



Scripture: Lk 1:28, 39-45, Lk 2: 6-7, 22-24, 44-52, Jn 1:46

February 11th is the Marian Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. This apparition was so important, and is so special that our Church has dedicated an entire feast day to it. Our Lady appeared to a sickly child of poor parents, and their faith was barely lukewarm.

“On Thursday, 11 February 1858, fourteen-year-old Bernadette Soubirous saw a beautiful young girl in a niche at a rocky outcrop called Massabielle, about a half mile outside the town. She was near a wild rose bush and surrounded by a brilliant light and a golden cloud, smiling, with her arms extended towards Bernadette, who took out her rosary beads.

When she had finished praying the rosary the apparition beckoned to her, but Bernadette did not move and the girl smiled at her before disappearing. She later described how she had seen a young girl of about her own age and height, clothed in a brilliant and unearthly white robe, with a blue girdle around her waist and a white veil on her head.

This was the beginning of a whole sequence of apparitions, eighteen in all, which occurred during the spring and early summer of 1858. Mary first spoke to Bernadette on 18 February when she asked her if she would come to the grotto for a fortnight. Thursday, 25 February, saw a crowd of about three hundred, and the discovery that was to make Lourdes famous, that of the miraculous spring in the grotto.

During subsequent apparitions Mary asked for a chapel and processions, but Fr. Peyramale, the local parish priest, insisted that the Lady would have to reveal her name before anything could be done about such matters. Early on March 25, the feast of the Annunciation, Bernadette made her way to the grotto, where the beautiful Lady was already waiting for her. Bernadette asked the Lady her name and after joining her hands at the breast and looking up to heaven she said, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

Bernadette hurried off toward the presbytery, repeating the Lady's strange words, so as not to forget them. She met Fr. Peyramale and left him dumbfounded with the words, "I am the Immaculate

Conception." He realized that the Lady had indeed answered his request for her name. Although the message of Lourdes was now complete, Bernadette again saw Mary on the Wednesday after Easter, April 7, remaining in an ecstasy for about three quarters of an hour.

Bishop Laurence set up a Canonical Commission into the apparitions and their cause on July 28. This body first interviewed Bernadette in mid-November, and was impressed by her testimony and by a growing number of cures. It was not until January 1862 though, nearly four years after the apparitions, that the bishop delivered his verdict on Lourdes in a pastoral letter, a verdict that silenced those hostile to Bernadette.

"We adjudge that the Immaculate Mary, Mother of God, really appeared to Bernadette Soubirous on February 11th, 1858, and subsequent days, eighteen times in all, in the Grotto of Massabielle, near the town of Lourdes: that this apparition possesses all the marks of truth, and that the faithful are justified in believing it certain. We humbly submit our judgement to the judgement of the Supreme Pontiff to whom is committed the Government of the whole Church." —From Theotokos <http://www.theotokos.org.uk/pages/approved/appariti/lourdes.html>

There are a beautiful set of tie-ins with Mary's life and Mary's apparition to St. Bernadette. At the moment of incarnation, Mary was about fifteen, which is the same age as St. Bernadette during the apparitions. Mary was a descendent of the great line of David, but her family was poor and had no earthly treasures. Likewise, St. Bernadette was from a great family well-known in Lourdes, but they were living in poverty at the time of the apparitions. Both lived in small towns (Lourdes and Nazareth). Nathaniel said: "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46) and a local politician doubted that anything could come from St. Bernadette's family, the Soubirous home.

Mary's apparition to St. Bernadette shows us that you don't need to come from a rich background, or even the holiest of backgrounds, to be important in the eyes of her and our Lord. Every one of us deserves a relationship with Mary and with her Son, our Lord, and we should strive to attain and sustain one.

- *Mandi*

Reflection: What part of St. Bernadette's apparitions speak to your soul the most?

Reflection: St. Bernadette was so great at following directions and having the faith to spread Mary's words and desires. What could Mary be trying to tell you, or desire for you to do?

Act: Spend time in contemplation. Think of your own faith journey. How far have you come, and how much farther do you have to grow? What can you do to give Mary your yes?



Scripture: Mt 1:18-20,23, Lk 1:27, 34, 45-47, Lk 2:19, 51, Jn 2:5

If we want to be as holy and grace-filled as possible, what better way than to imitate our dear sweet Mother Mary? She's the PERFECT example of so many wonderful virtues to emulate. There are Ten Evangelical Virtues of the Blessed Mother found in the Gospels.

The First Virtue: Mary Most Pure (Matt. 1:18, 20, 23; Luke 1:27,34)

Mary is the finest example of purity; she was so pure, she was conceived without sin, and the Holy Spirit came upon her. Mary's purity is unequaled aside from her Son, Himself, in all of mankind's history.

The Second Virtue: Mary Most Prudent (Luke 2:19, 51)

Mary kept everything the shepherds and Magi told her, along with what the Angels told her, in her heart. She knew from the Angel Gabriel's words that she was the chosen Daughter to be the Mother of the Lord, and used her free will to agree and be open to the Lord's plan.

The Third Virtue: Mary Most Humble (Luke 1:48)

"For he looked upon his handmaiden's lowliness," couldn't summarize a greater example of humility. She didn't say "Oh yeah? God wants ME to do what? Of course, I AM a pretty awesome person," and gloat. She was humble enough to recognize how lowly she was and agree to do the Lord's will.

The Fourth Virtue: Mary Most Faithful (Luke 1:45; John 2:5)

Mary knew if she asked her Son for help, He'd come through for her. She told the servants at the wedding feast of Cana to do whatever He told them to do, proving how much faith she has in her Son.

The Fifth Virtue: Mary Most Devout (Luke 1:46-7; Acts 1:14)

The passage from the book of Acts shows Mary was just as devout as the Apostles. She was in the upper room praying with them. In response to the angel telling her she was going to be the mother of our Lord, she said that her soul proclaimed the greatness of the Lord. Her devotion is unmatched and seen right away as soon as Mary appears in the Gospels.

The Sixth Virtue: Mary Most Obedient (Luke 1:38; 2:21-2, 27)



Scripture: Rev 12:1, Lk 1:38

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the Patron Saint of the Americas, and her feast day is December 12th. When people first started coming from Europe to the New World, they sought gold, religious freedoms, and conversions of the natives. One of the converts was a poor Aztec named Juan Diego.

Juan often walked through the Tepayac hill country in central Mexico. On his way to chapel one day, he encountered a beautiful woman, who spoke to him in his native tongue, "My dear little son, I love you. I desire you to know who I am. I am the ever-virgin Mary, Mother of the true God who gives life and maintains its existence. He created all things. He is in all places. He is Lord of Heaven and Earth. I desire a church in this place where your people may experience my compassion. All those who sincerely ask my help in their work and in their sorrows will know my Mother's Heart in this place. Here I will see their tears; I will console them and they will be at peace. So run now to Tenochtitlan and tell the Bishop all that you have seen and heard."

Juan, who was nearing 60 and had never been to Tenochtitlan, did what Mary asked and sought out the bishop. The bishop's servants were doubtful of Juan's credibility, and kept him waiting for hours. The bishop told Juan he'd think about it, and basically gave him the brush off. Juan saw Mary again, and asked for someone else to be sent in his place. She told him that he was the one she chose, and instructed him to go back the next day. His uncle fell sick, however, and Juan was going to go get a priest from nearby. He passed the place that Mary had since visited him twice, and she was there. "Do not be distressed, my littlest son. Am I not here with you who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Your uncle will not die at this time. There is no reason for you to engage a priest, for his health is restored at this moment. He is quite well. Go to the top of the hill and cut the flowers that are growing there. Bring them then to me."

While it was freezing on the hillside, Juan obeyed Mary's instructions and went to the top of the hill where he found a full bloom of Castilian roses. Removing his tilma, he cut the roses and carried them back to Mary. She rearranged the roses and told him, "My little son, this is the sign I am sending to the



Scripture: Mk 16:6, 19, Acts 2:4

Mawwiage. Mawwiage is what bwings us together today.

The Glorious Mysteries are those in which Mary takes a bit of a back seat, because she's not front and center like she is in the Joyful Mysteries. However, given that she's such an integral part of Christ's life, and how great a devotion the rosary is, the Glorious Mysteries are still an important part of Marian doctrine.

The First Glorious Mystery: The Resurrection

"...Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here," (Mark 16:6). In the first Glorious Mystery, the tomb is discovered empty. Mary had buried her Son, and here He was, missing from the tomb. When Christ returned, how joyful must Mary have been?

The Second Glorious Mystery: The Ascension

"So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God," (Mark 16:19). When Christ returned, he stayed for 40 days. He commissioned the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, and promised to be with them forever. He took his mother and the apostles to Mt. Olivet, and extended His pierced hands over all of them in a blessing and was taken up to heaven. They left the mount and returned to Jerusalem with joy!

The Third Glorious Mystery: The Descent of the Holy Spirit

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim," (Acts 2:4). When the Holy Spirit descended, Mary was in the Upper Room, where the Last Supper was held, with the Apostles. That first day, Peter went forth to preach and baptized three thousand. The feast of Pentecost is the birthday of the Church, for on that day it begins to grow.



Scripture: Lk 1: 28, 42

I'm not the type of person that can just whip out a free-form prayer at the drop of a hat. Usually my prayers are either very structured (rosary-style) or a rambling, shambled mess in which I pray for something or somethings and I think of 80 different things in the time I'm trying to pray, and before I know it, I'm talking to Mary or God about recipes I pinned and realize that I've totally forgotten that I'm praying because I've gotten distracted sixteen different times. Here are a few Marian Devotions you can focus on when you're in my "oh, there's a squirrel! Wow,, I'm distracted" boat.

—**The Scapular**

The scapular devotion, in its postage stamp-sized variety, is a sort of symbolic sharing in the mission and prayers of a religious order. The most famous version is probably the Brown Scapular, which was given to the Carmelite friar St. Simon Stock. It comes with a pretty intense promise: preservation from Hell. You still have to receive the sacraments, penance included, so it's not a catch all "do whatever you want because you're wearing a scapular" pass, but combined with a holy life and partaking in the sacraments, it's a fabulous and tangible reminder that Mary is interceding with us.

—**Consecration to Jesus through Mary**

This is one I've touched on already, so I'll be brief here. St Louis de Montfort says, "we consecrate ourselves at one and the same time to Mary and to Jesus. We give ourselves to Mary because Jesus chose her as the perfect means to unite Himself to us and unite us to Him."

—**The Angelus**

It is a simple and brief set of prayers, easy to memorize, typically prayed at the beginning, middle, and end of the day. In grade school and middle school, we prayed it at noon with our grace before meals, just before we'd go to the cafeteria for lunch. It's a peaceful and short prayer, but when you're a hangry middle-schooler, even a Glory Be can seem exhaustive. Link to the full prayer here: <https://www.ewtn.com/Devotionals/prayers/Angelus.htm>



Scripture: Rev 12:1, Lk 1:45

Our Lady of Fatima has been said to have been foretold in Revelations, and Mary had set requests she made of mankind through the three children she visited. Between May 13 and October 13, 1917, three Portuguese children received apparitions of Our Lady at Cova da Iria, near Fatima, a city 110 miles north of Lisbon. Mary asked the children to pray the rosary for world peace, for the end of World War I, for sinners and for the conversion of Russia. The third visionary, Lucia dos Santos, became a Carmelite nun and died in 2005 at the age of 97.

Mary gave the children three secrets. Since Francisco died in 1919 and Jacinta the following year, Lucia revealed the first secret in 1927, concerning devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The second secret was a vision of hell.

Pope John Paul II directed the Holy See's Secretary of State to reveal the third secret in 2000; it spoke of a "bishop in white" who was shot by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows into him. Many people linked this to the assassination attempt against Saint John Paul II in St. Peter's Square on May 13, 1981.

At Fatima, Our Lady said that God wished to establish worldwide devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Our Lady said that many souls would be saved from hell and the annihilation of nations averted if, in time, devotion to Her Immaculate Heart were established principally by these two means:

- 1) the Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by the Pope together with the world's bishops in a solemn public ceremony, and
- (2) the practice of receiving Holy Communion (and other specific devotions of about 1/2 hour in duration) in reparation for the sins committed against the Blessed Virgin Mary, on the first Saturdays of five consecutive months—a practice known to Catholics as "the First Saturday" devotion.

There are five parts to the First Saturdays Fatima Request:

- I. Spirit of reparation—The spirit of reparation is a loving desire to make reparation to and console the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Our Mother.

