

The Message of Our Lady

The Message of Our Lady is as relevant today for the world as it was in 1858, and will be for generations to come.

The mission of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes is to share the Message broadly, inviting all and particularly the sick, those with a disability or who are suffering, to experience the grace of Lourdes, and discover or deepen their faith.



Planning for the future, continuing history

From mid-March to mid-May 2020, the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes was forced to close its gates for the first time ever since 1858. Through social media millions of people around the world prayed daily in communion with the chaplains of the Sanctuary who celebrated mass and led the rosary at the Grotto, alone.

Since the pandemic, the pilgrimages and groups who have come to Lourdes for generations are endeavoring to return, accompanying the sick and those with a disability, however the gap of 2 or 3 years due to sanitary measures, the aging population of hospitaliers and the financial situation of many mean that while the number of pilgrimages and groups is similar to pre-Covid, the number of pilgrims in constituted groups is currently somewhat reduced.

In parallel, the Sanctuary is seeing increasing numbers of first-time visitors, who perhaps followed celebrations live from the Grotto during the pandemic, or who are searching for meaning, consolation, mercy.

At the Grotto, during the 13th Apparition the Blessed Virgin asked Bernadette to "Go tell the priests to build a chapel here". In response the then Bishop of Tarbes, Mgr Bertrand-Sévère Laurence, declared "To comply with the will of the Blessed Virgin expressed several times during the Apparitions, we propose to build a sanctuary on the ground of the Grotto which has become the property of the bishops of Tarbes" (pastoral letter of 18 January 1862).

Since that time successive leaders of the Sanctuary ("the guardians of the Grotto") have undertaken extensive, ambitious, and bold programs of work, to cater for the pilgrims and their constantly evolving numbers and needs. It is now time to plan for 2030 and beyond, renovating, building, and developing the Sanctuary for the next generations.

"Vision Lourdes 2030", future-proofing the Sanctuary for generations to come

The Sanctuary is vast. The upkeep of the places of worship and other buildings is immense and costly. Even though urgent work is carried out each year, many buildings are falling into disrepair and in some cases dilapidation. Pilgrims are the first to suffer from the lack of modernization of the facilities. The time has come to commit to wide-ranging renovation. The "Vision Lourdes 2030" provides the opportunity to identify key areas where buildings and spaces need to undergo transformation.

Each investment must take into account the following:

- optimization of the capacity of facilities and flow of pilgrims and visitors
- improvement of comfort levels, particularly for the sick pilgrims and those with a disability
- safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults
- respect accessibility standards and where possible surpass them
- preservation of heritage and architectural features
- provision of places of worship which are conducive to prayer
- nature conservation in the spirit of Laudato Si
- maximization of energy efficiency and sobriety
- above all, the transmission of the Message of Our Lady

The first two projects have been approved by the Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes and the Economic Affairs Council of the Sanctuary: the renovation of the **Basilica of the Immaculate Conception (Upper Basilica)** and the redevelopment of the **Youth Village**. 2023 marks the launch of the capital campaign for both projects.

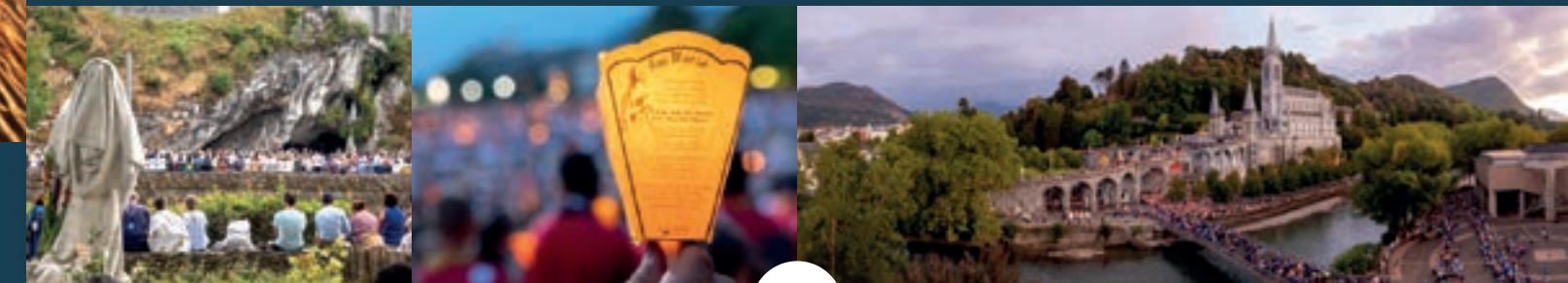
The map gives an overview of the other projects for which details will be forthcoming in early 2024, once the consultation under the leadership of the Rector of the Sanctuary confirms the shared vision of key stakeholders including the chaplains and employees of the Sanctuary and those who serve and volunteer in the Sanctuary.



Vision Lourdes 2030



The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes *Projects for the Future*



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A global center of healing
and prayer for all



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The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes is a unique place of peace, of prayer, of hope and healing. The Sanctuary welcomes everyone, especially the most vulnerable, without judgement or expectation of anything in return, with the principles of welcome, serve, love.



Since the beginning of the 18 Apparitions of Our Lady to a young, poorly and impoverished local girl Bernadette Soubirous in 1858 in a dark, damp cave near a remote town in the Pyrenees mountains in Southern France, the sick, those with a disability and to whom life has dealt a difficult hand, travel to the Grotto in Lourdes seeking hope, consolation and fraternity in the Message of Our Lady.

The Message has a universal appeal for everyone in its simplicity, and especially for those who often do not have the words to express themselves. They come to Lourdes and find answers, often through the prayer and the sacraments. They touch the rock of the Grotto, drink the water from the source, light a candle, experience the grace.

In an increasingly busy world, the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes is a beautiful place to pause and focus on personal spiritual growth. Priorities in Lourdes seem 'right side up': the most vulnerable come first and each serves the other.

It is vital that the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes continues to be a haven of healing, peace and reconciliation with God and each other. More than any other time in history, the facilities and services must be fit-for-purpose.

The Message of Lourdes is timeless, a universal message which attracts annually around 3,5 million visitors and pilgrims from all faiths and from all over the world (3.5 million in 2019, 800,000 in 2020, 1.5 million in 2021, 2.6 million in 2022, estimated 3.5 million in 2023).

Looking forward to 2030 and beyond, essential renovation and upgrading of facilities, and redeployment of buildings and spaces in the Sanctuary must be carried out in order to continue to spread the Message of Our Lady to a broad international community.

The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes and funding

The 1905 law led to the separation of the State and Church in France – the French State does not subsidize any religion or religious activity. The Sanctuary is an entirely private property. It receives **no funds** from the French State, the Catholic Church in France, the Vatican, and relies solely on donations, offerings and bequests, and to a lesser extent the contribution from pilgrimages and the accommodation of sick pilgrims, hospitaliers and volunteers.

Entrance to the Sanctuary is free of charge.

In 2022, the French State announced an ambitious plan for the economic recovery and regeneration of the town of Lourdes and the surrounding area post-Covid. 'Plan Avenir Lourdes' is the commitment of EUR 100 million of public funds by 2030. With around 4 million people annually visiting the town of 14,000 inhabitants, and the lack of investment on urban infrastructure in recent years, major redevelopment work is required to provide appropriate amenities for visitors and pilgrims from around the world – whether the purpose of their visit is to spend time in the Sanctuary or participate in sporting activities in the mountains. Lourdes used to have the second largest hotel room capacity in France after Paris, however since the pandemic many hotels have not reopened.

Although the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes is mentioned in 3 of the 100 actions in the Plan, it will not receive any public funds out of the EUR 100 million.

The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes in numbers:

55 hectares (136 acres) of land of which 17 hectares (42 acres) of forest and grass, 100,000 m² (1,076,000 ft²) of buildings including 3 Basilicas, 25 Chapels. 30 chaplains, 320 employees, 3,5 million visitors annually.

PROJECTS OF THE SANCTUARY OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

