



Our Lady of Lourdes Novena

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By: Daniel A. Lord, S.J.

FIRST DAY

"The age of miracles is passed."

Thus, spoke the cynical voice of a doubting age.

God had been shouldered out of His universe.

There was no place for Him in the exclusive little system
that man had developed to his own complete satisfaction.

Men looked to earth and hoped to make it their heaven.

Women embraced love that was not love and
wondered why their hearts were hungry.

There were wars, famine, cruelty, greed, lust, disbelief in God and in man,

. . . and heaven and Mary were very far away.

Then one lovely day,
upon a bare rock in southern France,
a fair Lady spoke to a child . . . a fountain broke from the barren earth . . .
miracles piled on miracles . . . and Lourdes was born.

It was Mary's challenge of faith to a world that had lost faith in her Son.



We pray:

The Prayer of Our Lady of Lourdes

O God, who, by the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin,
didst prepare a worthy dwelling place for Thy Son,
we humbly beseech Thee that we,
who celebrate the apparition of the same Blessed Virgin,
may obtain health of soul and body through the same Lord Jesus Christ,
Thy Son, who lives and reigns with Thee
in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

SECOND DAY

“Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise.”

“Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.”

The world around the little Bernadette was an old world and a blind one.

Men knew too much of selfish love to understand the real meaning of love.

They hugged money so closely that they had lost their sense of values.

Losing faith in mankind, they had thrown away their faith in God.

Finding sad and ugly the new earth they had tried to make, they disbelieved in heaven.

But not the little Bernadette. Fresh from her first communion, her rosary her only jewels, surrounded by a poverty that had not lost its faith and by labor that had remembered to offer itself to God,

she found the barren rock and saw there the wonderful Lady.

There were stars in the Lady's hair and roses on her feet.

There was a smile on her lips and mercy in her hands.

“I am the Immaculate Conception,” she said, gently.

And Bernadette knelt, as countless multitudes of adorers have knelt ever since, before the Mother of God come back to bring her Son anew to earth.

Kneeling beside Bernadette, we say:

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in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

Heaven often seems very far away from earth.

THIRD DAY

Clouds that roll close to earth are usually dark and threatening.
The warm, soft light of the springtime sun is distant and pale.

When faith is strong, it yearns for heaven with a yearning that makes heaven seem
utterly desirable and too long delayed.
When faith is weak, heaven fades away.

Few ages had pushed heaven farther from it than had the age of Bernadette.

God had been told--and none too politely--that He had no place in the
business or politics or literature of the world.
A thousand false religions were too deeply concerned with reforms in that very
minute to care about reform that lasted forever.

Then Mary came.

Heaven and earth seemed to unite in her lovely person.
Dead for twenty centuries, she was young with eternal youth.
She wore about her head a crown of heaven's stars and
on her feet she wore the roses of earth.
She spoke the thoughts of eternity in the language of time.
She, who had been as creature, brought with her the power lent her by the creator.
From heaven itself, she came to prove that there is a heaven.
She, who had listened to Gabriel, messenger of God,
became now our glorious messenger from on high.

To her we pray:

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FOURTH DAY

Always it is found that faith is strong and doubt is weak and fragile.

Doubt is negative and lonely;
faith is positive, charged with a great hope that shares itself.

Doubts die, a thousand in a generation.
The one true faith is reborn in a million hearts each year of each age.
So, under the rock of Lourdes, faith was reborn in a doubting generation.

They who had not believed the compelling word of Christ
now believed in signs and wonders.
A fountain that showed no signs of failing burst from the dry earth.

Thousands flocked to see a Lady they could not see.
Thousands flocked to hear words the Lady spoke--only for a little girl.

Men found their sight and children were given the power to walk.
Blind souls looked up to see that God does live and life is full of meaning.
Unbelievers returned with faith and hope and love.

Upon that rock, faith built a mighty basilica and
faith called unarmed and powerful armies of believers from around the world.

Mary's sons and daughters came to love her, their mother in heaven,
with a greater love because she had come to earth to find them.
Holding her hand, they walked back to her welcoming Son.

At Mary's feet, we say:

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Miracles can be of vast importance.

FIFTH DAY

They serve to place the seal of God upon His truth,
marking His great teachers as true,
stamping the teachings of Christ and His Church as authentic.

Sudden manifestations of God's almost careless gestures of power and authority,
miracles jolt men from their trivial preoccupations.
The dead rise to life. Eyes born blind are open to full vision.
Withered limbs leap and dance.

So it was that the miracles of Lourdes first struck the bystanders
and brought doubters to their knees.

The ordinary waters of the spring,
commonplace by chemical test, worked wonders in sick bodies.
The passing of the Blessed Sacrament was like the passing of the divine physician.
Men, who, though without faith, came to lay their illnesses
before a God in whom they did not believe
knew His power and rose to acknowledge Him.

Mary had indeed brought to Lourdes her Son, Christ the Healer.

And, in the miracles that were wrought by her intercession,
men and women saw the power of God and
believed in His love and providence.

Grateful for the miracles of Lourdes, we say:

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SIXTH DAY

When Christ lifted to health the palsied body of the paralytic, He first cried,
“Thy sins are forgiven thee.”

Great as was the miracle by which He raised Lazarus from death and
the miracle by which He drove seven devils from the soul of Magdalene.

Even greater was the miracle that
turned the harlot into a woman of pure love and lifelong penance.

Those miracles of Lourdes that heal the sick will be spectacular.
But the miracles that are at the very core of the shrine’s meaning are
the miracles that touch the soul.

Cynicism, blind and unfeeling, comes contemptuously prepared to be amused
and . . . kneels, open-eyed and believing.

Sin, hugging to its heart the disease that has slain the soul,
suddenly knows its fetid death . . . and rises to new life.

Physicians, knowing the limitations of their own powers,
bow humbly before the greater power that flows upon sickness there.

And, all over the world, Catholics lift their heads with new pride as their Church
is marked with the wonder of God’s intervention and
Mary lives to give her suffering children happiness and a return to health.

Knowing the needs of our own souls, we pray:

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Where in all this is the little girl Bernadette?

SEVENTH DAY

What happened to her after the Lady had appeared to her for the last time and the world had come to believe in the Lady? God's ways are strange, and yet they are often in a pattern. The little girl had known the happiness of looking upon Mary of the Immaculate Conception. Now, God closed her away from the world, in a convent. Her name became **Sister Mary Bernard**.

Never again did she visit Lourdes, though, year-after-year, thousands upon thousands of others came to the spot where she had first seen the fair and wonderful Lady.

With all the splendor of Catholic ritual, the great Basilica, man's artistic tribute to the God who made the beauty of the universe, is first opened. Bernadette is not present.

There are no more miracles. No honors come to her. She leads the life of an obscure nun. She does her quiet duties and dies her quiet death. Wisely did God shield her from acclaim and public curiosity to make her a simple saint of His Church.

Only then does God speak again. Through His Church, he proclaims her a saint and lifts her to the altars.



With Bernadette united to Our Lady in heaven we say:

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EIGHTH DAY

Sometimes a single wonder belongs to a single day. Then it fades and is forgotten.

Not so, the wonder that is Lourdes or the glorious apparition of the lovely Lady of Lourdes. Today and every day since the Lady appeared to Bernadette, miracles mark the presence of God at Lourdes.

Men and women of all the nations walk in procession, lifting their voices to honor God's Mother and to acclaim the humble king who is her son.

In a sort of unity of the human race, the races and colors of the world meet and blend before the shrine of mankind's one universal Mother and find their brotherhood in the brotherhood of her Son.

Mary still smiles from the grotto of Lourdes.

Christ still walks in Eucharistic procession among His afflicted. He passes among them as truly as he mingled with them in Judea and Galilee, ministering unto them. Mary truly brings her Son back to us.



God is very near His people in the place where His mother smiled upon a little girl and told us about the beads of the Rosary by using a child.

With the millions who come to Lourdes, we unite to say:

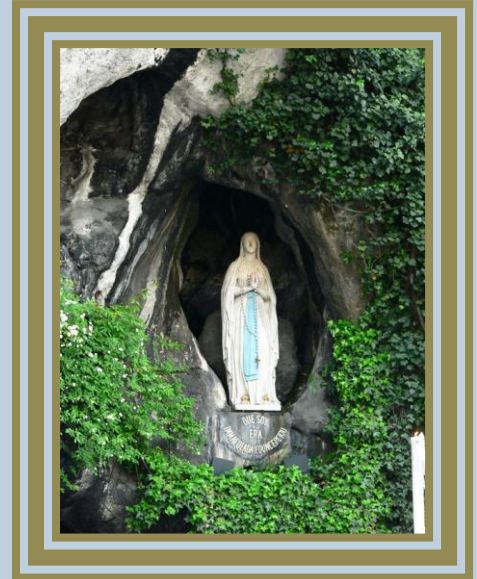
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NINTH DAY

It is strange that, with all the beautiful buildings in the world, one of the most famous and glorious structures is a rough grotto carved by wind and weather and sanctified by the brief presence of a lovely Lady. Ugly in outline, rough in texture, the grotto of Lourdes has become one of the dearest spots on earth.

Because people cannot always travel to the grotto, they have reproduced it, in one way or another, in every city in the world. It is the focal point of many convent gardens, the dearest meeting place of a great Catholic university, and children gather around it in schoolyards. The grotto of Lourdes has found its way into our churches. It stands as the chief ornament in many a great basilica. In miniature, it is a lovely little shrine in private rooms, in study halls, in auditoriums, in small chapels, and on ships.



For, in that little grotto, that hollowed bit of rock, God again manifested His love for mankind and Mary came to smile upon her children. The roughness of the stone contrasts with the gentleness of the miracles. The very ugliness of the outline serves to bring into stronger relief the charm of her who is its apparition.

Before the shrine, seen clearly or remembered happily, we kneel to pray:

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Nihil Obstat:

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