

My Name is Bernadette



On a June day in 1858, Fr. Peyramale noticed a girl's head encircled by a halo as he gave her Holy Communion.

When she raised her head, he recognised her as Bernadette Soubirous.

Next day at Mass, the Priest admitted, "I have spoken harshly at times to Bernadette, but yesterday I began to understand we may go constantly to the grotto."

Since that day, countless pilgrims have gone constantly to the grotto of Lourdes, where the Mother of God conversed with Bernadette.

In this booklet, in words spoken by Bernadette, in words written by her, Bernadette reveals her soul, her suffering, her sanctity.

Bernadette is Lourdes' most compelling miracle. She is one of God's most self-effacing saints. Perhaps for that reason, she is one of the greatest.



My Name Is Bernadette

A Faith Formation Resource
St Peter's Church
Padungan, Kuching

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Feast Day of St. Bernadette

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My Name is Bernadette



"The simpler one writes the better it will be."
— St. Bernadette.

"Footnotes, sources and references are omitted in this work. Educated people will not need them. Uneducated people will not read them."
— St. Francis de Sales.

**"For those who believe, no explanation is necessary.
For those who do not believe, no explanation is possible."**



Transcribed and compiled by Michael Hii
for Faith Formation for Children
FFC 2007

My Name is Bernadette

1858 A.D.

Tenth Apparition – 27 February (Saturday)

Note: "Go and tell the Priests to have a Chapel built here"

Eleventh Apparition – 28 February (Sunday)

Note: Personal messages

Twelfth Apparition – 1 March (Monday)

Note: "This Rosary is not yours"

Thirteenth Apparition – 2 March (Tuesday)

Note: "The Lady wishes to have a chapel at Massabielle and She adds 'I wish people to come here in procession'."

Fourteenth Apparition – 3 March (Wednesday)

Note: "She smiled when I told Her that you were asking Her to work a miracle. I told Her to make the rose bush bloom; She smiled once more. But She wants the Chapel"

Fifteenth Apparition – 4 March (Thursday)

Note: "She smiled when She departed but She did not say goodbye to me"

Sixteenth Apparition – 25 March (Thursday)

Note: "I Am The Immaculate Conception"

Seventeenth Apparition – 7 April (Wednesday)

Note: The Miracle of the Candle

Eighteenth Apparition – 16 July (Friday)

Note: The Final Apparition: as She disappeared, She cast one last smile upon Bernadette.

My Name is Bernadette

18 Apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes

1858 A.D.

First Apparition - 11 February (Thursday)

Note: "She is dressed in a white robe, girdled at the waist with a blue ribbon"

Second Apparition - 14 February (Sunday)

Note: Bernadette in ecstasy.

Third Apparition - 18 February (Thursday)

Note: "I do not promise to make you happy in this life, but in the next"

Fourth Apparition - 19 February (Friday)

Note: The Lady had simply raised Her eyes in the direction of the voices, which were then seized with fear and began to disperse.

Fifth Apparition - 20 February (Saturday)

Note: The Lady taught Bernadette a personal prayer which she never revealed to any living soul.

Sixth Apparition - 21 February (Sunday)

Note: "Pray for the sinners"

Seventh Apparition - 23 February (Tuesday)

Note: Three secrets which were never revealed: "if the sign of the Cross is made in Heaven, it must be as Bernadette made it that morning"

Eighth Apparition - 24 February (Wednesday)

Note: "Penitence... penitence... penitence!"

Ninth Apparition - 25 February (Thursday)

Note: Discovery of the Miraculous Spring.

My Name is Bernadette

Apparitions are homily from heaven. Apparitions do not reveal new truths. They re-affirm truths we tend to forget.

Bernadette's apparitions re-affirm that the Mother of Jesus is at home with her children on earth as equally as with her children in Heaven. Always will she be visiting her children on earth to make them aware of their home in Heaven.

She chooses carefully whom she visits. In Bernadette Soubirous, She chose magnificently.

It is time Bernadette, you spoke about yourself. Speak about your Faith, your Lady, your vocation, your hidden life, your holy death.

We will listen, not to glorify you, for that you would not want. We will listen to thank the Lady who promised you happiness, not in this life, but in the next.



**"Between the two fortresses which defend the Church, the Immaculate Virgin and the Papacy, Behold a humble grain of sand,
- the Apostle of our Lady,
- Bernadette Soubirous."**

Pope St. Pius X.

My Name is Bernadette



Contents

	Page
My name is Bernadette	5
February 11th	6
An Invitation and a Promise For Fifteen Days	7
Cross Questioning	9
Three Secrets and Repentance	10
Drink at the Spring	12
Questioning, Healing, Rosary	13
The Parish Priest	14
The Fifteenth Day	16
Enemies, Friends, Miracles	17
"I am the Immaculate Conception"	19
Mary's Magnificence	20
The Lighted Candle	22
First Holy Communion	23
The Lady says Good-Bye	24
Prayer and Penance	26
Leaving Lourdes Forever	27
Assignment Nowhere	29
Fidelity	30
Towards Eternity	32
"Poor sinner, Poor sinner"	33
St. Bernadette Soubirous	34
18 Apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes	36
	38

My Name is Bernadette

Two years later, Mother Josephine Forrestier inaugurated Bernadette's cause for canonisation.

As part of the formal proceedings, Bernadette's coffin was opened after thirty years in the grave. Her Rosary had rusted, her habit had frayed, but Bernadette was perfectly and beautifully incorrupt. It was as though she had just fallen asleep.



On December 8th 1933, Pope Pius XI declared Bernadette Soubirous a Saint of the Catholic Church. Her feast-day was fixed for February 18th, the day her Lady promised to make her happy, not in this life, but in the next. The Faithful however give her two more feast-days — April 16th, the day of her death, and February 11th — the day her Lady stepped from Heaven into her heart.

The miraculous spring still flows in Lourdes. People still come in procession to Lourdes. Miracles still grace the grotto of Lourdes. But the grotto's greatest miracle is the girl Our Lady asked to "come closer" to her that February day in Lourdes; — and

**HER NAME IS
BERNADETTE.**

My Name is Bernadette

clearly, "Mother of God, pray for me, poor sinner, poor sinner."

Now was the hour of her death, and like Jesus on the cross, she said, "I am thirsty." The Sisters brought some water. Bernadette for the last time made the Sign of the Cross as her Lady that taught her in the grotto. Silently she sipped a little water. Peacefully she bowed her head. Gently she surrendered her soul.

A Sister put the crucifix in her hands and the Rosary through her fingers. Bernadette Soubirous, after thirty-five years on earth, had gone to her God.

Saint Bernadette Soubirous

The moment Bernadette's death was announced, people flocked to pay their respects. Their sense of the sacred told them a Saint had died. They began to clamour for her canonization, but there was one insurmountable obstacle,—Bernadette's novice—mistress, Mother Vazou.

Within two years of Bernadette's death, this formidable lady had become Superior General. She had failed to fit Bernadette into her own mould of Jansenistic piety. Now she failed to hear the whispering of God in the voices of God's people. Where once she forbade all mention of Bernadette's Apparitions, now she forbade all mention of her canonisation.

"Spare me that humiliation," she would snap, "wait till I am dead." The Sisters would wait a quarter of a century for her demise, which occurred—ironically in Lourdes—in 1907.

My Name is Bernadette

MY NAME IS BERNADETTE

My father was Francois Soubirous, my mother Louise Casterot. I was their first child, born on Monday, January 7th, 1844. Next day, I was baptised by Fr. Dominique Forgue in the parish church of Lourdes.



Eventually six brothers and two sisters arrived as gifts from God. Only three lived beyond the age of ten. Justin died when he was nine, four others died as infants. Such comings and goings from Heaven to earth, and earth to Heaven welded our family together in fortitude and love. I never heard my parents quarrel. They were always at peace.

My childhood was carefree, for my father was a miller. He ran the Boly Mill beside a limpid stream that flowed into the Gave. Famine, bad times and poverty reduced us to living in a one-room dwelling called the Cachot. It was an unused police lock-up. It can still be seen in Lourdes today.

When I was ten, cholera scourged Lourdes, bringing me to death's door, and leaving me with asthma and palpitations of the heart. The following year, famine gripped the countryside, and we all but starved.

When I was thirteen, my parents sent me to Bartres, five kilometres from home. Marie Lagues my foster mother lived there, and she promised to prepare me for my First Holy Communion. Marie could scarcely read or write, I could not read or write at all. I spoke only patois, and the catechism was in French. After all day in the fields minding sheep, I was too tired to understand a word.

My Name is Bernadette

Fr. Pomian promised that if I returned to Lourdes he would prepare me for my First Holy Communion. So three weeks after my fourteenth birthday, I walked back to Lourdes on my own, and I never went back to Bartres.



Early on February 11th,

1858, my sister Toinette, aged eleven, and my friend Jeanne Abadie, aged twelve, set off with me to gather firewood for my mother. Jeanne and Toinette crossed the millstream by the river Gave, while I sat down to take off my shoes. I was taking off my stocking when I heard a noise like

the sound of a storm. I looked at the trees near the river, but nothing was moving. I was frightened, and I stood up straight.

Bewildered, I looked across the mill-stream to a niche above a cave in the rock of Massabielle. A rosebush on the edge of the niche was swaying in the wind. It was all that moved. All else was still.

A golden cloud came out of the cave and flooded the niche with radiance. Then a lady, young and beautiful, exceedingly beautiful, the like of whom I had never seen, stood on the edge of the niche. She smiled and smiled at me, beckoning me to come closer as though she were my mother, and she gave me to understand in my soul that I was not mistaken.

The Lady was dressed in white, with a white veil on her head, and a blue sash at her waist. A Rosary of white beads on a golden chain was on her right arm. On that

My Name is Bernadette

Poor Sinner, Poor Sinner

Bernadette Soubirous died on Easter Wednesday, April 16th, 1879. On Easter Sunday she said, "This morning after Holy Communion, I asked Our Lord for a respite to talk to Him in comfort. He would not give it. My sufferings will last till death."



On Easter Monday, Bernadette said goodbye to her dear friend, Sister Bernard Dalias. "Not that," Sister Bernard had remarked twelve years ago.

"Just that" said Bernadette as she took her hand. Bernadette took her hand again and said, "Goodbye, Bernard, this time it is the last."

On Easter Tuesday, the chaplain suggested she make the sacrifice of her life. "What sacrifice?" Bernadette answered, "it is no sacrifice to leave this life, where it is so difficult to belong to God."

On Easter Wednesday, she requested her crucifix to be tied to her, lest her weakening fingers be unable to hold it.

She gazed at the statue of Our Blessed Lady and said, "I have seen her. How beautiful she is, and how I long to go to her."

Sister Nathalie Portat came in about three o'clock, and Bernadette requested, "Help me to thank to the end." Taking the crucifix, she prayed, "My God I love You, with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength." Sister Nathalie began the Hail Mary. Bernadette answered

My Name is Bernadette

What madness, their deaths seemed to say, to attach oneself too deeply to anything on earth, when one must leave it all too soon for heaven "Why don't you ask Our Lady to cure you?" a pilgrim asked me once in Lourdes.

"**It's no use**," I answered, "Our Lady told me I would die young."

In September 1877, I said to the Sisters, "I will not last long now," and soon I became a patient in the infirmary I had helped to manage. My bed became "my little white chapel." Then it became my cross. Eventually it became a crucifix, when I could only lie on it and suffer.

A Sister apologised for the pain as she pulled a poultice off some blisters. "Pull away," I managed to say, "I'm as tough as a cat." Sister smiled,—she knew I was reflecting the way of sacrifice, repentance pointed out at Lourdes.

My weapons, I decided, would be prayer and sacrifice, which I would hold onto till my last breath. Then only would the weapon of sacrifice fall from my hand, but the weapon of prayer would follow me to Heaven.

My mission was ending. The Lady who shared with her Priest and myself her name in the Trinity before time began, would see her child, as she had seen her Priest, serenely through to Eternity.

"The Blessed Virgin is so beautiful that when one has seen Her once, one would gladly wish to die so as to see Her again" (St Bernadette)

My Name is Bernadette

cold winter's day, her feet were bare, but on each foot was a golden rose radiant with the warmth of summer.

I went upon my knees and took my Rosary from my pocket The Lady took the Rosary from her arm and I began to cross myself. My arm could not move until the Lady herself made a beautiful Sign of the Cross.

The Lady let me pray the Rosary on my own. She passed the beads through her fingers, she did not say the words. She signed for me to come closer but I did not dare. She smiled at me, she bowed to me. She disappeared into the niche, the golden cloud faded, and I was all alone.

I told Toinette what happened, and at evening prayer my eyes filled up with tears. "Is anything wrong?" my mother asked. Toinette answered for me, and my mother said, "It was a white stone you saw." My father thought it better for me not to return to Massabielle.

An Invitation and a Promise

On Sunday I asked my father's permission to return. He said "A lady with a Rosary can't be evil," and he gave permission.

A group of us went, I began my Rosary, and the Lady appeared in the niche and smiled at me. I sprinkled some Holy Water, saying, "If you come from God, stay. If you don't, go away." The more I sprinkled, the more she smiled. I knelt and gazed at her lovingly.



My Name is Bernadette

Some of the group ran frightened to Madame Nicolau nearby. Madame returned with Antoine her son, who used all his strength to carry me to his mother's home. Along the way, the Lady kept in front of me and slightly above me. Only when Antoine carried me into his home, did the Lady disappear and did I return to earth.

My mother had come to Antoine's house, and she was crying. "You are making everyone run after you," she said. Antoine's wife reassured my mother, and from that moment my mother stood by me, and never doubted me.

On Thursday morning, Madame Millet and Antoinette Peyret took me to the grotto. They brought a pen and ink with them. I began the Rosary, and the Lady appeared, surrounded with light. I went into the grotto, and the Lady came down from the niche and stood beside me. "If you are from God", I said, "please tell me what you want; else go away."

At "are from God," she smiled. At "else go away," she shook her head. I asked "Would you be so kind as to write down your name?" "There is no need to write what I have to say," she answered, and she laughed. Then she spoke again, "Would you have the graciousness to come here for fifteen days?"

"Aoue era gracia" were her exact words, and I was astonished she should speak to me in patois and in a manner so gracious. "I will ask my parents' permission," I replied, "and I will come."

She responded, "I do not promise to make you happy in this life, but in the next." Then, "Go and tell the Priests that a chapel must be built here." Her eyes rested on

My Name is Bernadette

The Rosary became my way of prayer, indeed my way of life. To hold it in ones hands brought serenity and peace. The Rosary I used during the Apparitions disappeared one day without a trace. Toinette had given it to me in 1856. A Priest boasted that he had it, but my answer was, "If anyone claims to have my beads, he must have stolen them, for I would never have given them to anyone."



Towards Eternity

On March 4th, 1871, my father died at the age of 64. He died as he lived, in deep faith, and with a quiet longing to be with God.

On September 8th, 1877, Fr. Peyramale died in Lourdes. He began the processions I could never organise, he built the chapel I could never build. Our Lady had requested but a chapel. He gave her a basilica. Surely, when he died on her birthday, she gave him Heaven.

Fidelity



Bernadette as a Nun.

After Profession I was left in the Novitiate "to help with the cleaning." The Novice Mistress demanded total revelation of my soul and complete submission to her ways.

The second I could manage, the first was beyond me. Having opened ones soul to the Queen of Heaven, how futile to open it

to anyone on earth. Yet it was good for me. When one is espoused to Jesus Christ, one should say yes in physical and emotional pain, without any ifs or buts. The Sisters used to say, "It is good not to be Bernadette," and they were wondrous in their encouragement.

Antoinette Dalias, a postulant, said, "I've been in Nevers for three days, and no one has shown me Bernadette." "That's Bernadette beside you," said a Sister. "Not that?" exclaimed Antoinette. I took her hand and said, "Yes, Mademoiselle, just that," and we were friends for life.

A liturgy expert assured me that Our Lady would never wear a blue sash,—blue was not liturgical. "I don't know anything about liturgy," I answered, "but I do know the Lady's sash was blue." Patience with such people was given me in prayer, and prayer was my assignment now.

Children never put me off. A tiny tot of four said, "You have seen the Blessed Virgin, Sister. Was she beautiful?"

"So beautiful," I replied, "that once you have seen her, you would willingly die to see her again."

Antoinette for a moment, she smiled on her, and then she disappeared.

For Fifteen Days

On Friday, my parents gave permission and my heart was full of joy. The Lady came, and when my mother saw me smile so sacredly, she prayed, "O God, do not take my child away from me." She thought I might die.



Bernadette's Parents

I was not afraid to die, but I was terrified by the voices coming from the back of the grotto. They were evil voices clashing in a guttural, angry way. "Save yourself, get out of here," they shrieked. The Lady raised her eyes, frowned at where the voices were,—and there was peace.

The Lady vanished as gently as she came, and I flung myself into my mother's arms, saying, "The Lady thanked me for coming, she told me she would have some revelations to make to me."

Early next morning, my mother and I returned to the grotto, where the Lady taught me, word for word a prayer for myself alone. I have never revealed it to anyone, not even to my mother.

Sunday was the Lady's sixth visit to me. Hundreds of people were kneeling by the grotto, but I scarcely noticed them. The light around the Lady was brighter,

My Name is Bernadette

yet softer than the sun. The roses on her feet were brighter than gold.

For a moment she looked out over my head, and sorrow overshadowed her. I asked her why? She answered "Pray for sinners." She was surrounded by light as she disappeared, the glow faded, but its warmth lingered in my soul.

Two other people came into my life today. One was our Lourdes doctor, the other was the police commissioner. Unknown to me, as I was talking to the Lady, Doctor Dozous had taken my arm and placed his fingers on an artery to feel the pulse.

"It was calm and regular," he wrote later. "Nothing suggested Bernadette was under undue nervous excitement." Doctor Dozous eventually became a man of deep faith. He was the first doctor to care for the sick when they came on pilgrimage to the grotto.

Cross Questioning



Dominique Jacomet the police commissioner! He was suspicious of everyone. He took hold of my hood as I left the church and said, "Qu'em bas sequi — follow me." He took me to his office and the questioning began. "My name is Bernadette", I said.

I could not say if I was thirteen or fourteen, as I had never learned to count He tried to suggest I was seeing Our Blessed Lady. I insisted I saw only "Aquero." Jacomet

My Name is Bernadette

Lourdes on December 8th. Her death at forty-one convinced me life is only Heaven's waiting-room.

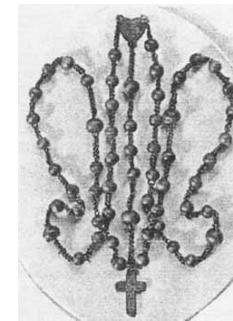
On October 30th, 1867, with forty-three other novices, I made my Religious Profession. Heavenly happiness and human humiliation mingled in my soul, "Monseigneur," said Mother General, "we are at our wits' end to know where to assign Sister Marie-Bernard. She is a little stupid, and is good for nothing."



In front of the community, the Bishop replied, "Sister Marie-Bernard, assignment nowhere!" Then, "If it is true you are good for nothing, what was the use of your entering the Congregation?" "That is what I said to you at Lourdes," I replied, "and you said it did not matter."

Mother General spoke again, "If you wish, Monseigneur, we could keep her out of charity here, and use her in the infirmary. To start with, she could help with the cleaning."

The Bishop looked at me kneeling before him and said, "I give you the assignment of praying."



My Name is Bernadette

I prayed. I asked my parents' opinion. I consulted Fr. Peyramale. My heart said yes. I chose the Sisters of Nevers because they never tried to entice me there.

On July 3rd 1866, I went to the grotto for the last time. I said goodbye. I turned away. I did not look back. Two other postulants and my self arrived at Nevers on July 7th. Superiors did not meet postulants who arrived at night, so we groped through the dark dormitory to our beds. We cried that night, to be told next morning,—small comfort—that tears were a sign of a true vocation.

Assignment Nowhere

Next day the Sisters assembled—three hundred in all,—and in my Lourdes dress and white hood, I was told to speak of the Apparitions. I was also told it would be the first and the last time I would speak of them.

Homesick for Lourdes, I struggled on till August, when choking bouts of coughing laid me low. The Sisters called the Bishop to anoint me.

"You are going to die," he said, "and I have come to receive your Religious Profession—you need only say Amen." He then departed, leaving the Superior General to close my eyes when I breathed my last. When I did not oblige, she was angry;

"You are nothing but a little fool," she said. "If you are not dead by morning, I will remove your Profession veil, and send you back to the Novitiate."

No sooner was I back in the Novitiate, than I received word of my mother's death. She died peacefully in

My Name is Bernadette

knew that "Aquero" means "reverence in the presence of a sacred reality."

He wrote down with a goose-quill every word I said. Then he read it back to me,—twisted, untruthful, incorrect. "Sir," I protested, "you are altering everything I say."

"Brazen hussy," he blazed, and the tassel on his cap shook as he ranted in anger. At that moment the door opened, and my father stood there saying, "I am the father of this little one."

Next day at catechism class, the girls shunned me as a criminal, and the Sister Superior thanked God had been arrested for my misbehaviour. One woman called me a brat, another slapped my face but Sister Damien was kind to me.

I was returning to class after lunch, when an invisible barrier prevented me from going forward and an inner force propelled me to the grotto. At the same time, a policeman shadowed me, making barbed remarks about Religion in these advance days of nineteenth century science.

I knelt at the grotto and said my Rosary, but Aquero did not come. People scoffed and said the Lady was afraid of the police. That evening I told Fr. Pomian about the commissioner and the policeman. "They cannot stop you from going to the grotto," he said.

When I told my father what happened, he said he would never again let anyone prevent me from visiting Massabielle.

Three Secrets and Repentance



On Tuesday, I felt my soul called to the grotto, and I told my mother. She came along with me. About one hundred and fifty people were there, including Doctor Dozous.

Aquero came and prayed with me for an hour. The anguish of yesterday vanished in the warmth of her presence. She told me three secrets for myself alone. I am never to tell anyone. They concern only myself, and they keep me prayerful, grateful, humble. When she said goodbye, my one consolation was my mother kneeling beside me.

Today I was surprised that people could not hear Aquero and myself talking. Aquero talked loud enough to be heard, I raised my voice to enable her to hear, yet no one heard a word.

Next day, Wednesday, my parents and my Aunt Lucille brought me to the grotto.

My Lady appeared for the eighth time. Again for an hour she spoke with me and prayed with me. I could not take my eyes off her radiant presence.

Today the people did hear something I said while I was talking with the Lady. She spoke one word only. She spoke it slowly, sadly. She spoke it three times. "Repentance, Repentance, Repentance," and my eyes filled up with tears.

Leaving Lourdes Forever

About this time, Our Lady's statue was placed in the grotto by the sculptor Fabisch, who attempted to portray in marble the living sacredness of God's Mother. No marble however can contain such sacredness, and I had to admit, "It is not she." The sculptor made Our Lady smile too little and look too big. He was not to blame. In Heaven he will understand.



Next came the blessing of the crypt of the chapel. My father's joy was complete that day. For months he had worked on the crypt as a labourer. My mother remained in the background, quietly thanking God for everything.

Then early in 1865, my little brother died. Justin never saw his tenth birthday. He was the fourth child my parents had seen die. That made four of our family in Heaven to keep our places ready till we meet again in the Communion of Saints.

Soon after Justin's death, the Bishop visited Lourdes. I was seated on a block of wood, scraping carrots for the Sisters' dinner, when he entered the kitchen. He spoke to me of getting married.

"Oh, that is not for me," I answered. "The Convent then, have you thought of it?" "I don't know anything, and I'm no good at anything," I answered.

"You are good at scraping carrots," he said. "Think it over, and if your heart says yes, I will see to the rest."

My Name is Bernadette

One Sister was shocked when I started everybody sneezing by passing snuff around while she droned away in French. Another was upset when I threw my shoe out the classroom window, telling Julie Garros to bring it back full of strawberries from the garden. Fr. Peyramale allowed me to receive Holy Communion every Sunday as well as twice a month.

In January 1862, the Bishop's commission gave its verdict: "We hold that the Mother of God appeared to Bernadette Soubirous on February 11th, 1858, and on subsequent days. We propose to build a chapel by the grotto which is now the property of the Diocese of Tarbes."

Photography had recently arrived in Lourdes, and I was asked to pose as though in ecstasy. "I can't," I said, "the Lady isn't there." Another photographer wanted me to change my dress for every photo. I did not have the dresses. The photos eventually sold in Lourdes for five cents!

I was called to the Sisters' parlour ten to twenty times a day to be grilled with questions. "Courage", Sister Victorine would say when she saw the tears "the Apparitions were for others as well as for yourself."

In April 1862, I collapsed and was anointed. The hospice doctor prescribed medicine, but I requested some water from the grotto. A moment after sipping it, I felt as though a mountain were lifted off my chest.

"My medicine worked well," the doctor beamed. "I did not take it," I replied. "Well," he answered, "you weren't as sick as you thought you were."

My Name is Bernadette

I spoke it as the Lady spoke it,—slowly. I said it a she said it,—three times. The people nearby hear me say it, and they repeated it to the others. When the Lady left, my Aunt Lucille was crying. She could not understand why I bent down several times and kissed the ground.

"Auntie," I explained, "Aquero told me to pray to God for the conversion of sinners, and she asked me to kiss the ground in humility for their pride."

"Drink at the Spring"

On Thursday, February 25th, Aquero came peacefully, prayerfully. Gently she said, "Go, drink | at the spring, and wash in it."



I saw no spring, so I went towards the Gave. Aquero called me back and pointed to a spot beneath the rock. I found some moisture there, but it was mud. Three times I threw it away, even though the Lady said to drink it Then I washed in it, only to have my face besmeared with mud.

When the Lady left my Aunt Bernarde slapped my face. "Stop your nonsense," she said, as she sent me home to the jeers of the people. That afternoon, Eleanore Perard returned with me to the grotto. Water was bubbling from the hollow I had scraped in the mud. Eleanore stirred the water with a stick. The more she stirred, the more it flowed. The more it flowed, the purer it became. Soon it was water crystal clear.

My Name is Bernadette

The people who laughed this morning when all they saw was mud, now saw the water as a gift from God. They obeyed the Lady's request, "Go, drink a the spring and wash in it"

Louis Bouriette asked his daughter to bring him some of the water. Years before in the quarries Louis had injured his right eye, and his vision was steadily deteriorating.

He bathed his eye with the water, and next day he said to Doctor Dozous, "I am cured." Doctor Dozous wrote a sentence on some paper, placed his hand over Louis' good eye, and said, "Read this." Louis read aloud, "This patient is suffering from an incurable amaurosis."

The Gospel at Mass that morning told of the pool in Jerusalem where so many of "the sick, the blind and the lame were healed." The people who scoffed when I washed in the spring, eventually treasured its water as a grace from Heaven.

Questioning, Healing, Rosary



That evening a policeman came to take my mother and myself to the Imperial Prosecutor. For two hours we were made to stand before a picture of Napoleon III, while the Prosecutor sat beneath the picture and questioned us.

For two hours we stood there, questioned, mortified, till he threatened to throw us into prison. My mother burst into tears at this, and the Prosecutor took fright. He said, "There are chairs, you can sit down."

My Name is Bernadette

plod along in the rut worn by the scepticism of the last century."

Doctor Dozous listed the cures he had witnessed through use of water from the spring. He was accused of being obstinate, but he simply stated the facts and admitted they were beyond medical explanation. Facts are the most obstinate things in the world. They cannot be denied, and they will not go away.

He was vindicated from a most unexpected source. Napoleon III who treated the Church so shabbily, suppressing Catholic papers and the Vincent de Paul Society, ordered Jacomet's notice to be taken down, the barricade to be demolished, and the grotto restored to the people. Jacomet he transferred to Arles.

Workmen rushed to remove the barricades, and the people flocked to the grotto. The Lady had won again. That evening the grotto was ablaze with candles in her honour.

Prayer and Penance

To protect me from the town officials, Fr. Peyramale boarded me with the Sisters in the hospice. Slowly I learned to write, to speak French, to sew and embroider. Though I was now sixteen, my size enabled me to fit in easily with the eleven and twelve year olds.



great. In Holy Communion I am heart to heart with Jesus. How sublime is my destiny."

The Lady says Good-Bye



On July 16th, I was kneeling in the quiet of the parish church, thanking God for my third Holy Communion. My soul stirred suddenly with an impulse now familiar — the Mother of God was calling me.

The grotto had been barricaded off by Jacomet and a notice erected, "Entrance to this property forbidden." The notice was in French. The Mother of God always spoke to me in my patois dialect!

I hastened to the meadow near the Gave. I knelt and lit my candle. I began my Rosary and my Lady stood in the grotto smiling at me. It was the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. She looked more beautiful than I had ever seen her.

This would be the last time I would see her on this earth. I knew, because my Lady had prepared my soul for Jesus, and she would give me now to Him with whom I had communed. I knew, because of the way she held her head as she said goodbye. She left heaven in my heart and it has been there ever since.

Twelve days later a commission was formed to investigate the Apparitions. The Bishop wrote, "To deny the possibility of supernatural happenings would be to

My mother took a chair, but the little man in the big uniform had treated her so rudely that I said, "No thanks, I might dirty it," and I sat on the floor like the tailors do in Lourdes.

He still kept trying to trap me by reading out answers I had not given, till my cousin, Andrew Sajous, banged on the shutters. Monsieur Dutour gave in then, and we walked home.

On Monday, March 1st, the Lady gave a grace to a friend and a lesson to myself Catherine Latapie had two fingers paralysed since an accident in 1856 She had two small children and was expecting a third.

After the Lady left me on Monday, Catherine knelt by the spring and plunged her hand into the water Her useless fingers suddenly regained their suppleness. Catherine said a prayer of thanksgiving then walked nine kilometres to her home in Loubajac. That evening, little Jean-Baptiste was born. He was special. He would become a Priest

The Lady's lesson to me! Pauline Sans asked me to use her Rosary at the grotto today. When I prayed on it, the Lady interrupted me. "You have made a mistake," she smiled, "that Rosary is not yours."

People climbed all over the grotto today, disturbing the rosebush where the Lady stood. I was afraid she might fall, but she kept on smiling at the people. She loved them, and she always seemed sorry to leave them.

The Parish Priest



Fr. Peyramale

The Lady had said on her third visit, "Go and tell the Priests that a chapel must be built here." I knew in my soul she meant Fr. Peyramale. He was a man whose heart belonged to the poor. For years he paid the rents of 35 families in Lourdes to save them from eviction. I saw him in his garden, and decided to approach him.

"**What do you want**, and why have you come?" he asked. "Father, I have come from the Lady." "Oh yes, you say you see visions, and you upset the whole countryside with your stories. Do you know the Lady's name?"

"**No, Father**, I do not, but I see her as clearly as I see you, and she talks to me as clearly as you talk to me. She is surrounded with light, and wants a chapel built at Massabielle."

Father said he would not deal with a nameless vision. He called me an imposter and a show-off. Gruff though he was, he never humiliated me or my mother as did Monsieur Dutour. Eventually he became my greatest friend.

I thought I had failed the Lady when Father said "Since you stick to your story, find out who this Lady is, and if she thinks she has a right to the chapel, ask her to make the rosebush at the grotto blossom immediately." That the Priest knew rosebush grew where the Lady stood, was surprise to me.

the first candle-lit procession to the grotto.

That same day, Monsieur Dutour and the Mayor paid a visit to Fr. Peyramale. They had decided to detain me in the mental hospital in Tarbes, but to act without the support of the Parish Priest would be disastrous. They suggested he join with them in putting the little trouble-maker away.

"**I know my duty**," Father blazed, "as pastor of my parish and protector of my flock. Your own doctors find no abnormality in Bernadette. You will have to fell me to the ground, pass over my dead body, and trample it underfoot, before you touch a hair of the child's head."

Sunday, June 3rd was the day of my First Holy Communion. It was the Feast of Corpus Christi—the Body and Blood of Christ. The Mass, begun by God's Priest on the altar on the Sisters' chapel, ended on the altar of my soul. My soul had been prepared for Jesus by his Mother, and my faith became enlightened in communion with my God.

There are secrets of one's soul which forever should be shrouded by a veil of reticence. My First Holy Communion is such. Mademoiselle Estrade asked, "What made you happier, Bernadette, First Holy Communion or the Apparitions?"

I could but answer, "The two go together. They cannot be compared. I only know I was very happy on both occasions."

Years later I would write in my prayer-book in Nevers, "I was nothing, and of this nothing God made something

My Name is Bernadette

To have a cell to oneself, to have hours of solitude would be a precious retreat in preparation for my First Holy Communion.

On Easter Wednesday, April 7th, the call came clear in my soul to meet God's Mother at the grotto. Hundreds of people were praying there when I arrived, and they had kept my place for me. I prayed with the Lady in a world of prayer, which I knew now was part of the world of Heaven.

When Our Lady left, I noticed Doctor Dozous beside me. He took my lighted candle and placed it under my left hand. I snatched my hand away. "Sir, you are burning me," I cried.

Only later did I learn that during Mary's visit, the flame of my candle had engulfed the fingers and palm of my left hand. To the doctor's amazement, neither fingers nor palm had burned.

The explanation is simple. When ones soul is enraptured by the Mother of God, the fire of earth is cold compared to the warmth of Heaven.

First Holy Communion

On May 4th, Monsieur Jacomet removed all the candles from the grotto. He announced that the owners could claim them at the police station. The people collected their candles, lit them, and walked prayerfully back to Massabielle. Unwittingly, Jacomet had organised



My Name is Bernadette

On Tuesday, March 2nd, the Lady again requested me to tell the Priests to build a chapel, and to ask the people to come to the grotto in procession. Her requests were more like pleas than orders, and she, gave me tenacity tempered with tenderness for the, mission she entrusted to me.

I needed tenacity. Father paced up and down saying, "A chapel, A chapel! Who will pay for it And if your Lady wants processions, she should send you to the Bishop, not to me. You don't even know her name. Ridiculous."

He took a broom that was standing in the hallway. and made as if to sweep me away with it. I left quickly!

The Fifteenth Day

The Lady did not come till evening time on Wednesday. Standing effortlessly on the little wild rosebush, she greeted me, she bowed to me, she made her wondrous Sign of the Cross. She asked for the chapel, the procession, and she disappeared. When she left, I was amazed to find myself still in this world.



It brought me down to earth to have to visit Father Peyramale again. "Did you ask her name?" "Yes, but she only smiled."

"Well, if she wants her chapel, let her tell her name, and let her make the rosebush blossom. Then I will build the

My Name is Bernadette

chapel, and if I build it, I tell you," he said softly, "it will not be a small one."

Thursday, March 4th was the last of the fifteen days. It was market day. Eight thousand people gathered around the grotto. It seemed the Lady had got her procession already.

We started the Rosary, and at the second decade the Lady came and lifted me into a world where the language is prayer, and the environment is Heaven.

I went in under the roof of the grotto, and we spoke and prayed together for an hour. My cousin, Jeanne Videre, was with me as I prayed, and the Lady came so close to her, that had Jeanne put out her hand she could have touched her.

When the lady left, I extinguished my candle and set off to give her message again to Fr. Peyramale He greeted me with, "What did the Lady say?"

"I asked her name," I answered, "but she on smiled. When I asked her to make the rosebush blossom, she smiled the more. She still wants the chapel."

"She must tell her name," said Father. Then in a tone so soft it surprised me, "If I knew it was the Blessed Virgin, I would do all she desires."

My Name is Bernadette

asked me to leave it lighted at the grotto, and to this day candles have always been burning at Massabielle.

I noticed that Our Blessed Lady would often look over my head to single out individuals in the crowd. She would then smile on them as though they were old familiar friends.

Nor did she forget the town officials who caused my parents such distress. All finally believed in the Apparitions, and died with the crucifix pressed to their lips. Jacomet admitted, "Our opposition was in vain. Bernadette had the Immaculate Virgin Mary on her side."

The Lighted Candle

Three eminent doctors came to Lourdes to examine me. A politician came with them to question me. "The Blessed Virgin could not have spoken in patois," he stated, "God and the Blessed Virgin don't know that language." "How do we know it, if they don't?" I had to remind him.



The three doctors declared I was mentally and emotionally stable, but that I suffered from asthma. My mother could have told them that, and saved them trouble. The trump card of the officials was always, "We will put you in jail." That was supposed to make me quail. They forgot I was living in a disused police lockup, with the entire family in the one room.

Mary's Magnificence



What my Lady meant by "I am the Immaculate Conception," I had no idea. I decided to ask Mademoiselle Estrade. She had a serene sense of the supernatural.

"Mademoiselle, what does it mean, Immaculate Conception?" Mademoiselle explained how Pope

Pius IX had applied the words to Our Blessed Lady four years ago on December 8th.

It was then I realised I could speak what was unspoken in my soul for seven silent weeks—that Aquero was the Immaculate Virgin Mary. She was the Mother of God, and she had been stepping out of Heaven to share her soul with me. She had taught me prayers no soul on earth had prayed. She had promised me happiness, not in this world, but in the next.

Through all her visits, she had spoken, not the flawless French of the town officials, but the homely words of my Lourdes patois. Holiness and prayer are simple. God's Mother taught me so.

The majority of people sensed it was Our Blessed Lady who was hallowing Lourdes. When they knew for certain, they could scarce contain their joy. Throughout her visits, not a single crime was committed in the district, the confessionals in the church were besieged, and the Priests were well-nigh exhausted.

The Lady told me always to bring a blessed candle to the grotto, then bring it home with me. On March 25th, she

Enemies, Friends, Miracles

Three weeks went by without a visit from the Lady. Yet I knew she would come again. It was not her way to leave without saying goodbye.

Meanwhile, the people pestered me, the police watched me, and the public prosecutor almost crushed me. What my parents suffered from the town officials, only Eternity will reveal.



A judge and a lawyer in Lourdes were Heaven-sent supporters. Judge Pougat assured me that Monsieur Dutour was overstepping the mark in threatening me and harassing my parents. Monsieur Dufo the lawyer saved me from the traps the officials were setting for me.

Despite the plottings and intrigues, wondrous things happened to affirm the people in their faith. Croisine Bouhohort's child of two was dying. His little coffin was already in the making.

Croisine took her dying child to Massabielle, and for fifteen minutes immersed him in the cold spring water. Next day, little Louis was walking around full of life. Doctor Vergez examined the child along with Doctor Dozous. Both doctors admitted the child's cure could not be explained by medical science.

As a result, the Mayor and the police accused me of curing people, and threatened me with jail. I stated simply, "I have not cured anyone." They then raved on about never going back to the grotto, and they tried to

overawe me with their impeccable French and their sophisticated attitude. They seemed incapable of realising I had knelt in the presence of a Lady who could only be of Heaven, and their words flew past my ears.

Each day after First Holy Communion class, I would go quietly to Massabielle. I would kneel down. I would say my prayers. I would make the Sign of the Cross as my Lady had taught me. Then I would go home.

"Immaculate Conception"



On March 25th, I was roused from sleep by an inner insistence to go to the grotto. It was still dark when I reached Massabielle. The Lady was there and waiting for me.

I apologised for keeping her waiting, for I had caught a cold. She smiled, I knelt down, we said the Rosary together. Then the Lady came very close to me. I told her how I loved her, and how happy I was to see her again.

"Mademoiselle," I said, "would you be so kind as to tell me who you are, if you please?" Instead of replying, she only smiled.

I said again, "Would you be so kind as to tell me who you are?" I said this four times altogether.

The Lady extended her hands towards the ground, swept them upwards to join them on her heart, raised her eyes, but not her head to Heaven, leaned tenderly towards me and said, "Que soy era Immaculada Conceptioni." She smiled at me. She disappeared. I was alone.

I did not understand the words, but I knew the Priest would. I knew also the Lady loved the Priest. Leaving my candle at the grotto, I went straight to Fr. Peyramale, saying the Lady's name to myself along the way. Father was waiting for me. I bowed and said, "I am the Immaculate Conception." Seeing his surprise, I explained, "Aquero said, 'I am the Immaculate Conception'."

The good Priest stood there stunned. Suddenly he stammered, "Do you know what that means?" I shook my head, I said "No."

"Then how can you say the words if you do not understand them?" "I repeated them all along the way," I replied, then added, "She still wants the chapel."

The Priest by now was deathly pale, but he pulled himself together, saying, "Go home now, child. I will see you another day."

Years later I learned that Father wrote to the Bishop that night, and as he wrote, his heart filled up with emotion, and his eyes filled up with tears.

*Then slowly opening Her hands and leaning towards me,
She said to me in a voice vibrating with emotion
"I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION"
(Que Soy Era Immaculada Conceptioni)*