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WELSH 2008 NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES

An plane had been chartered to make three flights to Lourdes on 22nd July 2008, and the first trip set off bright and early at 6 a.m. The second run was at 11 a.m. and the final leg at 5 p.m. The Infirm and some fellow pilgrims travelled on the mid morning flight, and after a pleasant journey, were met by the coaches ready and waiting to transfer us to the Acceuil St. Frai and other hotels. Holy Mass was celebrated that same evening at St. Frai to welcome the pilgrims prior to the Official Opening Ceremony, which took place the following morning.

The weather was very kind to us, and on Wednesday morning pilgrims assembled at St. Michael's Gate - one of the stages of 'The Jubilee Way' - to process to the 'Statue of the Crowned Virgin' where our banner was waiting for us. We then moved on to the Grotto in colourful procession and Bishop Mullins was there, with our clergy, to preside at Mass.



Pilgrims assemble at 'The Crowned Virgin'



... and proceed to the Grotto

It proved to be an uplifting experience and set the tone for the week. Colleen and Helen Lowden did us proud when they took up, at the offertory, the *Prayer Candle* brought from the shrine in February and used at the Hospitality Meetings - as did all who took part in the liturgy. Prayers were offered for Fr. John Dermody, who was meant to be with us this year, Sr. Mary Trinity and others who were unable to travel. (sadly Fr John died on Saturday 2nd August: Ed)



Brancardiers, Handmaids and Youth at the Grotto with their pilgrimage banners

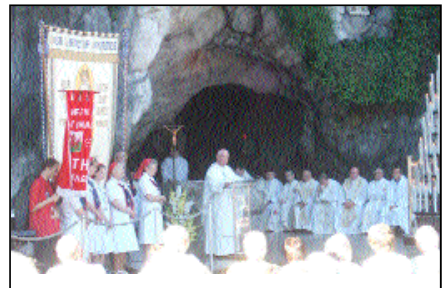
After the customary Group Photo (see centre pages 6/7) it was time to have lunch and then those from St Frai went to 'The Water Service' led by Fr. Teyrnon - this year's Chaplain to the Sick. Fr. Tey began with a tribute and prayers for Fr. Ieuan Wyn Jones, who sadly was also unable to be with us. We were invited to renew our Baptismal Promises and were then signed with the cross using Lourdes Water in response to Our Lady's request to Bernadette: "Tell them to take the waters."



Pilgrims at 'The Water Service'

Meanwhile, some of the more fit and agile (!) pilgrims set off for 'The Jubilee Way', led by Fr. Jason Jones. 'The Jubilee Way' is a devotion specifically devised to celebrate the hundred and fiftieth Anniversary of the appearances of Our Lady in 1858 and her declaration...

"I am The Immaculate Conception".



Bishop Mullins Preaching at the Grotto

'The Jubilee Way' starts off at the *Parish Church* where Bernadette was baptised, moves on to the *Cachot* where she lived for some time, continues to the *Hospital* where her First Holy Communion was celebrated and then finally to the *Grotto and the Icons*. Devotions had been suggested for each stage and a Plenary Indulgence granted for those who completed the Walk, along with prayers for the Holy Father, Confession and Holy Communion. Pilgrims then wore with pride the discs bearing the confirmation stickers received at each stage. The infirm and less agile were able to follow a Way on the domaine.

Report and lots more photos on inside pages

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