



13 April 2016

Dear Host/Hostess,

As we start our preparations for the 2016 Pilgrimage to Lourdes we would like to provide an overview of this most important role of Host/Hostess. Some are new to this role and many others are returning. You will know you are a Host/Hostess because there will be an asterisk next to your name on the Team assignments.

ROLE OVERVIEW

The host/hostess is in charge of the pod. Your first task when you get your assignment is to contact one of your Team Captains and let them know you've received the information and are ready to begin contacting your entire Pod. The Team Captains, who also call all on the team, will indicate to you at this time:

- The approximate age of the Malade
- The relationship of the Malade and Caregiver
- Any special needs that the Malade might have
- Any other information which might be useful
- **Important Note:** The Captains do not know the ailment or condition of the Malade, nor should anyone ever ask the Malade or their Caregiver what the Malade's ailment or condition is. If the Malade or Caregiver share this information with you, it is confidential and should always be treated as such.

You are responsible for calling the Malade, Caregiver and your fellow pod members to introduce yourself. This may be a first trip for members of your pod. Sometimes it is hard to reach people so try all telephone numbers and e mail. When you speak, explain that for a pilgrimage as large as ours, we are organized by Teams (color names) and further into "pods." These pods consist of the Malade, their Caregiver, and a combination of Knights, Dames, and volunteers to assist them. Other personnel on each team are priests, doctors, nurses and auxiliary members to assist as well. You may want to take a few minutes and talk about the importance of this pilgrimage for members of the Order of Malta and why we are so pleased they are joining us. For most Malades and Caregivers, this will be their first introduction to our work and they may be a bit nervous about the Pilgrimage so you should put them at ease and answer any questions they may have. If you do not know an answer to a particular question, tell them that you will contact your captain and get back to them.

You should welcome and reassure the Malade and Caregiver that you are there to serve them from the moment you greet them at the airport until you send them on their way from the airport at the end of our journey. You should listen for any concerns they may have. As previously mentioned, *we never ask about or discuss the ailment or condition of our Malades*. If asked, the term Malade is a French word, which means "patient" or "someone who is ill" and we use it as a term of endearment. Please do not use the terms: "invalid, disabled, dying or dependent" with respect to your Malade.

Although our schedules are very full, the Malade is always free to make decisions about how much they want to, or can do, on any given day, as the daily schedule can be tiring for them. If they need extra time for rest, you should help them decide which particular event would be the more important and/or most meaningful event for them to attend. If they decide to stay in their room to rest, a member of the team should stay nearby and the Team Captain / Medical Team must be informed. Remember that it is your responsibility to know where your assigned Malade is at all times and that you should never leave him or her unattended.

The Caregiver is equally important for us and our attention. They benefit as much and sometimes more from the trip than the Malade. When we support the Malade, it gives the Caregiver an opportunity for a break and they often benefit from engaging with other Caregivers. You will want your pod members to be attentive to how the Caregiver is experiencing the pilgrimage and to any needs that they may have. At times, a Caregiver

may struggle to keep up with the pace or may not feel well. The doctor and the nurse on the team are a resource for them and any others on the pod or team.

MEDICAL

Inquire if your Malade requires any equipment such as a wheelchair, walker, cane, or other device. All medications should be packed to accompany the Malade on the airplane, and it will be refrigerated if necessary. Remind the Malades and Caregivers that ***there will be Doctors and Nurses at Gate # B29*** to provide any necessary medications and/or shots that may be required, as well as tend to any needs they may have and answer any questions.

VOITURES

You may describe to them the voiture (transport carriage) that they will be riding in and our tradition of processing as Our Lady requested we do through St. Bernadette. Assure them that the voitures are always placed at the front in all of our Masses. Stress the comfort and practicality of the voitures from protection in inclement weather, a place to rest, and a vehicle to carry extra warm clothing, blankets, umbrellas, cameras and other necessities as may be needed. Water for the day will also be provided for them.

CLOTHING

The Malade and Caregiver will want to know what clothing to bring. You may tell them the weather is unpredictable. It can be cold and rainy, but can also be sunny and hot. He or she should consider various layers that may include:

- Warm, comfortable clothing including sweaters and a warm water proof jacket
- Short-sleeved polo shirts and cotton sweaters
- A lightweight rain jacket with a hood
- Gloves and a stocking hat...a baseball hat works well with the sun
- Long underwear
- Wrist watch
- A turtleneck shirt
- A scarf
- A beach umbrella and poncho will be provided, but a small umbrella is also recommended

Sunscreen and lip screen are a must when we are outdoors. Sunglasses may be needed as well.

You can check the weather report for Tarbes or Lourdes on the Internet in the days before we leave and give them the latest information, but remind them that the weather can fluctuate very quickly.

HOTEL ACCOMODATIONS

A description of the hotel room is simple but adequate. He or she should bring:

- An electrical outlet adaptor for France
- A small flashlight
- A washcloth
- Personal pillow (if desired)
- A regular size bar of soap
- The hotel has wi-fi
- A battery-powered alarm clock
- A hairdryer is provided in the bathrooms.

MEALS

Ask the Malade and Caregiver if they have any special dietary requirements or food allergies that we should know about. Our meals are ample and sometimes wine is served with dinner. A couple of members of your pod should eat all meals with the Malade and Caregiver, however, you should try and sit with different people at each meal so the Malade and Caregiver have the opportunity to meet other pilgrims. At times your pod may decide to stop on the street for coffee, a beer, or even an ice cream treat during the day or evening.

Going for a meal outside of our hotel is discouraged and should be discussed with the Team Captain before any plans or commitments to do so are made.

PILGRIMAGE SPIRITUAL REFLECTION GROUPS

The purpose of our Lourdes Pilgrimage is to offer a spiritual experience for our Malades and Caregivers whom our Members are privileged to serve. During our pilgrimage, the Malades and their Caregivers participate in many spiritual activities and liturgies (i.e. Processions, Mass, Anointing, the Baths) at what seems like a whirlwind pace.

Time for reflection is necessary so that the experience can be understood from the perspective of one's own spirituality. These opportunities are very important and helpful for the participants and are now an integral part of the pilgrimage.

There will be two sessions during the pilgrimage: one on Saturday afternoon and a second on Monday afternoon. We have organized small groups of both Malades and Caregivers and the location details for your team members are in your books (i.e. blue team Malades to Room X). This year a new reflections group is being added for others on the trip (Knights, Dames, Auxiliary, Medical team and Volunteers) because the experience is spiritual for all and we want to provide time to reflect on it while we are together. We encourage you and your pod members to take advantage of these sessions as long as your Malade and Caregiver are taken care of.

No preparation is needed for these reflection sessions. It is a time for sharing or for just listening.

You can mention these reflections briefly on the initial call and you should continue to note it when in Lourdes. Explain that these sessions are an important part of the Pilgrimage and reassure them that someone on the pod will escort them to the right locations. It is often helpful and recommended that, if you have been to Lourdes before, that you share a personal reflection on what it has meant for you from a spiritual perspective.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Assure your Malade and Caregiver they will be able to take any photographs anywhere that they want. Remind them to bring the plug adaptor mentioned above as well as their camera battery charger and/or smartphone charger. Let the Malades and Caregivers know that photographs are taken by a professional photographer and that these are displayed and available for purchase at Photo Lacaze. There is also an American Association photographer with our pilgrimage and she takes many photos of scenery and our group that will be available for all on a web site upon our return. She will be working with you as the host to coordinate a time for a picture of your pod together. This usually happens while the group is outdoors at one of the various locations in Lourdes.

OVERALL

Go over all of this slowly and give your Malade and Caregiver ample opportunities to ask questions and express concerns. Make sure they have your telephone number so they may contact you when needed. You should contact them again one week before we leave as well as the day before to confirm how and when they will arrive at the airport. Confirm you will be there to greet them at JFK Airport. *If they are arriving at JFK Airport by automobile they should allow extra time due to traffic congestion around the airport.*

Let them know they will also receive telephone calls from a member of our medical team and from one of the Team Captains. Inform them you will be contacting their Caregiver to share the same information with them. Suggest that they re-read the information that was sent to them from the American Association office. Also refer them to the Order of Malta American Association website (www.orderofmaltaamerican.org) so that they may look at the photographs from previous pilgrimages. Note how all the pilgrims are smiling!

RESPONSIBILITIES BEFORE THE PILGRIMAGE

1. Call the Team Captain and tell them you have the information.
2. Call the Malade and discuss the above information.
3. Call the Caregiver and discuss the above information
4. Call the other members of your pod. Ask if they have been on the pilgrimage before. If so, they should be aware of the above information however, please review it with them also. Share your knowledge of the Malade and mention the other members of the pod.
5. Call the Team Captains and inform them you have been in contact with all of the above. Advise the Team Captains of any issue that came up, any problems you foresee as well as any observations you have after speaking with the members of your pod, the Malade and/or their caregiver.

RESPONSIBILITIES ON THE PILGRIMAGE

While on the pilgrimage remember we are there *to serve*. The wants and needs of the Malade are your total responsibility and it is up to you to assure they have the best experience possible. As the *“leader” of your pod* you need to make certain:

1. Your pod surrounds your Malade and Caregiver with love, support and respect at all times, listening to their needs and implementing their wants. You are also the mentor for others on your pod, especially for first time new Knights, Dames or those in Prep, and any Volunteers. If this is your first pilgrimage, your Captains will be your mentors or we often assign an experienced Knight or Dame to your pod.
2. Your Malade and Caregiver are accompanied to all meals and sit with other pilgrims.
3. You get your Malade and Caregiver to the Spiritual Reflections group (early if possible).
4. Your pod is ready to process at the appointed time with your voiture in place, the Malade’s blanket, cushion, and umbrella (if necessary) are on hand as well as water and cups...always allow enough morning preparation time before we process.
5. You follow the procession and don’t take alternative, even if shorter, routes.
6. You follow the direction of members of the Order who may be directing traffic.
7. You inform your Team Captain if your Malade and/or Caregiver is not going to process so the procession is not held up.
8. If someone else on your pod will not be processing you inform your Team Captain as well.
9. You accommodate your Malade’s and Caregiver’s desires such as:
 - a. Visits to the Grotto, Baths and the candle area
 - b. Footsteps of Bernadette
 - c. Just sitting quietly wherever they want
 - d. Stopping for something to drink or eat
 - e. Shopping for Lourdes souvenirs at appropriate times

We thank the Staff of the American Association of the Order of Malta for all their help and preparations for the pilgrimage – Jeff Trexler, Ray LaRose, Carla Gunerard, and Matt LaRose.

They will have an office off the Lobby of the Mediterranean Hotel and will be a resource for any needs or questions.