

Bishop Antoine HÉROUARD

Apostolic Delegate *ad nutum Sanctae Sedis* for the Sanctuary Our Lady of Lourdes

Lourdes, 30th June 2021

Dear Monsignor,

Fraternal greetings from the Shrine of Our Lady at Lourdes.

I am writing to you perhaps in a more hopeful way than I might have done one year ago. Despite limited access permitted to the Shrine during the pandemic, our prayerful activities never ceased, with many Masses each day as well as a daily rosary from the Grotto livestreamed to millions around the world. Your intentions and those of your flock were remembered in our prayers.

Having said that, surprisingly we still received over a million visitors last year, largely individuals and families who came to Lourdes to find consolation, peace and healing. We realised that, hitherto, this was a section of the population which we at Lourdes had somewhat overlooked if they hadn't come here as part of a pilgrim group. Going forward we hope to address that gap in our pastoral provision.

Before the pandemic we had been preparing Lourdes' first ever fundraising and development campaign, with the help of John McCaffrey who worked as a fundraising consultant at your conference for some years. With John's help we have developed an articulate and compelling campaign – the first in the entire history of Lourdes – to address the needs of the fabric of the Shrine which had become acute. The global pandemic put a temporary 'pause' on our efforts, but I am very pleased to mark the resumption of those by sharing the attached e-brochure with you.

You will see that urgent interventions have become essential in the Upper Basilica, the Crypt Chapel, and particularly the Belltower and spire. A century of Pyrenees weather, with which you and your brother bishops will be very familiar, have taken their toll on the stonework, the buttresses, the architectural carvings, and so on.

The Shrine also wants to take this timely opportunity to bring the Upper Basilica up to 21st century pilgrim expectations, with new heating, wiring, sound, disabled access, etc. It is not a small task, but we believe it is a very necessary one which will do even greater honour to Our Blessed Mother.

Far from being something anachronistic, Lourdes is now more relevant and important than ever, an international place of healing, prayer and contemplation.

It has always been an important part of the faith of the Catholics of England and Wales, and your visits here are a vital part of our spiritual life which we hope will resume again before too long.

I am personally grateful to His Eminence Cardinal Nichols for placing this before you and your brother bishops at a pivotal moment in our campaign and I thank you in anticipation for your assistance and support, both material and spiritual.

With the fraternal assurance of a special remembrance here at the Shrine, I am,
Yours in Christ,



Mgr Antoine Hérouard