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My Dear Colleague,

Following our meeting concerning the medical care of the different pilgrimage groups which come to Lourdes, accompanied by doctors who are themselves pilgrims, we have agreed on a procedure based on common sense.

In fact since 2010, after the Charter was produced, there have been modifications to the medical care roster in the Lourdes and Gave Valley sectors. An Out-patient Centre has been created at the Lourdes Town Hospital.

This Medical Centre is manned by doctors who work from 8:00pm to 8:30am the next morning.

The protocol concerning doctors on duty in the Department of the Hautes-Pyrénées no longer provides for home visits out of hours (except for the unavoidable visits to retirement homes and death declarations).

As a consequence, all patients in need of medical attention are obliged to consult at this Medical Centre after having first dialled number 15 (the SAMU). This service will then carry out a **"medical appraisal"**. In this way the patient will be advised, if his condition permits it and according to the pathology, to remain at home and follow the prescribed advice, or to come to the Medical Centre, or to go straight to the Town Hospital Emergency Room.

This Centre ceases its functions at midnight. After midnight it is exclusively the doctors of the Emergency Room in the hospital who are on duty.

In that which concerns you directly, that is to say the medical care of the pilgrims, it goes without saying that, during the day, they can consult the doctor of their choice throughout the entire pilgrimage.

They may go directly to a doctor's cabinet in town or consult the doctor accompanying the pilgrimage.

However, outside the normal cabinet hours, if a pilgrim presents a problem within the precincts of the Sanctuary, the Poste de Secours, which is well organised and is perfectly capable of giving first aid and carrying out an initial diagnosis, may direct the patient, according to the pathology, to the appropriate Centre, and if necessary, to the Emergency Room of the Town Hospital.

When the pilgrims are in their hotels and present a medical problem, **they may consult the doctor accompanying the pilgrimage and receive an initial examination.**

**In a way, "the Pilgrimage Doctor" will take the place of the Doctor of telephone number 15 (SAMU).**

In this case it is evident that the doctor accompanying the pilgrimage, in assuming this role, if he or she considers that further examinations or medical assistance are needed according to the seriousness of the pathology, may direct the patient to the Medical Centre or the Emergency Room of the Lourdes Town hospital.

It seems to me that this method of operation is full of common sense, logic, and suits everyone in not depriving the doctors of Lourdes of their prerogatives and in permitting the doctors accompanying the pilgrims to have a role of consultation and first aid in relation to the pilgrims that they accompany.

With my fraternal best wishes.

**Dr Christian ROBERT**  
President of the Board of Medical Practitioners of the High-Pyrenees