

**Newcastle**  
**9 November 2019**

**Training**

Dear friends,  
Dear brothers and sisters in Hospitality,

I would like to share a belief with you. Training should never be an obstacle to service just as efficiency should never be an obstacle to productivity.

The success of our mission depends on our agreement to organize and maintain basic training and continuous education.

In my opinion, there are three distinct types of training:

Technical training;

Behavioral training;

Spiritual formation

**I) Technical training:**

This is the indispensable know-how of every hospitalier:

- How to move a patient: from the bed to a wheelchair, from the wheelchair to the “voiture”.
- How to place “voitures” in the best possible position in front of the altar in Saint Pius X Basilica.
- How to bathe a sick person, i.e. how to put on their loincloth etc.

Let us take as an example one of the oldest “jobs” of a hospitalier, that of a “fourgonnier”. A “fourgonnier” is someone who travels with the assisted pilgrims on the “fourgons” or ambulance buses.

Generally two fourgonniers are allocated to each of the ambulance coaches which provide transportation between the airport, or station, and the Accueil Notre Dame or Saint Frai. They are responsible for the placement, accompaniment and disembarkation of sick or disabled persons, on stretchers, in wheelchairs (which must be secured to the floor) or on the benches.

Securing the wheelchairs to the floor of the ambulance is the responsibility of the driver.

When I see a bus, full of assisted pilgrims arriving at the station or airport without an assistant, it means that the driver has had to do all the work on his own.

We no longer train what could be called “real” fourgonniers.

I give you this example to emphasize the importance of how all of this know-how may be lost if we let things slide...

If your pilgrimage helpers need technical training, especially with regard to the positioning of wheelchairs for Mass either in St Pie X or at the Grotto, HNDL can help you with this. Just contact us the week before you arrive in Lourdes.

## **II) Behavioral training. Training in respect for the person**

Regardless of the service, or his or her mission (at the station, the airport, the baths, in one of the Accueils, in front of the Grotto or during the ceremonies or processions), the attitude of the hospitalier must always be marked with respect and serenity, and always accompanied by a smile.

Our charity must be smiling.

To respect someone is to pay attention to what that person is feeling, to have regard for them and to take care of their person.

For a hospitalier, to respect someone is:

- to welcome them with joy, be happy to meet them, be waiting for them
- to speak calmly to them even if they are upset, panicked, angry.
- never touching them, for instance grabbing them by the arm, or pulling them away abruptly.

It is to see in them, a brother or a sister in humanity.

As part of this behavioral training, it is important to seek the help of the OCH (Christian Office of the Disabled persons).

In the Sanctuary, near Saint Michel's Gate, the OCH runs a reception service.

Whatever your situation, sick, disabled, relative, friend, caregiver, alone or in a group ...Martine, Anne or other members of the OCH team will be happy to welcome you and offer guidance on how to treat the disabled.

These requirements of respect for the person are not new.

If you need to be convinced of this all you have to do is read what Monseigneur Théas, Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, said to the hospitaliers in 1969 - 50 years ago:

"When a hospitalier, is faced with a real conflict between charity and rules, the hospitalier must without any doubt sacrifice the rule and allow charity to triumph.... The Lourdes Hospitalier must, as the Immaculate Virgin wants, be a specialist in neighborly love, under the power of the love of God.

### **III) Spiritual formation**

Spiritual formation gives meaning to our actions. We are not non-governmental-organisations (NGOs). We are Christian associations.

I have often heard it said that our first year stagiaires come to Lourdes primarily to serve and not to receive spiritual training. I have also heard that there is too much training in Lourdes for first timers. This is not true:

1st year: 8 hours or 14% of the time is spent training; 86% serving

2nd, 3rd and 4th year: 2 hours or 4% of the time for training; 96% serving.

Remember that the four pillars of a sanctuary are:

1. Prayer
2. The Word of God
3. The Sacraments
4. Charity

We must allow our people to deepen their spirituality, to improve their relationship with God and to avoid spiritual drought. We have, I believe, a mission to evangelize our hospitaliers.

To be a believer is not to manage a heritage of values or moral references, but to experience a personal relationship with God.

However, it isn't a question of imposing. On the contrary, we must propose, explain, bear witness. Spirituality is very personal and private matter.

Conclusion:

The conclusion is obvious. It's about maintaining our know-how and our skills. This training is essential. It should not be reserved for new hospitaliers but should be systematic before every service.

The precision and the delicacy of our gestures, the respect and the love of each pilgrim, and the deepening of our own spirituality, are the conditions necessary to fulfill our mission.

Finally, let's listen to Saint Paul:

“If I give all my possessions to the poor, or even give my body to be burnt, but have not love, I gain nothing.”