

Maureen Basse
2019 Lourdes Pilgrimage Malade

We were counseled on several occasions, prior to our departure, that the Lourdes Pilgrimage was not a guided tour nor a free vacation to France. The purpose of the Pilgrimage is to offer a spiritual experience for the malades and their caregivers, for whom the Knights and Dames are privileged to serve. During the Pilgrimage, the malades and caregivers participate in many spiritual activities, Sacraments and liturgies.

Over the course of time in Lourdes, we attended Mass every day. The locations included St. Bernadette's Chapel, the Rosary Basilica, the Notre Dame Chapel and the St. Pius X Basilica. The arrangement and scheduling of liturgies was strategic; early in the Pilgrimage we participated in the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and recitation of the rosary, after which we were able to have our confessions heard by one of the many clergy in attendance. This cleansing prepared us for entrance to the Baths of Lourdes several days later, which served as an integral part of our spiritual experience.

Two events figured prominently in our time at Lourdes, the first being the Mass and Anointing of the Sick at the Notre Dame Chapel. While difficult to verbalize, this very special celebration was transformative, both emotionally and spiritually, when Maureen was anointed by the Bishop Emeritus of Hartford Connecticut and then received a commemorative medal from Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York. Likewise, we received a special message from Cardinal Dolan who reminded us at the Grotto Mass that this now special location once served as a garbage dump for the Village of Lourdes; he simply asked that we leave all of the "garbage" we brought with us to Lourdes at this miraculous place.

We have come to a peace with Maureen's illness in a way that carries us through the "not so good" days and gives us an abundance of joy and hope every day. We felt the presence of the Blessed Mother and her Son at Lourdes and truly believe they are with us every step of this unexpected journey.

Sadly, I share with you that three of our malades have passed since we returned to the US, one of whose funerals is being held today. I ask that you pray for their families, the other malades and caregivers, as well as the members of the Order of Malta. As we recited at each event and liturgy during this very special journey:

Our Lady of Lourdes, Pray for Us
St. Bernadette, Pray for Us