

found to be intact and uncorrupted. Since then, her body, reposing in a handsome glass reliquary, lies in the convent chapel, guarded above by a statue of the Blessed Virgin, and by the nuns who keep vigil.

In Rome, on December 8, 1933, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, amidst a brilliant setting and the fanfare of silver trumpets, Bernadette Soubirous was admitted to the company of saints.

This little nun, humble, unlettered, honest, and obedient, is venerated by the great host of Catholics throughout the world. Tens of thousands of them journey annually to the glorious shrine at Lourdes. (Source: ewtn.com)

Lourdes became one of the major pilgrimage destinations in the world, and the spring has produced 27,000 gallons of water each week since emerging during Bernadette's visions. She was not involved in the building of the shrine, as she remained hidden at Nevers. **St. Bernadette, pray for us!**

#### Quotes of St. Bernadette

*O my Mother, to you I sacrifice all other attachments so that my heart may belong entirely to you and to my Jesus.*

*It is so good, so sweet and above all, so beneficial to suffer.*

*O Jesus, I would rather die a thousand deaths than be unfaithful to you!*

The Incorrupt Body of St. Bernadette



#### Socials with the Saints

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## St. Bernadette Soubirous

*The Saint of Lourdes,  
The Saint of Penance & Poverty*

**Born:** 7 January 1844 at Lourdes, France

**Baptized:** Mary Bernard

**Occupation:** Religious Sister

**Died:** April 16, 1879 at Nevers, France

**Feast:** April 16

**Canonized:** April 16, 1933, Pope Pius XI

**Patron:** Lourdes, sick people, poverty

Bernadette was born in January of 1844 at Lourdes, France. Her parents were Francois & Louise Soubirous. Her baptism name was Mary Bernard. Her parents were very poor, and she was the first of four children. As a toddler, Bernadette contracted cholera and suffered extreme asthma. Due to this ailment, she lived the rest of her life in poor health.

The Soubirous family lived in a house next to the mill where her father was employed. The family lived in this house for 10 years – Bernadette called this place the Mill of Happiness, because her parents were very happy there. She saw how much her parents loved each other, and how they were so devoted to each other.

Bernadette suffered from asthma and stomach problems, as a result of cholera. When she was 10 years old, her father Francois lost his job, which caused the family to plunge into a deep level of poverty; at times, not having enough food for Louise, Bernadette, and her siblings. The family was forced to move from their home to an old, one-room, stone-walled cell that was once used as a prison. In French, it's called *Le Cachot*.

It had a small fireplace, a small sink carved from stone, two windows, and barely enough space for the family to be comfortable. The windows would overlook an area where farmers would keep piles of manure, which was used for fertilizer in the farmlands. They slept on three beds: one for the parents, the others shared by the siblings. Every night they battled mice and rats. Every morning, when they awoke, their feet felt the cold stone floors. They dressed in clothes that had been mended more times than anyone

could count. Each day they hoped the work they could find would bring them enough bread to live on that day.

Bernadette's life was difficult, but she wasn't a miserable girl. She had a deep, simple faith in God. She didn't mind any of the work she had to do; whether it was helping her mother cook, or taking care of her younger brothers and sisters. There was, though, one thing that bothered her; she didn't know how to read, because she hadn't been able to attend school often. Because of this, she had never learned enough about her faith to be able to receive her first Communion. Bernadette yearned to receive Holy Communion—Jesus in the Eucharist, but she didn't have time to attend all the religion classes, due to the work she had to do to help her family.

Their lives would be changed forever; something happened in Lourdes that impacted Bernadette, her family, the town of Lourdes, and the world. Beginning on February 11, 1858, the Virgin Mary appeared to the young 14-year-old Bernadette for six months. Bernadette did not know it was the Mother of God; she described the vision as a beautiful woman dressed in white. The message Bernadette received would eventually impact the world, and confirm the reality of the role of Mary in the life of the Church.

Early in the morning of Thursday, February 11, in the year 1858; there was a dark, somber sky, the weather was icy cold, and it had begun to drizzle. The firewood was gone in the Soubirous home; it had been sold the night before to buy food. Bernadette pleaded with her mother to be allowed to fetch some wood. Afraid that the bad weather would cause Bernadette a bad Asthma attack, her mother was reluctant, but finally gave in to her pleading. Bernadette, along with her sister Toinette and a friend Jean, made their way down the path from their home to a Grotto called Massabielle. The River Gave flowed nearby and had a slight bend on the riverbank where branches could be caught. The land was public, and people were free to collect this wood for their fireplaces.

Now Massabielle was a large Grotto, dirty and damp, surrounded by a rocky area. Bernadette was alone when she noticed a young, beautiful woman standing on a ledge within the Grotto of Massabielle, smiling. Bernadette didn't know what to think of it; she didn't know who or what she was seeing. She made the sign of the Cross to protect herself. This was her way of making an act of faith, trusting God would protect her. These are Bernadette's words describing the scene: *I saw a Lady dressed in white. She wore a white dress and white veil with a blue waist-band and a yellow rose on each of her feet. She had blue eyes. Her rosary was yellow,*

*too. The Lady took the rosary from her arm and made the sign of the Cross. I wanted and managed to do likewise. I got down on my knees and began to recite the Rosary with the beautiful Lady. The Apparition moved the rosary-beads between her fingers without moving her lips. Only after each decade of the Rosary, she said the Gloria with me. When the recitation of the Rosary was finished – the Lady disappeared.*

The apparitions occurred from February 11 to July 16; a total of 18. In some of the apparitions, the Lady told Bernadette to pray for the conversion of sinners, and told her to tell the pastor of Lourdes to build a chapel at the site, and invite people to come in procession in prayer to the Grotto.

During the ninth apparition, the Lady told Bernadette to dig in the ground for a spring, and a spring was found with fresh water.

At the last apparition, Bernadette asked the Lady: "Would you kindly tell me who you are?" When the girl had repeated the question twice more, the Lady replied: "I am the Immaculate Conception." This answer, when repeated by Bernadette, caused a lot of excitement! It confirmed that the Lady was the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God! It was four years earlier in 1854 when Pope Pius IX had proclaimed a Marian dogma that Mary was conceived without original sin. She was given the title of the Immaculate Conception. So, the apparition in Lourdes supported the Dogma. The Immaculate Conception is, as the Church states, Mary conceived without original sin, thanks to the merits of the Death and Resurrection of Christ.

With time, and through the spiritual direction of her pastor, Bernadette entered the religious community of The Sisters of Charity in Nevers, France in September 1878. During the last two years of life, a tumor developed on one knee, which was followed by caries of the bone. She suffered excruciating pain. Her strength was diminishing, but even when she was confined to a wheelchair or bed, she went on with fine needlework. On her deathbed, in a spasm of pain, Bernadette pressed the crucifix closer to her, and cried, "All this is good for Heaven!" That afternoon, as the nuns of the convent knelt round her bed to repeat the prayers for the dying, they heard her say in a low voice, "Blessed Mary, Mother of God, pray for me! A poor sinner, a poor sinner..." She could not finish her prayer. The date was April 16, 1879.

When her tomb was exhumed in 1908 by the commission formed to forward the examination of Bernadette's life and character, her body was