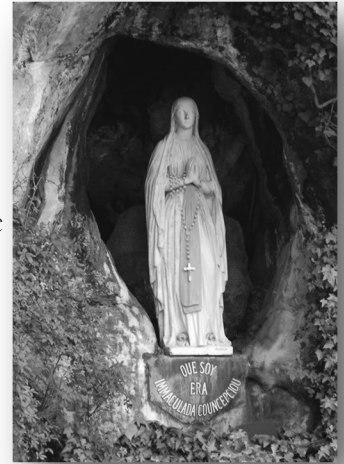




Our Lady of Lourdes and Saint Bernadette (Part II)

One of the special devotions that takes place in Lourdes is the nightly candlelight procession where thousands of people gather with their candles, and walk in procession praying the rosary. It is led in different languages (Polish, German, Italian, French and English to name a few.) After each decade everyone sings together in one language, raising high their candle, "Ave, Ave, Ave Maria! Ave, Ave, Ave Maria!" We are all familiar with this refrain as it is contained in the hymn, "Immaculate Mary." I can tell you that I sensed the strong faith of all these people, some of whom had traveled a great distance to be at this holy place.



Even though our Blessed Mother asked that a chapel be built, what is there today is not only a chapel, but a basilica, sitting on rock above the grotto. The processions do take place and people come to the waters. Our Blessed Mother's requests are being answered. Of course, the message in all Marian apparitions involves penance and conversion. That is why the sacrament of Reconciliation figures so prominently in the Lourdes experience. It is the goal that when people return to their homes after their pilgrimage, they live with renewed devotion and energy, the faith that brought them to Lourdes in the first place.

I brought to Lourdes all of the petitions given me and asked our Blessed Mother and St. Bernadette to bring them to our Lord. The message that all people can take from Lourdes is that God is rich in love and mercy and through Mary, the Mother of God and our spiritual mother, as well as through the intercession of St. Bernadette, we can be assured that our Lord is close to us and will provide His healing and peace, helping us to accept whatever He may please to give us in this life. Even if we cannot experience Lourdes as a pilgrim, we know that God hears us wherever we are. Prayer has no boundaries!

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us! St. Bernadette, pray for us!

Father David