



A Novena to Our Lady of Lourdes

NINE DAYS WITH BERNADETTE AT THE GROTTO
FEBRUARY 2 TO FEBRUARY 10 · HER FEAST, FEBRUARY 11

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How to Pray This Novena

A novena is nine days of the same asking. Not nine different prayers, but one request carried patiently, the way a friend is asked again.

Begin on February 2 and end on February 10, the eve of her feast. Each day has a page: a word of Scripture, a short reading, and the prayer of the novena. Say the prayer aloud if you can, and name your intention in the silence the prayer leaves for it.

The nine days follow the apparitions of 1858 as Bernadette told them, from a winter morning at the rock of Massabielle to the last time she saw the Lady, across the river. Each scene is shown by the stained glass that tells it in Lourdes.

Lourdes is the place of the sick. If you are praying for someone who is ill, keep their name with you all nine days.

If you begin late, begin anyway. Nine days that end after the feast are still nine days.

Cover: Antonio Ciseri, The Apparition of the Virgin to Bernadette, 1879, Sacro Cuore, Florence (photo Sailko, CC BY 3.0). Days: nineteenth-century stained glass of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Lourdes, copies at the Musée Sainte-Bernadette (photos Tylwyth Eldar, CC BY-SA 4.0).



DAY ONE

The Lady in White

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

MATTHEW 11 : 25

Bernadette Soubirous was fourteen, often ill, and could not yet read; her family lived in one room of a former prison. On February 11, 1858, she went with her sister and a friend to gather wood at the rock of Massabielle. As she took off her stockings to cross a stream, she heard a sound like wind and saw, in a hollow of the rock, a lady in white with a blue sash and a yellow rose on each foot. Bernadette took out her rosary, and they prayed it together.

She came first to the least of the town. Ask her today to find you where you feel smallest.

PRAYER OF THE NOVENA

O God, who by the immaculate conception of the Virgin didst prepare a worthy dwelling for thy Son: grant to us who honour her apparition at Lourdes health of mind and body.

Our Lady of Lourdes, who didst ask Bernadette to pray for sinners and to drink at the spring, look upon me who come to thee in this need, and carry to thy Son the thing I now name before thee:

.....
here name your request

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee. Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us. Saint Bernadette, pray for us. Amen.

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DAY TWO

Holy Water



eloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.

1 JOHN 4 : 1

Her mother forbade her to go back. On Sunday, February 14, she went anyway, with a little bottle of holy water. When the Lady appeared, Bernadette sprinkled the water toward her: if she came from God, let her stay. The Lady smiled and bowed her head.

Testing a gift is not the same as refusing it. Ask for a clear heart, able to tell what comes from God from what only looks like it.

PRAYER OF THE NOVENA

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DAY THREE

Would You Be So Kind

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

JOHN 16 : 33

On February 18 two women of the town came with her, carrying pen and paper, and asked the Lady to write her name. It is not necessary, she answered. Then she spoke to the poorest girl in Lourdes with a courtesy no one else had shown her: Would you be kind enough to come here for a fortnight? And she added: I do not promise to make you happy in this world, but in the other.

Ask today for the grace to keep a promise when it costs, and for a hope that looks past this world.

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DAY FOUR

Penance



herefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments.

JOEL 2 : 12-13

By Wednesday, February 24, hundreds of people stood at the rock. The Lady's message that day was short: Penance! Penance! Penance! Pray to God for sinners. Kiss the ground as an act of penance for sinners. Bernadette moved forward on her knees and kissed the earth, and the people around her did the same.

Name one person you have stopped praying for, and pray for them today.

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DAY FIVE

The Spring

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.

JOHN 4 : 14

The next morning the Lady told her to go and drink at the spring and wash there. There was no spring, only a little mud. Bernadette scratched at the ground, drank on the fourth attempt and smeared her face, while the crowd said she had gone mad. It is for sinners, she answered. Within days clear water was running, and pilgrims still drink it and wash in it.

Ask God for living water in the place in you that looks like nothing but mud.

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DAY SIX

The First Healing



he impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool.

JOHN 5 : 7

In the night of March 1, Catherine Latapie walked seven kilometres to the grotto. Her arm had been crippled since a fall; she plunged it into the spring, and her arm and hand moved again. In 1862 the bishop declared her healing miraculous, with six others. The Church has since recognised seventy-two at Lourdes.

Bring before her today, by name, the sick you love, and anyone who has no one to carry them to the water.

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DAY SEVEN

Go and Tell the Priests

Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it.

HAGGAI 1 : 8

On March 2 the Lady gave her a message for others: Go and tell the priests that people are to come here in procession and to build a chapel here. The parish priest, Father Peyramale, received her roughly. He wanted the Lady's name, and a sign: let the wild rose under her feet flower in the middle of winter. Bernadette carried the message all the same.

Ask today for the courage to pass on what you have been given, even to people who may not believe you.

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DAY EIGHT

I Am the Immaculate Conception



hou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON 4 : 7

On March 25, the feast of the Annunciation, Bernadette asked her name once more. The Lady opened her arms, joined her hands as if in prayer, and said in the language of Lourdes: *Que soy era Immaculada Councepciou*, I am the Immaculate Conception. Bernadette did not know the words, and ran to the priest repeating them so as not to forget. Pius IX had declared the dogma four years before. The rose did not flower, but the priest was shaken.

Ask her today to keep you close to the grace that kept her.

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DAY NINE

More Beautiful Than Ever



lessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

MATTHEW 5 : 8

The authorities closed the grotto with a fence. On July 16 Bernadette knelt on the other bank of the river and saw the Lady one last time: more beautiful than ever, she said. In 1866 she entered the Sisters of Charity at Nevers. She never saw Lourdes again, was ill for much of her life, and died there on April 16, 1879, at thirty-five. She was canonised in 1933, and since 1993 the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes has also been the World Day of the Sick.

Tomorrow is her feast. Bring back the request you have carried nine days, and leave it with her.

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