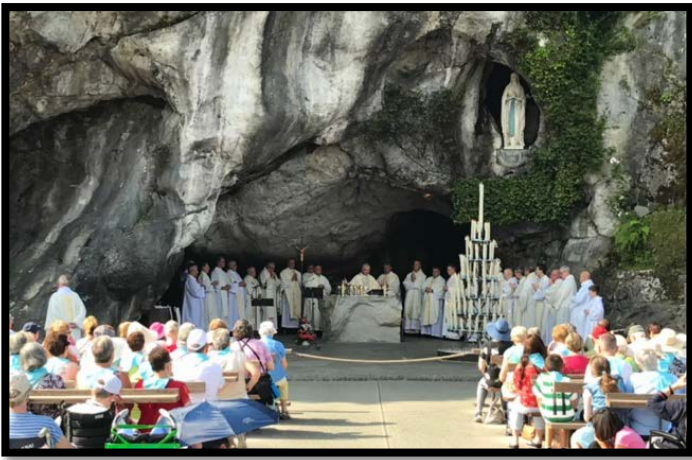




LOURDES PILGRIMAGE

The Lourdes Center in Boston, sponsored by the Marists, and the National Rosary Pilgrimage to Lourdes sponsored by the Dominicans brought 132 Americans together to make a spiritual pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in France. The Shrine was built to commemorate the place where Saint Bernadette Soubirous (1844-1879) received 18 apparitions from the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1858 and has been the place where there have been many miraculous healings. I was privileged to join three Dominican priests to provide spiritual support to these pilgrims during our nine days in Lourdes July 2 - 11, 2018.



Pilgrims celebrating Eucharist at Lourdes Grotto

I was particularly impressed with the thousands of people of all ages who made their way to Lourdes every day to bring their burdens in prayer to this holy place. It was obvious that many who came had crushing illnesses and problems. It was a humbling experience. I was also impressed with the many volunteers, young and not so young, who come for a week or two every year to assist with the many disabled and bring them to Mass, the afternoon procession with the Blessed Sacrament and the evening rosary procession.

Another thing that was hard to ignore was the literally hundreds of shops near the Shrine selling small mementos for the pilgrims to bring home to family, friends and loved ones to remind them that someone remembered them and their Intentions in prayer at the Grotto of Lourdes.

Although there have been some notable miraculous healings over the decades at Lourdes I do not know of any that occurred with our group of pilgrims. I do know that each one was blessed with renewed spiritual strength and grace to carry their burdens when they returned home and a deeper reverence and devotion when they returned to rejoin their parish community to participate in the celebration of Mass. The memories of this pilgrimage will be a source of enduring spiritual strength.

by John Beckley SM



Marist John Beckley on Lourdes pilgrimage