelled, this year eight groups from the South East will travel to Lourdes including for the first time Group 65 who are based in Wicklow. That is a total of 200 pilgrims each year! Also every June we have the Hosanna Group with 45 people going to Lourdes. Two years ago the Trust opened "Cois Cuain" in the region. This is the Trust's second holiday home and since opening 1,000 people used this house. It proves from little acorns.....! All are invited to celebrate with the region on Sunday 25th May in Wexford. See details later.

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. But we know come Easter Sunday and the days that follow, that every moment is worth it. This is a gift to us all not only to our guests

For each and everyone of us will experience the great joy that this week brings to our lives whether we be guest, carer, trustee or officer. Thank God for the privilege.

This year we also bring for the first time Bishop Billy Crean, Bishop of Cloyne, 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.

This year's theme for the Irish Trust is *"Give me joy in my heart"*.

What an apt theme for this years pilgrimage. We all need to experience Joy in our hearts and what better place to experience it than in Lourdes with all our special friends. As we know we can not all travel to Lourdes but we can experience the joy by being involved, we all make up the parts that allow the Trust to operate so whether by caring, fundraising, donating, planning or praying with the Trust, we can experience this "Joy" that we receive by our involvement.

We recently had the privilege of hosting the Conjoint in Ireland. The conjoint includes all the boards of the various trusts that make up our Family. The minutes of this are available on our Website.

Many things were discussed over that weekend but what was very clear is that we are a unique family made up of many different people coming from different places but united by something very special. This family has a huge amount to offer each other. The family is made up of Carers, Guests, officers and staff and together we can continue to bring to life the great dream of Brother Michael Strode, our founder, who is now in his 91st year. I think what binds us is love and it is well stated in the HCPT strategic plan in the following vision "Changing lives through pilgrimage, sharing God's gifts of love, friendship and joy"

At this time of year we tend to concentrate on Easter, 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 travelling either as a guest or carer please let us know.

Also a very special part of the Trust's work is our friendship weeks here in Ireland. 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.

A couple of dates for your diary:

- 2014 Cycle, bookings I believe there may be a few spaces left, if interested please contact the office.
- Lough Derg day is on the 13th September.
- South East 40th Thanksgiving Mass and Party, 25th May in Wexford.

Please keep checking the Website for news and updates.

Wishing each and everyone the very best for 2014.

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

James White

JOTTINGS

Congratulations to the 54321 Team on the success of the challenge in September 2013 which raised €19,000.

5 People, 4 Days, 3 Cycles, 2 Mountains for 1 Cause

Day 1 Cycle from Tralee to the foot of Mount Brandon and then climb Mt Brandon. Day 2 Cycle from Dingle to Killarney. Day 3 Climb Carrauntoohil. Day 4 Cycle the Ring of Kerry.



Back row, L-R: Catherine Foley (189) Martin McCarthy, TJ O'Connor, Noreen Sheahan, Mark Murphy.
Front L-R Eoghan O'Grady (305), Oliver Butler (66) Carol Moran (54321) and James Foley (305).

Congratulations to Kirsty Collins



Kirsty received the 'Super Sibling of the Year 2013' award at the Maternity & Infant Awards in November. Kirsty travelled to Lourdes with the **Family Group, Group 145** last Easter where we all got to witness what a truly super sibling she is to her brothers' Sean & Oliver and what a great help she is to her mum & dad, Lorna & Michael.

Well done Kirsty!



Congratulations on another successful 1 day retreat in Lough Derg last September.

This year the we are running the retreat on September 13th 2014. A date for your diary.



People of the Year, Co Wexford Hall of Fame



Congratulations to **Maureen Rossiter** on achieving the Hall of Fame. Pictured here being presented with the trophy at the Wexford Person of the Year event.

24 Hour Turbothon, Kenmare



FR: Eadaoin Healy.
BR: Diarmuid McCarthy, Sheila O'Sullivan, Suzanne Teahan, Lydia O'Shea, Fionan O'Sullivan



L-R: Diarmuid McCarthy, Barry Fitzsimons, Margaret McCarthy, Sheila O'Sullivan

Sheila O'Sullivan organised a 24 hour Turbothon – two people spinning on stationary bikes – in Kenmare to raise funds for her Group 90. Sheila recruited the support of her triathlon club to help with the event. They organised a rota of cyclists to cycle continuously for 24 hours. This event raised over €4,400 thanks to the very great support of the organisers and the generosity of the people of Kenmare

Conor Dillon Group 136



At **Your Service** on RTE 1, St. Stephen's Day featured **Conor Dillon** who travelled with Group 136 in 2012. Conor successfully challenged the Brennan brothers to renovate the CASA Respite Centre in Malahide, Co Dublin. **"Conor is an amazing young man who we've known for years, so we really wanted to do something special for him"**, says John Brennan.

A Weekend in Cois Cuain, Co. Wexford

The 136 Reunion

In early November

Group 136 hosted their long overdue and highly anticipated reunion from Lourdes 2013. With the memories of Lourdes overwritten by a hot and sunny summer, plans for April 2014 and the dreaded return to School, carers and guests alike were a little nervous. We met early on a wet and windy Saturday morning at the red cow and fears and anxieties were quickly laid to rest. Excitement took over and before we even hit the M50, memories were recovered from the back of our minds, gossip was flying around the cars and we were back to our family group dynamic.



With the summer long gone and the wind whipping up around us, we decided to take a detour on route to Cois Cuain into Wexford's Leisure Max. The staff there were so accommodating and a discounted rate of €10 a head, group 136 spent an afternoon bowling and in the upstairs play area which included sumo wrestling, football, bungee ropes and more. Topped off with an endless supply of orange squash and huge portions of nuggets, burgers or sausages and chips, we left giggling and full!

We then checked in to Cois Cuain where Maureen had the whole house welcoming and inviting – we dreaded to think of the damage that could be done. With the girls dispersed to the upstairs bedrooms and the boys at the back of the house, preening for the hugely anticipated fancy dress party began. Suddenly 136 were replaced with a host of strange characters, dinner was served and the sitting room was transformed into a disco.



It was late in the night before the crew trundled off to bed, tired from dancing, jumping and singing....but of course, not

too tired to talk! Chattering and gossip continued well into the early hours of the morning. Obviously when the alarms went off the next morning, the sound was not welcome but as the smell of sausages, bacon and toast wafted through the house, sleepy heads rose...some with a sprinkling of last night's face paints...

A brisk walk to the beach completed the reunion and with 136 ingrained in the sand, we returned to the Cois Cuain for the final and dreaded farewell. As we got back into the cars, the girls got teary and the boys got moody and Lourdes 2013 was sadly and finally closed.

As an organisation, we are lucky to have such a wonderful resource as Cois Cuain at our disposal – close to Wexford and the beach; it is a fantastic location for a Lourdes reunion. Group 136 are already booked in for 2014.

For more information on Cois Cuain, contact Kilcuan or Maureen Rossiter on 087 647 8101.

For more information on Leisuremax's group discount for the Irish Pilgrimage Trust should contact Aileen at 053 9122900.

Cois Cuain



In 2010, the Trust opened it's second holiday home in Kilrane, Co. Wexford. Situated close to the sea in South East Wexford, Cois Cuain, a self catering house on approximately 1 acre, is spacious and can accommodate 17 people. It is designed for both groups and families with special needs.

For further information;

Contact The Irish Pilgrimage Trust at Kilcuan, Clarinbridge, Co.. Galway -

Tel: 091 796622

E-mail: info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com

www.irishpilgrimagetrust.com

Group 190 Celebrates Double Ordination this Summer

This summer the Diocese of Derry was delighted to celebrate two ordinations to the Priesthood;

Father's Micheál McGavigan and Brendan Collins, who both travelled with Group 190.

Fr. Brendan travelled from 2005 and 2006 as a helper and as group leader for the following two years. Fr. Micheál travelled as a helper in 2007 and 2008. Also both of them travelled from Rome as a part of the pastoral program for the Pontifical Irish College. The Irish Pilgrimage Trust would like to express their congratulations to both Fr.



Micheál and Fr. Brendan in their ministry.

Speaking to Fr. Brendan this week he shared with the Trust some words: I am delighted to be asked by the trust to give an input into this magazine. The Trust holds a very special place in my heart, I was involved with this organisation for many years and I received great fulfilment from the work I was involved with. I believe that some extraordinary happens with this organisation that I have not witnessed anywhere else. For me what sets this pilgrimage apart are it's volunteers, people who work tirelessly in raising funds, home visits, training etc and all in order to bring other people to Lourdes. It is important to remember these volunteers give freely of their time to care for those on pilgrimage and they pay their own expenses for this pilgrimage week. At the heart of what we do are the pilgrims, they give us the reason for why this organisation exists.



This week as I read the Pope's message to members of the Italian National Union for the Transport of the Sick to Lourdes and International Shrines (UNITALSI) I was reminded of the wonderful work of the Irish Pilgrimage Trust.

In his address in complimenting the work of the aforesaid organisation, he also mentions the work of other ecclesial organisations and I believe the Irish Pilgrimage Trust fall into this bracket; *"men and women ... who, moved by the love of Christ and following the example of the Good Samaritan, do not turn away when faced with suffering"*. The Pope continued, *"The poor, even those who are poor in terms of health, are a wealth for the Church, and you, in UNITALSI, along with other ecclesiastical bodies, have received the gift and the commitment of gathering this richness, of helping to recognise its value, and not only for the Church herself but for society as a whole"*.

I believe that the Irish Pilgrimage Trust has given much to society, by the gift of its volunteers whose witness gives testament to the gift this organisation is to the Church. Each person who has travelled with The Irish Pilgrimage Trust in whatever capacity has laid witness to the gift of our Pilgrimage Trust.



We know from the story of Lourdes that Our Blessed Mother did not speak at the first two apparitions, when she did speak at the third she said to Bernadette that it was not necessary for her to write down what she was saying. Mary was inviting Bernadette into a relationship, the same relationship is offered to us. Mary wanted to show Bernadette the love that is present for each one of us, Mary and Bernadette spent time together. Central to the message of Lourdes is giving each other time, The Irish Pilgrimage Trust is all about time, it can often be about being silent at the beginning just like the first two apparitions and then begin to talk.



I wish the Irish Pilgrimage Trust every success for pilgrimage 2014 and I hope to return to travel with you in the not too distant future.

In prayer, Brendan.

CREATING ARCHIVES AND A WRITTEN HISTORY OF THE IRISH PILGRIMAGE TRUST



The Board of Trustees have decided to establish an archive record of the history of the Trust from its humble beginnings in 1972 along with a written record of people's memories and experiences



of being a Pilgrim as guest or carer with the Trust over the past 45 years. It is hoped that once established it will be added to year by year so that we will have a continuous record of the extraordinary work carried by so many people associated with this very special charity.



WE NEED YOUR HELP TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN...YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

A. ARCHIVE MATERIAL

The first objective is to collect as much material and memorabilia as we can for display in glass cabinets in Kilcuan. There will be a cabinet dedicated for each of the decades, e.g. one for the 1970's, '80's, '90's etc. In each cabinet we would like to show any or all of the following:

- Group photos
- Hats, badges, scarfs, sweat shirts, rain gear
- Christmas cards, post cards,
- Letters from guests and their families
- Copies of old Trust Newsletters
- DVD's,
- Any other items that reflects your special moments with the Trust

B. WRITTEN HISTORY

The second objective is to put together a written record of people's personal recollections, memories, funny and sad moments, stories old and new, friends made and of the many personal moments that make Lourdes, Kilcuan and Cois Cuain so special to us all. We hope that these personal memoirs will come from carers and guests alike.

Please put pen to paper or preferably by e-mail; a max of 600 words or two pages of A4. Please send your stories to John O'Reilly or Bernadette Connolly at the following addresses "joreilly05@gmail.com" or "bconnolly@irishpilgrimagetrust.com" Or send by post to "Trust History" at HQ

John O'Reilly
086-8523498.

The Irish Pilgrimage Trust fly Jumbo in 1985



Easter week in Lourdes 2013 will be forever remembered.

by Tanitha Tolan, Student with Youth Group 751

“We met as strangers, travelled as friends and came home as family”

It has been nearly a year now since my unforgettable experience in Lourdes with Youth Group 751 and Group 164, and what I would do to be back in its warm, welcoming and energetic atmosphere. But all good things must come to an end, as the cliché goes. Without a shadow of a doubt our journey to Lourdes has been the pinnacle of my life so far! Easter week there was the most memorable week ever and I will cherish those memories for the rest of my days.

Our true journey to Lourdes though started long before March of 2013. In October 2012 Youth Group 751 was assembled. Twenty 5th year girls were chosen, ten from St. Joseph's Secondary School in Castlebar and ten Mount St. Michael's Secondary School in Claremorris. We were a good team and anyone could tell that we got on amazingly, right from the first meeting. Meetings were organised for the Sunday of every second week in either Castlebar or Claremorris. Under the wings of our helpful leaders and Chaplain Fr. Mike Murphy all of us huddled together and began fundraising to bring many children and young adults with special needs to Lourdes.



FUND RAISING: Fundraising consisted of carol singing at Christmas; a Christmas concert; making and selling St. Bridget's crosses in February and many more fundraising ideas, and we fortunately raised what was needed. Over that period of time also, all the girls and leaders in our group grew closer and closer as our months together progressed. We bonded so well together and by the time our trip to Lourdes rolled around we were practically a family!

Lourdes was better than I imagined! It was full of life and hustle and bustle! Everybody we passed by had a smile on their face. Nobody is ever bored in Lourdes during Easter week. It's literally unheard of! One couldn't go down a street for long in Lourdes without hearing a faint singing of "Rise and Shine" in the distance. Fortunately for our youth group, there was never a dull moment; we were always on the go! Even though most of the time we were totally deprived of sleep, we didn't even care to notice because we were all enjoying ourselves so much. We would spend most of the day with our assigned groups and then return to our own youth group in the evenings. With our designated groups we would go on day trips e.g., visit the Grotto; the scenic Gavarnie; go to the baths; visit the home-place of St. Bernadette and much more.

There was an endless list of things to do there! Mass in Lourdes was like a concert. It was eventful and so much fun,

with everybody on their feet dancing, dressed in crazy costumes and singing hymns and songs. It was one of the main highlights of the trip. If only Irish masses back home were just as spirited and vigorous as mass in Lourdes? In the evenings we would return to our Youth group, hit the town for pizza or ice cream and have late night céilís, ceol agus craic in the middle of the restaurant. Everyone would join in, the craic was 90!

Spending time and getting to know the children in my Group 164 was definitely the highlight of my week. I'm sure everyone else in our Youth Group felt the same way about their assigned groups too. When the guests smiled and laughed it warmed my heart. They taught me that one does not need the best of the best materially to be happy. I miss them now and I hope they know how much more enjoyable they made my week just being with them and getting to know them. It was an honour to know and care for them and they cared for us too.



Also we were so lucky to meet and become friends with all the other groups and friendly people from around the world. Hopefully we will cross paths again.

Every day in Lourdes was a blessing and I am so privileged to have been picked to spend that precious week there. I will never forget it. It was an absolutely breath taking and life changing experience. To the girls of 751 you're most amazing group of girls I have ever met in my life you are "simply the best".



We are the closest that friends can be, we are a family through and through and I have had the absolute honour to have shared that journey from October 2012 to April 2013! Also a MASSIVE THANK YOU to all our Youth Group leaders and the Irish Pilgrimage Trust - you gave us the opportunity to live through that significant week. We wouldn't have had the chance to go there without your help.

Easter week in Lourdes 2013 will be forever remembered.

Picture Gallery



Picture Gallery



A Student's Story

Ross Cullen
St. Michael's College

It was early in the New Year when myself (Ross Cullen) and eleven other 6th Year Students were told the great news that we had been selected to go to Lourdes for a week in Easter 2013 with the 'The Irish Pilgrimage Trust'.

I had heard so many recommendations from friends, family and students over the years of how Lourdes is such an amazing experience, but with still no idea of what to expect, we all got straight to work in preparation for April.



First we had a very detailed course in manual handling and lifting, where we also got to meet some of our group members for the first time. We students also had a big task on our plate, we had been informed that part of our job was to raise

money in order to help bring the young with us to Lourdes. We took this challenge from all angles and were very successful. We organised a 1st Year social disco, a coffee morning and had various raffles and other events. We raised over €5,000.

Over the following weeks, we all got introduced to our groups. Myself and fellow 6th Year Student, Michael Jordan (not the basketball player), were so lucky to get put with Group 136. We were welcomed with open arms by all the carers to the group. In March we met the remainder of the group and all the young people. Friendships were forged immediately and everyone was filled with excitement with just 2 weeks until we set off.



In early April we gathered with our groups in Terminal Two of Dublin Airport, after a short talk from our teacher we were assigned rooms in groups of two for the hotel in Lourdes. We arrived at our hotels in the middle of the night and got as much sleep as we could as we all knew that the week that followed would be an experience that would stand to us for the rest of our lives.

I will never forget the feeling of walking into the hotels of our groups for the first time. The adrenaline from nerves and excitement were racing around my body but we had no need to



worry. We couldn't have asked for anything more from our guests and their enthusiasm, high spirits and gratefulness for our assistance was really the highlight of every day.

It wasn't easy with the 7.30am starts and the 11.00pm finishes but it couldn't have been more worthwhile. Throughout the days, we had different religious services took place such as mass and going to the baths. We knew a lot about the young people and the difficulties they faced at home – the way they smiled and laughed over the course of the week filled me with a great sense of achievement.



We all came as individuals to Lourdes and I had no idea what to expect, but by the end of the trip we were like a family. There was really a great mixture of characters in our group which really helped us gel together. On the last night, we had a recollection session of the trip. We each picked a name out of a hat and said a few nice words about them, it was so difficult find just a few words and we found the evening running later and later. Being able to do that after only a week shows the great lengths Group 136 go to make sure each guest gets the best out of the week in Lourdes. From talking to the other students, I know that Group 136 is not unique in their ability to do this and I think that is a most extraordinary gift to give to others. I am thoroughly looking forward to my next pilgrimage to Lourdes with the Irish Pilgrimage Trust.



‘Give me Joy in my Heart’

One of the important items on the agenda for the autumn meeting of the trustees every year is to consider a theme for the Easter Pilgrimage the following Easter.



It is considered with at least half a glance at the Pastoral Theme that the chaplaincy of the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes suggests for every pilgrimage for the following season. The Pastoral Theme for 2014 is Lourdes, the joy of conversion. For young Bernadette, the encounter with the Beautiful Lady was a moment of deep joy. It was a moment when heaven bent towards Bernadette and the experience inspired her to answer the Lord's call.

Following in her footsteps pilgrims for over one hundred and fifty years have been attracted by the call to conversion and have experienced Lourdes as a place of great joy. It is the same joy that the young wedding couple at Cana found when at Mary's word Jesus turned water into wine and saved the day. It is the joy of conversion that brought the little man Zacchaeus down from the tree to share a meal with Jesus. It is the same joy that is on offer to all, who at Mary's invitation will board the plane on Easter Sunday next.

Even a quick glance through any old photographs from pilgrimages past will be enough to convince anyone of how special a place Lourdes is, how joy filled the experience.

It is a place of smiles and sometimes tears of joy well from people's hearts, and notwithstanding the reality of suffering and the darkness that each person carries, something happens in this special place that makes the load a little lighter. ‘Give me Joy in my Heart’ we often sing as a kind of an anthem for our Easter Week of pilgrimage and prayer, and like the constancy of the grotto spring which echoes with our silence and petition, joy flows as an undercurrent to our every prayer. There is something



truly remarkable and even miraculous in the smile you'd often see creeping across the face of some group member whose shoulders carry the weight of terrible suffering. Often the people who sing most robustly of joy in their hearts are ones you'd least expect. One never knows what is going on

deep in the hearts of those around us.

When I look at Bernadette's story, what gives me most comfort is the reality that for her, she was never miraculously cured of her dreadful asthma. She witnessed the joy of acceptance, and that joy never left her. Even long after she left Lourdes, she used visit the grotto in the prayer of her heart while meditating in her convent cell in Nevers. ‘Give me joy in my heart’ it seems was an answered prayer.

Like the spring earth that is slowly surrendering to the colour of daffodils and snowdrops, may we unmask the beauty of God within us and through the prayers of Mary and Bernadette may we have reason to have hearts filled brim-full with joy.



And, so our great prayer and our pilgrimage theme this Easter:

...‘Give me joy in my heart.’

Fr Michael McGrath
Trust Chaplain

DUH Croatia from First Principles

DUH Croatia from First Principles

DUH (Dječja udruga hrabrost) stands for „Children of Courage“, and it is our honour to contribute with this article after our tenth successful pilgrimage to Lourdes in 2013.



At the very start we took the Irish process “lock stock and barrel” and then we figured out that neither lock, stock nor barrel worked very well for us. What we came back to after ten years of building the trust in Croatia, is something that very much approximates the best of what is done by Irish Pilgrimage Trust and HCPT, with a few little extras

we really like. The process of building a Trust from first principles for us had to be done, were we to survive and flourish. The driving and enduring forces that have got us here are: spirituality, vision and adaptability.

Year one – and safely loading a group of 15 onto a TGV in four minutes at Lourdes station is one of the most stressful experiences of our last ten years. It was an early turning point. Our attempt to “copy paste” the Irish system of flying to Lourdes (but in



our case without a charter and with the added complication of a couple of extra bus rides plus a TGV) was where we started the redesign. Step up Tomi Sebek

our first group leader, who brought the vision of the Lourdes road trip/pilgrimage. 26 hours on a bus, albeit with 8 beds, was a challenging way to get there by anybody's standards. We were unmissable with the 6 foot high slogan emblazoned on the side “Jesus and Mary love you“. I felt we were in pretty safe hands.

Far from the bus being a disadvantage, it was adapted into a type of camping on



wheels come team-building. 26 hours all packed in one space leads to some pretty effective time usage. Songs learned, story of Lourdes shared, badges coloured, 6 meals produced, every young person's needs fully investigated and I believe at one stage a rolling mass (thankfully the priest/driver wasn't at the wheel). On arrival, other than needing a good shower, we hit the ground rolling.

The bus served us well for 6 years and set us free of travel logistics and gave us the space to develop many other things we needed to. The challenges were many



as we struggled to find helpers and funding. The close proximity of Medugorje, and Croatian incomes being a quarter of Irish made “selling” the idea a tall order. Started by a bunch of friends working and studying at a private language school, set the tone for the age profile of our Trust. Our board member for recruitment and retention Martina Vukovic, had completed her three year run as group leader by the age of 25 and at present the average age of our board is just 30 years old.

How we selected our young people functions differently also as we work directly with local special needs schools. From starting with one school we now have five that partner us in the process of selection. With all these schools we have ongoing activities during the year for both the benefit of the young people and to develop the strengths of our potential new helpers.



In recent years with new vision, we have returned to the skies. Growing volunteer numbers and EU restrictions on non-stop bus travel, have forced our hand and again we have adapted. DUH has set clear visions moving forward:

- Spirituality at our core
- Growth to sustainability
- Financial independence within the wider HCPT family
- Sharing our knowledge and experience in international development.

As Ivan Naukovic our chairman points out: "Simply put there is no way back –only forward". Through much PR and in response to the challenge of filling a viable charter, we have expanded rapidly from 25 in 2010, to 75 this coming Easter including our Bosnian friends.

And Bosnia & Herzegovina travelling with their own group this year is perhaps one of our greatest successes.



Our first group leader and long-serving president Tomi Sebek set the ball rolling with an invitation to Caritas Mostar to join us. He follows a tradition of bringing the Trust story to a new regions. As English woman Anthea O'Grady brought the idea to Ireland in the 1972 and her son, the same idea to Croatia in 2002, so we as a group are delighted to pass the torch forward and

stand ready to support our Bosnian friends. The help we have received from the Irish Trust and HCPT is immeasurable and it is our honour to continue that tradition of contributing to others.

We are deeply excited about this year. We still have a mountain of fund-raising to gather, new helpers to train, new ideas to be tried and deeper and more loving connections to be shared. Our trinity of adaptability, vision and our spirituality stand at the ready for whatever lies ahead of us as we continue to answer the call of the blessed virgin Mary.



Whether it's a wheel or a wing, we'll definitely be there on a prayer.

Paul O'Grady

TRUST UPDATE Fundraising Co-ordinator

The Trustees have recently strengthened our team by employing on a part time basis Hilary O'Sullivan. Hilary has been tasked with the role of fund-raising coordinator for the Trust.

Her role encompasses two main areas, firstly supporting the Group Leaders, Regional officers and the Board in our fund-raising efforts. This involves training, providing information on various avenues to fund-raising, providing fund-raising packs for various types of events, coordinating approaches to corporate, state, community and church bodies to improve our accessibility to sources of income.

Also and equally it involves compliance. One of the biggest threats to any charitable organisation is compliance and the assurance to our members and benefactors that we are governed in accordance with legislation and best practice. The Charities Act was passed in 2009 but is only now becoming effective with the recent appointment of the regulator. This will put greater responsibilities on the Trust to comply not only with the Act but also with Auditing Standards, whilst we are happy that we are run in a very professional manner the new regulations require a significant amount of time to ensure compliance. This compliance will involve the cooperation of all of us, hence the requirement for a coordinator. Our current structures would not allow for this to be carried out professionally.

We as a Trust have a responsibility to ensure that we are "top of the class" in this regard. We are only minding the Trust for those who are to come. To this end we have recently signed up to the Governance Code. See www.governancecode.ie. This code will be the standard by which we will be judged, if you review their website you will see the level of work involved in this. As we are all aware the recent publicity has made the public cynical about the Charity sector. There are currently 8,000 charities registered in Ireland and I am sure there are more unregistered. As a consequence all charities will be under the microscope.

Hilary's background is that she is a solicitor. She is also a married to Billy and mother of four grown up children. She has very kindly agreed to take on this role and looks forward with the cooperation of all to make it a success.

We will be a success if we can consolidate and improve our fund-raising to ensure we are sustainable going forward. Also we need to ensure that we are fully compliant with all regulations as required by the Charities Act 2009. This is no mean task but by us all working together and being coordinated by Hilary we will get there. It is important for us to understand that Hilary is not the fund-raiser rather a facilitator. Each and everyone of us are the fund-raisers.

Please let us know if you have any comments or queries.

James White
Chairperson

THANKS TO YOU

This young lady travelled to Lourdes with the Irish Pilgrimage Trust last Easter.



AND she was not alone!

YOUR support also made it possible for nearly 500 more young people with special needs to travel to Lourdes too. That's right! Your support resulted in all these people getting the chance of a life time, an opportunity to travel on pilgrimage to Lourdes with The Irish Pilgrimage Trust!

This support was not only from your generous donations, also

- Many of you supported and assisted at numerous fund raising events;
- Some of you have cycled the 700 km to Lourdes on our bi-annual sponsored cycle;
- Many more travelled with us as a group leader, voluntary carer, doctor, nurse or chaplain.

Our voluntary carers are the backbone of the Trust, we simply wouldn't be able to operate without them.

Each year, over 1,100 people; 500 guests and 600 carers travel to Lourdes with the Trust at Easter.

In addition another 90 people travel each June to stay in Hosanna House, the HCPT's holiday home in Bartres, just outside Lourdes. And hundreds more avail of our holiday homes in either Galway or Wexford, where Groups and Families with Special Needs can have a welcomed break.



Cois Cuain, Co. Wexford



Hosanna House



Kilcuan, Co. Galway

The Trust has been going from strength to strength since its founding over 40 years ago. To maintain this growth it needs your continued support, not only with funding, but also if you are interested in travelling as a voluntary carer to either Lourdes or to one of our holiday homes in Ireland, we'd love to hear from you.

*"Everyone desires to contribute in some way to the lives of others.
This is part of becoming fulfilled as human beings."*

Jean Vanier