

Galloway Lourdes Hospitalité

Presidents Report 2026

Hello everyone,

Our main focus this year has been preparing for our pilgrimage to Lourdes, but before we get on the plane there is huge amount of preparation that takes place, particularly in recruiting, safeguarding and training our volunteers, but also meeting our assisted pilgrims to prepare them for their pilgrimage too. This year was quite unique as we travelled with the Diocese of Dunkeld, we had to work in conjunction with their team to ensure all the travel and medical requirements for their pilgrims were taken on board too.

Our pilgrimage preparation day took place in early June at St Matthew's hall Kilmarnock. This meeting is a mandatory part of our training so all volunteers must attend. Both our adult and Youth for Lourdes helpers get to meet, train and prepare together prior to their pilgrimage experience, we ended the day with Mass, thank you to the community at St Matthew's for the warm welcome.

I would like to thank all our volunteers for their continued dedication to the pilgrimage and the special community spirit they bring with them to Lourdes. Their passion for our Lourdes pilgrimage and most importantly our assisted pilgrims know no bounds, without them we couldn't make it happen. This year those volunteers were able to support 18 assisted pilgrims who all joined us in the hotel accommodation; we thank them for giving us the privilege of assisting them on their Lourdes journey.

Our pilgrimage volunteers are made up of 2 main teams, leading those teams were our Chiefs Janie & Alison on the medical team and Christine the Hospitalier team; I'd like to thank them as they work their socks off, not just in Lourdes but particularly in the months prior to the pilgrimage they all took their role to diamond standard again this year to enable the pilgrimage to go ahead without any hitches.

Huge thanks as always goes to our wonderful Youth for Lourdes team without their fun and friendship the pilgrimage would not be the same. Although smaller in numbers this year they were still mighty with continued high praise for all. All members of the Hospitalite hope to continue the strong bond which we have in place with the team already and hope to see you all back in 2027.

On pilgrimage we had many beautiful services and daily Mass together through the week, a highlight was our joint Mass with Dunkeld at the Grotto. We had time for some recuperation together in the form of our games night and some wee coffee & ice cream outings.

This year on pilgrimage our clergy team was led by Fr Gerald, we thank them all for their spiritual direction whilst in Lourdes. Thanks also goes to Bishop Frank who joined us to lead the pilgrimage for the first time, it was a great opportunity to get to know him better and see his love of Lourdes shine through.

We had such a fantastic pilgrimage week in July and have many fond memories of our week. We had a chance to reflect and share those memories when we held our reunion in August at St Joseph's hall in Kilmarnock.

Following a very well-earned break, the council are looking at recruiting again throughout the year ahead. Please keep an eye out for sign-up dates on our Facebook page and in parish newsletters after Easter.

We would also be delighted to see any of our past YfL members who are now of an age to transfer to the adult helper teams, as your experience is invaluable. This is echoed for past volunteers who would like to return after having some time away from the pilgrimage week.

This year we will be celebrating our 70th Anniversary, we have the fundraising part covered by the raffle, we will be arranging a social event and we hope that we will be able to have our St Ninian Statue installed in Carfin with Mass there to celebrate the anniversary too. We will keep you updated regarding dates for these in the future months.

We have been using Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Kilmarnock for our council meetings and we would like to thank them for accommodating us over the year.

I would like to thank Fr Gerald, Fr Jim and all the team on the Galloway Lourdes Hospitalite Council for their continued hard work and commitment over the past year.

We now look forward to our 70th anniversary celebrations and preparing for our 2027 pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Thanks for listening!

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