



HCPT *The Pilgrimage Trust*



Dear Mr Watson,

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about the wonderful contribution your students made to this year's HCPT Easter Pilgrimage. The theme this year was "Cariad." Which is Welsh for love as this year the pilgrims from Wales led the liturgies.

A hymn sung often was

"God's love is the best love."

While the theme was aimed primarily at the sponsored children we took, it was certainly true also of the VIth formers that went from St. Thomas More and the 'Pink Pilgrims' spread their love throughout the whole town.

During the week the student's time was split between working for the central services department on tasks such as ensuring people were in the right place at the right time, helping at Mass and other services, and the baths. While these tasks are rather lacking in the 'limelight' they are still vital and the young people did them with great diligent and energy.

While Group 714 have always worked with family groups within the North East, this year they were also asked to work with other family groups from other areas of the country who unfortunately did not have any youth groups from their area. During their time with these family groups the youth of STM had the chance to interact with younger children with a variety of physical, learning and behavioural difficulties. Both listening and talking to students afterwards I know this was a highlight of their time in Lourdes.

If we believe that

"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required,"

Luke 12:48

then the youth of 714 are certainly showing Gospel values in their dealings with others.

At a time when the youth of today are often vilified and described in a number of negative ways it was an honour and privilege to see the youth in Lourdes working tirelessly and with a selfless nature that would shame many adults in our country.

I must also mention here the staff, Luke, Andy, Michael and Pauline without whose support the STM pilgrimage would not have been able to take place. It must be a hugely onerous task taking a large group of young men and woman away for the week, but these people did it with energy, humour and great diligence. Each and every one of them worked tirelessly to ensure each and every young person gained as much as possible from their week long experience. Relationships were excellent and reflect wonderfully well on your school.

I would be grateful if you could pass on my best wishes to them, not forgetting the young people themselves who were such a credit to the school.

Finally I would also like to send my congratulations to the group I travel with, Group 36. While not technically a STM group, they carry your name and are led by Mrs Anna Merchant from your school, ably supported by a number of your excellent support staff especially Anita. It is also fair to say that the vast majority of helpers are ex STM students who are at various stages of their University life. It says a great deal about the ethos and character of these young students that they are willing to pay a lot of money, and huge banks of energy, to give up a week of their lives to support and care for those who have not been fortunate enough to have all their advantages. On a personal level it is always a great joy to meet up with ex St. Bernadette's students who I remember with great fondness.

It is easy to judge a school by its academic performance but as a faith school I feel it is just as, if not more important, to look at the character of the citizens it turns out to society. Once again STM have not been found wanting.

Well done to all who helped make the HCPT Easter Pilgrimage 2019 such a success.

Yours faithfully,

Alan Egdell