

## **Knights and Dames of the Order of Malta bring Lourdes to Australia**

For many Catholic Australians, especially for those in poor health, a trip to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes in France where Marie Bernarde Soubirous (St Bernadette) had a series of visions of the Virgin Mary is an aspirational but unachievable goal.

For those unable to visit Lourdes in person, for over ten years the Order of Malta Australia have hosted annual Lourdes Day Masses in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide. The masses are celebrated for the intentions of all Catholic families but 'malades' (those who are sick or infirm) are particularly encouraged to attend. A blessing for good health with water brought from the spring at the Shrine of Lourdes follows the celebration of the Liturgy and the Order of Malta gifts each attendee a small bottle of Lourdes water for their personal use.

"A pilgrimage to Lourdes represents one of the most significant moments in the spiritual life of the Order's members and volunteers' explained Order of Malta Regional Hospitaller Steve Christie. "Each year Lourdes dedicates the first weekend in May for the Annual Pilgrimage of the International Order of Malta where nearly 20.000 members, volunteers and malades attend. However for Australian malades the trip to France is not only expensive but arduous. Therefore members of the Order of Malta bring 'Lourdes to Australia' at their Lourdes Day Mass celebrations"

Whilst COVID-19 has resulted in the cancellation of Lourdes Day Masses around the country, the mass at St Mary's Cathedral, held on the first Saturday in December each year, was able to go ahead but with capacity restrictions. Thankfully a livestream of the celebration meant thousands of others across the country could join Archbishop Fisher and the congregation of 150, including 35 malades and 60 members and volunteers of the Order of Malta.

One of the attendees remarked: "It was a truly happy occasion. Looking at so many smiling faces after such a tough year really lifted my spirits. Archbishop Fisher's offering of the Mass, his moving homily, his blessing of the sick and his generous and kind presence amongst us after Mass was greatly appreciated."

The 900 year old Order of Malta has been operating in Australian since 1974 and in addition to the annual Lourdes Day Mass celebrations, is active in the 'service of the sick and poor'. Projects are based on hands-on service include winter coats for the homeless, assistance to bushfire relief, palliative care projects and annual camps for disabled youth. Learn more at [www.orderofmalta.org.au](http://www.orderofmalta.org.au)

**View a recording the mass <https://youtu.be/gB5cxZ0CfbM>**



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