

Lives of Saints

St Bernadette Soubirous

1844-1879

Feastday: 16th April



I was born in Lourdes in France, the eldest of six children. We lived in extreme poverty. My father was a miller, and my mother a laundress. I did farm work, notably sheep herding, for a family friend nearby, and also waited tables at my aunt's tavern.

On 11 February 1858, then aged 14, while I was out gathering firewood with my sister and a friend at the grotto of Massabielle outside Lourdes, I had an experience that forever changed my life and the town of Lourdes where I lived. After that, from February to July 1858, I had eighteen apparitions. In all of these, I saw a Lady who wore a white veil, and a blue girdle, who had a golden rose on each foot, and held a string of Rosary beads. The Lady told me once that she was 'the Immaculate Conception'. Despite initial skepticism from the Roman Catholic Church, my claims were eventually declared to be worthy of belief after a canonical investigation.

At the age of 22, I joined the Sisters of Charity of Nevers convent moving into their motherhouse at Nevers. I spent the rest of my life there, working as an assistant in the infirmary and later as a sacristan, creating beautiful embroidery for altar cloths and vestments.

I died at the age of 35 in 1879. After my death, my body remained "incorruptible". I was canonized in 1933. The shrine at Lourdes has become a major site for pilgrimage, attracting millions of Catholics each year.

"[Our Lady] did not promise to make me happy in this world, but in the next."

**St Bernadette
Soubirous**

S. D. C.
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