



REDSHIRT & YOUNG HELPER TESTIMONIES

"My favourite part about Lourdes was the huge sense of community. No matter who people were or where they came from, it felt as if we all understood and cared for each other. One of the most memorable moments of my Lourdes trip was the torchlight procession... I found it really beautiful to see all of our diocese together, celebrating both our similarities and differences. Throughout the week, it was evident we all truly cared for one another and wanted to share around the love. I would recommend going to Lourdes to absolutely anyone, it is so magical." **Redshirt Testimony**

"My time at Lourdes was a really amazing experience that helped me have time to think about things I've never thought about before. I had a friend say to me that 'God will never give you anything you can't deal with'. This helped me rethink about hard times and difficulties. **Lourdes is not only a place of God, but also a place you can find long lasting friendships.** My favourite part was that you could connect with anyone there, because everyone had something in common - and that was God. Knowing this I could be myself and not be afraid of what others thought. The leaders were exceptional and so caring that you felt at the right place. It was definitely an unforgettable experience that I thoroughly enjoyed." **Redshirt Testimony**

"While I was definitely looking forward to helping out at Lourdes, I wasn't entirely sure what to expect. And while I guessed that I would enjoy it, **I couldn't have guessed just how fun it would be!** One thing that comes to mind when thinking about Lourdes was the welcoming atmosphere. It doesn't start right away, but when it does you just feel relieved of all the pressures that you have in life. As I was saying to pretty much everyone that asked me how the pilgrimage was going: 'It's a lot to take in, but it's a relaxed atmosphere, which is nice.' The pilgrimage can feel quite busy at times, and even emotionally difficult. But everyone's there to help, and if you're like me and it's your first time then no wonder it's a very different experience!"

"Of course, being a Young Helper gave me the chance to connect with other Young Helpers too! I didn't know how many friends I would make at first, but I managed to talk to everyone during the pilgrimage and could feel the support that was being shared. There were also many opportunities to talk to others about the pilgrimage, or your interests (on that note, the choir and the concert are both enjoyable if you like performing!), or even just have a laugh. **I really enjoyed the spontaneous karaoke we had one night - it was great to see everyone enjoying themselves!**

"However, being a Young Helper is also where you start helping the pilgrims at their hotels. You're not there 24/7, but your assigned hotel is where you'll be spending most of the pilgrimage. **My confidence improved throughout my time at Lourdes** - and it was really interesting to get to know the pilgrims as I was looking after them. That mostly involved pushing pilgrims in wheelchairs. Like I said, you get more confident as you get used to everything around you. It makes a lot of difference to your experience, and it makes me glad that I decided to go. Oh, and Party Night. Can't forget that - it's definitely something to look forward to at your hotels.

"Overall, going to Lourdes was something that I didn't think would have such an impact, but I'm glad that I made the decision to go there. I would definitely recommend being a Young Helper." *Young Helper Testimony*

"Being a Young Helper in 2023 was one of the most enjoyable and moving experiences I have had of Lourdes so far. It is amazing how different it is to experience the pilgrimage alongside an assisted pilgrim, I am so honoured to have had this opportunity. Spending the week with the assisted pilgrims you don't realise how much they affect you in an emotional way.

"One of the highlights of my week was when I spent 2 hours just sitting and talking to my assisted pilgrim about anything and everything. **Some of the things that they say and do give you a different perspective on events in your own life and they are extremely powerful and meaningful.** Whilst we are helping them in a physical way, they affect you even more in a spiritual way and I came away feeling enriched by the time I spent with these people who I hope to see again. Furthermore, the community of young helpers and our leaders made me feel instantly at home and welcome in Lourdes. You only spend a week with these people but by the end I can safely say my family is a lot bigger than it was at the start.' *Young Helper Testimony*