

# Arundel & Brighton Lourdes Pilgrimage 2021

Dear All,

I hope you are all coping in these challenging times. We are all aware of the amazing jobs you are doing, and I know you must all be exhausted but hope you are lifted by the prayers we are all offering for you throughout this pandemic.

We know that, despite some of you not being on CV-19 acute wards, all of you are working extremely hard to cover absences from colleagues due to various quarantine requirements, so you are all exhausted no matter where you are working in the care system.

By now, you will have seen that we are planning to try and take a group of pilgrims to Lourdes this year, for a week of prayer and reflection. At the outset, please let me assure you that we will only proceed with this plan if, as a result of the vaccine roll out and the warmer weather in the early summer, the pandemic returns to more manageable levels, with a significant reduction in hospital occupancy. So please be assured that what I offer you all below is an offer of the heart, on the assumption that the head says it is wise to continue with the plan! I hope that makes sense.

For years, many of you have joined us on a “busman’s holiday” to serve our Assisted Pilgrims during our week in Lourdes. You are an amazing group of people, and without you, even with all the prayers in the world, our “normal” pilgrimage would not be possible. However, due to the pandemic, this year we find you all exhausted and weary from the hours that you have spent trying to help those who, through no fault of their own, have had an acute response to CV-19.

With this in mind, we feel that 2021 is a year to give back to you, and this note is written to offer you all financial support to join us in Lourdes as a pilgrim if this would help. To rest, relax and reflect on the terrible year you have all had, and to ensure that your financial situation is not an impediment to you having a week of prayer with us. (We know and understand that you may also want to have a holiday with your family too, and this may mean you need financial help with the pilgrimage.) So all I ask is that, should you wish to join us once the application process has opened, please just let us know what you can afford to pay for your week, and we will work out how to fund the balance for you, so that your place is assured.

If sufficient clinicians join us as pilgrims (with no care responsibilities) for this year’s pilgrimage I will also undertake to allocate a chaplain to you and create some space and time for you to unpack your emotions, amongst yourselves, in a pastoral setting where you can share your experiences, what they have meant to your faith, and take comfort from the companionship of those who have also experienced the best and the worst of their job in 2020/21.

May God bless you all, and I hope to see a number of you in July, if we are lucky enough to be able to carry out our week in Lourdes safely.

Yours in Christ,

Mike