



UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

Religious Bulletin

February 10, 1958

A Blessed Anniversary

A hundred years ago, tomorrow afternoon, an asthmatic and cholera-ridden little girl, named Bernadette Soubirous, joined a group of three children bent on gathering firewood to cook their simple noonday meal. It was a cold day and, in addition to her long dress, buttoned high with a black shawl round her shoulders, she also wore her white capulet — a cloak and hood common to women of the Pyrenees. The wretched poor of the village were always in need of firewood.

She followed the other two children to the Gave river, walking slowly because of her asthma. Soon they came upon a grotto-like spot, wild and desolate. Shepherds used it for shelter in time of storms. (Here there was driftwood in abundance.) And while the other two crossed the stream and gathered sticks, Bernadette hesitated, then fell on her knees. Later, when they all started for home, Bernadette inquired cautiously: "Did you see anything?"

"No, did you?"

"Yes, I saw something dressed in white, drawn in at the waist by a blue sash," she replied. "Yes, it was a girl of 16 or 17. She had a white veil on her head and falling down her back. You could hardly see her hair at all. Her feet were bare, and there was a yellow rose on each of them. On her right arm was a Rosary of white beads — and the chain was golden, all shining like the two roses at her feet. I couldn't raise my hand to my forehead. . . . The girl took the Rosary she had in her hands, and she made the Sign of the Cross. Then I tried to do it a second time and I was able to. . . . As soon as I had made the Sign of the Cross I wasn't frightened any more. I knelt down and said the Rosary in the presence of the beautiful lady. I recited the prayers alone. Only at the end of each decade did she join in the 'Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.' After the Rosary, she made me a sign to come closer. But I didn't dare. Then she disappeared."

This was the first of 18 apparitions of the Lady who said: "I am the Immaculate Conception." "Penance! Penance! Penance!" Four years earlier the Church had solemnly defined the dogma. Now the Blessed Mother reaffirmed it by her own lips to this little peasant girl who could neither read nor write — but only repeat what the Lady had said. Today, the little girl is a saint. She was canonized 25 years ago.

Scoffers have, from the very beginning, attempted to belittle Lourdes. Scientists analyzed the water from the spring — which works so many cures — and found it to be ordinary water. Psychiatrists made a study of little Bernadette, and found her perfectly normal. Science has been unable to disprove the marvelous events; indeed, science has only helped to confirm them. And when public officials put a fence about the grotto, and forbade anyone to go there under penalty of a fine, Bernadette knelt beyond the fence, and Our Lady continued to appear there, and seemed as close to Bernadette as in previous appearances. For a hundred years, now, thousands have continued to flock to the holy place. Indeed, the best books on Lourdes have been written by non-Catholics.

LOCAL OBSERVANCE

Tomorrow afternoon at 4:30 in Sacred Heart Church, you will be privileged to attend the Anniversary Mass. On this historic occasion, Bishop Pursley will bring part of St. Bernadette to Notre Dame — a First Class Relic (*ex carne*). After Mass, the relic will be carried in procession to the side altar beneath the scene depicting the grotto apparition. And there it will repose for veneration. St. Bernadette should feel at home here — so many Notre Dame men have grown to know and to love her at the Grotto through the years. The service will not be long. Come and join us in welcoming her, and in honoring the Blessed Mother, as we open the Centenary Year. And join in the singing of the pilgrims' hymn during the procession — just as is done every evening at Lourdes.

Plenary Indulgence: Tomorrow, you may gain a Plenary Indulgence by receiving the Sacraments, praying for the intentions of the Holy Father (*Pater, Ave, Gloria*) and visiting the Grotto. (Your confession and Communion within the Octave suffice).