

Monday in 17th Week in Ordinary Time – 27th July 2026:

Our pilgrims in Lourdes are making an act of trust in the Lord, that they should bring their ailments, physical and spiritual to him. In doing so, he will give them an outpouring of his healing grace, but this is not necessarily the same thing as a cure, for that grace might be the strength of bearing their suffering or the ability to carry the cross in a new or particular way. For other pilgrims (*those who might not be suffering*), God is, perhaps, presenting them with an image of the Kingdom to come, where the mighty are cast down from their thrones and the lowly are lifted high and given the place of honour. Our calling as children of God, in the world, requires us to seek out our personal holiness but also to go out to others and show them that the Kingdom of God has come close to us, inviting the world to its own conversion to the gospel.

Tuesday in 17th Week in Ordinary Time – 28th July 2026:

In Lourdes today, there may be some tears – of relief, as many of our sick, elderly and disabled pilgrims will be anointed with the ‘*sacrament of the sick*’ and receive the grace and help of the Holy Spirit. The anointing enables them to unite their sufferings to Christ’s own passion, death and resurrection and is a reassurance that amid our pains and torments, Jesus is encountered. This is why we always recommend that the sacrament of the sick should not be delayed. Yes, it may be called the last sacrament, but ‘*last rites do not mean last minute*’, as surely people would wish the grace and help of the sacraments at the beginning and during their illness, not simply at the end.

The memorial of St Martha, Mary and Lazarus of Bethany – Wed. 29th July 2026:

Just as Martha, Mary and Lazarus welcomed Jesus to Bethany so he could take his rest when visiting Jerusalem, so Our Lady welcomes the pilgrims to Lourdes so they might rest from the world and be refreshed by our encounter with Jesus through her. Today, Mass is at the Grotto where Mary appeared to St Bernadette entrusting her with the message that the bishop should build a chapel so others could come in procession and receive divine assistance. Martha, Mary and Lazarus give the pilgrimage a three-fold image: Martha shows us that we must serve, Mary shows us that we must listen and Lazarus shows us that death is not the final reality of one who is suffering. ‘*I am the Immaculate Conception*’, says Our Lady telling us that grace leads to life; and ‘*I am the Resurrection and the Life*’, says the Lord, telling us that faith and hope are stronger than death itself, for love always wins in the end and endures.

Thursday in 17th Week in Ordinary Time – 30th July 2026:

As the A&B pilgrims prepare for their final few hours in Lourdes, maybe they are reflecting on what has changed following their encounter with Jesus through Mary. At first glance, perhaps nothing extraordinary seems to have happened, but God is like a potter who gently forms and re-works the clay in the hope that in time, it may be moulded into the shape that he wants. Hopefully, many pilgrims will leave Lourdes spiritually refreshed and are ready to embark afresh on the invitation to make *‘prayer, formation and mission’* an even greater part of their daily lives. In this way, the pilgrims play their part in helping others come to the Faith and discern their own vocation from the Lord, which is all part of obtaining the treasure of entry into the heavenly kingdom.

The memorial of St Ignatius of Loyola, priest – 31st July 2026:

For the most part, our Arundel & Brighton Diocesan Lourdes pilgrims have returned home to their families, their schools and their parishes and while physically tired from the journey, they are, hopefully, fully refreshed spiritually, ready to play their part in the mission of the Church to proclaim the gospel and hand on the Catholic and Apostolic Faith. May they do so in the spirit of St Ignatius of Loyola whose prayer says: *‘Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous; teach me to serve You as You deserve; to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and not to ask for reward save that of knowing I am doing Your Will’.*

Saint Alphonsus Mary de ’Liguori, bishop & doctor – Saturday 1st August 2026:

Saint Alphonsus is the founder of the Redemptorist Congregation. Raised in a pious Italian home he often went on retreat with his father. By the age of 16 he had obtained his decree in law and by 19 was practising it but he could see the transitory nature of the secular world, and after a brief time, retreated from the law courts and his fame. Visiting the local Hospital for Incurables he received a vision and was told to consecrate his life to God, and despite persecution from his family, he dedicated himself to the religious life, later being ordained a priest and becoming bishop of the see of St. Agatha of the Goths near Naples. For thirteen years Alphonsus fed the poor, instructed families, reorganized the seminary and religious houses, taught theology, and wrote. His austerities were rigorous, and he suffered daily the pains they cause him. He is, perhaps, best known to us by his wonderful *‘Stations of the Cross’* that so many people use, to aid their *‘way of the cross’* during the Sacred Season of Lent.