

Lourdes Pilgrimage

Last February, Moate Community School had a meeting with the Co-Director of the Carmelite pilgrimage to Lourdes. Because The Carmelites have a strong presence in Moate and are also one of the trustees of our school we were offered the opportunity of sending eight students and two teachers to help the sick on the annual pilgrimage. This was to be offered to Transition Year students and the various other Carmelite schools in the country would also be participating.

We saw this as a great opportunity for our students but we were unsure how many might be interested. The RE department spoke to the third years and invited applications. As part of that, students had to write about their reasons for their interest in going and they also had to write about their parish involvement and any ideas how they might fundraise as this was an important element. The school was going to fundraise some of the cost but students then had to raise the rest.

We were amazed at the interest. Over thirty students applied and each of them had their own unique story. It was a very difficult task interviewing and selecting as each student that applied would have been a worthy applicant.

The eight were chosen and then the job of fundraising was addressed. We organised Dodge Ball matches, cake sales and the students organised coffee mornings and ice cream parties in their local area.

The students and teachers Ms Kelly and Mr Tormey had an information evening in Knocklyon in Dublin one of the evenings so that our student could meet with the Dublin students.

Before they went, the group attended family mass in Moate and Fr Noonan gave them a special blessing before they set off.

There was great excitement before they left and also a little anxiety as they were going to be looking after the sick and elderly. They were also going to be working closely with students from parts of Dublin, Cork and Armagh. However each of the students were enthusiastic and had great support from Ms Kelly and Mr Tormey.

They returned on Monday night and on their return to school with all the stories of the trip, you could see the happiness on their faces. Each student got so much from the pilgrimage, they went



with their own story and came back with so much more. They were wonderful ambassadors for our school and we are so proud of each of them. We are organising a mass of thanksgiving over the coming weeks.

We are so appreciative of the opportunity that was given to them by the Carmelite pilgrimage group and we are already thinking about next years.