

Bernadette Soubirous in Nevers

In July 1866, wishing to realize her desire for a life dedicated to religion, she joined the Soeurs de la Charite of Nevers in Saint-Gildard, the seat of the congregation. Before she left her beloved Lourdes and her family, Bernadette went to the Grotto on the 14th of July 1866. Bernadette lives with the nuns in Nevers under the name given to her at her Baptism. Soeur Marie-Benarde. At the beginning of her novitiate Sister Marie-Bernarde told the entire congregation of the nuns her full story about the apparitions, after which she was never again allowed to mention them. Some of her Mother Superiors put her to work at humble and menial tasks to keep her meek and mild. She did suffer under these humiliations, but she accepted the situation and remained very cheerful. On the day she took her final vows, the Bishop told her, that it was her work to pray. She was given work in the convents hospital room, where she became a good and efficient nurse. She herself was sick with asthma, she developed tuberculosis, calcium loss from her bones and open wounds, these things gave her a lot of suffering which together with her mental suffering, reminded her daily of what Our Lady had asked in Lourdes.

"Do penance and pray for sinners..."

"I promise to make, you happy, not in this world, but in the next"

She died on Wednesday 16th of April 1879 aged 35. On her deathbed she once more reinforced, at the request of Pope Pius IX and the Bishop of Lourdes, under oath, her statements about the happenings at Massabielle. Following a long and strict process, as ordered by church law, Sister Marie-Bernarde was declared a Saint by Pope Pius XI on the 8th of December 1933. Her body, remains intact, in a glass Shrine in the chapel of the convent in Nevers.

These apparitions in Lourdes are fully approved by the Holy See: Jan 18, 1862.

*(excerpted from: www.marypages.com)



Saint Bernadette
The Sleeping Saint of Nevers

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Saint Bernadette Soubirous

***Patronage: Illness, shepherds, poverty,
People ridiculed for their piety.***

Memorial: February 18 (France)

April 16. (USA)



***"I had gone down one day with two other girls to the bank of the river Gave when I heard a rustling sound...
I turned my head toward the field by the side of the river...
I looked up and caught sight of the cave where I saw
a Lady wearing a lovely white dress with a blue belt...
I rubbed my eyes, thinking I was seeing things,
the Lady made the sign of the cross and the beads slipped through
her hands...I asked my two companions
if they had noticed anything, but they said no..."***

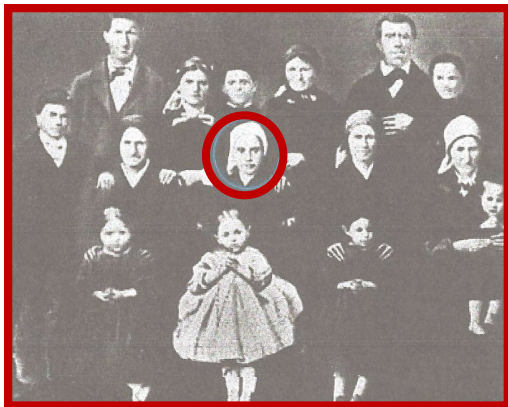
from a letter by Saint Bernadette

Saint Bernadette Soubirous

*Bernadette Soubirous is very closely associated with God's plan and works in Lourdes. That is why we should get to know her better. She is a Saint who is an ordinary person like you and I. It is her humanity and living the true gospel, which make her so attractive. She was just fourteen and did not know her catechism or her French. Bernadette was taken in by the Hospice de Lourdes, run by the Soeurs de la Charite de Nevers (Sisters of Charity of Nevers), in January 1858 to learn to read and write in preparation for her first communion.

The Soubirous family in Lourdes

Her parents were Francois Soubirous and Louise Soubirous-Casterot. Bernadette their first child was born on Sunday January 7th, 1844 in Lourdes. Her birth was registered locally with the names of Bernarde-Marie Soubirous. During the following years six other children were born, of which three died. Bernadette herself was never a healthy child, she suffered from asthma. She was always very close to her parents and siblings. They lived in the mill belonging to Boly. Due to the bad conditions in the mill, the amount and quality of the flour went down, as did the number of customers. Eventually the family Soubirous was forced to leave the mill and move to a much poorer dwelling. Francois Soubirous had to look for work daily, which was usually badly paid. Thus he was unable to take proper care of his family. Louise Soubirous tried to help out by going to work, whilst her eldest daughter Bernadette looked after the little ones. People did try to give Bernadette catechism lessons. This proved to be very difficult and Bernadette was very often to be found alone with her sheep. She was very religious and was always praying her rosary which she always had with her. She knew no other prayers.



A Soubirous Family Photo

The Apparitions Began

On Thursday, February 11, 1858, Bernadette (14), her sister Toinette (12) and their little friend Jeanne Abadie (13) had gone out to hunt for wood. They had walked to Massabielle and saw a grotto in front of which there was a stream. So Bernadette Soubirous started to take off her shoes and socks to walk through the water. She had hardly got them off when she heard a sound much like a gust of wind. Again she heard the same sound and when she looked at the grotto, she saw in the upper most corner a beautiful lady clad in a white dress with a blue belt and a yellow rose on each of her feet. The lady signaled, with her finger that Bernadette should come nearer. Bernadette was almost frozen to the ground. She spontaneously grabs her rosary, kneels down and tries to make the sign of the cross. But she cannot do this until The Lady who is carrying a Rosary with a large shining Crucifix has made the sign of the cross. Whilst Bernadette is praying the rosary she sees that The Lady is also letting her beads slide through her fingers, but without moving her lips. This 'vision' lasts for about 15 minutes. The other girls saw nothing of this 'vision' but Bernadette told them about it and thus the news is told to mother Soubirous. Many apparitions were to follow. The last of the eighteen apparitions was on Friday, July 16, 1858 the feast day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Following this apparition Bernadette again returns to her normal life in faith, which means to her being completely faithful every day.

The first of these eighteen apparitions of Our Lady in Lourdes took place 11 February 1858. During and after Bernadette is subjected to admiration and is seen as being important. Her parents had a very hard time of it, how could these poor people defend themselves against threatening public pressures! But Bernadette remains her normal self. A simple, honest and devote girl. She remains calm and very open with some humor in the face of the investigations from the church and worldly authorities, displaying a resolute resistance in the face of their indelicate persistence whilst repeatedly telling them about the apparitions. A decision to become a nun develops in Bernadette at this time and finally she decides to enter the convent in Nevers, as her health is not good enough to follow the rules of any very strict orders. She loves to care for the sick and as "nobody has tried to force me to go there".

