

# The Catholic Association Pilgrimage to Lourdes – Young Helpers Information

Thank you for expressing an interest in coming on Pilgrimage to Lourdes as a Volunteer Helper. Please ensure you read these guidance notes before completing the form.

## Details

Young Helpers Group - Catholic Association Pilgrimage to Lourdes 17th to 26th August 2017

## Travel

Travel will be by coach from Cambridge, Northampton, Central London or Dover to Lourdes. The coach will leave on Thursday 17th August, arriving in Lourdes on the Friday afternoon. Departure from Lourdes will be on Friday 25th August, arriving in the UK on the morning of Saturday 26th August.

## Cost

The full fare inclusive of all travel, full board accommodation (shared room) and travel insurance is £525.

Your £75 deposit should be sent with your application no later than 1st June. The balance of £450 should arrive no later than 1st July. The balance can be paid in instalments prior to this. Payment is preferred by direct transfer to:

BACS - Please include 'CA YOUTH' and the young helper's name in the reference field

Account Name - Catholic Association Main Account      Account number - 00005828

Sort code - 40-52-40

Cheques - Made payable to Catholic Association

## Preparation Day Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July, Sacred Heart, Edge Hill, Wimbledon, London

We will hold a Preparation Day in London for all volunteer helpers. This day is essential for new helpers, to learn more about the work and the pilgrimage as a whole, and to meet more experienced volunteers, including some of the organisers. It is also a useful day for experienced helpers. We will complete DBS application forms on this day – More details to follow.

## Notes for filling out the form.

- Please ensure the form is fully completed – your place will not be guaranteed until all information is received.
- To join the Young Helpers Group you have to be at least 16 years of age by the 17th August 2016 and under 25 years of age otherwise we are unable to accept your application.
- Please make sure your email address is clearly written and NOT a school or university one as we will be using this to send information after term has finished.
- It is necessary for us to obtain a personal reference for all new helpers. Please include email details wherever possible as we prefer to use emails for taking references.
- Please let us know of any medical or dietary issues. All information that you give us is kept strictly confidential.
- Please note those under 18 should travel as part of a diocesan, organisations or school group. Those who wish to attend and are not being accompanied by a group leader please contact John – details below
- Under 18s also need to return the Parental Consent Form
- PLEASE NOTE THAT STANDARD POSTAGE MAY NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO SEND THE FORM.

Please send the form to:

CA Young Helpers, SCYS, St. Vincent's Centre, Castle Road, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 2ED

Contact details:

Tel. 01227 272900

email: [young\\_helpers@catholicassociation.co.uk](mailto:young_helpers@catholicassociation.co.uk)

## Useful information regarding Lourdes and young helpers

Lourdes lies in the foothills of the Pyrenees in South West France. Here Bernadette Soubirous saw apparitions of the Virgin Mary, and this is why Lourdes has grown into a pilgrimage centre. The Catholic Association comprises of a number of Diocese and groups who join together in pilgrimage for one week of the year. Although there is a strong social aspect to the week, please consider that we are there primarily to help others and to enhance our own spiritual experiences.

As a volunteer helper with the “sick” or “disabled”, you will need to understand the terminology of Lourdes. The building where many of them stay is called the Accueil Notre Dame. This is not a hospital, as you would recognise it. The word Accueil roughly translates as Welcome. It is a large, modern building, a cross between a hotel and a hospice. They are referred to Assisted Pilgrims (A.Ps). Assisted Pilgrims may also stay in Hotels.

Volunteer work includes the following categories

Rolling duty - helping people to move from the Accueil or hotels to the events of the pilgrimage (e.g. masses, processions), or to shops, cafes etc. Usually this involves pushing wheelchairs.

Accueil Care duty - assisting the nurses with the care of the guests, e.g. helping them to wash and dress, making beds, and cleaning their rooms.

Other duties – include helping in the Accueil dining room, and the vital job of ensuring a steady supply of tea and coffee from our kitchen (but not cooking, as the food is provided).

HCP – working with the Helpers' Children's Programme. They have a preference for people who have been a CA volunteer at least once before and who have experience of childcare/teaching/youth groups.

Another key role is to spend time with our guests, chatting, socialising, shopping etc.

Male volunteer helpers are called “Brancardiers” meaning “stretcher-bearers”, and wear the official blue pilgrimage polo shirt when on duty, to help identify them as workers in our group. The female volunteers are called “Handmaids”, and are all provided with a uniform (blue dress).

Those 16 year olds joining the pilgrimage and those joining for the first time who indicate a preference, will have limited duties with planned excursions exploring the story behind Lourdes. Most of you will work in teams comprising a mixture of Handmaids and Brancardiers and will participate in a mixture of Accueil Care and Rolling duties, under the supervision of experienced team leaders. Other experienced helpers will be assigned to specific roles for the whole week, where continuity is required.

Those under the age of 21 will be led by a team of volunteer youth workers, Diocesan Youth Ministry team, teachers all staying in the same hotel and will be subject to agreed curfews and drinking rules.

Lourdes is a stimulating experience, where volunteers, like you, work in the service of others and make friends for life. We look forward to receiving your application.

It is essential for the purpose of organising rotas that all volunteers are available in Lourdes for the entire week, from Friday 18th until Friday 25th even where individual travel arrangements are made.