

Lourdes News

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THE JOURNAL OF GRACES

11th FEBRUARY 2020, FEAST OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES, XXVIII WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

10:00 a.m. International Mass, presided by Mgr. Rino Fisichella, Saint Pius X Basilica

3:30 p.m. Rosary at the Grotto (French)

4:30 p.m. Adoration and blessing of the sick, Saint Pius X Basilica

9:00 p.m. Marian torchlight procession

Novena to Our Lady of Lourdes

3rd TO 11th FEBRUARY

Say the novena.

Pray a decade of the rosary.

Invocations: "Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us!"

"Saint Bernadette, pray for us!"

"O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee!"

Go to Mass and Holy Communion on 11th February.

It is also recommended that you receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during the octave.

Mary,
Our Lady of Lourdes,
You appeared in the hollow of the rock of Massabielle
To Bernadette, a small and simple shepherdess from Bigorre.
You brought her the radiant light of your smile,
The gentle, resplendent brightness of your presence.
Day by day, you built a relationship with her
Where you looked at her like one person talking to another.
We, too, come here before you in our poverty,
and we humbly pray to you.
May those who doubt discover the joy of trust,
May those who despair sense your discreet presence.
Mary,
Our Lady of Lourdes,
You revealed your name to Bernadette
By simply saying "I am the Immaculate Conception".
May we discover the joy of a forgiveness that never falters,
Instil in us the desire for a rediscovered innocence and a
joyful holiness.
Help the blinded sinner.
You who gave birth to the Saviour of the world,
Look tenderly on our beautiful but tragic world.
Open in us the path of hope,
Guide us to the One who is the Living Source,
Jesus, your Son, who teaches us to say
Our Father..

Serving in Lourdes

Joining the hospitality

If you are between 18 and 75 years old, the Hospitality of Our Lady of Lourdes (HNDL) will be delighted to welcome you.

After 8 to 15 days of training, you can start your service in the Sanctuary.

You will be in Lourdes as a volunteer, so it is your responsibility to organise your travel, accommodation and meals. In order to make this as easy as possible for you, the HNDL provides a refectory, accommodation centres and a café/bar.

Contact: hospitalite-lourdes@wanadoo.fr

Tel. +33 (0) 5 62 42 80 84

Hospitality Notre-Dame de Lourdes
BP 197 65 106 LOURDES Cedex



Become volunteer

How do I volunteer?

You just have to fill in the on-line form on the sanctuary website: <https://www.lourdes-france.org/etre-benevole-sanctuaire/>. There is no registration fee to become a volunteer at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes.

You must:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be physical fit for regular work
- Commit for a given period
- Accept assignments and service changes as needed

To organise your stay, the Sanctuary of Lourdes has accommodation for volunteers. Several rates are available depending on the level of comfort required. To book, send an email to hebergement@lourdes-france.com or call +33 (0) 5 62 42 82 59.

At the heart of message of Lourdes:

"I am the Immaculate Conception"

In 2019, we walked in Bernadette's footsteps on the double anniversary of her birth and death. In 2020, we come to the Grotto to meet the Lady who appeared on 25th March 1858, and gave her name when she said, "I am the Immaculate Conception." At the request of the rector, the Sanctuary "chapelains" offer some thoughts and suggest concrete gestures for your next pilgrimage.

The Immaculate Conception

The high point of Bernadette's 18 meetings with Mary, at the Grotto of Massabielle, was on 25th March, the day of the Annunciation and the 16th apparition, the day on which the Lady revealed her name: *I am the Immaculate Conception*. Bernadette could not have lied in reporting the Lady's words. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was promulgated by Pope Pius IX on 8th December 1854. Bernadette Soubirous, unable to read or write, and therefore unable to go to catechism classes, could not have known about it. The dogma is defined as follows: *the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace of the Omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind, was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin.*"

Why a pastoral theme?

To know about, to delve deeper into and to own Bernadette's experience, that is to say the message of Lourdes. It is from the account of the apparitions that we are invited to rediscover the Word of God. The theme of the year is a suggestion from the Sanctuary of how you might deepen the experience of your pilgrims when they come to Lourdes.

You can read it in full on the website www.lourdes-france.org

TO HELP YOU DURING YOUR PILGRIMAGE, HERE ARE A FEW SUGGESTIONS OF GESTURES YOU MIGHT LIKE TO MAKE:

Make the water gesture

At the 9th apparition, on 25th February 1858, Mary showed Bernadette where to dig to find the spring. In doing this, she revealed to us the depth of Jesus' heart and of his infinite mercy. Through baptism, Christ gives us access to the spring of life placed deep in our hearts. For all those who have been baptised, there is a before and after the discovery of the spring, a discovery which can be made during in particular during a pilgrimage. Let us ask the Immaculate Virgin to help us discover the spring of charity that is already within us and to share it with our brothers and sisters⁽¹⁾. Let's go to the taps to drink and wash. And when we leave the Grotto, let's take home some water from the spring to share with those who were unable to come.



Light a candle

Immaculate, Mary is a being of light. After the first apparition, Bernadette said, "I saw a young lady wrapped in light." The light at which she gazed revealed her own darkness and dissipated it. The candle she carried from the third apparition helped her to pray because it reminded her of the candle that is given to the godparents during a baptism. Let's imitate Bernadette, let's go to the Grotto to ask for a light in our lives. In Lourdes, each day ends with a torchlight procession, starting at 9 p.m. Let us light our candles, sing the *Ave Maria* and meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary.



Go to confession

After Bernadette saw the beautiful Lady of Massabielle all "surrounded by light" she became aware of her sins and, three days after the first apparition, went confession for the first time in her life. The pastoral theme "I am the Immaculate Conception" gives us a chance to reflect on forgiveness, because the presence of Mary opens us up to hope. Forgiveness granted or received opens us to life. We become free again. The Sanctuary therefore suggests we have a celebration of forgiveness based on Mary's gaze: a gaze which is always open to hope and fruitfulness. Let's pray to Mary that, reassured by her tenderness and by the mercy of God, we may receive the sacrament of confession.



(1) A water celebration is suggested which can be done either personally or in community. Each pilgrimage can adapt and enrich it with songs and prayers. You should provide containers filled with water from the Grotto and drinking cups.



The Sanctuary invites us to make an act of trust or consecration towards the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

"Mary was able to turn a stable into a home for Jesus, with poor swaddling clothes and an abundance of love. She is the handmaid of the Father who sings his praises. She is the friend who is ever concerned that wine should not be lacking in our lives. She is the woman whose heart was pierced by a sword and who understands all our pain. As mother of all, she is a sign of hope for peoples suffering the birth pangs of justice. She is the missionary who draws near to us and accompanies us throughout life, opening our hearts to faith by her maternal love."



(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* n°286).

Act of trust in Mary

Blessed are you, God, our Father for having created Mary so beautiful and for having given her to us as Mother at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. Blessed are You for having called us, like Bernadette, to see Mary in Your light and to drink from the wellspring of Your Heart. Mary, you know the misery and the sin of our lives and the life of the world. We want to trust ourselves to You today, totally and without reserve. From you we will be reborn each day by the power of the Spirit. We will live the life of Jesus as little servants of our brothers. Teach us, Mary, to bear the life of the Lord. Teach us the "yes" of your heart.

The Church is a family

We can join the Family of Our Lady of Lourdes. We receive a scapular and, through a monthly newsletter, we can maintain a link with Lourdes and with other members of the Family so that we remain in the grace of the meeting between Mary and Bernadette.

Contact: famillendl@lourdes-france.com
www.lourdes-france.org/famille-notre-dame--de-lourdes/

A communion of grace

When Mary asks Bernadette to come to the Grotto for fifteen days, she actually invites her to open her heart. May we have the grace, like Bernadette, to feel "looked at like a person".



The Sanctuary invites us to open our hearts for an exchange with Mary. After making a beautiful sign of the Cross, let us say with true affection, «Hail Mary...»



Lourdes
2020

To find out more about **Lourdes 2020**
www.lourdes-france.org

Lourdes is my home

"I was born in Lourdes. My parents met there in 1973, when they were on a pilgrimage with French-speaking Switzerland. Subsequently, my father joined the stretcher bearers, and my mother joined the choir. When I turned 20, my parents offered to pay for me to go on a pilgrimage to Lourdes with a group of young people from French-speaking Switzerland. I was overwhelmed by my experience of faith there! I went back several times, including in 2000, where, the day after my arrival in Lourdes, I placed my last novena to Saint Anthony in the box, in the parish church, to ask him not to find something I had lost, but to find me love, someone with whom I could start a family and raise my children in faith. No matter where he came from, what he did in life, I just wanted him to be a believer. I came back full of hope, but without the love I had hoped for. The following year, I felt the call to go to the Baths and put myself at the service of the sick. This seemed strange to my family and friends because everything about caring for the sick frightened me, as well as bathing in water in which many others had bathed before me.

I joined the hospitality of French-speaking Switzerland in 2001. The day after our arrival in Lourdes, I went to the Baths and made the gesture requested by Mary. Although

I have always been loved by my parents, I never felt such a great Love envelop me, comfort me, forgive me. I had the impression at that time, of having carried out the request that Mary asked of Bernadette, this message addressed to all humanity: "Penance, penance, pray for the conversion of sinners". I had to let myself be purified from everything that was wrong in my life. I understood many years later that what I had felt was God's Mercy for me.

I left the Baths crying, I couldn't stop. My godmother then gave me my deceased grandmother, Mary's rosary, and I went to confession. I now understand that this bath was also a reminder of my baptism, that it allowed me to be reborn again and again into the New Life, with Mary!

It was at the end of the week of my pilgrimage that I met the man who was to become my husband and the father of our 3 sons. He too had been in the Baths, on the same day as me, at the same time ... but we didn't know each other at the time ... although we worked on the same floor at Accueil Notre-Dame all week ... Each of us had to do what Christ asked of us, and let ourselves become "new" to each other, through Him, before we met. My future husband was a pilgrimage pharmacist, invited just a week or two before to replace someone else. He lived 4 hours from my home, in an Italian-speak-



ing region, not easy for me, very attached as I am to my family, but the Lord had answered me because the man was a believer!

It was not easy to leave my loved ones, my region, my mother tongue after our marriage. Following Christ is not always easy, but if it is His will, we have to surrender ourselves to Him completely, to strip ourselves of all our fears, because He alone knows what is good for us, and He fills us with happiness in all the little things in life! And my husband is the one I needed!

I have received so many graces in Lourdes: my husband, my children and all that that entails. I was born in Lourdes and my family

too. I waited 16 years before coming back, not that I didn't want to go, but life meant that I had to wait. Last year, before she died, my mother asked me if I was going to go back. I replied, "Yes, of course!". It was then obvious that I had to return to Lourdes, and take our 3 sons there, thus responding to the call that Mary had made to me through my mother and showing the children the place from where they were born too! The second was born on the same day as Saint Bernadette, 7th January... Thank you Mary!" ■

Danielle
(French-speaking
Switzerland)

Bernadette said...

Awakened before 4 a.m. on 25th March 1858, Bernadette urged her family to hurry if they wanted to accompany her. They were worried about her asthma which had returned over the past few days: "Wait until it is sunny! - No, I have to go there and quickly". No one had been forewarned, the Soubirous family thought all would be quiet. What a surprise! There were a lot of people there. The feast of the Annunciation given rise to a new intensity. A hundred people were gathered. The Commissioner was also there. The young girl dressed in white was faithful to the date she had set - for Bernadette alone. During the three weeks without an Apparition, Bernadette had been rehearsing a particular sentence in her head, "Mademoiselle, would you be so kind as to tell me who you are please?" The "young lady" smiled but remained silent. Bernadette insisted and asked her question again. At the fourth time of asking, the Lady did not smile. She just transferred her rosary to her right arm. She unclasped her hands and extended them towards the ground. She then joined her hands at chest height, raised her eyes to heaven and said, "Que soy era Immaculada Counceptiou" (I am the Immaculate Conception). After having left her candle in the Grotto as a gift, Bernadette took off at a run while repeating in a low voice the phrase which she did not understand, and which would cause Father Peyramale to waver when she relayed it to him.



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(Laurentin, *Bernadette vous parle*, pp. 133-134)

4th August is no longer an inauspicious date

On a pilgrimage to Lourdes with his wife last summer, Donato tells us that until a certain pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1965, he had never prayed. Two significant events in his life, however, were to let him see the love of God.

On 4th August 1945, he was just 11 years old. War was still rumbling in Europe. He picked up a grenade which exploded in his hand. Providence put a particularly gifted surgeon in his path thanks to whom, his right hand, which has only 4 fingers, is today perfectly functional even without an index finger.

On 4th August 1962, he was sent to paint an electricity pylon which supported high voltage lines. The current had to be cut off during his work. A failure to pass on instructions led to a dramatic turn of events. The electricity was turned back on while Donato still had his feet on two of the lines. 20,000 volts surged through his body, destroying his right kneecap, burning his leg and torso, and ending at the top of his head which broke his skull. He fell 6 metres to the ground. No one believed he would survive. He had suffered 70% burns, but he was alive.



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Doctors treated the most urgent injuries to save his life but temporarily left his knee untreated which caused him excruciating suffering. After three years in hospital, his leg was finally operated on. Infection had caused irreversible damage. He refused amputation. His knee was locked permanently, and his suffering was ever-present. His wife, Gaetana, always

prayed to Mary for him. In September 1965, he agreed to go with her to Lourdes. In the evening, when following the Marian torchlight procession, the pain in his leg was so great that he had to stop. Gaetana left him near the taps, after applying compresses to his knee soaked in water from the Grotto. The next morning, he found he was able to follow the pilgrimi-

mage in everything they did without any suffering. He retained the scars on his body which reminded him that he had been blessed by at least two graces. The eve of 4th August always used to worry him. Today, he knows that Mary is watching over him and his family. He wanted to return this year on a pilgrimage to Lourdes to thank her. ■ Donato (Italy)

My brother became more of a believer than me!

I came on a pilgrimage to Lourdes in the Jubilee year of Mercy in 2016. A widow for 8 years, I was accompanied by my young son. I explained to him that merciful God forgives us our sins as well as those of the deceased and that, as the Holy Father explained, at the end of our journey here on earth journey, God also releases the deceased for whom we pray from the negative consequences of their sins. I therefore suggested that he prayed for his father and that I prayed for my father who was an alcoholic. At that time, I was already praying for my brother, who had also been under the influence of

alcohol for many years, from which nothing and no one had managed to rescue him. Just a fortnight after the end of this Holy Year, we had just completed the Way of Mercy in Lourdes, when my brother was involved in a road accident. As he was thrown to the ground, he heard God in his heart asking him to stop drinking. He experienced extreme distress. He first got help with drug therapy. Very quickly, he asked his companion and his son for forgiveness. Before their eyes, he experienced a real conversion. He prayed every day. He passionately wanted to rediscover Jesus through the Mass, and then to receive



the sacrament of reconciliation. Today, he's even more of a believer than I am! Our sibling affection has been profoundly transformed because it was another man, another brother whom we discovered! Thank you, Our Lady of Lourdes, who always intercedes before her Son and guides us to the merciful God. ■

Marie-Hélène (France)

A relationship of the heart

Léontine Douissard, born in 1921, would not miss her annual trip to Lourdes for anything in the world: "I love the Blessed Virgin and I love Saint Bernadette. I always look forward to my pilgrimage!" Every year since 1976, each year without fail, this "almost centenarian" has responded to the call of Our Lady, even after the death of her husband, Gabriel. Living in Saint-Maurice (France), a small town near the city of Clermont-Ferrand, throughout her working life, Léontine ran the café-bar-restaurant in her village, with her husband. She has three children: Jean, Daniel and Josiane. She returns to Lourdes each year accompanied by Josiane who wishes to add, "Mum knits blankets for sick pilgrims!" The bond that links Léontine to the Grotto is also that of fraternity and self-giving, in faith. A relationship of the heart. ■



Interview by Laurent Jarneau

Bernadette came to visit me

"May God be praised for having sent Bernadette to our home, especially for me because I am fortunate enough to stay with the Sisters of Marie Saint-Frai to do my hospitality stage every year. This year the Lord wanted things to be different because I was unable to go for health reasons. God willing, I will come back next year." ■

Joselyn Ibarra (Spain, from the diocese of Terrassa who hosted the relics of Saint Bernadette from 3rd to 6th November 2019)



Mary hears your prayers

Prayers answered

Unable to have children, my mother went to pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lourdes. She had expressed the desire to have a little girl. Nine months later, she gave birth to twins: Bernadette and Geneviève. I am one of them.

Pray for me!

I came to Lourdes on 24th August this year. It was a magical, unforgettable moment. I need a lot of prayers right now. Please pray for me. Thank you very much. **Valérie (France)**

Thank you TV Lourdes!

Not having been able to attend the Lourdes pilgrimage with the diocese of Saint-Brieuc, I was still able to be close to the pilgrims thanks to the *TV Lourdes* app and I would like to tell you how much I appreciated it.

Even though I was sick and far away from Lourdes, I felt like I was there close to the pilgrims and friends of my diocese with whom I was able to share many live ceremonies.

What a great initiative you took in creating *TV Lourdes*!

Be assured of my grateful thanks and also of my fidelity to the life of the Sanctuary thanks to this magnificent means of communication.

Maryvonne (France)



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