

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin

February 11, 1953

The First Miracle At Lourdes

Louis Bourriette was a poor stonecutter who lived in the village of Lourdes, in Southern France. While at work in one of the marble quarries of that district, his right eye was half crushed by a chip of stone. For twenty years he suffered blindness in that eye. Medical science could do nothing to restore Bourriette's vision.

When this good man learned of the supernatural events taking place at the grotto in Lourdes, he sent his daughter to bring some of the water which flowed from the miraculous fountain that had sprung up near the cave. Bourriette, after making the sign of the Cross, took a little of the water and rubbed his affected eye. His vision returned instantly. He continued to pray and rub the eye with the water, and very soon all objects became clearly visible to him.

"Impossible!" cried Bourriette's doctor when the stonecutter informed him that the eye was cured. With an air of defiance the eminent physician said, "If you can read this, I will believe you." Immediately, without hesitation and with his left eye covered, Bourriette read the words: "Bourriette has an incurable amaurosis and he will never recover." The evidence was too convincing. The doctor admitted supernatural intervention. He called another doctor to examine the case; and he, too, called the cure a miracle.

There it is -- and this sort of thing has been going on ever since at this little mountain shrine in southern France. Great crowds witness these wonders and great medical minds continue to be baffled by the things that happen to those who invoke the intercession of Our Lady.

Cures At Lourdes

Miracles have gone on at Lourdes from that day until the present hour. But here is the significant thing: of the 1200 authenticated cures that have been certified as medically unexplainable, only 44 are recognized by the Church as miraculous. How many other hundreds there have been no one knows.

This was revealed in La Croix, Paris Catholic daily, by Dr. Francois Leuret, chief of the Lourdes Bureau of Medical Authentication which certifies the cures. Dr. Leuret stressed the fact that the bureau never proclaims any cure a miracle. It is concerned only with establishing the medical facts in the case. On the basis of these facts, the Church decides whether or not a given cure is miraculous.

Madame Marguerite Lordos of Barisst, near Lourdes, the last survivor of a group of girls who grew up with St. Bernadette of Lourdes, has just passed her 100th birthday. She was six years old when Bernadette, at 14, saw the first of her 18 apparitions of Our Lady. Madame Marguerite well remembers the excitement when the miraculous spring appeared at what is now the grotto of Lourdes.

Today is the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Before the day comes to a close, go down to Her grotto for a brief prayer. The grotto is a replica of Lourdes -- in appearance, in atmosphere, and in devotion to the same Patroness of little Bernadette. Time and space mean nothing to the Mother of God. The important thing to remember is that we are praying to the same Lady. It is a most appropriate spot to pray for the sick among your family and friends.