

A Theotokan reflects on Lourdes

by "Sister Anne" | Mar 1, 2017 | 02aa Mary Speaks to the World | 0 comments



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Episode #5: Mary Speaks to the World

May Jesus and Mary be loved by all hearts!

The Lourdes Apparitions occurred about a dozen years after LaSalette, and Pontmain about a dozen years after Lourdes. I’m not doing much on Lourdes because there has been a famous movie on it and book, “The Song of Bernadette.” Many people go to Lourdes, so I don’t need to try to present something already well-known.

Of course it’s a very important one, but in a way, it’s like LaSalette wasn’t being well-received because the messages were unpopular, so at Lourdes She takes a more gentle approach, and brings gifts. With the miraculous water it’s like She’s watering down the messages to get them known.

“The Lady looked at everyone, and with so much love and affection,” said Bernadette after one of the later Apparitions. “Sometimes she seemed to be looking one by one at the people there. And now and again, her look would rest on someone for a moment as though she had recognized a friend!

“Saint Bernadette Soubirous” by Father Francis Trochu ©1958 [Note: Trochu (1877-1967) was a Canon in the Diocese of Nantes. The Académie Française awarded him the coveted Georges-Grente prize for this well-researched biography.]

This is so beautiful! Mary pays attention to our prayers. She knows who we are. Those of us who try to be her friends, by listening to her messages. She is gazing on us with special affection. This is an echo of Pontmain, where it was more dramatic as She was interacting with that group of sixty or so devout parishioners.

1: Thursday 2/11/1858

No words. They recite the rosary. Mary smiled and bowed to Bernadette.

2: Sunday 2/14/1858

Forty Hours Sunday. Bernadette sprinkles holy water on Mary.

3: Thursday 2/18/1858

Bernadette brought some paper because some ladies were intrigued by Mary's white dress and blue sash, the garb of the *Children of Mary*. So it was conjectured that this might be someone from Purgatory. Mary laughed when asked to write down her message.

Will you do me the favor of coming here for a fortnight?

Extremely courteous language. In French, there are different ways to address different classes of people. This was the way you would address the upper class. It caught people's attention. Bernadette was at the bottom of the barrel. Mary was treating these people with great respect.

I do not promise to make you happy in this world, only in the next.

I'll just pick out a few significant things.

4: Friday 2/19/1858

The demons scream: "Get out of here, get out!"

5: Saturday 2/20/1858

Bernadette is taught a prayer for herself alone. She never revealed that prayer.

6: Sunday 2/21/1858

First Sunday of Lent

Pray to God for sinners.

This was her first public message. This is Lent.

7: Tuesday 2/23/1858

Secrets. We never know what it was about.

8: Wednesday 2/24/1858

The Apparition stops when someone irreverently touched the briar, but reappeared farther within the grotto.

Penance! Penance! Penance!

9: Thursday 2/25/1858

Go and drink at the spring and wash yourself in it.

Go and eat that weed.

Bernadette could only find mud, and comes back dirty. She said that the weed was tough and nasty and Bernadette had to spit it out.

10: Saturday 2/27/1858

Go and kiss the ground as a penance for sinners.

Bernadette crawled up and down a steep place kissing the ground frequently. The Lady asks for a chapel.

11: Sunday 2/28/1858

Bernadette kisses the ground many times and repeats the penance of walking on her knees.

I'm calling this out because Hollywood didn't emphasize this. Jennifer Jones, the actress, did not do obvious penance. So, we didn't get these messages. They are important. The world obscures them, and waters them down with the miracle water.

12: Monday 3/1/1858

Mary noticed that she had exchanged rosaries and did not approve. Either Mary wants to keep Bernadette humble, or wants her to observe poverty by using her own poor beads.

13: Tuesday 3/2/1858

The Lady asks for a procession. Again, this is an act of penance. It took a lot of humility for men in those days to join a procession. A lot of them struggled with it. Saint John Vianney sometimes demanded it as a penance, saying that now that they were converted, they had to make it known. For the poor it wasn't so difficult, but it was a public expression of Faith in a country quickly losing its Faith.

14: Wednesday 3/3/1858

The Apparition occurs in the afternoon because people had dishonored the grotto the preceding night. We don't know exactly what went on, but some people had come on the pilgrimage, not out of piety, but just for curiosity and for fun and games. Mary did not like whatever they did. When Bernadette appeared in the morning, nothing happened so all these people were disappointed. Later in the afternoon, Bernadette felt drawn to return to the grotto, and Mary explained why She hadn't shown herself in the morning with those people present.

15: Thursday 3/4/1858

The last day of the fortnight but the Lady does not reveal her name. There was some disappointment. The pastor had told Bernadette to keep asking her name and to make the rosebush bloom. Now there is nothing. And yet some healings had begun to take place at the spring. The people had the sense that it wasn't over. They know the Annunciation [feast] was coming up, so there was an expectation of another Apparition.

16: Thursday 3/25/1858.

Bernadette asked Mary three times to reveal her name. Feast of the Annunciation:

"I am the Immaculate Conception!"

Mary said those words in the local dialect. At that time, France was a conglomerate of many pockets of people. Bernadette ran all the way to the presbytery repeating words that were strange to her. The priest was quite startled. It didn't even make grammatical sense. You don't say: "I am conception. I am the fruit of a conception. I am immaculately conceived." But to say "I am the Immaculate Conception" was very extraordinary. The pastor was moved. The dogma had just been approved four years before, but Bernadette knew nothing about that. She hardly even knew her catechism. And all this was the fruit of the Miraculous Medal vision: Mary had wanted a medal that said:

O Mary, conceived without sin: Pray for us who have recourse to thee!

So after those years, there was a growing devotion to the Immaculate Conception. Rome and bishops decided it was time for the dogma to be proclaimed. Now, four years after the dogma, Mary seems to be confirming the dogma and showing that it was important to her. So that was it. It seemed to be the epitome, the culmination. They did not expect anything else.

17: Wednesday 4/16/1858

"Wednesday after Easter"

Less than a month later, Bernadette felt drawn to the grotto. I don't think there was anything going on that day. It was rather mysterious why Mary chose that day, just to be with Bernadette. There weren't many people there, just whoever happened to see her running off to the grotto. It was an unexpected Apparition, but it will be the liturgical feast of Bernadette's death 21 years later. It was a blessing on her death day.

18: Friday 7/16/1858

Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

The grotto is barricaded. It's illegal. The secular government didn't want Apparitions going on. It was persecuted. The closest she can do is stand on the other side of the river. It is twilight. Bernadette see Mary as if through a grille, as if She were right there as before. "Never has she looked so beautiful." Mary smiles. All is silent. It is "au revoir!" The last time, a very gentle, loving goodbye. Eventually a Carmelite monastery was built on the spot. Bernadette said she always wanted to be a Carmelite, but she never had the health for it. So she entered a milder congregation of teaching and nursing Sisters.

The message is again . . .

Prayer

Penance (*Hollywood didn't emphasize this!*)

Poverty and Social Justice.

Mary had chosen a very poor child, as she had done at LaSalette. Bernadette's father and mother couldn't read well, keep books well, or operate the mill in a way that they could compete. Unable to balance the books they eventually lost the mill. They had to move their four children into a jail. The jail was so bad, it was condemned by the city as too bad for the prisoners. He took whatever work he could. One child died of malnutrition. Bernadette had asthma, her growth was stunted and she was sickly all her life. One boy did well, because one day he was in church scraping candlewax off the floors. A lady noticed this and took him home and gave him a meal. She told him to return every day. But he would never reveal who his parents were, it was so shameful. After a year, the woman came to Bernadette's home to hear about the Apparitions, and there she spotted the little boy as a part of this family. The boy never returned to her house. It would be too shameful for his parents.

Now that the parents were famous, people wanted to give them money and get them out of the jail. But Bernadette would not allow anyone to accept alms. But with all the crowds, it was harder to find time to work, to take in laundry, etc. This was frustrating to the pastor. The family was actually worse off, more poor, more hungry. Mary may have advised her not to make money off the Apparitions. Eventually they set up the miller with a mill, but it was after Bernadette was in the convent.

It was a loud cry to everyone who came, to see the injustices of society at that time: how poor, how uneducated. Catholics weren't taking care of Catholics. So I think there was a social justice message going on, and also a call to poverty.

God bless you!