Life of Bernadette



The simpler it is written
it will be better.
By force of wanting to adorn
the things.
it disfigures them.

Saint Bernadette
on his deathbed, April 1879

The following account is not a fictional narrative. The names, the facts, the dialogues and the quotes (in italics) have been taken out scrupulously from the documents. Fictions have been excluded, which even today they abound in many works. The accuracy of each piece of data in the volumes in which we have established the narrative of the appearances and the life of Bernadette, Lourdes, authentic documents; Lourdes, authentic story; Logia of Bernadette. We refer them to reader through very brief references (see the acronym table on page) 258).

Lourdes dialect

Until the apparitions, Bernadette only spoke the 'patois of Lourdes', as she designates it. And in that dialect of the arcane tongue. received the communications from Virgin. For reasons of authenticity the The following narrative provides some typical or irreplaceable expressions.

How to transcribe that dialect? Here is the apple of the discord. There are indeed two schools: the Occitan School and the School Gaston Fébus, whose spellings differ, not matching either with the improvised graphics of the documents of the time. These problems have thoroughly studied in Lourdes, authentic history (6 volumes), through consultations with representatives of both schools. For each word From the Virgin, a confirmation will be found between the spelling of the sources and the transcription according to the principles of the two schools mentioned.

This work, intended for a much wider audience, does not can get into those problems. We have decided to transcribe the patois in the manner closest to the documents, with some special conventions, to avoid controversies and misunderstandings endless issues that arise in local speech, whether regarding the Salette, Lourdes or Pontmain.

1st We will use the accent as the tonic accent. Such use was ignored. in Bernadette's time, but I have imposed (the acute accents or serious would attract the reproaches of specialists, whose expertise we respect.

2nd Therefore, remind us that neither in Occitan nor in the dialect Lourdes concrete exists; it must be pronounced é or è, according to cases. This is of singular importance in order to avoid confusion about the

word Aqueró, that Bernadette used to refer to the apparition; see page 58.

I want to thank Father Point and the team of Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception, natives of Lourdes, who have revised fruitfully the transcriptions.

René Laurentin

Life of Bernadette

1979

Castilian version of CLAUDIOGANCHO, from the work of RENÉ LAURENTIN, Life of Bernadette

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PREFACE

from Monsignor Donze, Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes

One hundred years ago, on April 16, 1879, he died in the convent of Saint-Gildard, in Nevers, Sister Marie Bernard Soubirous. And on the occasion of This centenary here is a new book about what his life was, a life very short, thirty-five years old.

We owe the work to one of the foremost contemporary experts on the history of Lourdes. René Laurentin has indeed dedicated a twenty volumes on the scientific study of the events that occurred there it happened one hundred and twenty years ago. In the pages that follow, it has put to contribution to the wealth and seriousness of that documentation. There is nothing of novelized in this story: the names, the events, the dialogues, are taken meticulously from the documents that the author has studied from a critical way, excluding any fiction. In one word, it is about a book to reconnect with Bernadette in her truth, in her gestures and in her authentic words, and to receive the lessons of your life, animated by complete, until the hour of her death, by the message received from the Virgin.

A second appealing aspect of that moving and true testimony, which all readers will notice immediately, it is in the lively, concrete style and clear with which the author presents it to us. No digressions; to the conversely, simple phrases, loaded with meaning and that make us reflect, con detalles vivamente captados y anotados de forma concisa. El resultado it has been a thrilling story, in which the candid freshness of is rediscovered the little seer of Massabielle and the astonishing strength of character of the young religious woman who was later.

Bernadette Soubirous was beatified before the age of fifty. her death, and canonized on December 8, 1933, just eighty and nine years after their birth. Among the men and women to whom that the Virgin has appeared during the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, Bernadette is the only one who shares that glory with Catherine Labouré.

In fact, he lived each day a growing evangelical holiness.

extraordinarily pure, simple and naked. The historical works, theological and multidisciplinary, which have been coming for thirty years multiplying upon it, they have increasingly highlighted that the san- Bernadette's holiness was a poor and imitable holiness, in close harmony. between nature and grace. She is a saint within our reach, a saint for our time, a witness announcing to the Church of today, called to to live, like her, a mystery of service and poverty, in hope.

All of that and more can be found in the work that I am pleased to present. Here, a few months away from the year in which we will celebrate the centenary of the day. as Bernadette entered the happiness of heaven, which had been promised to her. Immaculate Virgin. For the seriousness of its information, for its presentation accessible to all cultures, due to the warmth of its style and its density , it will allow us to live that event more intensely. And by It rightfully deserves the title of Book of the Century.

I wish that many Christians read it and meditate on it.

Tarbes, 11 de febrero de 1978



7



Bernadette in 1864

PROLOGUE

Who is Bernadette?

Bernadette Soubirous, the seer of Lourdes, died at the age of thirty five years old, on April 16, 1879, at the convent of Saint-Gildard from Nevers, after 13 years of religious life and 21 years after the appearances of 1858.

Only she has seen the Virgin in the hollow of the rock, and only about the testimony of that poor, uneducated, and despised girl was founded Lourdes and, still today, four million pilgrims go there every year. and visitors.

The crowd gathered at the announcement of his death to see in his coffin the that he had gone there to hide.

Even today, in Nevers, the flow of people continues in front of the sarcophagus in which his body rests, exhumed intact after his beatification, on August 15, 1925, less than fifty elapsed years after her death. Pius XI would canonize her eight years later, on the 8th December 8, 1933, during the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

If she had lived, at that date Bernadette would have been 89 years old.

Since then, Bernadette has not ceased to manifest her importance: precisely that of a new kind of holiness, which the Spirit Saint has aroused in the Church of the 19th century: a purely holiness evangelical.

And yet, it is Bernadette who is the most secretive of all the saints. Those who have claimed this were not thinking so much about the 'secrets' that guided his life like in the intimate quality of a holiness without works or writings or human triumphs. A holiness of the poor.

The secret of that holiness escaped her own novitiate teacher, notable and saintly woman in her own way, who did not want to hear talk of the canonization of Bernadette. Do we have a greater chance? to capture that secret? Yes, but in the sense of Bernadette: by force of simplicity. She said:

Passion moves me more when I read it than when it is explained to me.

(L 576).

And to the historians of Lourdes:

The simpler it is written, the better... by decorating the things are distorted

His life, without introspection or artifice, invites us to avoid the comment and simply present your facts, gestures, and words as much as possible as close as possible to the authentic documents. That is the best probability to reveal its secret, which is one of transparency.

The life of Bernadette is an exemplary illustration of this word. Gospel:

I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; because you have You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, and revealed them to the little children. simple (Mt 11:25; Lc 10:21-22).

The holiness of the poor

Esa luz, oculta a los sabios y eruditos y revelada en cambio a los little ones, it is Bernadette's. The older ones discovered it very soon. insightful.

Since the time of the apparitions, the young Antoinette Tardhivail, whose poor health prevented him from fulfilling his vocation as a Carmelite, does this discovery in the small village where the Soubirous are some desolate shaved heads and with a bad reputation

His parents are very poor... as poor as our Lord was. about the earth, and in that girl María has set her eyes, preferring her to so many rich young women who at this moment envy the fortune of that one those whom they would have looked down upon, and who consider themselves fortunate to to be able to hug her or touch her hand (Letter from March 29, 1858, D5 p.77).

Four years later (January 18, 1862) the bishop, without having having read this intimate letter, draw the same conclusion, in the instruction in which he recognized the authenticity of the apparitions:

What is the instrument that the Almighty will use to communicate to us his designs of mercy? Once again it will be that what is more weak in the world: a 14-year-old girl... born... of a poor family.

And Bernadette writes the same thing at the moment she gets paid.

awareness of her vocation, in this intimate prayer to the queen of heaven:

How happy my soul was, oh my good mother, when I had the fortune to behold you...! Yes, you have lowered yourselves to the earth to appear to us to a weak girl... You have wanted to take advantage of what was the most vulnerable. according to the world (ESO, p. 187).

The one to whom Bernadette directed that prayer must have recognized herself in she had said:

For great things He has done for me, the Mighty One... He set His eyes in the humble condition of your slave. And so, from now on, they will call me blessed are all generations' (Lk. 1:48-49).

This fragment of the Magnificat, the canticle of the poor, enlightens us. the daily life of Bernadette.



I

LOURDES

(1844-1866)

Childhood
The appearances
The testimony

1

THE CHILDHOOD OF BERNADETTE

(1844-1858)

Bernadette Soubirous was born on January 7, 1844, in Boly, the penultimate of the five stepped mills, in a few dozen of meters, over the low flow of the Lapaca creek, between the enormous rock crowned by the castle and the hills of pastures and forests that rise smoothly towards Bartrès.

Marriage of love

There is joy in the mill. Bernadette was a wanted girl. Her birth fulfills a marriage of love, whose story, born from a this is misfortune.

On July 1, 1841, Justin Castérot, the miller of Boly, dies. in a cart accident, on the road from Pouyferré. His widow, Claire, is before the floured corpse, which they are going to bury. Now the woman has what to think about his problem. In that mill, whose wheel has stopped turning He has four older daughters and two young boys. The deceased felt owner; but in reality, he was not. And those uneducated people did not... I was taking a word from that complicated situation, in which the most clearly it was the obligation to pay an annual fee (fiou) of 130 gold francs.

One had to marry off Bernarde, 19 years old, to a boy immediately. of the trade. The widow Castérot gauged François Soubirous, of the mill Latour, still single at 34 years old. He did not hesitate, showing up at a kind and smiling mill, but without revealing anything about the wedding. What. thoughts bubbled behind that spacious, kind forehead, stubborn?

In the end, his idea could be guessed. The one that 'interested' François did not. it was Bernarde, but her younger sister, Louise, a blonde with blue eyes. When he was made to confess this anomaly, he avoided sentimental reasons. which had no legal course among the milling of Lourdes in the 19th century:

Louise is a better housewife,

The obvious was the opposite. Bernarde was a woman with a sharp mind and with her authority where it existed. Moreover, Louise was only 17 years; she was too young. And it was not wise to marry her off before the Mayor. François did not raise any argument. There he was tenacious and smiling. He had to take a stand: either he married the one he wanted, or he would not marry at all. with none.

Birth

The wedding took place on January 9, 1843; and Bernadette was born on the 7th of... January, a year later. The next day, according to tradition, François, proud and awkward, he went with the girl to the town hall, and the next one, 9 of January 1844, the anniversary of the parents' marriage, was celebrated. baptism of the newborn, in the ancient granite baptistery, in which Even today people from Lourdes are still being baptized.

Bernadette cried. Should we see in it a premonition of the strange promise she received that 'she would not be happy in this world'? In the the same meaning speaks another symbol: the familiar noise of his early years it was the one of the molars and the ground wheat, with which she will identify on her deathbed by saying: 'I am ground like wheat'.

The party on January 9, 1844 left this simple memory, much later consigned 'in Lourdes patois':

There are plates and bottles of wine on the table. One made a round.

Anyone can translate it if they know what shade a great basket is. wide edges; fritters, typical of the festivities; classify large bottles of 2 to 3 liters, ytaoulosignifica, table.

The heiress

Five were the women willing to watch over Bernadette's cradle: from grandmother to little aunt Lucile, who was four years old. The authority there was Bernarde, 'the heiress'; because, according to the custom of Bigorre, the the firstborn, whether male or female, carries that title and honor..., whether there is or not heritage, and her advice prevails over that of the younger ones, boys and girls.

Bernadette had also been born 'heir'. Therefore, she will have always aware of her family duties.

The love that surrounded his early childhood will, throughout his life, be a from the strong roots that grace knows how to use to forge the saints...

As for the mother, Louise, sweet and patient, confused by having having usurped the privilege of his sister with his happy marriage, he accepted without recriminations about sharing their daughter.

She knew me as well as she knew her mother, aunt proudly said. Bernarde.

But for Bernadette, the fundamental point of reference was the silence and the smile of the miller's man, his father, proud as was of his firstborn. For the new 'heir', the royal image of the book From his childhood is that big, dust-covered white cap and the eyes. (François still kept the two) that looked at him with tenderness. Thus he instilled in her a deep sense of security, which will remain indestructible, despite the onslaughts to disintegrate the rock. The result could have been fatal, if those human foundations had not been for Bernadette symbols of a deeper reality, the one that was evoked at the sunset of each day the rumor of some harsh voices at the edge of sleep: Our Father, who you are in the heavens. It was the time when the noise of the mills quieted down and little Soon the song of the stream was rising in the silence.

Bernadette did not know that Soubirous means 'sovereign'. But one sovereign image, that of God, shared in the simplicity of a a close existence to nature, inhabited his childhood, and gave him this pride in the humility that marks all of his/her being.

Bartrès

The onset of misfortune did not wait for the year to end. birth. One afternoon in November 1844, Louise, pregnant again, was he sits by the warmth of the fire. The resin candle, hanging from the fireplace, she falls over as she wakes up among flames. She will no longer be able to continue. breastfeeding Bernadette due to the burns on her breasts.

Aunt Bernarde is looking for a wet nurse. Precisely in Bartrès, on the hill whose slopes descend to the mill, Marie Laguës has just of losing her firstborn Jean, at just 18 days old. And she willingly accepts. breastfeeding the girl. She takes care of Bernadette for 5 francs a month, payable in currency or in wheat. Bernarde stays up there for 8 days. end of getting the girl used to it.

But the most frequent visitor of Bernadette is her father François. Such frequency had never been seen on the 4-kilometer slope that climb to Bartrès, under the pretext of collecting wheat, delivering flour or dealing with Some client. Soon marks dates to get his daughter back.
Marie Lagües resists because she has become fond of the girl. She cannot to resign oneself to seeing the empty cradle. But also in Boly the cradle is empty. The little Jean Soubirous, born on February 13, 1845, has died on the 10 in April. And in December of that same year, they wean Bernadette...

Marie Laguës remains steadfast; she will continue with the free babysitting... And only returns it on April 1, 1846, when it is sure of a new pregnancy, which I desired so much. And all of this is about the slow way and ceremonial of peasant courtesy. When going to pick up the little one, Louise Soubirous already left a handkerchief as a gift. Bernadette, at 2 years and four. months, finds again, with spring, the noise of the molars and the water rumor, which will now be dangerous for their independent steps and curious.

Thanks and misfortunes in Boly

In 1848, the separation between the Soubirous family under guardianship and the Clan Castérot. Bernarde, seduced by Tarbès, has become a mother before the parents of her beau authorized the marriage. Claire Castérot abandons the mill with its single children. In Boly, François and Louise feel very strange when finally finding themselves alone again, like two lovers. How light life is without the looks, the replies, and the advice of every moment!

There was another event that could not escape either Bernadette. Her father, François Soubirous, 'picked' his teeth too much. smoothed. The hammer was striking at a good pace; but suddenly, it stops with a shout. And behold, it arrives with the hand over the face: the left eye he has been hit directly by a fragment. He has no salvation. In Go ahead, François will have to hide his illness with that wink that he has in the photos to spare others the sight of his misfortune.



Neighborhood of the mills: below Savy



Savy Mill

The passion of the Soubirous

Are the Soubirous in the process of reliving Job's adventure? money is missing in the mill, without its inhabitants knowing exactly why. The The truth is that they work and, despite the competition, there are always people. But these good people have a heart too generous to be good administrators in difficult times. They welcome well to the beggars, including one named Michel Garicoïts. They feel sorry for them insolvent, and they do not hesitate to advance them wheat and flour 'until next time harvest.

You will pay when you can, says Louise.

To the customers who bring the wheat or collect the flour, the miller

there is always something: wine, cheese, and sometimes fritters like at the baptism of Bernadette. She knows how to do it very well. And why skimp on the oil and the flour that abounds? The atmosphere is cheerful and lively; but the yield null. That environment drives away serious clientele and attracts the bad ones. never pays. The deadlines become difficult.

In 1854, when Bernadette turns 10 years old and Pius IX defines the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, one must move. And Bernadette he abandons the cheerful mill of his childhood.

The furniture is moved to the Laborde house and the father starts to looking here and there for precarious jobs to earn bread for his four children, because after Bernadette, Louise has given birth to Toinette (1846). Jean-Marie (1851) and later to Justin, on February 28, 1855.

The miller François has become a 'bracero'. The word says well what it means: the man who rents his 'arms' every day at the price of its brute strength: 1.20 francs on average, less than a horse or a mule, whose daily rent reaches 1.55 francs a day.

A family of 5 people needed, according to the Indicator of the High Pyrenees (Paris 1856), 523 francs annually as the minimum vital. to say, to not die. The Soubirous were 6. With Sundays, the holidays and the days of strike are far from reaching that figure. Louise has also job position: cleaning woman, laundry, agricultural work. Bernadette takes care of Justin. When he screams from hunger, she takes him to his mother. so that I breastfed him —in summer, in the shade of the sheaves— with the little milk that a malnourished and dry mother can give due to her hard work under the heat. Of the nine children that will be born, five will not they will reach the age of 10 years.

When there is no employment, the two older daughters go to gather firewood, bones or scrap, everything you want to buy from them for a few cents the Letchina ragpicker from Barràou, who then resells it to the wholesale ragman. Casteret. No talking about the school for Bernadette.

In the autumn of 1855, the cholera epidemic descends upon Lourdes. triggering those torrential diarrhea episodes that dehydrate a person in a few hours and reduce it to the state of a corpse.

On September 23, there are eight dead, on October 10 there are now thirty. At the moment when others flee, calamities reveal to

the men of heart: the abbe Peyramale, new parish priest, arrived at Lourdes last March. And then Commissioner Jaconet, always in the gap with his friend, the cavalry sergeant from Angla. They clash at argue with bundles of straw to the sick. It is the treatment that has prevailed in Lourdes. Bernadette barely escapes; but her health, increasingly weaker since the age of 6, reaches a new level of deterioration. Despite the recipes of Rosine Maillet, the midwife, asthma will not leave her.

On October 22, 1855, Claire Castérot, the maternal grandmother, who has... escaped from the epidemic, dies fourteen years after her husband.

Her death restores the family's financial situation. From her economies, 900 francs are due to the Soubirous. They buy a little of livestock, hoping to recover with some calves, cows, pigs, and birds of corral. They invest more than they have and lease the mill of Sarrabeyrouse, on the Echez, in the village of Arcizac-ès-Angles, 4 km away from Lourdes. But the contract that they have Soubirous sign, taking advantage of that is illiterate, it is ruinous. And that lasts barely a year. At the first expiration has to start over, without the slightest hope of finding nobody is crazy enough to rent the mill.

It is sinking more and more. The mutual affection is being put to the test by an indisputable material fact: 'Too many mouths to feed', according to the Bernadette's expression (H2, p. 30, note 85).

We will have to keep that in mind to survive.

Mosaic in a tavern

During the winter of 1856/57, the Soubirous resigned themselves to separating. from 'the mouth to feed' number 1. Her godmother, Aunt Bernarde, takes her away as a maid. Bernadette helps her take care of the house and the ta-
Bern, which the aunt has inherited from her first husband, at the intersection of the streets. Bourg and Baous. Bernadette takes care of her cousins, does the laundry, and adds patches, she is an excellent seamstress and works at the counter. She is docile to the the authority of her aunt Bernarde, who governs with an iron fist when she is necessary..., but Bernadette feels inclined towards generosity, as it they were his parents in Boly. And that is stronger than his exemplary docility. He has his own way of filling the tin measure at the counter of the tavern, and thus in the end there is a sip left when the bottle has been filled. And to tell her friend Jeanne-Mario Caudeban, that he has told it (or to others) little friends)

Drink that, María!

In Lourdes, wine, which was relatively scarce, was considered as a tonic and a prestigious remedy.

The dungeon

In early 1857, with the worsening of unemployment, the Soubirous are expelled from their dilapidated home: the Rives house. When putting them out on the street, The landlord keeps the wardrobe as collateral. The move happens more and more often. lighter. Where to find a roof? Where to find something worse? No one wants the Soubirous anymore. The last chance left to try is el 'calabozo': 'un tugurio infecto y sombrío', como lo describió el procura- from Dutour, in his report of March 1, 1858.

It was the uninhabitable part of the old prison, abandoned in 1824. due to its unsanitary conditions. Jean-Pierre Taillade, the buyer, had blown up the window bars, but it had not taken away either the dampness or the evil smell, a pungent smell of poultry manure. André Sajous, cousin of the Soubirous, to whom his uncle Taillade had bequeathed the house during his lifetime unhinged, she had opened a second window, but still about the same corral. And here is François, knocking at his cousin's door:

I was not happy! Sajous admitted. They had four children. I had five. I understood that my wife, very kind, would give them my bread.

I used to host the Spaniards who came to dig during the winter, and they would lie there on the slabs, with their blanket, and many times no straw...

Those immigrants from the other side of the Pyrenees represented then the last degree of misery in Lourdes: 'a bundle of "Spaniards," according to the derogatory expression of Zola in his diary. investigation in Lourdes. The Soubirous had fallen to that level of 'hatajo', as illustrated by a story from then.

The little Amanda Jacomet, daughter of the commissioner, who is 5 years old, finishes her first piece of work: a pair of small white socks.

We have to give it to the first poor child that shows up, that surely he will be a Spaniard, says Mrs. Jacomet, driven by her good heart.

But it was Bernadette's little brother who showed up first without socks.



The dungeon

The Spaniards had abandoned the 'dungeon' at the end of that winter of 1856, although they would undoubtedly return the following winter; it was, Well, it's money that Sajous would stop earning.

Sajous delays the response until night, and speaks to the uncle first. Taillade, who had bequeathed the dungeon to him. And the conclusion is unavoidable:

They are on the street; we need to provide them shelter.

In the gloomy room of 3.72 x 4.40 m, the two fit as best they can. beds (three would be needed for six people), then the table, two chairs, stools for the children, a small wardrobe, and the trunk that is now enough for the family's clothing and linens, including sheets. Everything is clean. But they will not take long to discover the parasites of the occupants previous.

Hunger

In 1856, the escalation of misery has intensified. On August 26, the the attorney general of Pau issues an alarming report to Paris and confidential:

The grain harvest is, on average, one third of a normal harvest. The powdery mildew that has been ruining everything for the past three years harvest season has reached its peak. The corn, which in the month of May was at 13 francs is now at 27. Wheat has reached up to 42 francs.

Hunger is on the horizon, and the problem is twofold. insoluble, the report continues, because there is no railroad to transport wheat, neither does the poor population have money to buy it. And in that 'dungeon' hunger is felt more strongly. Bernadette tries to make soups of herbs, that only nourish the imagination...

One day of that tragic winter, Emmanuélite Estrade, who was praying in the church is surprised to hear a strange noise from the side of the catafalques. And what does he discover? An unknown child who scratches, like a little mouse, the wax fallen from the candles. What is not eaten when it... Are you hungry? The boy never wanted to say his name. But it will be during the apparitions, on February 23, 1858, when Emmanuélite will identify to Jean-Marie, the little brother of Bernadette, who later forgot (and rejected) that childhood memory (H2, p. 224).

In prison

At the end of that gloomy winter, on the 27th of March in 1857, The gendarmerie stands in the 'cell'. And takes François Soubirous away. like a villain. In the Maisongrosse bakery, two have been stolen. bags of flour the night before. And the baker accuses François Soubirous, whom I had hired in September 1856 to deliver flour in Light. In his favor, this testimony is presented:

During the time he was with me, I had no reason at all to complain about his loyalty. But he adds:

It is his state of misery that leads me to believe that he might be the one. author of that robbery (report of the prosecutor, March 31, 1857).

The argument is impressive. The gendarmes seized the boots of the old miller and they led him home barefoot to the baker to proceed with the investigation. The thief's footprints had a little more or less 'the same size' as the boots, emphasizes the report, while acknowledging that the arrangement of the nails differed. François Soubirous added that 'the shape of the boots was larger than the one with the footprints.

Will they let him go free? No, because the investigation that was conducted at his house. Hello a board. Where did it come from? François Soubirous was disturbed. That a piece of wood had been abandoned against a wall for a long time in the Petits Fossés street, and he had picked it up with his bundle of firewood upon returning from Bartrès. Instead of flour, there was finally the 'robbery', for the misery of the old miller seemed suspicious. He was imprisoned, while the board 'it was deposited at the town hall' to return it to its eventual 'owner'. No one showed up, and for good reason. The trunk will have a job at next year: it will hold the sign that will prohibit access to the cave from June 1858.

In his prison, François dreamed of his loved ones, submerged in the ignominy and more punished than him by hunger, since they lacked their newspaper.

On April 4, the prosecutor ended his preventive detention due to 'reasons of humanity', according to the terms of the report. The investigation ended with a dismissal; but the reputation of the Soubirous had fallen to the lowest point. Besides being one-eyed and that his businesses are going Mal, François is treated as lazy and incapable. 'Bebe', they accuse him from the side. of the Castérot; 'it is she who drinks', says the Soubirous clan. Everything Hello without strong foundation, but weakness and malnutrition make it so that sometimes they prefer a glass of wine to a more 'normal' food to cheer themselves up In the task. In the region, everyone then shared the idea current that wine 'gives strength' (LHA 1, p. 77-80).

And there is François sunk in the category of thieves.

Only two things sustained his pride: above all Louise, brave and without reproach. They remained united in misfortune as they had been. en la felicidad. Jamás 'hubo palabras' entre ellos, reconocen los miembros of the family, who nevertheless tried to incite one against the other.

And there is also something that brings them together above themselves. Each Later, through the floor of the first floor, cousin Sajous hears the voices of los Soubirous que 'gritan' la oración de la noche en francés; un lenguaje that Bernadette did not understand. But through some dark words she it achieves a presence. She has received it as something natural. And for her, it is a hold through the fields of Bartrès...

Bartrès, 1857

We see that he goes up to his wet nurse's house in September 1857. By very prosaic reasons. The problem is always the same: too much mouth that needs to be fed. Despite the pleasure of being all together, one mouth me- it means a little more for each of us when it comes to distributing the small ones portions, that each one would like to see turn into portions 'like this big...

Since March 1858, Bernadette's life in Bartrès will be wrapped in legend. Wonderful stories will run in the newspapers an admiring or ironic tone: their flock had miraculously waded through the torrent increased by the storm. And to everyone's amazement, the rains

they had not soaked it. Bernadette denied such legends, pare disappointment of his admirers.

No idealizations or a charming landscape, laden for her with austere duties, nor the mysticism of the shepherdess.

Her condition has inspired mythologies no less unreal for love. of God, like those of Honoré de Urfé for human love of the shepherds of the 17th century.

For Bernadette, Bartrès is not the pastoral idyll, the holy Trianon. what tourists dream of. Their diet is austere; meat does not make up their appearance more than two times a year: for Christmas and for St. John. Tomorrow and In the afternoon, the food is always that corn dough, which the stomach of Bernadette has long been rejecting. At home, they bought her her a piece of wheat bread; but in Bartrès that is 'a privilege of the old ones. sirs.

And besides, Marie Laguës is tough with her old breastfed child. The He loves in his own way, but he has never forgiven him for having nursed the... milk of her dead child, her little Jean. After that, she returned to losing her second Juanito, who died at two years old, on March 1. 1850. And the third, whom Bernadette cares for, wilts. It will not pass the autumn...

Bernadette is not just a shepherd and a nanny; she is the little maid for do it and clean it all. It is docile and never shirks from work. What what hurts the most is that I had gone there with the promise of finally being able to attend to the catechism with Abbot Ader, who explained it in Bartrès. But the Sheep also ate on Thursdays, and the shepherdess's stall is with her sheep.

What was that life in Bartrès for Bernadette, whose sweet hills Do they make you dream? Without a doubt, a long solitude. But she knows how to remedy it sometimes. inviting a colleague, Jeanne-Marie Caudeban, who shares her con- child-maid's saying. When she is alone, she plays with her dog Pigou and with his lambs. He likes the 'smaller ones'; this is one of the memories that have survived more clearly in their memory until the end of their life.

He likes to build small altars, in the local style, for the month of Maria, in order to support her prayer.

But the favored lamb does not share that pity. The animal, which Bernadette likes to carry on her back and make him bend his knees.

It is also fun to destroy the 'altarcillos'. Bernadette doesn't know how. to scold him/her

To punish him, she would give him salt, which he was very fond of.

Bernadette likes that friendly universe where she reigns over order. and peace. Those little incidents constitute their fun in solitude. interminable.

Her father comes to visit her, like when she was a little girl.

One day he finds her all sad in her meadow:

Look at my rams, there are some that have a green back. What will it happen to them?

The misfortunes of those days lead François to dark humor:

The grass they have eaten has gone to their backs. They will die.

Bernadette cries. But how to comfort her? The green mark is the butcher's mark. Yes, their rams are going to die.

In the afternoon, at home, the nurse insists on teaching him the catechism. He wants to calm his remorse for having broken promises. made. The pedagogy is not up to its intentions. Repeats the Imperative phrases, hit with them like a club.

Repeat, repeat!

Words do not enter that head which has never been to the school. What Bernadette understands, she understands from within, and she does not see the relationship between those abstract phrases and the communion that she wants to do. Everything fades away the moment it needs to be repeated. The nurse gets exasperated and ends up throwing the catechism on the ground. telling him:

—Take it! You are too silly. You will never be able to do it first. communion!

The abbot Aravant, the brother of the wet nurse, was a witness to such snorts. and reproaches, which she did not stop criticizing her sister for.

She changed her behavior for a while... After that she returned to her usual way, Bernadette confided once to Jeanne Védère (H2, p. 58).

Without that confidance to her closest friend, the words of Bernadette would have only left us the praise of the nurse and her affection. towards her. It has been others who have revealed to us the misfortunes of

Bernadette.



The sheepfold of Bernadette InBartres

When good God allows it

Without another confession to Jeanne, we would also ignore one of the springs of your patience and of your kindness. He said:

When good God allows it, there is no reason to complain.

The expression is fair and tuned. Bernadette does not say: 'The one that God wants', when it comes to the sufferings and injustices endured.

In that attachment she finds peace, but without forgetting to seek. an exit.

Aunt Bernarde and the nurse have witnessed her sweetness and her docility. But was she pious?

"Well, like any other!" responds Justine Laguës to the abbot. Servais in 1913.

I don't remember seeing her with a rosary, Jeanne said. Marie Caudeban, who was sometimes his companion in the meadow of Arribans.

"Did you pray the rosary in the fields of Bartrès?" she was asked. Bernadette herself on her deathbed, December 12, 1878.

I don't remember, she replied.

She has forgotten many things. Louise Soubirous, her mother, observed in her since her earliest childhood 'a very pronounced tendency to the piety' (testimony from November 12, 1859; D5, p. 327). He liked set up small monuments during the month of Mary, next to her bed or in the fields. But that was nothing more than a local custom, which did not he singularized (H2, p. 60). He had a two-cent rosary that Toinette I had bought it in 1856 in Bétharram (A7, p. 173). He knew how to recite it in French, a language she barely knew globally, like the faithful

Before the council, they could understand Latin (H2, p. 50). In the mo-
the mentor of the first appearance will have that rosary in the pocket. And for her it was a familiar gesture to take the hand there.

He also knew this invocation that was said in the evening prayer:

Oh Mary, conceived without sin...!

That is all that the researchers were able to gather.
in Bartrès a wonderful spring or, like Zola, the secret of a crazy mysticism.

The primitive nebula

Bernadette was not a mystic, not in the popular sense of a fervor. strange and unique, not in the technical sense of states of soul catalogued in the Treaties of spirituality. And yet, it was very advanced in true mysticism, that is, in union with God. She lived in the way of the poor, a way that made Christ leap for joy the day that exclaimed 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; why have you hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to the simple people.

It is a silent grace that leaves no bright marks in the diaries, and not even in the archives. But the priests of that region have often found that contemplative experience among the shepherds or farmers of the country.

In this realm of the holiness of the poor, one must know how to guess and to penetrate the half-spoken words. Bernadette's parents have been too silenciosos como para poder decir nada de su 'experiencia espiritual', del secret of their generosity, of their unshadowed concord, despite the misery and the attempts to confront them against each other. But many visitors those who did not come only with
questions and arguments, but they knew how to perceive beings and environments.

Azun de Bernétas, who visited the 'dungeon' for the first time on the 12th of November 1859, he recorded his first impression as follows:

When one enters the Soubirous house, one is struck by the identical family likeness that prevails in all the figures: the peace, innocence and happiness seem to emanate from such placid traits que les caracterizan a todos: y, sin embargo, están en la indigencia en the entire extent of the word... How happy we were amidst those

blessed children! (D5, p.328).

Bernadette has lived the Gospel through her footprints, from a good source, without knowledge or words. She quickly forgot many things.
my right hand ignored what my left hand was doing, and it stayed radically alien to all spiritual exhibitionism. It has discouraged the curious when they sought their secret outside of their simplicity.

Her union with God was lived always, in great poverty of language and media. And he lived it in the communion of the saints: those of the land and the heavens, then very present among the people. John the Baptist it illuminated the church of Bartrès from the top of its golden bas-relief, and Saint Peter of Lourdes. The Virgin Mary poured over one and another a sweeter light. But Bernadette's holiness was set apart from all religious instruction; I was unaware even of the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The abbot Pomian did not take long to realize this with horror. Bernadette was oblivious to any reflective consciousness; she lived in a night. spiritual, the night of the poor simply: that of those who wait for the good news doing the 'will of God', as expressed by the word of Childhood collected by Jeanne Védère.

Return to the 'dungeon'

Abandoning oneself to the will of God did not prevent Bernadette from deliberate in search of a solution, which starts to put into practice the end of 1857, Sunday after Sunday, when he comes down to give a hug to the yours.

On December 5th of that year, little Jean Lagües (third of that name) also dies. The wound that the heart of the nurse carried Thirteen years later, it opens again. The atmosphere of the house becomes more... heavier. The outpourings of the mourning mother unload onto Bernadette. The hope of learning the catechism, always postponed to next Thursday, it is completely eliminated. On January 3, 1858 the Abate Ader, who served in the ministry in Bartrès, leaves the parish after after having officiated a last baptism, a last marriage, and presiding a final deliberation of the church 'council'. It departs for the abbey of the Pierre-qui-Vire, following its desire for Benedictine life.

It is not yet known who will replace him.

Bernadette has made her decision. Now it all consists of making sure that

if they accept her. She lets her parents know that she is 'bored' in Bartrès. In her measured purpose mouth, that euphemism carries weight.

François Soubirous understands his tribulation. The mother is at agreement. The departure process is set in motion with a pause.

On Sunday, January 17, Bernadette goes down to Lourdes, as every Sunday, taking some potatoes that are a blessing... Upon leaving, I it encloses itself in its shell every time the wet nurse repeats like a refrain:

Come back at night, without fail.

But that day he doesn't reappear, nor the next one, nor on Tuesday; only He presents himself on Wednesday with a clear and well-prepared response.

The priest wants me to make my first communion.

Who could speak against the decision of the priest, when Is there no cure in Bartrès anymore? Bernadette is already fourteen years and ten months old. days. The Lagües do not have a clear conscience. Bernadette does not rush. the game. For the last time uses the handkerchief of Jeanne-Marie Caudeban while washing his. It's the day after, Thursday, when he takes the road with hardly any luggage.

Farewell to friends Jeanne-Marie Caudeban and Jeanne-María Garros. Goodbye to the milk brothers Zephirin, Joseph, and Justin. Goodbye to dad. Legëes, who was the kindness of the house, and to the nurse whose affection returns to to blossom in farewells and arrivals.

Bernadette has turned her back on the Burg house. She turns left. Once past the church, greet the cross of the crossing as you walk. The way. What follows now is not the open road afterwards for tourists. It is a carriage road, with deep and winding ruts, that borders the altiplano before descending towards the Gave. On the right, the blacks The slopes of the northern slope do not attract attention. On its shady side, which she does not see the sun during the winter. Bernadette does not distinguish the cliff. abrupt of the old rock: Mases vielle or Massabieille as it is called in patois. Did they even know the name of that little accessible hideout and of bad reputation, which provides grass for the community's pig herd? We don't know if you have heard the not-so-brilliant saying: 'Have you been educated in Massabielle? Bernadette has never been there...

At the end of the straight line, the road rolls towards Lourdes. There it appears the bell tower of the church where she goes to listen to catechism and will do her

first communion.

In the 'cell', he finds misery, dampness, foul smell, the shadow, but also the affection of her loved ones. It is the choice she has made. made.



Francois Soubirus



Louise, the mother

2

THE FIRST THREE APPEARANCES

February 11, 14, and 18

Thursday, February 11, 1858: a day like any other in the "dungeon", in the nauseating gloom that habit makes one forget. It's 11 in the morning. François Soubirous is lying in bed. It is a day without work, and save his strength for tomorrow or for another day...

Oh my God, there's no wood left! exclaims Bernadette.

The idea is launched. Toinette wants to go too. Jeanne enters. Abadie, called Baloum, the daughter of the stonemason, a rough girl who she is very lanky. She will also go...

—Bernadette, no! says May (the mother).

Outside there is fog and a fine drizzle. She is afraid of the cold because of her asthma. of her firstborn. But Bernadette insists. Oppressed by the atmosphere closed, it sighs for the open air. Finally, it obtains permission among a thousand. Recommendations. May adjust the hood on the head of the heiress. white all patched and bought second-hand at the Marcadal.

Looking for firewood

The three pairs of clogs make the slabs of Petits street resonate. Ditches, and then the vault of the door of Baous that opens to the field. Barely there are bones to pick in the Paradis prairie, along the cemetery. It is too close to the town. The three little ragmen they descend toward the old bridge. There is the old Pigoune washing entrails violet-colored.

Tata, what are you doing there? Who are you washing the intestines for?

It's Mr. Clarens' pig. And you all, what are you doing around here? with this bad weather?

We are looking for firewood.

To the meadow of Mr. La Fitte, who has cut down some trees.

No! Bernadette protests..., don't let them think we are thieves.

Always go by the side of Massabielle.

300 meters beyond, they cross the canal bridge that moves the mill. de Savy. They penetrate thus into the meadow, an island between the canal and the Gave, which they do not know. Nicolau, the miller of Savy, steps to the threshold of his door... He doesn't like to see the three rummagers lurking around the cuts recent.

Hey, mischief-makers, be careful not to poke the firewood!

They quicken their pace, but with dignity, without picking up the branches. abundant.

Around the meadow, the poplars raise the skeleton of their branches. stripped.

We could go where the canal meets the Gave, suggests Bernadette.

"And what if he doesn't reach Bétharrain?" says Toinette, who enjoys. to go against 'the heiress'. The exploration is not long. At 200 meters the girls reach the sand point where the Gave meets the canal of mill, which is closed that day. To its left, the cliff rises. rocky, hollowed out at the base of a cave; the water from the canal washes the shore left. Among the rocks and the uphill moraines that fill the cave, the foragers see firewood and bones. Until then, hardly if they had found nothing...

Jeanne throws her clogs to the other shore and passes with the bundle of firewood. over the head. Toinette follows her with the bundle of firewood in hand. And there is Bernadette alone by the river with her asthma and her mother's advice.

Help me to throw stones into the water so I can cross!

The others are fully engaged in their collection.

— Pet of Pericles! Come in like us!, Jeanne shouts.

The pet of Pericles is a vow made by his father, the stonemason, and does not mean more than 'thunder'. Jeanne is mad at that lazy one, who hasn't collected as much firewood as the others...

A gust of wind

Bernadette is looking for a ford; but she can't find anything. Then she writes. I turned back towards the cave and began to take off my shoes.

Just as I had taken off the first sock, I heard a noise, like

the men of heart: the abbe Peyramale, new parish priest, arrived at Lourdes last March. And then Commissioner Jaconet, always in the gap with his friend, the cavalry sergeant from Angla. They clash at argue with bundles of straw to the sick. It is the treatment that has prevailed in Lourdes. Bernadette barely escapes; but her health, increasingly weaker since the age of 6, reaches a new level of deterioration. Despite the recipes of Rosine Maillet, the midwife, asthma will not leave her.

On October 22, 1855, Claire Castérot, the maternal grandmother, who has... escaped from the epidemic, dies fourteen years after her husband.

Her death restores the family's financial situation. From her economies, 900 francs are due to the Soubirous. They buy a little of livestock, hoping to recover with some calves, cows, pigs, and birds of corral. They invest more than they have and lease the mill of Sarrabeyrouse, on the Echez, in the village of Arcizac-ès-Angles, 4 km away from Lourdes. But the contract that they have Soubirous sign, taking advantage of that is illiterate, it is ruinous. And that lasts barely a year. At the first expiration has to start over, without the slightest hope of finding nobody is crazy enough to rent the mill.

It is sinking more and more. The mutual affection is being put to the test by an indisputable material fact: 'Too many mouths to feed', according to the Bernadette's expression (H2, p. 30, note 85).

We will have to keep that in mind to survive.

Mosaic in a tavern

During the winter of 1856/57, the Soubirous resigned themselves to separating. from 'the mouth to feed' number 1. Her godmother, Aunt Bernarde, takes her away as a maid. Bernadette helps her take care of the house and the ta-
Bern, which the aunt has inherited from her first husband, at the intersection of the streets. Bourg and Baous. Bernadette takes care of her cousins, does the laundry, and adds patches, she is an excellent seamstress and works at the counter. She is docile to the the authority of her aunt Bernarde, who governs with an iron fist when she is necessary..., but Bernadette feels inclined towards generosity, as it they were his parents in Boly. And that is stronger than his exemplary docility. He has his own way of filling the tin measure at the counter of the tavern, and thus in the end there is a sip left when the bottle has been filled. And to tell her friend Jeanne-Mario Caudeban, that he has told it (or to others) little friends)

She's crazy for praying there. Enough with praying in the Church!

Here they come back with a good supply of firewood. They are dancing now. under the vault of the cave, sheltered from the fog, to warm up.

Bernadette does not like to see them frolicking there.

Have you seen anything?

And you, what have you seen?

Bernadette realizes the mystery that has just happened to her. She has to keep it for herself! And she changes the subject.

You are such jokers! You said the water was cold; but I... I find it temperate.

Jeanne is chopping firewood, while Bernadette is inspecting the... new the grotto: the solid rock, pierced by numerous caves, the ground covered with dark and sometimes reddish pebbles, 'bramble' motionless hanging from the empty niche. It cannot help but return. to ask them:

Have you seen anything?

—And what have you seen?

Well, nothing (Labets, arré: H., p. 181).

Toinette is interested, but Jeanne gets angry:

—You haven't seen anything, and what you've wanted is not to gather firewood! May she scold him.

The bundle of firewood is loaded onto the head, grab the basket of bones. and disappears among the weeds of the hillside, leaving the planted there otras dos. No tiene ganas de volver a meter los pies en el agua helada. Pre- it dares to climb the steep slope and reach the old bridge by it forest path.

Bernadette and Toinette in turn tie their bundle and load it. But now Bernadette no longer goes by trailer; she is the first to arrive at the top, she leaves her load on the road and return to help Toinette who is surprised:

But I am the strongest!

"You believe it yourself!" replies Bernadette.

Suddenly Toinette insists:

Tell me what you have seen... Only to me! I promise I won't tell anyone.

nobody! Not even May!

Confident, Bernadette refers to the apparition in two words.

The confidence simultaneously stirs Toinette's fear and her envy towards Bernadette, the firstborn, 'the heiress', for whom they buy stockings for her asthma, and who has the privilege of eating white bread for his stomach.

You want to scare me, but I'm laughing now that we are in the road!

And he makes to hit her with a branch of his bundle.

What nonsense!

You can believe me, Bernadette says calmly, stopping the hits.

And once again the door of Baous, the cobblestones and the 'dungeon'. François Soubirous is still lying in bed. The 'meal' time has passed. But May's first idea is to clean the hair of her daughters planted with twigs. The ringworm is her obsession:

—Toinette!

You always start with me! Start with Bernadette.

Bernadette has gone to the hallway to eat her portion of bread, whose sight to drive Toinette to madness. And she recounts:

Something was pushing me to say what Bernadette had told me. And so I did it three times:

—Hmm, as if I wanted to hold back my voice.

My mother told me:

Why are you doing that? Are you sick?

No, I just want to tell you what Bernadette told me. p. 111).

And it starts with a fickle tone:

Bernadette has seen a young white girl in the grotto of Massabielle

Poor me! (Práoube de you), exclaims May.

After the expulsions, ruin, prison, what misfortune befell him? would happen now? And he mobilizes his calm to ask Bernadette:

What have you seen? Tell me, what is it that you have seen?



The Grotto in 1858
drowned by the waters of the Gave

The cane

The words get stuck in Bernadette's throat.

...in white.

The broom for shaking the mats comes down on the two sisters, with less force on Bernadette's fragility.

You have seen nothing more than a white stone. I forbid you to return. there.

The father, always lying in bed, speaks in a solemn tone.
those words, which express their dream of pride for everything and against everything:

They have never had to say anything about the family. Don't you go start now.

Neither the father nor the mother understand a word. But, what is it that What happens to Bernadette?

"We must pray," says the mother.

Y piensa para sí, 'Quizá sea el alma de algún pariente en el purgatory.

There is Jeanne Balo. She is coming to negotiate the sale of the bones. It is the time to celebrate the carnival days! Toinette finds a a pile of bones piled up for that purpose. The opportunity they

smile. Letchina gives 20 cents for everything and 6 for the morning basket. With 30 cents, they buy a pound of bread that they redistribute. 'dungeon'. And no more is said about the midday event.

Is it a dream?

At night, at the hour of prayer, and before the home where the fire burns wood collected in Massabielle, Bernadette is excited. A great Sweetness overwhelms her. And she cries. May asks. But, what to respond to her? Louise, disturbed, she goes to seek advice on the first floor, at the house of Romaine Sajous. The two question Bernadette, sitting on the edge of the bed and in favor. from the shadow. They finally conclude:

It has been a dream... an illusion. It doesn't have to come back to Massabielle.

Prohibition of returning

El viernes, 12 de febrero, Bernadette se siente atraída hacia la gruta. But there is nothing to be done.

—Let's get to work!, replies May.

Bernadette obeys. She will not talk about it again, neither that day nor later. next.

The mother thinks and hopes that she is forgetting her ideas.

In the confessional (February 13)

On Saturday afternoon, however, Bernadette approaches the confessional of the neighboring church. In the twilight, Abbot Pomian is finishing the confessions of Saturday afternoon. And upon opening the lattice to the penultimate penitent, receives this strange confession in patois all at once:

I have seen something white that had the shape of a woman.

Let the girl talk without showing any interest, and she admires the coherence of the propositions. Above all, one feature has impressed him:

Like a gust of wind

And think of the 'wind' of Pentecost, according to the Acts of the apostles, chapter 2. Where has this girl learned that conviction and those words so above her? Despite this, she does not give importance to it.

confidence. Later, she will attribute the idea that was given to her to 'a motion of God'. it happens to say to Bernadette:

Can I talk about it with the priest?

Bernadette consents, deeply surprised by such deference.

That same afternoon, the confessor meets with Abbot Peyramale in the road from Argelès, and makes him a participant in that minor matter in two words:

We must wait, the priest simply says.

Y pasa a otro asunto.

The holy water and the stone

February 14

The rumor, however, has spread among the 'class of the the indigents, in the school of the sisters of the hospice. Toinette and Jeanne they have spoken. On Sunday the 14th, after the main mass, it solidifies a project among the girls in patched dresses, in an atmosphere of interest and Out of fear: to go see what Bernadette has seen.

Louise flatly opposes; afterwards she refers her to the father who isn't there. there. The girls hurry to find him in the communal field. Take care the horses of the stable of Jean-Marie Cazenave, called Ganço, owner from the diligence of Bagnères.

"No," he responds curtly, continuing his work.

Pero las pequeñas, buenas diplomáticas, han buscado en el dueño un ally

A lady with a rosary cannot be anything bad, says Ganço.

François yields by imposing restrictions:

I grant you no more than a quarter of an hour.

Very well, we will have returned for the eve.

In the 'dungeon' Louise has another objection:

And what if it were something bad!

We need to bring holy water.

They take the road of February 11 until the old bridge. But instead to enter the island through the mill, they go up the forest path. In the the slope that leads above the cave, the group splits into two. While

the youngest hurry with Bernadette, the oldest lag behind. It is the fear that holds them back, under the appearance of disdain affected towards the small class...

Bernadette descends the steep and slippery slope. they find her on her knees, without any panting:

How fast you have run!

She doesn't listen to them. She has taken out her two-cent rosary. And she prays. knees. The other girls are standing around. At the second decade the Bernadette's face changes.

—Look there!(¡Hela ahí!)...the rosary on the arm...She is looking at you...

The colleagues see nothing. Bernadette has taken the jar of water. blessed what happens to Marie Hillo. And sprinkles strongly towards the appearance conjuring her 'to stay, if she comes from God, and if not, let her leave. let's go.

But the more I sprinkled her, the more she smiled, and I continued. doing it until the bottle was empty, Bernadette will explain later.

She is pale. It seems as if she neither sees nor hears her companions. uneasiness grows in the depths of that closed ravine, in that alley no exit, cut off by the canal water, in front of that rock with mysterious twists and turns. But Bernadette seems happy, and her view inspire peace.

Suddenly something falls steeply along the rock, it seems to explode. on the pebbles, very close to Bernadette, and jumps towards the Gave, whose waters rise like fountains. It is panic. Toinette, Pauline and Marie howls amid shrill screams, feeling as if she is being hunted.

From the other shore, a passerby has heard them scream:

—It’s following us!

The bravest do not want to abandon Bernadette. They try taking her away; but her companion doesn't seem to hear anything. She resists his efforts, becoming incredibly heavy.

At the top of the rock, Jeanne Baloum goes mad in turn. They are hers. those high-pitched screams and that panic. It was she who, to alleviate her own fear had the idea of 'scaring', balancing from the top of the cliff that 'stone as big as a hat', which had fallen in the middle of the

group.

To make Bernadette move, the strength of Nicolau will be necessary, the miller of Savy (the canal mill). He, who turns with such the ease of the flour sacks, is stunned by the inertia of this girl, so p- gently and so heavy, while she is impressed by her paleness and her smiles. Is it the girl who weighs so much or is he the one losing his strength? Along the way, Bernadette seems to see something, with her eyes 'fixed on the high

I placed my hand over his eyes and tried to make him fold his head; but she would lift it again and reopen her eyes with her smile(H2, p. 269).

With great effort, she is taken to the mill. The frightened girls they have returned to their homes. The rumor spreads through Lourdes; people are coming... Louise, with her cane. This time, it is over. Bernadette will not return. never to this cave.

Carnival events

The following Monday of Carnival, Bernadette is welcomed into the school with that reprimand from the superior, Mother Ursule Fardes:

Have you finished your carnival antics?

At the school entrance, Sophie Pailhaisson, a tough one, is on duty. quadragenarian. She has asked Sister Anastasie (the strictest of the the class teachers, whom the children 'hate') which is the girl that makes 'those comedies' in the grotto. Sophie has a moralizing soul and comes to give a lesson:

"There you have the little rascal!" says Sister Anastasie.

A violent slap strikes Bernadette's cheek:

—You rascal! You such a rascal! If you come back, they'll lock you up.

With her cheek burning. Bernadette strives to obey. and to forget, although without succeeding.

In the afternoon, the companions recall the matter again, during the sewing in the workshop, with Brother Damien Calmels, who is a good person. pasta:

Tell your sister what you have seen.

Bernadette tries to evade it:

I don't know how to speak French.

But the subject is on the table. The others tell it in their own way. From Soon Bernadette forcefully rectifies. No, she doesn't speak about any bouquet, and the apparition was not chasing her. Sor Damien is perplexed. She returns the efer- vulnerability with the jabs about the pig's grotto and the lady of the barefoot; the mockeries will be repeated relentlessly in the days following.

Bernadette laments not having stuck to her first idea: to keep to herself. all that just for herself. And she wraps herself in that silence that for her is has become a force in the fields of Bartres.

Could it be the soul of Elisa?

On carnival Tuesday, February 16, Mrs. Milhet, an opulent fifty-year-old, who had established herself with a good fortune by getting married with his old master, he is curious about the matter of the grotto. His habit- Rera Antoinette Peyret, the daughter of the usher, has spoken to him about it. The 'young' who appears, could it be Elisa Latapie? The holy death of that 'daughter of Maria', which occurred on October 2nd, had caused a profound impression in Lourdes. The priest had written a long letter to the monsignor Laurence, to 'console his bishop's heart'. A few hours before to take the last breath Elisa Latapie had demanded that they clean her up funeral: I would like to be buried in a simple dress, with my insignias of congregant, but without laces or lace. That white tunic, that blue belt, the rosary... wasn't it Elisa?

We need to clarify all of this, concluded Mrs. Milhet.

She was the patroness of Louise Soubirous. And she would come in and out of the 'dungeon'. with triumphant air. Tomorrow, before dawn, she will take Bernadette to the cave.

Jueves, 18 de febrero

Pen and paper

On February 18th, at 5 in the morning, Mrs. Milhet is in front of the door of the 'dungeon' with Antoinette. Bernadette is still in bed and she gets up very quickly. The three attend the first mass, and then

bajan, todavía de noche, hasta el puente viejo, para remontar después el path of the forest. Antoinette carries with her the pen and the message of write about his father, the usher. The first two appearances had it has been demonstrated that it was not possible to trust Bernadette's simplicity. what was about getting the visitor to personally write her name.

Bernadette is the first to arrive at the grotto, while the lady Milhet is the last 'sunk in her robes...'

Just starting the rosary:

--What-y-ey!(She is there), murmurs Bernadette.

When the rosary concludes, Antoinette hands him the message to write. The seer moves forward under the dome of the cave, stopping beneath a internal crack that connects to the niche and there it offers the gear of the Usher. It has been agreed that Bernadette makes this request:

Would you be so kind as to write down your name?

The apparition has approached him 'slipping down that opening', as Bernadette will explain later. But on paper, not nothing written appears.

The two women are getting impatient. They see nothing and don't even hear anything. the voice of Bernadette. They insist; but the seer signals to them to be quiet. call them or maybe, so they step aside. At the end of the appearance, in- screaming at Bernadette,

But why haven't you begged him to write his name?

Bernadette is surprised:

—But I pleaded with him, very strongly!

How have they not heard her? The mysterious young woman of the rock —the one who that Bernadette calls prudent and respectfully that (that) You heard very well. She only responded:

—N'ey pus necessári(Eso no es necesario).

Y has also asked him in patois:

Would you be so kind as to come here for fifteen days?

He has said to her, 'to have grace', that is, kindness or kindness to attend. Bernadette is confused by the deference of Aqueró. It is the first time he hears her 'delicate and sweet' voice.

She, in her impulse, has promised it to herself, without reflecting on the consecuencias. Tampoco ha reconocido a Élisa.

And if it were the holy Virgin..., says Mrs. Milhet in the way of return. His reasoning falls into silence.



Mrs. Milhet 1813-1892

3

THE FORTNIGHT OF THE APPEARANCES

18 de febrero - 4 de marzo de 1858

With great secrecy

As Bernadette has promised, and nothing has been made clear, it is necessary to return. Upon returning, Mrs. Milhet arranges the matter in a way authoritarian. She takes care of Bernadette at the boarding house. This way she can drive her to the cave with a great secret, without the need for useless comings and goings. But Louise also wants to go, and Aunt Bernarde, 'the heiress', insists.
in doing so. The rumor is growing and on Friday, February 19, there are already eight. the people who gather in the cave; on Saturday the 20th, thirty attend, and the Sunday, 21, the attendees number around a hundred.

The appearance renews silently; the rumor spreads on the wings of the fervor of those who pray the rosary in that grotto: they share the joy of Bernadette in ecstasy, although the seer says nothing more.

A double concern takes hold of the people of 'the lower class': What Is that it? And what will happen on the last day of that fortnight, during which the Has the invisible apparition summoned Bernadette? A miracle? A revelation? A calamity? The rumor is growing larger and larger.

The Commissioner's Interrogation

La tarde del domingo, 21 de febrero, las muchachas de la clase the indigents leave on the eve like a flock of sparrows. The guard forestry, Callet, is positioned to the left of the portal, and next to him there is a sir 'bourgeois dress', although more lively and less stiff than the town bourgeois. Callet points at Bernadette with his finger:

This is it!

And she grabs it by the hood.

Where are you going to follow me?

The gentleman who just spoke is Commissioner Jacomet, with whom the The girl's father had an affair when the flour was stolen. There are wails. for the girl:

Poor Bernadette! They're going to put you in jail.

But you can hear her say:

I am not afraid. If they put me in jail, they will get me out.

In Lourdes there is still no police station. The commissioner is heading at his home, the Cénac house, which he shares with Jean-Baptiste Estrade, collector of indirect contributions, and with the vicar Pène. The house is in front of the church altar, barely 50 meters away. People are continue. The curious gather...

Jacomet is calm. Already at the threshold, he turns and stops suddenly at those who intend to enter, including family members, to whom the people push forward.

—You have nothing to see here!

The door has been closed.

The police commissioner has settled into his office. He begins the interrogation. For Bernadette it is the first. Behind her is a witness discreet, Jean-Baptiste Estrade, soon joined by his sister Emmanuélite. Both have obtained permission from the commissioner.

After arriving at Estrade, Jacomet has begun the interrogation according to the usual routine, in a neutral, indifferent tone and in a hurried manner:

What is your name?

—Bernadette

—Bernadette what?

The girl hesitates. In the neighborhood, they call her Bernadette Boly, because of the Name of the mill where he was born. Is that what he has to say? Or good...

Soubirous!

What is your father's name?

François.

Your mother?

—Louise.

—Louise what?

—Louise Soubirous.

No, your family surname before getting married.

Bernadette hesitates for a moment, and then says with the readiness of a alumna who has found the answer:

—Castérot!

The commissioner approves and encourages his goodwill.

How old are you?

—13... or 14 years.

Is it 13 or 14?

I don't know.

Do you know how to read and write?

No, sir.

Have you made your first communion?

No, sir.

Jacomet writes down freely. He has gauged that the girl is simple and sincere. So, who pushes or inspires her? Who makes her go to that one cave, and who put it in his head that he sees the holy Virgin? For-
that the hypothesis of it being a soul from purgatory has been abandoned discarded, despite the prestige surrounding the death of Elisa Latapie. The idea what prevails is what came to the mind of Mrs. Milhet, on the 18th of fe-
brother, upon returning from the cave:

What if it were the Holy Virgin...?

That is what the public rumor has retained and what has reached the commissioner's ears. And thus he gets to the heart of the matter with a marked interest, encouraging the girl, almost admiring her, to facilitate the confidence

And so, Bernadette, have you seen the Holy Virgin?

I do not say that I have seen the Holy Virgin.

Could it be that he didn't understand it well and the girl is left out?

Ah, good! You haven't seen anything!

—Yes, I have seen something.

And what have you seen?

Some white thing.

Jacomet is becoming increasingly disoriented.

Any thing or any person?

That (Aqueró) fills the form of a young lady (damsel).

This dialogue takes place in the patois of Lourdes, the only language that Bernadette knows. Although she considers the one who appears to her as a person and says that she looks like a 'young girl' or miss, like the the commissioner has observed him with marked hesitation. Bernadette uses neutral words to designate it; and especially Aqueró, with a strong accent clear in the last syllable, which in the dialect of Lourdes means 'that'.
In her mouth, that is an expression of peasant prudence in the face of what ignore; but also of reverence in front of a reality that surpasses it.
How to speak without people ridiculously distorting what she says?
That has been his difficulty from the first day. Jacomet, who always it understands everything and understands it immediately, now has difficulties in understand. And makes her repeat:

You say Aqueró, That… And hasn't that said to you: 'I am the most holy Virgin

Aqueró didn't tell me.

And yet, that is what is said in the village.

THAT, THAT ONE

Aqueró, that. This is how Bernadette has always referred to the , until it had not shown its identity; that is to say, until March 25, 1858. This word 'parola' poses a problem: and It can have two meanings depending on the place where it is used. accent: —Aquéro, aquélla, if the accent falls on the second syllable, that in this case it is the last one, as the o is almost silent, imperceptible. The the word is widely used in all Occitan dialects.

—Aqueró, that, if the accent is placed on the last syllable. This this form is peculiar to the patois of Lourdes, and occurs in very few others. regions.

How did Bernadette pronounce it? The documents that I have found for the centenary leave no doubt about it. Everyone

how many spoke in patois with Bernadette before March 25 like
were Jacomet, the procurator Dutour, the journalist Romein Capdevielle,
Estrade and her sister Enmanuélite, Sister Augustine, Marie Dufo and Pimorin,
everyone understood it that way (texts collected in LHA 3, p. 142-144). It is
Pimorin, the one who says with singular precision the day of March 21, 1858,
four dates before the appearance revealed her name: 'the lady' to
the one (Bernadette) gave no other name than that of Aqueró, that.
No discrepancies among the witnesses. Not even one that translates.
'that one' in feminine. And those who have not dared to refer to the expression
Aqueróla testifican indirectamente al transcribir la frase de Bernadette
with some abstract formula: 'the object' the doctors say that it
they examined on March 27.

This expression of Bernadette (which historians downplayed
for a long time) shocks us, but with a shock that has nothing of
scandalous. It translates his respect for the ineffable, and derives from that which is
it is called negative theology. Thus, the mystics - whether they are educated people or not -
sometimes they evoke the light of God in terms of night, and his existence
transcendental in terms that would make one think of nothingness. All of this comes from
the concern about not expressing in a vulgar and inappropriate way what
it's 'something completely different'.

Those who despise popular culture sometimes object that a
A simple person like Bernadette couldn't go so far in her reflections.
In fact, there is a popular wisdom and intelligence about things of
God, they are not those of the wise and learned, as the Gospel says. The
comparison points abound. Françoise Souchet, a mystic of
Rennes, from the 17th and 18th centuries simple and ignorant if there have been any,
I could not find another term than 'That' to designate the mysterious being.
that spoke to him, according to Trochu in his first edition (1953, p. 82,
nota 1).

Recently, Jean Fourastié from the Institute of France has given
new relevance to the hypothesis, in a review by Le Figaro about my book
Lourdes, pilgrimage for our time, where I had not explained myself
about this point. His objection stemmed from the fact that Aqueróno
exists in the 'patois' of his childhood, which is the speech of Quercy. After
having taken note of the historical arguments presented in my
books, and after consulting the historical atlases with Abbot Toulze,
undisputed authority on the subject, came to the conclusion that
In Lourdes, there was a three-syllable word that meant
that (neuter): That one. But in almost every place that neuter only has
two syllables: Acó, Aquó, Acróo bienOcó'. That word Aqueróhe
deeply impressed those who have a sense of mystery and

spiritual authenticity. It has also inspired artists: like the
the draftsman Raymond Gid and the great abstract painter Hartung, whose painting
It was one of the most beautiful works seen at the Lourdes exhibition.
64.

Yes, that was what was said, and that is what Le Lavedan prints in that moment in the press dated February 18, although it will not be released the street until the 22nd, with the usual delay of three or four dates. Jaco- he is up to date and already knows the anonymous article by lawyer Bibé, what is declared in an ironic and light tone:

A girl, who everything suggests is affected by catalepsy(...) excites the attention of the population. It is nothing less than the emergence of what Most Holy Virgin...

Jacomet tries to take the compass again and focuses on the matter from the beginning: the search for bones, the journey across the canal, the branches of the rosebush wild ones that shake (or a white sarrot that roars, says Bernadette), that noise like a gust of wind (like a blow of good) and the appearance deAqueró...

Were there other girls with you when you saw her?

Yes, sir.

Have they seen it too?

No, sir.

How do you know?

They have told me.

- Why haven't they seen her?

I don't know.

Jacomet still refrains from contradicting her. It is about taking to Bernadette until the end of the confidences, where the ruling will be seen for itself. same.

But, well, that girl... was that young lady dressed?

A white dress, held with a blue ribbon, a white veil over the head and a yellow rose on each foot... the color of the chain of his rosary...

Did she have feet?

The dress and the rose covered them, except for the fingers.

Did he/she have hair?

They were a bit visible here.

Bernadette brings her fingers to her temples and draws two lines. symmetrical.

Is she beautiful?

Oh, yes, sir, very pretty (beroye)!

—Bella, like whom? Like Mrs. Pailhasson? Like the Miss Dufo?

The commissioner appreciates the local beauties. He is a goldsmith in the matter.

Bernadette responds compassionately:

—They cannot be compared to her!

What age?

—...young.

The commissioner has continued writing. Now he is reporting on all the people mixed with that appearance.

What holds your attention is the influence of Mrs. Milhet, a unemployed woman, a skilled woman, who has managed to carve out her fortune marrying her last master. There may be a clue there:

Is that lady the one who tells you what you have to do?

No.

But he hosts you in his house!

No, I returned to my home.

—When is that?

Yesterday.

—Why?

My aunt didn't want me to go back with her.

Has Mrs. Milhet given you a lot of money?

No money.

Are you sure?

—Yes, sir, very sure.

And the sisters, have you talked about that to the sisters?

Yes, to the superior and to the sisters of the workshop.

And what have they said?

—Don't pay attention to it... I was dreaming.

Those women have had common sense, thinks Jacomet. And he relies on it. in those religious authorities to undermine Bernadette's security.

Yes, my daughter, you have dreamed.

No, I was wide awake.

You have thought to see.

—No, me froté bien los ojos.

A reflection tricked you.

But I have seen Aqueró many times and it was dark. I do not I can always deceive.

And the others? The others also have eyes. Why don't they? have you seen?

I don't know, but I am sure I have seen it.

Persuasion has failed. Now it will try deterrence.

—Listen, Bernadette, everyone is laughing at you. They say you are Crazy. For your own interest, it is advisable that you do not return to that cave anymore.

I have promised to go there for 15 days.

You haven't promised it to anyone, since you've deceived yourself! Come on, be reasonable, and promise me that you will not go back anymore!

Bernadette calls, but her black eyes clearly say: 'If I have already done it. promised, I cannot promise anything else now.

The tone changes. The commissioner reviews what he has written with an air that it is no longer entirely kind and expressly changing some elements:

The Virgin smiled at me, she wrote in her draft.

I did not say the Virgin, correct it Bernadette.

The commissioner feels rushed. Since Bernadette refuses. any identification, and expresses his disagreement even when he says 'the girl' or 'the young lady', has no choice but to write Aqueró, and to not knowing if after that it should be written, because Aqueró is a neutral word. And yet Bernadette undoubtedly speaks of the apparition like a person! The commissioner rereads the same ones over and over passages, changing the order and content to test Bernadette. After having reacted strongly to the first feints, he stops

follow him in that game:

Sir, you have changed everything for me!

As he writes, long silences alternate with a granular fire.
of questions and intimidations. The intelligence and skill of Jacomet are
to test. No clue leads to anything: neither the blow of affection (who and
Why?) Neither the deception: that girl is sincere. Nor the desire to
to assert oneself: she is a modest girl. Not the scam: there is no money in there.
Neither the catalepsy: Bernadette is healthy and she is not an exalted.
let go; always escape. Jacomet feels his resources are exhausted, but not
he is a man who abandoned the game.

And the interrogation begins again, now rejecting the responses from Bernadette

That's not what you told me the first time.

Yes.

No.

Jacomet has put on his campaign hat that gives him a martial air.
The pom-pom shakes. The tension rises. That has an effect when it makes the
rounds the market where no one dares to resist her. But Bernadette
remain unyielding. Raise the tone. Jacomet gets excited. Callet, with the ear
stuck to the door of the adjacent room, where the lady also
Jacomet is listening, he hears him shout:

Drunk, little cock, whore! You make everyone go
behind you. You want to become a small p...!

I don't tell anyone to go there.

Yes, you are happy to be seen.

No, this tires me!

These last words give the commissioner a terrible idea. He begins to write feverishly at the bottom of the third page of your sheet of paper minister. His writing is expanding on the fourth page until it doubles in size.
size in six lines. Bernadette's formula 'this tires me'
combined with that other answer that was felt internally
driven to go there by an irresistible force, provides the elements
to set up a kind of confession: they have forced her to go to the cave. They took her
ha..., or rather, parents, who are responsible before the law and that
they would be extremely interested in not drawing attention to the
police. (Let's say right away that Jacomet will honestly remove that

false confession, rewriting neatly, after leaving
Bernadette, her draft full of cross-outs.

While the goose feather traces the last lines of the draft, it rises a rumor from the street, where the crowd has been increasing. The people knock on the door and the shutters. Voices rise. Jacomet understands the sense of that confusing uproar: they are pushing the girl's parents. they have the right to attend the interrogation.

Before confronting those who are protesting, try one last chance. with her interlocutor:

Listen, Bernadette, you have put yourself in a difficult situation. I want to fix things between us, but with one condition: Acknowledge that you haven't seen anything.

Sir, I have seen. I can't say otherwise.

Promise me, at least that you will not return to the cave. It is your last opportunity

Sir, I promised that I would return.

Well, you asked for it, I'm going to get the gendarmes to that they put you in jail.

He gets up. But Bernadette doesn't move. Jacomet heads towards, effect, towards the front door that they are banging on. The crowd has pushed to the front line to François Soubirous:

They have no right to interrogate her without you being there!

—Go over there, if you want your daughter!

François is also furious. Of course he loves his daughter. He doesn't he will say that he does not know how to defend her.

Suddenly the door opens, and François finds himself face to face with the commissioner. The man has entered driven by his impulse, but the the door has closed behind him. He finds himself alone before the commissioner, with your experience of being poor, knowing that it is not enough to be innocent to escape from prison. The cap, which he has politely taken off, now spins between his nervous hands.

His claim is made humble and respectful:

I am the father of the little one.

Jacomet adopts an even friendlier tone:

—Good, Mr. Soubirous, I'm glad to see you! I was just going to Look for a reason why this comedy cannot continue. They are calling the... people's attention.

I know everything now. The little one is tired, she told me. Enough of forcing her to go all the way down there.

— Force her? But we are doing the impossible to prevent it!

—And yet, look at what she has just told me in tears. and what I have written on this paper: 'Dad and mom are on the other side, it's I need you to stop them from forcing me to go to the grotto, I am tired and I don't want to go there.

François eagerly looked at that paper, similar to the one that made him go to the prison, not even a year ago, without being able to read a single word. The commissioner silences Bernadette who protests. Now it is about a matter between him and his father.

Well, well, Mr. Soubirous, I want to believe you, but it's up to you. be sincere. Prohibit Bernadette from going to the grotto, defend her from all those people who are after her, and everything will be over.

François Soubirous is conciliatory.

It is true that we are tired of seeing our home invaded, and that we have done everything possible to stop him from going there. To Organizing it for me is a favor. I will close my door to people, and the little one. he will no longer go to the cave.

And he leaves happy to have recovered his daughter; and Jacomet for having once again got his way.

Bernadette leaves as she came, without any sign of dismantling. The commissioner who impresses everyone has not Intimidated. His feints, his contradictions, and his outbursts make her smile. now. To Dominiquette, who asks her, upon entering the 'dungeon', she smile back:

(the commissioner) was trembling, he had a tassel on his hat that made Tintin.

The absence

Monday, February 22

The next day Bernadette faces her problems again.
In the morning, she feels 'pushed' to go to the cave...

But no! Bernadette tries to obey, as usual. But she ...
She feels uncomfortable because she promised to go there for 15 days. No one reasoning calms her down. And she says:

So I must disobey you or Acheron.

She inflicts violence upon herself. The superior, who has seen her led
The commissioner congratulates the end of the 'carnival festivities'. The comments of her classmates continue. But that is nothing compared to her dis-
inner sorrow. Never has obedience weighed so heavily on him as that morning. interminable.

Returns to school after the meager 'snack' at noon.
But upon crossing the threshold of the colonnade, an inner force makes her return. about its steps. It turns on itself. Its steps lead it towards
Massabielle by the shortest route: hurry down through the neighborhood of the mills from his childhood, and he takes the path of Pè de Pesqué (foot of
nursery), between the castle and the Gave. They are followed by some supporters and also the gendarmes who watched over her return to school. Bernadette
she is restless; disobedience torments her. She stops at the old bridge. No
bring a candle, like the other times... Aunt Bernarde sends to look for the
Aunt Lucile.

But the cavalry sergeant is right on the heels of the gendarmerie. He stands before the improvised meeting so quickly:

—And it is in the 19th century that we are made to believe in such things. superstitions!

There is Bernadette in her usual spot, in front of the rock, but at her side with the cavalry sergeant from Angla, who repeats with increasing irony

Do you see her?... Do you see her?... You see like I do!

Bernadette calls. For those who were in the cave on the days previously it is evident that nothing happens. Bernadette has finished her rosario without her face changing. For her, no light has penetrated.
the darkness. Her anguish provokes compassion. Aunt Bernarde extinguishes the candle and he takes her. He makes her rest at the Savy mill, like on the 14th of February, of confusing memory...

The cavalry sergeant appears triumphant:

The wings of my hat have scared away the apparition!

Comments go in all directions:

—These are nonsense, some say.

It has been because of the gendarmes, others explain.

An hour had passed...

And it is in this last explanation where the 'believers' agree, like they are starting to assign them. As for Bernadette, she just murmurs:

I don't know how I've let you down...

That afternoon she slips away, for the second time, to the confessional of the abate Pomian. And he submits his case of conscience to him. And he calms him down. awareness, following an unknown internal motion:

They have no right to prevent you from doing it.

At that same hour, the authorities deliberate on that right. cavalry sergeant, the prosecutor Dutour and the mayor Lacadé are gathered:

The ban has no legal basis, observes this latest one.

opinion is in favor of the small one, and there would be no lack of someone who 'would throw us the stone', if we acted against it. There is no doubt that we must keep watch. But repressing would be a mistake.

This moderate opinion prevails. For Bernadette, it has been unraveled. a tangled situation.

Seventh appearance

Tuesday, February 23

On February 23, at five thirty, Bernadette is on her way.

In the grotto, there are almost a crowd: about 150 people. They are seen there for the first time. in the midst of berets and hoods, the hats of gentlemen and ladies of society, including the intelligentsia that meets at the Café Doctor Dozous, Mr. Dufo, the lawyer (counselor) municipal) and Jean-Baptiste Estrade who had attended the day before yesterday interrogation at the commissioner's house. Secretly interested, although perplexed, he has only come at the request of his sister Emrnanuélite and some friends consumed by a curiosity already in effervescence. For their he comes as a gentleman companion, because the young ladies of good family does not go out alone during that time; personally I am skeptical.

Ironical on the way there, he shows enthusiasm on the way back.

the ecstasy of Bernadette has captivated him.

I have seen Miss Bachel at the theater in Bordeaux. She is magnificent... but infinitely below Bernadette... That girl has in front of him a supernatural being.

Its 'conversion' propagates the event and the credit of the appearance. But Aqueró is always silent, and Bernadette still does not know its name.

Eighth appearance Wednesday,

February 24

On Wednesday the 24th, he/she has had difficulty reaching 'his/her' position, in the middle from a crowd of approximately 300 people. After the rosary in ecstasy, here is a new fact: advances on knees one or two steps and then- to fall face down to the ground...

Next to him, his young aunt Lucile (eighteen years old) lets out a scream and is fades; Bernadette feels a shiver. She has just prostrated herself and to kiss the ground, as the apparition requests.

And returns to the outside reality to say:

Aunt, don't be ashamed!

But the appearance has already disappeared.

Today she has pronounced a new word, which she repeats:

-Penance!

She has said:

Pray to God for sinners.

Afterwards, he urged Bernadette to do a penance exercise:

Kiss the ground in penance for the sinners.

That is the gesture that Bernadette has made and that has impressed so much. to her aunt Lucile.

Thursday, February 25

A still murky water

On February 25, the influx begins as early as two in the morning, because there are few good spots from where it can be seen. In the There have been knocks all night on the walls and shutters.

friends warn friends. Upon the arrival of the seer, there are already 350 people.

Bernadette recites the rosary in ecstasy, as usual; after
delivers to Éléonore Pérard, her neighbor, the candle and her white hood, and repeats
the interrupted gesture the eve: you scale the slope that rises on your knees
to the bottom of the cave. From time to time it kisses the ground. Its agility
effortlessly astonishing among those pebbles. They make way for him and are
waiting for what is going to happen.

Bernadette has arrived under the crack of the vault that allows passage.
of light, that vertical chimney that communicates with the niche of the
appearance. He stops. His lips move. But, as always, no one
listen to the sound of their voice in those conversations open to the other world.
Bernadette seems to nod. Then, there she goes, always towards
knees, towards the Gave. There something stops her. She turns towards the niche, and
return in the opposite direction, now already walking. Go up to the bottom of the
cave. Arrival at the point where the bottom of the vault reaches the
inclined plane of the moraines, it tilts looking with the eyes I do not know
You know what? Restless, go down again, look again into the inner cavity,
rises again and now curves over the land, looks with disgust at the
muddy soil, soaked with water, casts an embarrassing glance over the
cavity, she scratches the ground with her right hand, and makes a small hole or
as they say in Lourdes. It pulls a kind of reddish clay out of that hole,
he brings it close to his face, throws it away in disgust, and starts again. He would like to drink.
that dirty water, but her disgust is stronger. Only on the fourth time
He/she achieves it. Immediately he/she eats some herbs with lobed leaves that sprout.
at the bottom of the cave: the dorina (D4, p. 391-393).

What is he doing? Nothing makes sense. When will he come back down with
the smeared face, there is consternation:

She's crazy!, people murmur.

The friends, whom Estrade's enthusiasm had brought to see
the emulation of the famous Rachel (who died the previous month), do not hide their
disappointment. Elfrida Lacrampe, the innkeeper's daughter, whose anger puts him in
the lips the language of the drivers of her father, bursts:

—Instead of Rachel, you brought us to see a little piece of crap!

Estrade doesn't know what to say; his fervor has faded:

—Estoy desorientado. No comprendo nada.

The discussion will arise again that same afternoon at the French Café.
where it will perform poorly again.

To those who ask, Bernadette explains:

Aqueró has told me:

Go drink from the fountain and wash yourself.

As I didn't see any water, I went to the Gave. But she gestured to me. with my finger so that it went under the rock. There I found a bit of water, like mud: so little that I could barely take it in the bowl of the I threw it three times, it was so dirty. On the fourth time I was able to.

But why has he begged you that?

She hasn't told me.

And what about the grass you have eaten?

Bernadette gives no response.

Do you know that they think you're crazy for doing such things?

-- For the sinners!,
the word heard in ecstasy.

The sinners, the sin, is that so serious? The look and the tone of Bernadette opens new horizons.

In the afternoon, people return to the cave. They observe the hole. 'big as a soup pot' that Bernardette has dug. In that hole of muddy water Éléonore Pérard plants a stick. And perceives the murmur of running water. Other people try to drink like Bernadette. The water jumps with more abundance and clarifies as it is pulled out. A mud that transforms into pure water... One begins to understand the message that asks for the conversion of sinners...

Since that day, two full bottles rise to the village. Jeanne Montat she takes them to her sick father:

You have to drink from this water, she thinks.

The other one is brought up by the tax collector's son, a boy who was carrying a sell over the eye. In the following days, she no longer wears it, observes Jacquette. Pène, the sister of the vicar who has seen him draw water.

At the home of the attorney

That same afternoon, a police officer arrives at the 'jail':

The imperial attorney requests Bernarde Soubirous to

present this afternoon at your house at 6 o'clock.

François Soubirous is in the big market of Tarbes, where he is a car from Cazenave. What to do? Louise turns to her cousin in tears. Sajous who works in the Ger quarry. The man arrives and puts on the suit. on Sunday.

The prosecutor lives 300 meters from there, in the Claverie house. current presbytery of Lourdes), Marcadalouse street (now Bagnères street). With a suspicious look, she examines the waiter who arrives with the two. women

Are you his father?

No, I am his uncle and the owner of the house where he lives.

—Bernadette, come in with your mother. You wait there!

The gesture stops Sajous at the entrance. And the door closes.

The interrogation is conducted according to the rules, like that of commissioner, although at a less lively pace. The prosecutor Dutour is a meticulous intellectual. He does not have the feline resources of Jacomet. He hides behind her position and her shyness to impress the incul-
But neither the apparatus of justice nor the solemnity of the inkpot. impresses Bernadette. The prosecutor has certainly started with distancing, method, and authority. Bernadette's answers escape to his forecasts, and the attorney loses the thread. It is his weakness (the only one of this irreproachable man, but that his relationships with his superiors unequivocally highlight, and of which their testimony is evidence erasers). Bernadette laughs seeing that she misses the mouth of the inkwell. The prosecutor exhausts all means to unmask the invention, the exaltation, interest, and other classic resources that are usually given in such matters. And try to finish.

You are going to promise me that you will not return to the cave again.

I have already promised to go there for fifteen days.

That promise made to a woman nobody sees is worth nothing. One must abstain.

I experience great joy when I go there.

Joy is a poor advisor. Listen more to the sisters. what they told you was an illusion.

I am being dragged by an irresistible force.

So, if they put you in jail, what will you do?

Oh, if I can't go, I won't go.

Mr. Dotour makes one last attempt at intimidation.

You have to tell the commissioner to come and get this girl to put her in prison.

May starts to sob. She has been standing next to it for two hours. Bernadette also stands and sways. The prosecutor realizes that Hello.

There are chairs, you can sit down.

The tone reveals the condescension and contempt that the The attorney will express in his next meeting. Bernadette warns the nuances. And she hears herself responding without any reflection:

No, it would get stained!

Y mientras Louise se deja caer sobre la silla que le ha puesto la Mrs. Dutour, she sits down 'on the ground like tailors'.

Knocks echo on the shutters. Sajous and his friends who have spent time regularly drinking at cousin Sajous' café, which is In front, they begin to give signs of their presence. The prosecutor trembles. His hand fails to find the mouth of the inkwell.

After a final intimidation (to save face) the two women are farewells. The interrogation has not been a success. The prosecutor has later destroyed the drafts made clumsily.

Bernadette and her mother are taken to have the last drink at the Sajous café.

It is almost nine o'clock at night when Bernadette returns to the 'jail'. Dominiquette Cazenave waits for her at the entrance.

And well, have you confessed?

Yes, I have told the truth. They tell lies.

He fails to understand the feints and contradictions of those. gentlemen. And question:

When it hasn't been written well, do you have to make crosses? The gentleman procurador siempre hacía cruces(de tachadura). Y ríe.

What a little girl you are! says her mother.

The story of Bernadette will take on fantastic proportions among the

population of Lourdes. The tremor of the prosecutor will turn into a dance of Saint Vito; the crossings, large crosses that he was forced to draw about the paper. And that night (it will soon be assured among the people) the candles lit themselves around the house... Bernadette stays at margin of all that mythology.

The excitement of February 26

On the morning of February 26, the situation of the 22nd repeats itself, after from the commissioner's interrogation. Bernadette has been prohibited from attending the cave. The prohibition comes this time from higher up. But now there is a a multitude of people waiting at the door. Bernarde Castérot, aware of her duties as the firstborn, she has gone to the 'dungeon'. She has sat down to table and is perplexed. Bernadette observes the family authority of the great occasions:

—I, in Bernadette's place, would go!

Without uttering a word, Bernadette removes her white hood. from the wall.

In the cave that day there are around 600 people. It is needed for everyone has great goodwill for Bernadette to arrive until 'his' place. He recites the rosary. And nothing. He goes back to practicing the exercises 'penitential' for sinners. And nothing at all. It has a gesture. implorante. Sus vecinos al acecho interpretan:

Everyone on your knees!

But Aqueró has not asked for anything. Aqueró is not there. Bernadette is wash in the fountain that has cleared up overnight. Pray in vain. And it is they take them to the Savy mill, refuge of calamitous days.

Unfamiliar with comforts, she wonders:

What have I done to you?

Penitential apparitions

(February 27 - March 1)

The next morning, February 27, Aqueró is there; he has come to the I find myself in the midst of an increasingly large crowd, despite the disappointments from the previous two days. Among the newcomers is Antoine. Clarens, director of the École Supérieure de Lourdes. He comes to present the

lights of their culture on this dark matter.

Upon his return, he begins to draft, at the direction of the prefect — his friend and protector— a memory, titled The Grotto of Lourdes. exercises of the seer who walks on her knees and kisses the ground have made a bad impression.

In the afternoon, she goes to interrogate Bernadette. The naive certainty of the girl and her 'charm' impress him. With no emphasis, she explains the meaning of those unusual gestures:

In penance, first for myself and then for others.

Clarens is perplexed. His 'lights', so effective at dissipating the popular superstitions have nothing to do in the face of this clarity.

Bernadette continues the penance exercises the next day and at another, in front of an ever-growing crowd.

On Sunday, February 28, 1150 people are gathered. That day the Commander Renault, head of the gendarmerie squad, arrives from Tarbes. to establish the measures imposed by the increasing influx, danger- sitting nestled between a steep slope and the banks of the Gave.

At the end of the main mass, the water guard Latapie grabs Bernadette for the hood, like last Sunday. This time for the interrogation of the investigating judge, Clément Ribes. The magistrate clashes with her resolution to go there 'until Thursday'. She has 'promised' it. And the magistrate lacks legal means to prevent it.

On Monday, March 1st, people arrive at the cave around midnight. The atmosphere is one of reverence. Prayers are improvised. There is a crowd close to 1500 people. The white cloaks can be seen from the hunters of Visens. And, at the last moment, the cassock of a priest.

It is not Lourdes; her name is Désirat. She is nearsighted and did not know that the abbot Peyramale had forbidden the clergy from going to the grotto. Their arrival produce feeling. Space is made for him. He is very confused to find himself in front row. With her eyes enlarged by the lenses, she sees Bernadette in ecstasy. Since then, it will hold an indelible memory.

The smile surpasses anything that can be said. The most skilled artist, the most Consummate actor, they would never reproduce that charm and grace again. Impossible to imagine it.

What impressed me the most was the joy and the sadness that were they were drawn on his face. These phenomena occurred one after another with the speed of lightning. However... nothing abrupt; it was a transition. admirable. I had observed the girl when she was heading to the cave; the I had observed with scrupulous care. What a difference between the what it was back then, and the one I saw at the moment of the appearance!

Respect, silence, and solemnity reigned everywhere. Oh, what a Well, I was there! I thought I was in the vestibule of paradise.

First miracle

It was that day when the first of the seven occurred in the cave. healings that the bishop will retain as 'work of God', after the long investigations of the episcopal commission and Professor Vergez, professor of medicine (D6, p.260; cf. D5, pp.168-169, 263-264, 357).

In the middle of the night, Catherine Latapie, called Chouat, sets off for Lourdes. She is nine months pregnant. She takes her two children with her. minors. The cave is 7 kilometers away. An instinctive impulse has placed it on the way as if pulling it up from the bottom of an abyss. In October 1856 He had climbed an oak tree, shaking down acorns for his pigs, and he had fallen. The doctor was able to put his dislocated arm back in place; but they had two twisted and paralyzed fingers remain. It is the right hand. And Catherine cannot spin, nor knit, nor do anything useful. She is the ruin.

Catherine attends the appearance with her two little ones; then she climbs up. to the bottom of the grotto, to the source of the stream that now flows up to the Gave. Put your hand in it and a great sweetness invades it. The shrivelled fingers have suddenly regained their agility...

A violent pain in his guts shortens his thanksgiving. And murmurs: —Holy Virgin, you have just healed me, allow me to... come back to my house!

In a hurry, she takes her children by the hand. And she walks without stopping through the seven kilometers back to Loubajac. As soon as she arrives, she gives birth without no help from anyone and 'almost without pain'. The midwife, hurriedly informed, does not he will arrive more than at the first cry of a newborn. It's a boy: Jean-Baptiste, who will become a priest.

Chapel and procession

March 2

On March 2nd, at the end of the ecstasy, before 1650 people, Bernadette is heading towards the presbytery. She is preceded by some devotees. what they have gathered from his lips is the message:

Go tell the priests to come here in procession and that they Build a chapel.

They have only retained the first point: the procession. For them, it is urgent... It is undoubtedly the 'big day', the day after tomorrow, Thursday, for the closing of the fortnight. Bernadette has not specified anything to the regarding, but for the devoted it is something evident. She runs to take that message to the rectory. It doesn't stay there long. The idea of to have to authorize a procession just when the magistrates are worried about stopping that crazy influx to the cave, the evidence of the rejection that the bishop would oppose such a project, the ridiculousness that would follow, They impose themselves fully on Abbot Peyramale. An irritation rises within him, the stronger it is as the abbot feels more strongly obliged to neutralize the inexplicable tendency to believe that it works, seeing so many fruits of grace in their parish... The devotees bear the expense of that internal conflict. They endure one of those sudden fits of anger that he has the secret in difficult cases.

And behold, Bernadette arrives accompanied by her aunts Bernarde and Basile. He is received poorly:

Are you the one who is going to the cave?

Yes, Mr. Priest.

And you say that you see the Virgin?

I haven't said that she is the Most Blessed Virgin.

So, who is that lady?

I don't know.

Ah, you don't know! Liar! And yet to the people who... you make them run after you, they say, and the newspaper has written it, what do you intend to see the Most Holy Virgin. So, who do you see?

Some thing that looks like a lady.

--Some house! Quaouqu'arré!

And this word patois resonates like thunder.

Bernadette tries to convey the plea of the procession; but in a inextricable quid pro quo. Ignore that the devoted have preceded him and They have requested 'the procession' for Thursday! The priest's anger rises again. to rise, fighting against aggression and against oneself. He travels through the room from one side to the other repeating:

That's enough! A lady! A procession!

Look at the two aunts of Bernadette that she had to expel from the daughters of Mary for conceiving before marriage (Petition to vespers, according to the local expression).

It's a disgrace to have a family like this, that carries the disorder in the town (and with a piercing glance at Bernadette): Hold her and do not let her move.

Aunt Bernarde has vanished, while Basile and Bernadette are they make 'little like two millet grains'.

Leave!

These last words of Abbot Peyramale sound like a Vade retro

They won't catch me again to come to the priest's house! Basile says upon leaving.

A few steps further, Bernadette stops:

Oh, Aunt Basile! We have to go back, I forgot to mention the... the chapel.

Don't count on me! Let's go now! You're going to make us sick!

Bernadette uselessly seeks someone to accompany her. All the the world slips away..., except, in the end, Dominiquette Cazenave, the sister of the stagecoach owner, with whom François works.

She returns alone to the rectory and arranges a meeting for something more. afternoon... At night, at seven, when the priest has finished calmed down.

There are many priests there, the vicars Pène, Serres, and Pomian, the confessor; a whole areopagus. Bernadette conveys the second part of her

order

Go tell the priests to build a chapel here.
(H5, p. 182)

But she is so impressed that she adds, the only time in her life, a comment on the terms of the message.

A chapel... as soon as possible, even if it is very small.

—A chapel? Is this like the procession? Are you sure of... Hello?

Yes, Mr. Priest, I am quite sure.

The printing and the morning mess have erased the request of the procession in the fragile memory of Bernadette. Has the apparition Have you really talked about Thursday? What are the words you have? pronounced? Everything has disappeared like the phrases from the catechism in Bartès. Bernadette has a vague idea of a procession; but she cannot. honestly specify the terms.

Do you still not know her name?

No, sir priest.

Well, it is necessary for you to ask him/her.

The priest sinks back into silence. And those gentlemen see in it all the accumulated questions about the event. Abbot Pomian fear me of the rise of folklore and local superstitions.

Have you heard about fairies?

No, Mr. Abate.

Have you heard about witches?, asks another.

No, sir abbot, responds Bernadette (all of it in patois, from later).

—You lie! Everyone has heard about witches in Lourdes.

Dorniniquette, whose situation at the coach stop has expert in untangling misunderstandings between the patois of a valley and the other one intervenes:

—Mr. Abbot, she does not understand you. Talk to her about 'brooches,' 'sourcieros', the other doesn't mean anything in the local patois.

Abbot Pène, in turn, mobilizes his knowledge of patois to ask him/her:

What are the 'paráoulos' that the lady has said?

There hasn't been any 'paráou' there, replies Bernadette.

—What do you mean there haven't been any words!? What about the chapel, and the... procession?

Dominiquette intervenes again:

—Mr. Abbot, she does not understand you: in Lourdes they say 'parólos' and no 'paráoulos', as in your valley. With 'paráou', she has understood arise!... Mr. priest—add—let her go free!

Bernadette rushes out of there arm in arm with Dominiquette.

I'm very happy because I've completed the order!

The vigil

March 3

On March 3rd, there are 3000 people in the grotto. True clusters. humans cling to all the roughness of the rock and the slope. That crowd has been praying for hours, although very few manage to see Bernadette. What happened that morning? Contradictory rumors are spreading. for the town: He hasn't seen her... Yes, he has seen her.

In fact, it hasn't appeared in the morning tumult. Bernadette has left shaken like on the days of February 22 and 26. But a a little later he returned by the path at the foot of the castle. And this time Aqueróha has attended the meeting.

In the afternoon, when the priest returns from Tarbes, where he has gone to seeking advice from Abbot Ribes, Bernadette knocks on the door of the house priestly.

Mr. Priest, the lady still wants the chapel.

Have you asked him/her his/her name?

Yes, but she only smiles.

He's teasing you cute!

The fervor and the conversations that the priest verifies in the parish feed a hope in it. He comes up with the idea of asking for a signal that dispels its perplexity. In Guadalupe (Mexico), in the 16th century, the Virgin had made the mountain bloom in the middle of winter.

Well, if you want the chapel, say your name and make it bloom. rose of the cave; and then we will have a chapel built and of course it will not be 'tiny', but it will be quite big, adds the priest,

unrelated to any meanness.



Peyremale



Jacomet

The big day

Thursday, March 4, 1858

And the last day of the fortnight arrives, 'the big day'!, according to the expression that will make a fortune. At 11 o'clock at night, the eve, the commissioner the police appear in the cave. They inspect all the cavities to check that there is no hidden tent or firework in some place to perform a miracle. He is surprised to already find so many. People. And in prayer!

At 5 in the morning, the commissioner renews his inspection. With great job, that's the truth, because the cave is packed to the brim and the Human clusters cling to the minor protrusions of the rock.

The crowd has gathered from all the valleys. At 6 o'clock the gendarmes from Argelès and Saint Pé are gathered in front of the town hall, as well as the soldiers of the castle. There are guard soldiers along the way.

The milky dawn reveals a crowd gathered on both shores. of the Gave. The red hoods of the women of Barèges blend with the white hoods of the women of Lourdes. From the peak of rock on which dominates at the crossing of seven valleys, never the castle of Lourdes had contemplated so many people... and especially in that corner

desert. Estimates vary from 8,000 to 20,000 people (the lowest figure
Yes, as usual, the safest one.

The crowd is surprisingly quiet. It has not ceased the sentence. People have endured the overcrowding, the brambles, and even the pushes that from time to time throw the fish into the water of the canal
First row bearers. Fortunately, the ford is shallow.
Bernadette had crossed it barefoot on February 11.

At 7 in the morning, the usual time of these last few days, Bernadette is not there yet. Anxiety is growing among the crowd; the Pain and fatigue exasperate everyone. Could they have kidnapped Bernadette?
Sensitive to the environment, the commissioner who has been there since 5 in the morning.
drugada with his assistant, sends the boy Tarbès to go for the road

Go see if Bernadette arrives!

At seven o'clock and five, a rumor spreads across the hillside:

There it is!

Bernadette arrives accompanied by desase Védère. She has promised her first major (she is 30 years old), governess of Momères, who will be with her during the appearance. The two have attended the first mass of the six and media, and they have departed with the last blessing.

The crowd finds a way to squeeze itself beyond what imaginable to leave a clear path. The order of service does nothing but to help the goodwill of all. Bernadette herself has taken her precautions, after it was found blocked yesterday having to miss out
at the appearance of the morning. In the afternoon, he/she went up the street stairs.
Wait to ask for help from Gaço, the man who knows how to perfectly align.
to everyone when driving their carriage at full speed. Below, the
In the afternoon before, the carter Tarbès has installed a kind of walkway.
with iron plates in the last meters, so that Bernadette arrives on time and do not miss your meeting as happened the day before.

And she is there in her place. But Mane Védère has been blocked. in front of the walkway. The wave of people has closed behind the seer... Bernadette, however, has not forgotten her promise and asks for her cousin. Everyone is watching her lips. A gendarme and the propio Jacomet franquean la pasarela y señalan a Jeanne entre las mujeres
what they are eagerly hoping to experience.

Is it her?

And Jeanne meets with her cousin, as promised.

At the third Hail Mary of the second mystery, Bernadette enters into ecstasy. The commissioner and the deputy mayor have taken out their notebooks and they take notes. Jacomet especially records even the smallest gestures of Ber- '34' smiles and '24' greetings towards the grotto. The crowd accompanied by her signs of the cross. After half an hour, Bernadette about the cavity, place of their conversations with the apparition. Their lips move, but no sound escapes from them. There remain joyful for 2 minutes, and Jeanne Védère has counted (according to It seems, only in that phase) 18 smiles; then her face has saddened. for 3 minutes, to illuminate again. Bernadette greets and returns to the site where I was before; then continue praying the rosary for a quarter of an hour. In the end, he extinguishes his candle and resumes the road to Lourdes, indifferent to the passionate attention of the public. The appearance has been long, as it has lasted a good three quarters of an hour (from 7:15 to 8).

But there has been neither miracle nor revelation. The crowd turns into order and perplexed. The commissioner and the cavalry sergeant have triumphed over double title: for the disappointment of the people and for the success of the service of or- since he has avoided all accident. These are the two themes that will resonate in the newspapers of the last few days: especially that of disappointment.

However, in the morning, a crowd of people gathers. in front of the 'dungeon', and a parade begins that never ends. The people want to see Bernadette, kiss her, make her touch their rosaries. She protest

And then, what will happen next?

In vain. If it resists, it will halt the countless wave. So try. speed up the parade to finish.

—Bring them all at once... (H5, p.336).

But Jeanne Védère, who has been closest to her cousin since the mass until the end of the apparition, she also lines up and approaches present your rosaries to Bernadette. She has three: the one of the seven sorrows, the one of the Camaldolese and the Dominicans:

—You too! murmurs Bernadette. What do you want me to do? I I am not a priest!

And only with great difficulty can the door be closed taking advantage of

some gaps during lunchtime.

Bernadette takes advantage of the break to deliver the message to the gentleman. cure.

The man waits not without emotion, he waits...

What did the lady tell you?

I asked her name... She smiled. I have already...
I begged her to make the rose bush bloom, and she has smiled again. But she still continues. wanting the chapel.

Do you have money to build that chapel?

—No, sir priest.

Neither do I... Tell the lady to give it to you.

He is disappointed. Bernadette is also disappointed for not having obtained that last day the expected response.

Hiding as best as he can, he approaches number 15 on the street of Bourg where Antoine Clarens, the director of the school, has invited her to withdraw from the crowd. One admires watching it participate spontaneously in the games of your small children, like Marie-Jeanne, who is 4 years old.

But the crowd once again crowds in front of the 'cell.' informant. And the hideout of Bernadette is discovered. The three doctors who They had seen her that morning at five thirty, they have gathered and demand her return. Between three and four François Soubirous picks up his daughter, and start the parade again until night. Bernadette is exhausted from the hugs, and plea:

Lock the door!

The filthy and gloomy hovel that the report spoke of three days before, it has become the privileged place before the which is waited for like in a king's court. People want to leave money and gifts there. Bernadette rejects it with liveliness. surprising

"That burns me!" she says, when someone tries to slide a coin to her. gold in hand.

Fortunately for her, because they are setting traps for her. The police it is supposed that the reason for all this is the scam. The test has been done. sending to a gendarme. The trick is a bit crude. Later he has-

cen algunos civiles, luego la señora de Angla en persona, la mujer del cavalry sergeant. It must be noted well, Bernadette ignores the gesture. expert in collecting tips. Reject that money with violence. which is surprising. How to explain that enthusiasm after the disappointment of The morning? It's just that an event has once again illuminated hope.

Upon returning from the appearance, up the steep slope that leads to the On the forest path, Bernadette has slowed her pace to almost a stop. Genço, who was holding her by the hand, making his way with the left. among the crowd, she turns. Bernadette looks with compassion at a girl with red hood. She is the girl from Barèges who had already tried to approach she when she was heading to the cave. Her name is Eugénie Troy and she has the same age that Bernadette. She is sick; she wears a ribbon over her eyes because he cannot stand the light. Ganço has seen Bernadette's affectionate gaze.

Make that girl come closer!

The crowd does everything possible, and the two girls hug and laugh. holding hands. Bernadette hugs Eugénie for the second time and continues its path without having asked for his name. And slips away. easily among the people. What now "catches everyone's attention is the red hood. Because Eugénie Troy has just raised the ribbon for look at the seer. The sunlight, which blinded her. painful, it no longer bothers her. And she is filled with joy:

Miracle! A blind person has been healed!

The news spreads 'with the speed of an electric spark', according to the new formula of Peyramale. A procession is formed around the girl from Barèges, who descends to the cave and washes in the spring. The enthusiasm reaches its peak. They take her to Attorney Dutour. It is necessary for that unbeliever to verify the miracle. And they are scandalized by his reservation and skepticism.

Peyramale seems more welcoming, all the more so because of the father of the girl gets excited while testifying: With the accent of the strongest conviction deeply and with tears in her eyes she swears that her daughter has miraculously recovered vision (letter from Peyramale, March 9) 1858, DI, p. 230-231.

The people of Barèges testify in the same vein. Peyramale immediately draft a verbal process for the bishop, although under summary secrecy. The next day, March 5, he writes to the priest of Barèges. The response is delayed because your colleague is absent. He will come. personally to Lourdes in the second half of March, bringing a

disappointing response to a great degree: that girl has never been blind. Her eyesight remains mediocre; she is very ill.
the joy of the trip to Lourdes has given him hope about his condition, shared hopes by their parents. Healing cannot be spoken of.
That is what Doctor Theil has confirmed, sent expressly to
that he will study it. Peyramale's disappointment will only be confirmed.
The young woman of Barèges will die the following year (June 9, 1859).

The sick person of Piqué farm

The priest is on another track. Wonders are told about the visits of Bernadette at the Piqué farm where a little sick person has called for.
Bernadette. His name is Jean-Marie Doucet. He is nine years old. He couldn't eat or close his mouth, as he always kept it open like an oven.
After Bernadette's visits, he closes his mouth, eats, and starts to feel again.
love for life. On March 15, the priest goes there with his vicar. 'Improvement notable', write that day. But it would be necessary for it to heal 'radically', in order to say with Saint Augustine: Finite cause.

However, police pressure is tightening around
Bernadette has interrupted her visits to the Piqué farm and the mouth of little sick one opens up again like before.

Interrogation

On March 18, she is subjected to a full interrogation, in which declares:

I don't think I have healed anyone, and besides that, I haven't done anything. for that. I don't know if I will return to the cave again.

He did not seem to want to get entangled with the local authority, concludes the commissioner.

The problem

The problem is no longer really Bernadette, but the influx that continues in the cave. The candles multiply there: there are ten on March 18, nineteen on the 21; on the 23 a plaster virgin already appears, provided by a certain Félix Maransin and that has been placed in the niche of the appearance. Behold an illicit place of worship and a base for legal action!

Moreover, people drink that water and the pharmacist Pailhasson has declared 'dangerous'.

The press, however, has spoken clearly. The morning after the great day the editorial of the Lavedan concluded unambiguously:

What a disappointment!... How many poor gullible people have been humiliated... How many people have understood..., too late!, the ridiculousness of his actions lamenting his excessive gullibility.

The miracle is the marvelous credulity of that crowd, to which the his disappointment show has not been able to disillusion, adds Le Bagnérais, while the Imperial Era, unofficial echo of the prefect, laments that it does not I have cut it off cleanly, all that, sending to the so-called saint of eleven. years (sic) as a patient in the hospital.

The strange matter of the cave disrupts all habits and it disrupts all forecasts.

4

LATEST APPEARANCES

(25 de marzo-16 de julio de 1858)

An irresistible attraction

Bernadette wakes up in the early hours of March 25th, the day of the annunciation. Again he feels the urgency to go to the cave. His parents they wanted to prevent it. But the attraction is irresistible. They know it and it has- they wait. But at 5 he is already on his way to the cave.

The appearance of March 25

This time she is absolutely determined to get an answer for the Mr. Priest. After the rosary, Aqueró approaches through the cavity. interior. Bernadette, overflowing with joy, forces herself to bring it up the issue, ceremonious like a bow, that she has prepared in patois

Miss, would you be kind enough to tell me who you are? favor?

Aqueró smiles. But does not respond. Bernadette insists on repeating her request a second and a third time. Aqueró continues smiling... But This time Bernadette will not give up, as it is the condition set by the lord. fund for building the chapel.

On the fourth time, Aqueró no longer 'laughs'. His hands together separate and extend towards the ground. Then bring your hands together at chest height, raise your eyes to the sky and say:

I am the Immaculate Conception.

Immaculate Conception

The colors return to Bernadette's face. She rushes to the rectory house repeating the words, that does not want to risk losing

like those of the procession. It avoids the questions and repeats without stopping: Immaculate Council… cet-tiou. Immaculate Counc... et.ciou. It gets stuck in the two last syllables. He arrives at the rectory and shouts at the priest:

I am the Immaculate Conception.

Peyramale wavered under the blow, and was about to speak:

—Proud little one, you are the Immaculate Conception!

But the words get stuck in his hoarse throat. He understands. perfectly that Bernadette does not say that on her own account. Her reason he struggles to escape from a blinding light. Reason comes to the aid of his resistance. The Virgin has been conceived without sin, but she is not her conception. At last the words sprout:

A lady cannot have that name! You are mistaken! Do you know? What does that mean?

Bernadette shakes her head in denial.

So how can you say it if you haven't understood it?

I have been repeating it on the way.

Peyramale feels that all his anger is leaving him. How strange. Is there a movement rising in his chest? Could he be sick? It is the sobs. what is being withheld.

She still wants the chapel, murmurs Bernadette in the silence.

The priest mobilizes all the resources of his authority to save the appearances.

Go home, I'll see you another day.

Bernadette is puzzled. Why is the priest angry? And what could those words mean, that he has never heard, but that seem so beautiful and cheerful? Without a doubt, the expression Immaculate Conception has impressed his ears in the church, when the festival of the 8th is celebrated December. But in sermons delivered in French, which is for her a strange language... And the idea seems as unfamiliar to him as the mystery of the Trinity. What it means is Immaculate Conception only He will learn that afternoon at Mr. Estrade's house, the first one who has thought. to explain it to him.

So, without a doubt, it was the Most Holy Virgin! At last, it can to give in to the joy that had overwhelmed her that morning.

But the formula puzzles her. Peyramale has a wide field to formulate your theological objections in the letter he writes that afternoon to the

bishop. The 'believers' are uncomfortable with the unusual expression. Each one arranges it in their own way correcting Bernadette. And makes her say:

I am the immaculate Virgin.

I am Immaculate Mary.

I am the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception. Or, in rigor:

Mary, the immaculate conception.

The disconcerting message boils down to known models.

Once the letter was written, Peyramale, already freed from his duties towards the bishop personally feels that things are settling within him. And Think: that girl couldn't have made it up. Maybe this... this has to to have a meaning. And it appeals to the figures of rhetoric learned in its seminar. Saying: 'This is the very whiteness' is equivalent to 'It is very white'... What is that called and how can it be applied to the dogma promulgated in Rome four years earlier?

We define that the blessed Virgin was preserved from all stain of original sin... from the very first moment of her conception.

The light is made upon that adhesion of the heart, which had been in it. first movement, before any calculation.

Seventeenth appearance

April 7, 1858

On April 6, Easter Tuesday, Bernadette feels drawn again. towards the grotto. One passes by the confessional after vespers. Antoinette Tardhivail, who helps in the sacristy, has seen her. Guess something and that's how it's told to some friends, in secret. And the news spreads like a trail of gunpowder. Bernadette's friends are worried. The week After the prosecutor questioned her for four hours, forbidding her to she returned to the grotto (D5, p. 75). Before vespers, Bernadette has approached the house of Blazy, former mayor of Adé (4 km from Lourdes), healed in the cave, and he wanted to see it. Brazy son proposes to take her in subreak, which it will be a providential alibi.

The next morning, Easter Wednesday, Bernadette is in the cave before dawn. Two hundred are already there. people and they will soon reach a thousand.

Bernadette has already entered into ecstasy, in the midst of silence. impressive. But, what tumult is noticed at the outer limits of the crowd? Strong footsteps, an authoritative voice approaches the place that everyone desires:

Let me pass!

It is Doctor Dozous. He has wanted to examine ecstasy for a long time. Fire lieutenant at the same time as a doctor, had tasked one of his 'men', Martin Tarbès, to warn him. He makes his way through the multitude that raises its protests... all the more so because it retains the hat worn against the imposed habits of respect in the cave. And faces it with conviction:

I do not come as an enemy, but in the name of science. arrived running (and discovers his bare skull, which shines in the light of the candles, drenched in sweat) and I cannot expose myself to drafts. My the only purpose is to verify the religious fact that is fulfilled here; allow me to continue my study.

He wipes himself, afraid that running might have done him harm. But I have here that an unusual phenomenon captures his attention making him forget everything else. That day Bernadette has a long candle resting on the floor, what Blazy, his host from the night before, has provided him. To protect the calls against the wind, his two hands have been rising along the candle closing it between his fists. He wraps the lit wick as if between the two shells of a shell. Through the slightly open fingers the flame illuminate the curved palms:

"But it's going to burn!" they shout among the crowd.

Leave her alone, exclaims Dozous.

The doctor does not believe what his eyes see. Once the ecstasy is over, he examines the hands of the psychic, who does not understand anything about those dealings.

—There's nothing left! (There's nothing!), exclaims Dozous.

Faith has suddenly overwhelmed him. With the explosive exuberance that has characterizes, proclaims the marvel in the French Café, throughout the town and before the commissioner himself, who has furtively noted it in his notebook his phrases of enthusiasm.

For me, it is a supernatural fact to see Bernadette kneeling. in front of the grotto, in ecstasy, holding a lit candle and covering the he calls with his hands, without showing the slightest impression of feeling any. contact of their hands with the fire. I have examined them: not the slightest

trace of burns.

The time of the visionaries

(13 de abril - 11 de julio de 1858)

After that date, Bernadette steps into the shadows. She is threat. The prefect wants to put an end once and for all to that blessed cave. Its purpose is to confine the seer as a mental patient. On the 4th of May openly declares in Lourdes, where he has come to preside over the review advice:

Anyone who pretends to be a visionary will be immediately detained and taken to the hospital of Tarbes.

On that same day, the commissioner clears the cave (a place of worship not... authorized!) of all the religious objects that had adorned it. The friends who protect Bernadette push her away. On May 8, without calling the Attention, she is sent to treat her asthma in the waters of Cauterets. There soon It becomes the center of everyone's attention. All day long they ask him/her sentences. But the police commissioner of the town, in charge of his surveillance, can only verify its discretion and its rejection of any type of compensation' (D2, p. 33).

In Lourdes, the temperature rises. The absence of Bernadette. it shows that she is not the cause. The problem is the cave! The 'believers' they have experienced the plunder of May 4th as a sacrilege. The source they attract. The apothecary Pailhasson had declared it in due time. 'dangerous'. But here the pharmacist of Trie now discovers in her healing properties, special ones that could classify it among the number of waters that constitute the mineral wealth of our department p. 34). These wonderful phrases fuel a dream of Mayor Lacadé: to establish a thermal station. Their reports hint at that project. However, unfortunately, serious and scientific analyses will demonstrate that it is a completely normal water, devoid of the properties so coveted by the municipality.

The popular pilgrimage resists dissuasion, organizing by itself. solos: sentences, chants, candles, fervor, processions. The guilds of Lourdes has improved the grotto. Since the early days, the carter Tarbès and the carpenter Domengieu have dug a ditch for the water of the fountain. On April 10, they build a pond with grass panels. The

On the 24th, the tinsmith Castérot installs a zinc trough with three taps there. The carpenter prepares a perforated board to place the candles on each more numerous. The stone masons draw curves on the slope abrupt that goes down to the cave.

The cavalry sergeant does not return there. Those people 'without no profit' they give their time and their money. Donations flow in: hearts in gold and silver, images, a gauze veil and... even a cheese. In the cave, the desire to acquire gives way to the desire to give. And everything is given that One has. Every day they leave money in the crevices of the rock. Who leaves it? For what? No one knows. Jacomet finds there a gold coin. Who is the important figure who made that donation? Well, it has been a poor old woman, a homeless person, who has deposited there. all his belongings, his reserves for bad times, telling himself same: 'This for the Virgin'. The most generous offerings come from the poorer, the commissioner observes again. And it is money that is respected; there it remains untouched by anyone. For a moment, Jacomet has I believed to have sniffed out the scam: on March 1st the money had disappeared from the cave. But the research has only uncovered a pious initiative: the sacristan Fourcade had collected and counted the money, and gave it to him I had brought Father Peyramale to say a mass 'on the great day'. Since then, the collection has continued spontaneously and in good spirits. order.

But there are more debatable and more unsettling phenomena. If the sentence It started with the received formulas, especially the rosary, now the frustrated fervor with the end of appearances, sometimes it becomes feverish...

On April 11, four days after the last public appearance. Bernadette, five women, fascinated by the mysterious caves of Massabielle, they have gone to look for a ladder at the Espélugues farm. The They lean against the back of the cave, on the right (on the opposite side of the fountain) against a narrow recess that opens in the vault. With large efforts slip through the narrow opening and the five disappear in that cave with its candles. A few minutes later they go down again. proclaiming that they have seen the Virgin. They are congregants of good reputation. Peyramale welcomes them better than it had welcomed Bernadette.

On April 16, a police commissioner's expedition will identify the key to the mystery: after having climbed a dozen meters up that rocky hallway (which Bernadette always ignored) the spelunker of Today, discover, like the commissioner and the visionaries of 1858, a stalactite

white, in the form of a statue... although, to be honest, without a head. But the imagination and shadow play make up for it. The demystification does not. it stopped the epidemic of visionaries. In June, they multiply among the children. from school; at the beginning of July they count up to fifty (I have done the prosopographic inventory in Lourdes. Authentic documents, volume 2, p. 56-57.

The forbidden cave

The administration did not wait for that date to intervene. On the 15th of June the cave is prohibited and barred. But the repression exasperates the People of Lourdes. The barriers installed on the 15th are demolished on the 17th. (for one of those that the commissioner had confiscated for him to put them!) They are raised again on the 18th, but are brought down the night of the 27th, back to they were built on the 28th, but they were demolished on the night of July 4th and again they They reconstruct on day 10. Verbal processes rain down on the visitors. The visionaries slide between the separated plates. The pure prayer the time of appearances is corrupted in niceties and superstitious rites you are so exalted.

First episcopal intervention

July 11

It is then that the authority of the Church intervenes. On the 8th of July, the priest of Lourdes, alerts the bishop of Tarbes. On the 11th, monsignor Laurence, who is on the lookout, denounces the abuses. And, surprisingly, teeth, suddenly disappear. There will be no more talk of visionaries in the cave.

Last meeting

16 de julio de 1858

Bernadette —forgotten— has stayed out of that fever. I have respected the established order and has advised against breaking down the barriers.

And behold, on July 16, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (and five days after the episcopal intervention that had restored the (order), feels attracted to Massabielle. Trapped, once again, between obedience and the allure that she knows is invincible, she adapts to the

circumstances. Wait until dark and, hidden under a hood of dark color, rushes in the twilight, not towards the Old Bridge that leads to Massabielle, but in the opposite direction. Stays on the shore right and win the Prade of the Ribère. There are groups that pray silently on my knees with my face turned towards the cave that remains far away and it is closed. Bernadette also kneels and lights her candle: a flame among the various scattered here and there in the falling night. There was gone out alone with her aunt Lucile. Two other congregants have joined them in silence.

The rosary has just begun, when Bernadette's hands they part in a greeting of joyful surprise. Her face pales and lights up... like during the fortnight of the apparitions. Recite the rosary during a time that no one has bothered to measure. He gets up and everything is over. That last appearance has been as silent as the first ones.

On the way back, Bernadette simply said:

I could see neither the plates nor the Gave. It seemed to me that I was in the cave, not further away than the other times. I could only see the holy one. Virgin.

It is the last time I see her on this earth.

5

TESTIMONY TO THE FOUR WINDS

(1858-1860)

During the apparitions, Bernadette in ecstasy was a witness without to know it. The transfiguration of his face and the fervor of his prayer have moved and converted many eyewitnesses, without her being notice it (H3, p.80-135).

At that moment, she didn't have to defend herself from the questioners. I didn't even hear those who eventually wanted to communicate with. she. She was isolated from the outside world. But, after the appearance, the questions flowed from all directions. All the curiosities, all the hypotheses, fervent or absurd, flowed around her. Bernadette was turns throughout the day into the center of attention for those who seek, believers or unbelievers, admirers or adversaries. Starting from the 21st of February suffers the interrogations and the contradictions in accordance with the rules of the police, of the magistrates, of the doctors appointed by the prefect of draft a certificate of hospitalization in a mental hospital..., even of the priests, whom he fears more because he fears God. Alone in order to be able responding to the appearance and the message, this fragile girl thus becomes paradoxically on the caryatid upon which the future of the pilgrimage, the chapel that is to be built and everything else.

How has he/she managed to move forward without losing his/her calm, his/her balance and even your reason? That's one of the most surprising aspects of the phenomenon. called Bernadette. She responds without formulas or calculations, without fear or complacency, in direct and always brief terms. It occurs unknowingly. the maxim of the Gospel: 'When you are brought before the synagogues, the powers and the authorities, do not worry about how or with What will you defend yourselves or what will you say? (Luke 12:11).

There lies all his secret. And this is how this little David stands firm against the Goliaths of the Church and the State. Those who do not respect him they have laid down their arms, they have at least recognized their intelligence and their sincerity.

Without a doubt, she has had support that has helped her get by.

all the procedures undertaken to reduce or eliminate it.
since the middle of the fortnight of the apparitions, Mr. Dufo, a lawyer and fervent believer in the appearance, she has been put on guard against certain traps. Also Mr. Pougat, president of the court... although with a totally different purpose. That somewhat cheerful man, lost in the the judiciary to which she had risen with political support, placed her in guard against the irregular summons of the imperial prosecutor, his subordinate. Mr. Dutour was aware... but he didn't know very well how to manage to report your hierarchical superior. The drafts full of crossings out on this point testify to her pregnancy. But she felt less pregnant to make reproaches to the seer:

You are forewarned, Bernadette. Certain gentleman nearby. entry, which advises you. That won't stop you from going to jail!

And Bernadette replied to him, half in patois, half in French:

What do you speak standing to yourself, sir? (kick that man).

His candor did more than advice. In the testimony and in the ecstasy, his secret was nothing other than transparency.

The first communion

Bernadette is now going to school. For her, it is a protection against the importunates.

On June 3, he makes his first communion, thus satisfying his great desire. During the preparatory retreat, Abbot Peyramale has authorized to a foreign lady to speak with her. And in her presence, the lady raise this question:

The priest forbids you to go to the grotto. But if the Virgin you If you were ordered, what would you do?

I would come to ask for permission from the gentleman priest (letter Peyramale, D2, no. 314, p. 359).

The day after the communion, Emmanuélite Estrade asks Bernadette:

What are you happier about: the first communion or the... appearances?

And she replies:

They are two things that go together, but cannot be compared.

I have been very happy in both.

Agüistas and curious people

The summer has brought Lourdes, crossroads of paths and valleys in a thermal region, its usual parade of tourists on vacation, starting with the emperor himself. The press in Paris has spoken of the appearances. The pious newsletters sustain the rumor, especially Rosier de Marie. Agüistas and curious people flock to Bernadette: unique resource for those who want to know and judge.

In the 'dungeon', life is disorganized due to the constant visits. Day after day the Soubirous oppose the increasingly attempts. ingenious for leaving some offering. Bernadette remains intransigent, not without sometimes sparking. One day some wealthy visitors have begged your younger brother who goes to fetch water from the cave. Upon returning, receives a gold coin. When he arrives at the 'dungeon', proud of the money he has cattle, receives a magnificent slap from his sister, while she he is obliged to return the coin immediately; he himself has mentioned it.

In July, a young lawyer from Beaune, Charles Madon, 32 years old, age, notes on the ground his conversation with Bernadette. At first he has captivated by his 'intelligent, funny, and modest appearance, which gives I want to see. But the asthma bothers her, and she coughs frequently. He asks her:

Have you prayed for your healing?

No.

And your secrets? What are they about?

They only refer to me.

If the pope asked you, would you tell him?

No.

—And if your confessor denied you the Easter communion for that negative?

Neither.

—Yo conozco uno de tus secretos, y es que serás religiosa.

Bernadette ríe.

That's not allowed; they are more serious.

Does it bother you if I ask about your secrets?

No, but the apparition has told me not to say them.

By means of skillful questions, the visitor has managed to confine the secrets: have been entrusted 'in patois... and in several days'. No concern more than her life. Neither the place of pilgrimage, nor France, nor the world, will she need on other occasions. What justifies her discretion.

On July 17, Monsignor Thibault, Bishop of Montpellier, arrives at Lourdes asks about Bernadette. The priest hastily makes it. come to the rectory. Their poverty and simplicity impress the prelate. I would like to offer you a donation. Nothing to do. And this Beautiful rosary granted indulgence by Pope Pius IX in person? New rejection. If you do not want to accept any gift, at least agree to change your rosary for his.

No, sir priest, I prefer my own.

For her, every cleric is 'Mr. Priest'. She doesn't know what a Bishop, for about two months before, was unaware of the mystery of the Trinity. The the device of this meeting impresses her less than her visit to the seminar from Tarbes, where she ran to the window of the phone booth, impressed by the number of so many and so many cassocks: they were the seminarians, numerous as a flock of sparrows, and exclaimed:

Oh! Oh!

On July 20, Monsignor Cardon de Garsignies, Bishop of Soissons, ask about her. Interrogate her about the sky. Hasn't she lived that? experience? Bernadette responds only:

I don't know anything, monsignor, I am an ignorant.

Like his colleague from Montpellier, he leaves there impressed, moved, stimulated, and reaffirmed in his inner convictions.

The two prelates hurried to testify before the bishop of Tarbes, Monsignor Laurence, and they pressure him to intervene. And so, on the 28th of Julio, at 11 in the morning, signs an ordinance to establish a co-investigative mission.

On July 28, Admiral Bruat, governess of the imperial prince, passes by Lourdes with her daughters, a priest, and a nun. The lady is conversing. with Bernadette:

The Virgin married to Saint Joseph must have worn a ring, right?

the priest who accompanies the admiral asks.

No, sir priest, I did not carry it.

The nun asks Bernadette to accompany them to the grotto.

—No, no! They have forbidden me to do it.

It's not difficult to find a guide, the 'believers' are at the party. Some of them have maliciously alerted the juror Callet, in charge of filing the complaints, to put her in a bind.

I was taking a nap, and I arrive at the grotto when those ladies They are praying, despite the prohibition stated on a post. Guess. the trap. Cautious like the sentinel who prepares to shoot at the enemy and guess his general, is content to kindly note in his booklet the identity of the visitor, with its poor spelling and inimitable

Admiral Bruat widow, governess of the children of France and her family accompanied by a nun.

To disguise, climb the rock, descend towards the cave surrounded by the fence and throws the bunches of flowers that have been deposited into the Gave there; that is one of his daily obligations. A sad duty that at least he provides an alibi. The admiral is a great lady and notices her confusion; for this reason, he questions him:

—Sir guard, would you be so kind as to fill this jug for me? with the water that flows from that tube?

He does it gladly and also gives him some twigs and a few stones that she has asked her. But she refuses to accept a five-franc coin that the nun wants to slide it into her hand. The admiral will manage more. late to drop her off at her home when he is absent... so that not may refuse it.

While the lady makes her last prayer, Louis Veuillot arrives, director of the universe, wearing a white hat. Callet also notes his name, while Veuillot exclaims:

So you want to prevent people from praying here to the good God! (D3, p. 46).

Go up to the village and call Bernadette to the apothecary's house. chocolatier Pailhasson, in which he organizes a formal interview in front of a large audience, among which is Abbot Pomian, The journalist insists on the secrets, despite the resistance.

from Bernadette and the disagreement of Abbot Pomian who repeats: 'That has no importance'. Veuillot is very emotional. When Bernadette has left, exclaims:

—In an ignorant person, but worth much more than I am (D3, p. 47).

In Paris, a month later, on August 28, the interview will take place five columns of the first page of the Universe.

On July 30, Father Hyacinthe Loison, who was then famous preacher and shortly thereafter would hang up the habits, subjects the seer to a contradiction in terms.

Around the same time, a pious Jesuit, Father Nègre, puts everything the resources of his theology to prove to Bernadette that 'she has seen the devil'.

The devil is not so beautiful.
like she), responds Bernadette.

According to the visitor's demonology, Satan, skilled in metamorphosis, does not It has the power to ennoble all its attributes. It has shapes beastly and she hides them:

You haven't seen his feet; his feet were hidden.

Yes, she had bare feet, very pretty.

You haven't seen his hands. Wasn't there a shadow that Was it covering?

No. I have seen them and they were very beautiful (A VII, p. 264).

Here Bernadette interrupts the conversation and says to her companion, Antoinette Tardhivail:

He doesn't want to believe it, let's go.

This dialogue, referred to by Antoinette, may seem implausible; but twenty years later Father Nègre has naively testified that that is it was indeed his idea. In his letter of September 18, 1878, he responds to the Father Cros:

I know (sic) that the devil, in his appearances, usually takes the feet of a beast.

After the incarnation... God does not want to allow the devil to I took the perfect form of humanity. It is necessary to betray for something that belongs to the beast (Archives Cros. A VI).

Others threaten Bernadette with eternal fire (DR, p. 292), the they lead to dangerous theological summits or to inextricable casuistry. She Respond clearly and concisely, hitting the mark like Joan of Arc. A my- the commissioner of the diocese of Tarbes says to him:

Since the most holy Virgin has promised you heaven, no longer you will have to take care of your soul.

Oh, priest, I will go to heaven if I do what is right!

But what do you understand by 'doing what is convenient'?

Oh, I don't have to tell you that, priest!

There are those who ask him for the impossible: to imitate the smile of the Virgin, etc.

Bernadette testifies with a serious difficulty. Until the beginning of that year has never spoken more than the dialect of his valley. French is for She has a strange language. There are misunderstandings and mistakes. She gives herself count and, since the month of July, he/she is striving to speak French: 'a French very incorrect,' notes Balech de Lagarde, journalist of the Courrier French, arrived from Paris on September 24, to do an interview this new celebrity. And she has done her job well by examining her in all aspects:

A lot of people care about you in the country... Do you like that?

I don't mind.

Many newspapers have printed your name. Have they told you? also?

Yes.

Have you read the newspapers?

No, I only know how to read.

Do you like that?

Oh, not too much! No!

The journalist has tried to 'blind her', according to her own expression.

Listen, Bernadette, it's necessary for you to come to Paris with me, and In three weeks, you will be rich... I will take care of your fortune.

Oh, no, no! I want to remain poor!

And the man insists in vain.

El 5 de octubre de 1858, el emperador está de vacaciones, y, enterado on the matter of Lourdes, it raises the barriers of the grotto: measures that it

it will be worth a great popularity.

Before the episcopal commission

The investigative commission, appointed by the bishop, is set to work. On November 17, Bernadette undergoes her first ecclesiastical interrogation. In the presence of the four canons, he manifests the same clear assurance. It discerns without any hesitation what it knows and what it what has been forgotten: the dates, for example. But the message is very present. Only at one point is his memory empty: the famous procession requested for the appearance on March 2. The memory has disintegrated under the anger of Peyramale. He knows no other answer than this:

I'm not sure that I was given that order; more so for the which refers to the construction of the chapel, I have always been sure and I am still being that (81, p. 194).

Since mid-September 1858, the Soubirous have abandoned the 'dungeon' for a healthier room, at Deluc's house, a pastry chef-coffee maker, vaguely related to the Soubirous through the Castérot. They continue as such the warning given by the three doctors who they had visited (and examined briefly) Bernadette in the morning Thursday, March 4.

If you want to keep your children, it's best that you don't stay here. (H5, p. 354, note 280).

In the Gras mill. 1859

During the first quarter of 1859, the Gras mill is stopped and François Soubirous tries his luck there again. A young man in him English tourist, R. S. Standen, meets Bernadette on April 19. François Soubirous has returned to his trade and regained his dignity. Produce an impression of a 'respectable' man, notes the English visitor. And Bernadette is a pretty looking girl.
She explains to him 'with a lot of intelligence' how the mill works, that he knows since his childhood. It's good to be outdoors, next to a river. His asthma has improved significantly.

What impresses the young Standen is Bernadette's indifference. for the miracles that are talked about with enthusiasm in the village. The English he explains some of them. Bernadette, allergic to exaggerations, dismisses it.

everything in block:

There is nothing true in all of that (D5, p. 51, note 124).

Between August 8 and 12, Bernadette, exhausted, suffers an attack of Asma. Dominique Mariote and Paul de Lajudie find her in bed and they take the opportunity to interrogate her at length. Both have noted the conversation each one on its own, independently (BI, pp. 202-210).

Why were you forbidden to go to the grotto?

—Because everyone was following me.

And what is the reason you no longer go now?

Oh! because then I felt very pushed (very emphasized, Write it here, Mariote.

Did you feel very pushed?

Oh, yes!, very pushed.

And what was it that drove you?

I don′t know, but I felt pushed and I couldn′t hold back.

And now you no longer feel pushed?

No, sir priest.

Have you seen the Blessed Virgin since then?

No, sir priest, I haven't seen her.

—Not even on the day of your first communion?

No, Mr. Priest.

When did you make your first communion?

Last year.

And when you go to the cave, do you no longer see it?

No, sir priest.

They were long questioning her about her secrets, but they completely wasted their time. And with a kind and natural smile they he said goodbye to them (D5, p. 318-319; s81, p. 211).

One of the two visitors, Paul de Lajudie, comes back on the 28th of September

Would you tell your secret to the pope?

The Most Holy Virgin has forbidden me to tell it to anyone. person... the pope is a person.

But the pope has the power of Jesus Christ!

Yes, the pope is very powerful on earth, but the Virgin is in the sky.

And once again, check Bernadette's indifference. towards the wonderful.

Have miraculous events, healings come to your knowledge? miraculously operated?

I have been told that there have been miracles, but to my knowledge, no.

As the visitor feels strange, she clarifies:

As far as my personal knowledge goes, I have not seen them.

They say that you have contributed to some of those miracles. Is it truth?

She smiles as she says:

Oh, no sir, none!

Both to keep Bernadette away from the intrusions and to take care. the sending of it another two times that same year to the waters of Cauterets.

A life on four fronts

Throughout this period, Bernadette has been living a life in four. fronts:

1. Works to earn the bread for their loved ones: entire days like 'little nanny' at the house of Armantine Grenier (D6, p. 74, note 180).

2. Helps in their home and plays her role as the firstborn, especially regarding the frantic Toinette.

3. Unable to attend school regularly, he/she tries to fill his/her delay through the benevolent lessons of Antoinette Tardhivail.

4. Finally, respond to the visits that come from everywhere, well be at home or wherever they call her: the rector's house, the hospice, the hotel of the Pyrenees or private houses. Their testimony is a factor decisive for the founding of the pilgrimage, currently under examination by the episcopal commission

Available to everyone, it has built up some and astonished others confused others, according to Peyramale's testimony in his letter of 17 of

mayo de 1860 (D6, p. 110).

Bernadette es personalmente, según la expresión del abate Pomian, the best proof of the appearance' (PANev 1142). But at what price!

What saves her is not only her gift of reply, but her natural economy. from those dialogues where he/she responds only to the question asked, and never beyond; it is their indifference to the effect produced. It does not impose itself the ta- a persuasive area. Does not argue, and disarms the debater. Knows how to disengage from a natural way, saving themselves a lot of unnecessary effort.

This surprises those who know her. She never shows so much intelligence as in their testimonies, according to someone who has observed it. knew. That charisma, which reveals its full measure when Bernadette is in front of the judges (cf. Lk 12:12) is also a daily occurrence in presence of visitors of all kinds. And thus escapes some enormous risks.

But that is an impossible life for the Soubirous. In the mill su natural generosidad vuelve a imponerse de forma peligrosa. Son too welcoming, too complacent, both for the clients as for the visitors, those who accept nothing.

Louise offers the snack again and tells the struggling customers:

You will pay when you can.

6
BERNADETTE PROTECTED

The Care of Dominiquette

In early summer of 1860, Dominiquette Cazenave becomes anxious. for that 'disorder', and goes to see Abbot Peyramale:

Don't leave her in the world!

Abbot Peyramale had already thought about it a lot. Since the summer In 1858, he had proposed to Bernadette to place her with the sisters of hospice. But she had replied:

Oh, I understand you very well, sir priest, but I love you so much my father and my mother!(D3, p. 326)

This time the project is taking shape. Mayor Tacadé, who is funding the hospice combines a particular statute: Bernadette could be welcomed as a destitute patient (D VI, p. 77). But, with that formula ad-administrative, a convenient situation will be created so that it can, about everything, continue his instruction at the school of the sisters adjoining hospice.

Bernadette's parents dislike the separation, just like to her. They have been promised that their daughter will come to see them 'freely', although accompanied by a sister (Barbet, p. 129-130. D6, p. 77).



The Lourdes School Hospice
Where did Bernadette live?

Thus, on Sunday, July 15, Bernadette settles in the hospital, where he will stay until his departure from Lourdes.

She was protected there. In a sense, it was essential. But there his testimony loses in brilliance and freedom. Instead of managing with the people, freely, according to a way of life monitored remotely by the priest, now she becomes the psychic that a sister leads to the booth and presents in humiliating terms, because the pedagogy of that time believed that it was a duty to suppress pride in situations where one ran the risk risk of waking him. Bernadette is thus subjected to a Scottish shower. of admirations and affronts, capable of having disintegrated natures less solid.

It also loses some of the brilliance of its disinterest. In absence of Bernadette, the family will be less scrupulous in this matter. It was after his departure, in October 1860, when Azun de Bernétas managed to make accept from Louise some 'travel expenses' for a ninth that she I had begged him to do it in the cave. It was undoubtedly a fair compensation. for a lost time to earn his livelihood. And the pious writer had to put all his persuasion into play. But that would not have been possible in in no way with Bernadette.

She herself no longer has the right to reject 'dishonest money', and he has to accept it for the jobs. That is what costs him the most. But there, As always, it has been shaped for obedience and to act against.
She has never been in control of herself.

Furthermore, Bernadette leaves her environment because there is no pensioners in the class of the destitute that I had been frequenting until now. Only you can choose between 'first class', that of the bourgeois young ladies, and the 'second', frequented by girls of modest but honorable condition. A they place their own request in the second.

The benefit is that, for the first time in his life, he is going to take a course. normal school, not without effort, because he is already 16 years old and is not ready for that effort.

Sometimes one becomes desperate seeing their desire drift away so many times. caressed

You should put the book in my head!

He feels more comfortable in sewing, where the intelligence of his hands reveals itself as exceptional, especially in embroidery.

During recess, she is a cheerleader. Always cheerful, she enlivens the crowd of small classes, although soon it suffocates (testimony of Sister Philomène) Cames, B 1, p. 239.

The 'defects' of Bernadette

By seeing her daily, the sisters learn to know her 'flaws'.

He knows what he wants. His stubbornness surprises. One day he resists to Ms. Victoire Poux, who wants her clothes to be changed (without reason) from Sunday. When they don't let her go see her family, she protests:

They had promised it to me.

But he only protests in private, never 'in the presence of the girls' (A VII, p. 191, n.° 136). Sensitive to small injustices, she is ready to to defend others against any error of the authority. It is seen there a weakness. And her mischiefs due to being a 'seer' have little acceptance.

From there came the greatest difficulty for his canonization. The incident more serious is situated at the beginning of the summer of 1861. Bernadette was on the first floor of the hospice, with Julia Garros (10 years old), a girl full of vitality, and who reviews the lessons, although he is younger than She. The window overlooks the orchard, where some beautiful strawberries attract her. Attention; it is formally prohibited to enter the garden... But never... It has been clarified that strawberries cannot be picked. Bernadette comes up with one. idea:

I throw my clog out the window, you go get it and pick up the strawberries (D6, p. 81).

In the beatification process, 'the devil's advocate' emphasized, in Latin, the seriousness of the case: 'There is no doubt about the malice (in the sense of desire of evil: malice), and the violation of discipline is evident.

Fortunately for Bernadette, it was a sin of her youth, that later would be redeemed.

Sister Victorine was surprised to observe in her 'vanities of the dressing table'. One day he found her ready to 'widen her skirt' in the manner of the miriñaques that Peyramale and the clergy of that time qualified as 'diabolical'. On another occasion, she saw her striving to get a 'whale' or piece of wood in her corset (D6, p. 82, note 212).

Bernadette was already 17 years old, and she was not unfamiliar with the movements of the nature. That was a problem then; today we would be concerned
On the contrary. What everyone recognizes is his respect for God, the seriousness. of her prayer, her demand for her and for the sisters. However, to Victorine made a bad impression hearing him tell his sister. Toinette:

Do not learn to read.

Bernadette told him next to a window, in the hallway of the hospice. Sister Victorine, who has been surprised by the conversation, is amazed at such evil. advice. And Bernadette replies:

Ah! We come from a family where that's better.

Sister Victorine will not clarify anything else.

But what Bernadette feared for her sister was the bad example of the young ladies who hid the 5-cent novels in their missal and the they read in secret (III, 242). But she would not be a snitch for a empire.

The one that cost him the most to suppress was his disgust for money. In the early days, 'he would drop it on the floor.' Now he says in a very ... a little stimulating

There is a brush.

And if, despite everything, the money comes into his hands, he rushes to do it. pass to the superior.

She is not fond of anything and gladly gives what she has. Neither the gifts nor the personal items accumulate in his small pensioner's wardrobe, in which there is nothing particular, except that bo- little wine, which also missed sister Victorine. This is because her parents bring her a little wine from time to time 'to strengthen her' according to the formula accepted in the region.

If Bernadette takes snuff, it is for her asthma and by prescription from the doctor. Balencie. But the fact is a source of displeasure. One day, during the class offers a shot to its neighbors, and the cascading sneezes they provoke the craziest and most irresistible laughter of the year.

Wherever Bernadette is, she always brings joy, a bit excessive according to the feelings of that time. During recess, he/she avoids the topics serious, even after the meetings of the daughters of Mary. Prefers the game and good humor. He enjoys making others happy more than himself. herself, except when her companions ask her to recount the appearances:

Leave me alone, please, she pleads, I already have enough with to tell them to so many foreigners (PATarb 283, D7, p. 29).

Recognized qualities

It is crafty to protect itself from the curious.

Her piety is normal, but unimpeachable. She always makes the sign of the cross. 'as in the apparitions', even when she is alone. And that gesture build.

She is authorized to commune every Sunday, and sometimes in between. week; what was a privilege for that time (D6, p. 83, notes 216-217).

I appreciate your scruples about not taking pills, even for a cough. the eve of the days when he will take communion, so as not to run the risk of breaking the Eucharistic fast. Which is nothing more than the observance of what by then it was commonly taught.

But Bernadette is not gifted for mental prayer, and thus ... happily acknowledges:

Ah good! I don't know how to meditate.

Eventually she started to do it, No. 136, RSL, No. 15, p. 106.

The worst test

It was in 1861/62 when Bernadette was photographed for the first time. The Abate Bernadou, a chemistry professor at the minor seminary, obtained the permission from Abbot Peyramale.

As a demanding businessman, he insisted that Bernadette adopt. exactly the same expression that she had during the appearances. She protests:

But she is not here!

But, engrossed in his project, the photographer doesn't want to know anything.

Was consent given to preserve his face out of fear of losing it? Periodically, asthma attacks made him fear for his life. It was difficult for him. impossible to exhale; the air trapped in her lungs was suffocating her; it she turned red-purple. The first time her parents were called in, during the night (testimony of Jean-Merie Soubirous, PONev 164v, D7; p. 112, note

623).

Was that her worst test? No; she herself said so during a crisis:

I prefer this to receiving visitors (177, p. 112).

By the hundreds, by the thousands, the visits become unbearable for him until the nausea.

Bernadette goes to them reluctantly, especially when she They interrupt recess. Sister Victorine testifies to this:

I have seen her cry at the door, when there were 20 people there. 30 to 40, who were waiting for her in the living room... Big tears were flowing from his eyes. I said to him: Cheer up!

He was wiping his eyes, coming in, making some funny greetings, and responding. (A VII, p. 197, n.° 167; RSL n.° 15, p. 108).

After which he returned to his games or to his work, as if nothing had happened. it would have happened (PATarb, p. 229, n.° 49). The most painful thing for her was that they treated her like a saint, even though she did nothing to lend herself to it.

They want her to touch pious objects, and she responds:

That's prohibited for me.

And then they resort to subterfuges. Important characters left to fall to the ground her rosary so that she would pick it up.... In such cases, her Insight neutralizes her courtesy. One day she said:

I am not the one who has dropped it.

Again, and sister Victorine mentions it, some women approach her for behind

If I could cut a piece of her dress!

—How foolish you are! said the seer (A VII, p. 197).

Now that you can write, the task of autographs adds to the Others. But for her, the day started on January 1, 1859. That day they made her to repeatedly copy a congratulatory model of which one does not understand nothing. And since then I have found a formula that works for everything: p. p. Bernadette.

That abbreviated formula that is written in hundreds of prints. Pray for Bernadette.

She is often presented with rosaries to bless. And she says:

I am not wearing the stole.

Daily, they ask him about his secrets.

If you can't say them, it's a useless revelation, three object. jesuits.

—Useful for me, she replies.

Why have you hidden it from your confessor? asks the abbot. Shack.

"That's not a sin," Bernadette responds.

The supreme interrogation

On December 7, 1860, Bernadette is called for a solemn and last interrogation at the diocese of Tarbes, in the presence of Monsignor Laurence. He is in front of the bishop, clean-shaven and unperturbed, and surrounded by the 12 members of the sharp faces commission. The secretary Fourcade tirelessly fills the large sheets of white paper:

Did the Holy Virgin have a halo?, asks one of the commissioners.

-Aureola?

Bernadette ignores that word, but soon understands:

She was wrapped in a soft light.

Have you seen her well?

—Yes, fine.

And did that light appear at the same time as the apparition?

He arrived ahead and stayed a little longer.

I don't think it is a worthy idea of the Most Holy Virgin to do it. eating grass, another commissioner comments.

— Although we eat the salad, replies Bernadette.

Finally, she is invited to specify how the Virgin pronounced the words. March 25: I am the Immaculate Conception. Then she rises, extend your arms and bring your hands together. Something happens in the simplicity of that inspired gesture.

Two tears were seen running down the face of the old bishop. After the meeting, still greatly moved, he says to his vicar general:

Have you seen that girl?

On January 18, 1862, thirteen months later, the bishop promulgates the instruction in which it recognizes the appearances:

We judge that the Immaculate Mother of God has appeared really Bernadette.

That judgment is based on the spiritual fruits of the pilgrimage, the healings and Bernadette herself.

Bernadette and her doctor

Shortly after, the fear of losing her spreads once again. On April 28 In 1862, he receives 'the last rites'. 'Last', it is thought, because he is... extremis, at the last moment, without being able to even take communion. With difficulty it manage to make him swallow a piece of the host with a bit of water from the grotto. Is it the end?... No, because there the face of the dying woman changes. blocked expiration regains its rhythm. Relieved, Bernadette smiles. She wanted to eat and get up; but the superior does not allow it; it will be tomorrow.

The next day, April 29, Dr. Balencie is frankly surprised to find her in the phone booth; but hides her surprise:

Well! Those remedies I prescribed to you have had their effect.

But if I haven't taken them, observe Bernadette. 1300).

In the village, where the rumor of Bernadette's agony had sown the emotion, they talk about a miracle. It was one of those sudden remissions to which asthma is subject. The conclusion of the seer is foreign to any mysticism:

If I get sick again, I will ask the doctor to give me a lot of... Attention... he confused my bad with another, and I could have died. (D6, p. 360-361).

From now on the trial of the bishop of Tarbes has closed the mouth of the opponents. But the questions sometimes become more subtle:

And what if Monsignor of Tarbes had judged that you had... wrong? What would you have answered? asks Abbot Corbin.

I could never have said that I have neither seen nor heard it, he responds. Bernadette.

The year 1862 brings him great joy: at the end of August, he manages to Finally, to meet his godfather, Jean-Marie Védère, arrived with permission to Lourdes and Momères, with the Legion of Honor won in 1859, in the battle of Solferino. He sees her then for the first and last time, haloed by her separation and its legend.

The year 1863 continues the monotonous rhythm of the life of a pensioner and of the work from the visits. In June of that year, Bernadette receives a what moves her: it is that of Abbot Alix. That celebrated and worldly speaker receives in Lourdes the shock of a deep conversion. And so it trusts Bernadette. She recognizes herself in that transparency:

It is the holy Virgin, sir, it is the holy Virgin who has having done that, he repeats it twice (D7, p. 244, n. " 1457).

In October of the same year, it is exposed to the target for the second time. photographic, thanks to the skill of Pau's traveling photographer, Mr. Billard-Perrin.



Bernadette:
photos of Billard-Perrin
October 1863

7

The Shepherdess and the Sculptor

1863-1864

Bernadette contributes her input for a delicate matter.

The young ladies Lacour, from Lyon, enthusiasts of Lourdes, where they have Having built a house on the current esplanade, they have decided to replace the figurine, which the popular initiative had placed in the niche of the cave, for a life-sized sculpture made of Carrara marble, which will represent the appearance 'as accurately as possible'. Agreed with the bishop of Lourdes, they sign with the sculptor Joseph Fabisch, a member from the Academy of Sciences, Fine Letters and Arts of Lyon, a contract fabulous 7000 francs in gold, not including the expenses of the sculptor himself, starting with a trip to Lourdes to question Bernadette. It is a specialist in the subject. He is also responsible for the needle statue of Fourvière and that of Notre-Dame de la Salette.

On September 17, Fabisch arrives in Lourdes. Immediately, they begin to Bernadette from the playground. The sculptor observes her features with eyes of expert

The face, lacking the regularity desired by the sculptor, has something very nice: a charm that commands respect and inspires faith (memory of October 17, 1878, p. 3).

He finds the topic appealing, but he is scared. Unlike the Salette, where she has obtained permission to 'interpret' the instructions. 'eccentrics' of the seers, the contract imposes the obligation to accommodate follow Bernadette's instructions. They are not contrary to the 'rules of art', in which he believes as the supreme verdict. He has prepared 20 questions, in pencil, on a sheet of letter paper, that has been preserved until today. And in it, she records Bernadette's answers:

The body... straight or leaning forward?

—Flat... without being rigid.

The head tilted or leaning forward?

Also straight.

The hands, how were they together when he said: 'I am the Immaculate Conception?

Here the sculptor notes:

Bernadette has gotten up with great simplicity, she has gathered the hands and has raised his eyes to the sky. I have never seen anything more beautiful... Neither Fiesole, nor Perugino, nor Raphael has ever made anything as. smooth and at the same time as deep as the gaze of that young woman naive, consumptive from head to toe... who has not the slightest doubt about the notable favor received (Letter of September 17, 1863; D7, p. 280, no. 1500).

Inspiration was born in that moment.

Worried about the contract, the sculptor approaches the cave. accompanied by the seer. Test a paper silhouette in the niche, to determine the size and position of the statue. And also submit to Bernadette a folder of engravings in which the Virgin is represented. in every way... Bernadette barely looks at them, when suddenly, at to pass a engraving or lithograph of the Virgin of San Lucas, raises the hand with liveliness and says:

I had something like that.

That trait that has come to us through two traditions has fascinated by Picasso and Malraux. They were unaware of the testimony contemporary, to which Bernadette immediately added:

But that's not it! No, that's not it!
the Literary Figaro of April 13, 1974, in response to Malraux.

In November 1863, the sculptor sends a message to Abbot Peyramale. photo of your plaster model, two thirds the size of the full scale definitive. The letter from the parish priest hints at Bernadette's criticisms. have been severe:

The figure did not seem young enough or smiling enough... The veil descended perpendicularly and uniformly... The hands were more together, and the fingers applied to each other, the left foot is a little separate, etc.

Aware of the abyss that separates Bernadette's vision from the vision of the artist, and careful to respect the freedom of the latter, Peyramale he added these words that left him free rein:

I don't know if the rules of art will allow you to take these into account. observations. I am convinced that, inspired by your talent and by the immaculate Virgin, you will provide us with a remarkable work of art p. 309, n.° 1565).

A sharper criticism would have put the sculptor in a bind. Well, I hadn't waited for the response to begin the final execution. from the marble work (D7, p. 48; cf. p. 323, n.° 1565).

The box containing the statue arrives in Lourdes on March 30th. 1864, five days before its inauguration. Bernadette recovers from her illness and begins to resume her life and her games. They tear her away from a I run in which I happily twirled with the little girls of the school. When introducing Father Ollivier, preacher of Notre-Dame, to he is there, the priest scolds her, according to the practice of 'beneficial humiliation'. And There she is, with the two priests, in front of the statue that has just been. placed on a piece of furniture in the adjoining room.

Is this alright? asks Peyramale.

Before the shining marble of Carrara, formulate your question with 'a a kind of unease,' says Father Ollivier. He has understood perfectly well the impossibility of getting the pastor to agree with the sculptor. In his letter of November 30, 1863, he had prepared the Mr. Fabisch for the final exam:

I doubt very much that, upon seeing your statue, Bernadette, no matter how... amazed that it could be (sic!) I exclaimed: It's her! Don't get angry for Hello.

Bernadette, educated for submission, tries to give the answer. scheduled:

—Yes, that's fine...

But he doesn't know how to pretend. And, after a silence, he speaks again with an accent. of lamentation, 'almost out of spite':

No, this is not it! (Memory 011ivier, and Sempé, p. 224).

What was lacking in the statue was mainly the craftsmanship. According to Bernadette, the Virgin was all simplicity, detachment, symmetry, verticality, while the sculptor has given it a forced tone, complicating to pleasure the folds of the veil and the dress. She has tilted slightly the head and tilted it backwards, according to the drawings popular from the celestial, when Bernadette wanted it straight over the shoulders.

She raised her eyes, but not her head. They've made her have a goiter! Bernadette protests.

The sculptor has multiplied the smoothness and sinuosity of everything. type. Has not respected the small size of the appearance. Has taken advantage of the dismantling of the land where the rosebush of the niche rested to enlarge the statue, giving it 1.70 m in height, when it would have been enough to adapt it to the same height as Bernadette: 1.40 m (H3, p. 152-156).

It has not respected the youth of the appearance, as requested. Bernadette, to whom the Virgin appeared when she was very young (as in the original) like Saint Teresa of Ávila.

Younger than sin, younger than the race from which he was born, writes Georges Bernanos (Diary of a Country Priest, Plon, Paris, 1936, pp. 256-259.

Without a doubt, the sculptor was sincere. And the current had passed from Bernadette to him, although without breaking the conventions of her academicism. Art is eloquence,
Academy of Letters and Fine Arts of Lyon. Eloquence betrayed Bernadette.

Neither she nor Peyramale attended the inauguration. The parish priest decided that she stayed in the orphanage so as not to expose her to the curiosity of the admirers at that triumphant ceremony... Perhaps he also wanted to prevent an untimely judgment about his frankness from being taken away statue. But, the mocked mocker, Peyramale also remained trapped in house on April 4th, the day of the inauguration. I was recovering from a serious illness, in the course of which your brother, Doctor Peyramale, had attended from Momères, he found that 'by all luck he had then none more than 45 cents... and 35 rents of the poor to pay at the end of the month, to avoid evictions similar to those suffered by the Soubirous (Védère, p. 90-91).

As for the sculptor, he confessed that in that official triumph there was experienced 'one of the greatest sorrows' of his life 'as an artist'. Seen from below, from an unusual angle, 'illuminated by a reflection unexpectedly, the statue had 'completely changed its expression'. the artist missed the 'polychromy of the ancients' and thus decided to paint from blue the belt...

That day was for Bernadette the day of the big decision that will mark the rest of his/her life.



The statue of the Appearance, inaugurated April 4th de1864

8

THE VOCATION OF BERNADETTE

The decision of April 4

On April 4, 1864, after the mass held at the hospice from Lourdes, Bernadette goes to look for the superior, Sister Alexandrine Rocks:

Now I know, my dear mother, where I must become a nun.

And where is it, my daughter?

In your house, my dear mother.

Well, my daughter, we will talk about it with the Monsignor.

Sister Maria Géraud (arrival in Lourdes for the inauguration of the statue) was convinced that Bernadette had found in the communion that had just made the light that inspired her vocation religious (PONev 1202v; D7, p. 109).



Sister Alexandrine Roques,
superior,
with Bernadette
late 1861
beginnings of 1862

A long deliberation

In fact, the decision had been made a while ago. And it was the result of a long deliberation kept in the shadows. The works of dom Bernard Billet has elucidated the enigmas and apparent contradictions. (D7, p. 79-128, collected in a volume titled: Bernadette, a vocation like everyone else).

A letter from March 8, 1858 (which I had published in the volume II of the Authentic Documents) provided a new piece of information. On that date the the mayor of Lourdes had a conversation with Bernadette revealing. He proposed to her that she learn the trade of sewing or ironing lady, paying the municipality. And she replied:

No, I want to 'be religious'.

The mayor insisted:

But you can change. And in the meantime, you have to take a stance.

She replied:

I will not change. However, I want to do what you want. father and my mother (D2, p. 149).

The first thing that attracted Bernadette was the contemplative life, according to the testimony of his two aunts Bernarde and Basile. He knew the Carmelite of Bagnères. Antoinette Tardhivail, his private teacher, had spoken to him. of it with enthusiasm since the spring of 1858, because this was the attraction and the drama of his life. He had wanted to enter there, but his health it had prevented him. That's why she often signed as 'sor Augustine' with nostalgia for her failed vocation. Did Bernadette have the opportunity to talk with the nuns through the black veil and the latticework? Anyway Bernadette found a highly respected Carmelite for his musical knowledge and by his holiness: Father Hermann. But soon he understood that his health prevented him from continuing that way of life, exactly just like 'sor Augustine'. Realistic as she was, she stopped thinking about it. turning a deaf ear to the proposals that came to him in this regard, like many others.

In 1960/61 he talks to his cousin Jeanne Védère, the governess of Mommers, of an order dedicated to their patron Saint Bernard. They would like to to enter it, because there are practiced 'vigils... fasts... disciplines... mortification. For a long time it was thought to be about the

Cistercians. But 'Saint Bernard' was for her the convent of the Bernardinas, established in Anglet, near Bayonne, by Father Cestac. The founder, forewarned, had expressed his refusal, partly due to health. Bernadette and partly for another reason that he did not tell her:

I don't want people to come here behind her (D7, p. 86-87).

It doesn't seem that Bernadette has questioned her desire to religious vocation. But he wondered about the possibilities of putting it into practice. He was a beggar. His health was one obstacle and his poverty another. He needed a dowry, that he could not think of asking his family.

According to numerous testimonies, she did not feel attracted to the sisters. from Nevers. And this is having had an important conversation about his vocation with Sister Ursule Fardes, superior of the hospice, before October from 1860. And he talks to him about the matter again with a lyrical accent, exceptional in she

I like to remember the day we were by the fire, when I you spoke of my vocation. How many times have I recalled that conversation! I can still see you sitting on a step of the staircase and I in another. I look at it every time I go by there...(letter of the 15th of June 1866, ESB, p. 190.

But, certainly, his confidence on the stairs will never be known. as neither was known the secret adventure that Natanael lived 'under the fig tree', of which Jesus speaks... (John 1:38).

"He would have liked the Cruz sisters," according to Abbot Pomian. Perhaps he tried to guide her towards that regional congregation, of which he... occupied. Whatever the case, Bernadette reacted very poorly when those nuns wanted to show him their monumental headdress that they wore for so:

I don't want that tunnel.

The Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul were not more successful when they also tried on her cap after inviting her on the occasion of the entry into the congregation of Germaine Raval.

Today I got very bored, he confessed upon his return. The day has been very long story. Those nuns have tried on their habit for me, but I don't feel attracted in any way.

Ah, that's going to give you the vocation, Bernadette!

Oh, no! Quite the opposite (D7, p. 89; note 516).

In 1863, the sisters of the hospice guide her towards caring for the sick. Decisive experience, specifies Abbot Pomian, his confessor:

She exercised in taking care of some 'somewhat repugnant' elderly people. And He applied himself to the task with charity. He did it gladly (A VII, p. 189).

We have some details about one of those sick women: 'A woman desharrapada, which was given to the wine... It had fallen into a brazier of head... having burned horrifically.

Bernadette said while laughing:

From now on, there will be no need to drink (blow) so much!
1929, p. 189.

Bernadette entrusted that attraction to Joanne Védère:

I love the poor very much, I like to take care of the sick: I
I will meet with the sisters of Nevers. They have given me a patient to take care of him; when I am feeling well, no one cares for him more than I do. I
I will meet with them (letter from September 10, 1879, Védère, p. 71, OG) 192-193).

What stops her are money and health problems, but also the idea that the daily humiliations have given him about his 'disability'. At that time, disabilities were not properly valued. damages of such a method.

This is how Bernadette found herself when Monsignor Forcade, bishop of Never, arrives in Lourdes on September 27, 1863. She interrogates her about her future with the frankness of the ancient missionary in the Far East, shaped by simplicity through his own tumultuous life:

What are you going to be?

Well, nothing!

—What, nothing? We have to do something in this world.

Well, I'm with the sisters.

—Undoubtedly, but you can only be there temporarily.

I will always stay with them.

That's easy to say, but not so easy to accomplish. That you have been provisionally taken in by charity does not mean that they will have you. forever.

And why not?

—Because you are not a sister, and it is essential to be one in order to be able to to be granted permanent membership in the community... Here you are not even a maid. From today 'you are' precisely what a moment ago you pretended to be: you are 'nothing'. And on that basis, nothing can be done. to remain a long time in no place.

And continues after a moment of silence:

You are no longer a burden. Wouldn't you like to find in the world a convenient placement?

Oh, not that, of course! [she replies] lively.

So why don't you become a sister? Haven't you ever thought about it? in it?

That's impossible; you know well that I am poor. I will not have never the necessary dowry (Forcade, p. 11-12).

The bishop calms her down.

When we recognize in poor girls a true vocation, we do not hesitate to receive them without a dowry.

But the young ladies you receive without a dowry are skilled and smart, and they compensate them very well... But I don't know anything, I'm not 'worth it not at all.

This very morning I was able to confirm that you are good at something.

—For what?

...to scrape carrots.

(Bernadette laughs).

Bah! That's not difficult at all!

It doesn't matter... A way to employ you will be found; and that not to mention that in the novitiate you will be given a good part of the instruction that you are missing.

If that's the case, I will think about it; but I am still not decided (P. 13).

Over the following months, Bernadette matures her deliberation. about those new bases, through the ups and downs of his health, that has improved during the winter of 1863-1864.

What she appreciated, among other things, in the Sisters of Nevers, it was the discretion they observed regarding her, in contrast to others who they were requesting her from everywhere.

I don't know if the rules of art will allow you to take these into account. observations. I am convinced that, inspired by your talent and by the immaculate Virgin, you will provide us with a remarkable work of art p. 309, n.° 1565).

A sharper criticism would have put the sculptor in a bind. Well, I hadn't waited for the response to begin the final execution. from the marble work (D7, p. 48; cf. p. 323, n.° 1565).

The box containing the statue arrives in Lourdes on March 30th. 1864, five days before its inauguration. Bernadette recovers from her illness and begins to resume her life and her games. They tear her away from a I run in which I happily twirled with the little girls of the school. When introducing Father Ollivier, preacher of Notre-Dame, to he is there, the priest scolds her, according to the practice of 'beneficial humiliation'. And There she is, with the two priests, in front of the statue that has just been. placed on a piece of furniture in the adjoining room.

Is this alright? asks Peyramale.

Before the shining marble of Carrara, formulate your question with 'a a kind of unease,' says Father Ollivier. He has understood perfectly well the impossibility of getting the pastor to agree with the sculptor. In his letter of November 30, 1863, he had prepared the Mr. Fabisch for the final exam:

I doubt very much that, upon seeing your statue, Bernadette, no matter how... amazed that it could be (sic!) I exclaimed: It's her! Don't get angry for Hello.

Bernadette, educated for submission, tries to give the answer. scheduled:

—Yes, that's fine...

But he doesn't know how to pretend. And, after a silence, he speaks again with an accent. of lamentation, 'almost out of spite':

No, this is not it! (Memory 011ivier, and Sempé, p. 224).

What was lacking in the statue was mainly the craftsmanship. According to Bernadette, the Virgin was all simplicity, detachment, symmetry, verticality, while the sculptor has given it a forced tone, complicating to pleasure the folds of the veil and the dress. She has tilted slightly the head and tilted it backwards, according to the drawings popular from the celestial, when Bernadette wanted it straight over the shoulders.

orderly of the hospice. Her order was internal. She was
very precise in following her little personal rules: she attended mass every day, I took communion three times a week: Sundays, Wednesdays, and viernes; todos los días hacia la visita al santísimo sacramento y recitaba daily the rosary. When she prayed, one would say she was in ecstasy, so pious and withdrawn she was (Védère, p. 22).

François Soubirous frequently attends. Just like in the times of Bartrès has been going there since his firstborn left... He will be the one who she will finally decide on her daughter's return, although she feels so happy in Mormères. Prefers to see her close rather than far away.

The two cousins prolong their conversations, initiated long ago. some time ago, about their vocational projects. They had talked a lot about Hello on April 4th, the day Bernadette has decided. The vocation Jeanne Védère was still held back by her family. She thought then Jeanne in the convent; but her father did not want to hear about the cloister. Exhausted from the struggle, she had resigned herself to try a solution:

Going with the sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul with the intention of enter later into the Carmel.

Don't do it, Bernadette replies. Stay at home.

Es como si tuvieras la intención de engañar a las personas y al buen God The good God is not deceived. It is He who draws you[...]But it is not he who puts the thought in you to join the Sisters of Saint Vincent from Paul with the intention of leaving there later to go to another place […] Be patient, you will achieve it (Védère, p. 65 and 68).

In Momères, Bernadette had told her cousin:

The main difficulty will disappear very soon.

That difficulty was my poor godmother who opposed more than anyone to my entry into religion. At that time I was sick. Four days later When my cousin left, she died; it was on November 23rd (Védère, p. 88).

The candidate

Bernadette had left for Momères without having the answer to her request of April 4th. In Nevers, the superior general, mother Joséphine Imbert doubted. She was worried about the disturbances that the celebrity of the fortune teller could provoke in the religious house that the would welcome. Mother Marie Thérese, novice mistress, was favorable:

It will be one of the greatest satisfactions of my life to see the eyes that they have seen the Holy Virgin, he will say a little later to the novices (PONev 1100v; ESB p. 181, no. 48).

The bishop supported the demand that he himself had provoked. received and transmitted.

On November 19, 1864, upon returning to Lourdes, Bernadette find a good news: the answer is favorable.

She communicates it to her parents. 'It suggested that she was happy,' has observed his brother Jean-Marie (PONev 147; D7, p. 109; and Mélanges J. Coppin, p. 78, note 40, for the correction of the date.)

The postulancy could begin. But Bernadette relapses into her illness from the beginning of December until the end of January, and it will be Only at the beginning of February will it start to be lifted, according to their letter of 7. from the same month of 1865 (D7, p. 421, no. 1717).

His recovery is overshadowed by the death of Justin. Soubirous, the little brother that she took to the field so that his mother breastfed him in the summer of 1855. He died before reaching the ten years. The doctors who had visited the unhealthy 'dungeon' had already they had told the Soubirous:

You will not keep your children

Marriage proposal

On March 5, 1866, Bernadette is proposed to. The suitor had already declared himself on April 20, 1863. His name is Raoul. from Tricqueville and is an internal medicine resident in Nantes. He is addressing Monsignor Laurence, as if the bishop were the moral father of the young woman:

I feel that I can do nothing better than getting married, and I would wish marrying Bernadette. If I can't marry her, I think that I will abandon the world and ask God for the grace to go die in the solitude (D7, p. 493, no. 1814).

We don't know what Bernadette thought about it, or even if she did. they transmitted the letter. It is only known —from the pretender himself— that the the bishop had responded to the first letter 'without regard' and saw in She made a request contrary to the work beloved by the most holy Virgin. the boy will show perseverance and will renew his request, in Nevers, to Monsignor Forcade, during Bernadette's novitiate (Forcade, p. 38-42;

L3, pp. 236-240.

In February 1865, Bernadette begins her postulancy. And in April In 1866, he drafts his request to enter the novitiate.

Delays

On April 28, 1866, he announces his departure (D7, p. 498, no. 1822). But Monsignor Laurence is interested in having you present for the inauguration. from the crypt, which is the substructure of the 'chapel' requested by our Madam. Sor Alexandrine writes then:

Bernadette... sighs because the moment of her departure has arrived, which it will be delayed (still), if Monsignor de Turbes demands, for the good from the cave, may she stay here for some time. Pray a lot[...] my dear mothers, so that it is not this way [...] so that this girl is more sheltered by self-love and the ambition of all orders religious women who, even in our presence, frequently come to request it[...] (D7, p. 499, n.° 1823; cf. p. 78, note 467).

This time Bernadette attends the ceremony and participates in the first. official procession, which responded to another request of our Lady.

For Bernadette it is a joy, although also an occasion for many insults.

On May 19, the first day of the triduum, she is framed among the tight lines of the daughters of Mary, in uniform, for her to pass inadvertent.

Back, Jeanne Védère takes her out for a moment to the patio of the hospice where the people of Momères want to see her. But immediately it it forms a crowd and exclamations like these are heard:

Oh, what a lovely saint!

Oh, the beautiful virgin!

How happy he/she is!

In the afternoon, the operation needs to be repeated in order to disperse the crowd that gathers in front of the colonnade of the hospice and intends to get inside. It is decided to summon her to withdraw. They do let Bernadette stroll for a while in the cloister. Those who have having managed to penetrate there, they approach to 'touch' her and present her with objects pious

During that time—Jeanne Védère recalls—she would tell me:

How foolish they are! Let them go to the cave to make their objects sound, and let me be

On the way back, Bernadette was still lamenting:

You present me as a curious piece (D7, p. 76, notes 450) 452).

And this other complaint:

You show me like a fattened ox 909, and PONev 624).

Finally, Monsignor Laurence authorizes his departure. But it has been planned. that Bernadette makes the trip with her postulant companion, Léontine Mouret. Now then, the father of that girl refuses to give his consent. feeling, because she is just 17 years old. We have to wait. Bernadette He writes to Mr. Mouret on May 27, 1866. His letter brings tears. to Léontine's father, and authorizes the record (ANDL 42, 1910, p. 311).

The goodbyes

In the spring of 1866, the moment of farewells arrives. They take to Bernadette in Pau, where her presence 'attracts so many people' that there is a need to 'turn to the police'. On June 25, he heads to Tarbes to say goodbye to Monsignor Laurence, but he is out administering confirmations. A the letter will replace the visit. They also take her to Bagnères. The mother Alexandrine had promised it to the superior of the place, with the condition that she would be very discreet...

Bernadette said goodbye to Jeanne-Marie Doucet, the little sick one. that I had visited at the Piqué farm the day after the appearances. Since the autumn of 1858, he lived on the Bourrié farm. Now he was already 15 years old. His job consisted of coloring for Mr. Dufour the recordings of the apparition and the portraits of the seer. Write her memoirs illustrated, of which the most beautiful ornament is the visits of Bernadette.

Billard-Perrin has approached the hospice to photograph Bernadette with the sisters: two in civilian attire and one in habit. religious, and one more with the daughters of Mary.

On July 2, the eve of the departure, Viron obtains from the bishop a permission that he had requested a long time ago. And so he obtains three photos of Bernadette alone. But the cliché of the maternal family is out of focus and missing is the paternal family member, who unfortunately has not

left a trace.

Viron goes to deliver the photos himself. He wants to give them as a gift to Bernadette, but she refuses:

No, I want to pay you for them, because if you give them to me, they won't really be mine.

mine (ANDL 42, 1910, p. 311; D7 p. 125, note 193).

Bernadette gives the photos to her friends and distributes all the little ones. objects that he still had in his wardrobe from the orphanage. Then he makes the last visit to the cave. It costs him, but without it being noticeable dramatic note of those that have inspired that emotional scene. Aunt Basile Castérot hits the right note, she who shared the last one with Bernadette. evening and the next day saw her again before the departure.

I was not in the grotto when she came last time. I know he felt sad to part from there, but he showed bravery 810v).

On the afternoon of July 3rd, the whole family is gathered at the mill. I stayed for the farewell meal, and they don't part ways until 11 o'clock. night, an unusual hour for that time:

A large crowd was waiting for Bernadette in front of our door, and when she came out everyone gathered around her...[to] to touch it, refers Anne-Marie Lamathe, owner of the mill (PATarbes, p. 315).

The next day, the closest relatives go up to the orphanage for the last goodbye: the father, the mother already ill (A VII, p. 287, n.° 556), aunt Bernarde, Aunt Basile...

Bernadette is wearing a blue dress, a gift that she must have accepted. instances of the head of the hospice. She carries all her things in a thick fabric bag, adorned with vertical stripes in the colors of the rainbow. The trousseau is in a chest, overflowing, because when a a girl would marry or enter the religious life was provided with clothing for the rest of their life, at least in the environments that had means to pro- See, how the bourgeoisie and the religious orders were.

– We all cried – says Bernard, the youngest brother of. Bernadette, who was then 6 years old—. I acted like everyone else, without to know the reason for those tears 698).

We cried, but she didn't, precise Aunt Basile.

Bernadette said:

You are very good at crying. I can't stay forever.
PONev, 810v.

Lourdes is leaving

In Tarbes, they meet with the superior from Bagnères and her postulant. Marie Larrotis. Tía Bernarde, Toinette y sor Victorine, que habían accompanied Bernadette there, they remain on the platform with a group of friends and curious people. Lourdes and her mountains fade into the blue of horizon veiled by a plume of smoke. It is the penultimate farewell.

The last one will take place in Andrest (near Vic), where the Mouret they have a property. Mr. Mouret has also extended it in this way a few minutes the last hours with his daughter Leontina, of whom he loved so much it has been hard to separate

A crowd of friends had gathered [...], who testified a I really wish to see Bernadette. She went to the door to satisfy them. from the car. But the whistle of the machine is already heard and it is time to part. they hug crying and say goodbye. The train disappears taking away Never to future religious (ANDL 42, 1910, p. 308-309).



II

NEVERS

(7 de julio de 1866 - 16 de abril de 1879)

9
THE NOVICIATE

The journey

July 4-7, 1866

It is the first (and will be the last) time that Bernadette takes the train and leaves his Pyrenees. He has a sensitive gaze towards everything new that is coming. seeing. And so he writes to Lourdes's friends:

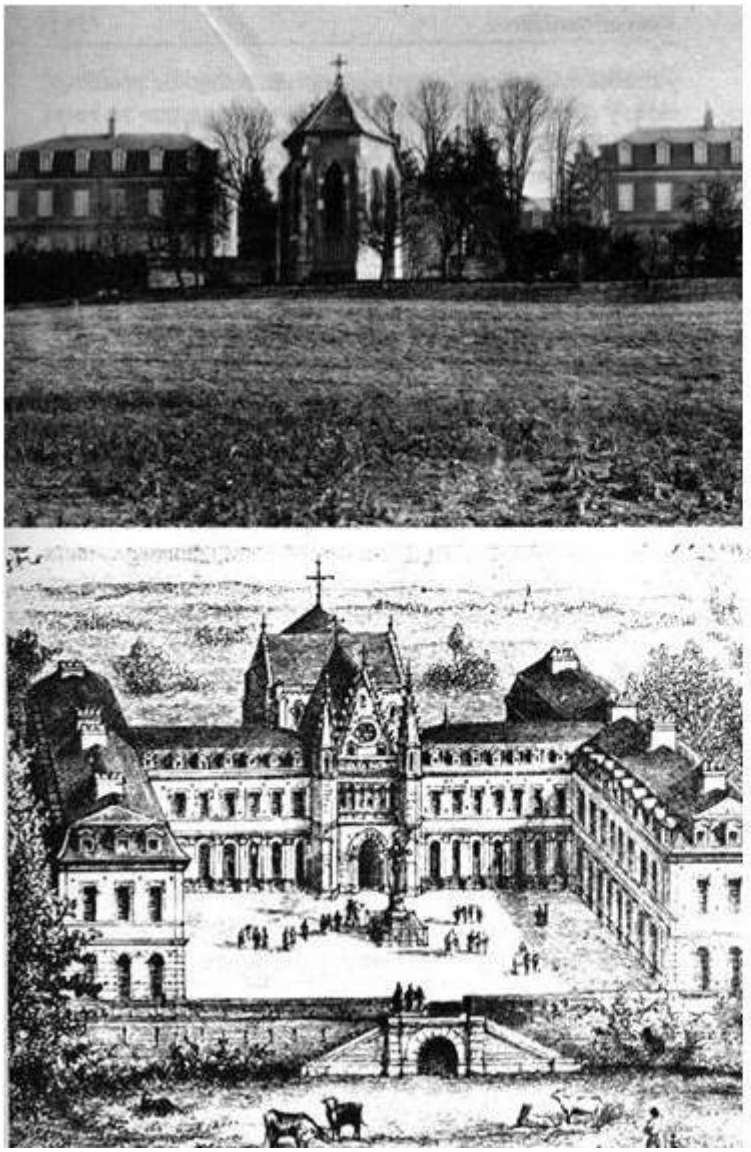
Let me tell you how we did the trip. We arrived on Wednesday, July 4th, at 6 in the evening, to Bordeaux, and there we stayed. until Friday at one. I beg you to believe me if I tell you that we make very good use of the time to take a walk. And by car so that you know! We were taken to visit all the houses of the Congregation in Bordeaux. I have the honor of telling you that this is not like that of Lourdes... Above all the 'imperial institution': it could be said to be more of a palace than a house religious.

We went to see the church of the Carmelites. From there we headed towards the Garonne to see the boats. We were also in the garden of plants. And I will tell you that we have seen something really new. Can you guess what? Red, black, white, and gray fish! It's what I've found the most. beautiful: to see how those little animals swam in the presence of a a multitude of children who were watching them.

Bernadette has recognized herself, with a complete sympathy. Franciscans, in those fish subjected to the condition of 'beasts' curious', a condition that was hers and that she hopes to leave behind definitely.

On July 6, second stage: Périgueux; from where the journey resumes on Saturday the 7th, at seven in the morning, to arrive at 10:30 at night at the Nevers station.

A car waits for the two superiors and the three postulants: Marie, Léontine and Bernadette. Everyone is sleeping in the big silent house. of which Bernadette only guesses the shadowy masses.



The convent
of Saint-Gildard.
in Nevers

The hood before the Areopagus

The next day, Sunday, July 8, at 1 PM, novices and Candidates are gathered in the novitiate room, where she has been invited. the entire community, as well as the sisters from the other two houses of Nevers. And yes, before entering the silence he has longed for so much, Bernadette is going to finally tell the story of the appearances.

To clearly mark the separation between this last testimony public and the religious discretion that Bernadette is going to enter, she has been allowed, against all customs, the peasant dress popularized for the photographs for sale, and especially the famous white hood.

The novice mistress presides with the superiors who have arrived from the

Pyrenees, and there are 300 nuns sitting on either side in
waxed wooden benches; there is the entire community of the mother house
with other sisters from the city and the surrounding areas. The teacher of
news gives the floor to the seer, but in a rather little
favorable, taking care to protect her humility. Bernadette begins in
modest and hesitant tone, first in patois, by a reflection of protection,
and then in French. Follow the scheme that has been repeated so many times.

The first time I went to the cave was on Thursday, February 11.
to gather firewood with two other little girls. When we arrived at the mill
I asked them if they wanted to go see the place where the water from the canal meets.
with that of the Gave. They replied that yes. From there we continued the
canal and we found ourselves in front of a cave, unable to go any further...

Then, the gust of wind and the appearance of the lady in white with
a blue belt. When Bernadette arrives at the muddy water on the 25th of
February, which she rejected three times before drinking it, the mother
Alexandrine Roques, superior of Lourdes, emphasizes:

Therefore, they can judge their little mortification.

You, Bernadette, were not mortified, kindly adds the mother.
Marie-Thérèse.

The water was very dirty.

Mother Vauzou is troubled by secrets. She loves transparency in
his novices. But he achieves nothing in that chapter.

Bernadette, in the end, must tell her vocation, including the part about the bonnets.
flashy devices with which they touched it to attract it to other congregations
religious:

There was one that bore the same name as the Immaculate, precise.
her.

Our congregation was one of the first dedicated to the
Immaculate Conception, specified Mother Marie-Thérèse Vauzou.

After giving that testimony, Bernadette puts on the pleated veil and
you saw the postulant's cape. On the eve, the curious will see themselves in
struggles to recognize her among the other forty-two.

Bernadette has formally stated that she was going to 'hide'. And that is
it is also the intention of her superiors. The chimes of the bell that
they multiply at the Saint-Gildard portal warn the sisters that the

it won't be easy.

Nostalgia

According to tradition, Bernadette is entrusted to 'a guardian angel': a novice responsible for getting her used to the new life; her name is Sister Émilienne Duboé. Bernadette feels nostalgia. She will confess it later to to encourage Valentine Borot, who was going through the same ordeal:

At first, I was very bored. When I received a letter from the mine, I was waiting to be alone to open it, because I felt incapable of to read it without spilling all my tears (L 453).

Overcome displacement with courage and also with humor. And thus write to Lourdes:

I have to tell you that Léontine and I got well soaked with our tears on Sunday. The good sisters encouraged us. saying that it was a sign of a good vocation (ESO, p. 241).

It mobilizes all its resources to acclimate, including the game. symbolic, referred to by sister Philomene:

Meeting three stones in the novitiate courtyard:

Here are the companions I love, she says, pointing at them. In one it had written LOURDES; in the second, THE GROTTO, and in the third, NEVERS, MOTHER HOUSE (L 17).

What comforts her is going in front of the statue of 'Our Lady'. of the Waters', which is at the back of the garden, 'in a kind of grotto'. write to Lourdes' sisters:

It was there where I could pour out my heart in the first days, and Afterward, our beloved teacher has allowed me to go every day.

What Bernadette found in that corner was not the 'likeness' that some have wanted to see, if not the open air that reminded of the cave, the gesture welcoming and a certain smile.

The uprooting was hard for Bernadette. Never before had she... abandoned its region, its mountains, the climate of humanity that characterizes Bigorre and all its connections with the places where it grace has flourished for her.

It is a great sacrifice (L 375), or even the greatest sacrifice of his

life, as she herself recognized (L 754). But she assumes without reservation no class the new stage:

My mission has ended in Lourdes (L 391).

—Lourdes is not heaven (L 759).

The taking of habit

Take the habit on July 29, three weeks after his arrival. with another 42 applicants. It leaves the grooved cap replacing it with the cap. two white bands that float diagonally below the chin. The change takes place during a ceremony. The candidates disappear in the sacristy and return cloaked with a white veil (a bridal veil), that Monsignor Forcade replaces with the black veil saying:

You are going to receive a new name that will remind you that you are separated from the world. You belong to Jesus Christ who, as a husband, has dear to choose you.

For the first time, the bishop imposes that new name on Bernadette, her name of a religious woman, when telling her:

Sister Marie-Bernard, may the Lord clothe you with a new man, has been created according to God, in righteousness and holiness of truth (Eph 4:24).

The novice teacher has reserved the patron saint for her baptism: Bernard of Clairvaux, but adding the patronage of Mary:

It was totally fair (she explained) that I gave him the name of the Most Holy Virgin, of whom she is a daughter (RC, p. 30).

After taking the habit, the novices disperse throughout France. They are going to complete their training on the site, working in each of the houses. to those who are sent: stimulating formula, which associated the communities based on the training of the young women. And so it was until the Congregation The Religious prohibited this custom.

An exception

Bernadette was kept in the motherhouse, as it was thought that she was the most suitable fortress to protect her, not the hospitals or schools open to the four winds, where it would have been the target once again of the curious.

Esta situación excepcional pesa a Bernadette. Así se lo confiesa al

console Sister Émilienne Duboé, disillusioned because she has been assigned to Clermont-Ferrand

How lucky I would be to be able to go to work, instead of seeing myself forced to stay here doing nothing!(L 24).

She appreciates the uniform that protects her from the curious, and above all the a veil that allows him to hide. He likes to pull it forward, like the cowl of the time of the apparitions, and wrap oneself in it during the thanksgiving. But the novitiate is not a place of indulgences. To the Mother Vauzou, who makes the observation to him, replies:

It's my little house.

It's impossible to blame her for that. Hasn't she gone to hide?

The profession 'in articulo mortis'

Around August 15, 1866, Bernadette entered the infirmary. The only reason is fatigue. But in September, asthma worsens. put him in bed and denied him permission to get up (L 33).

Sister Émilie, the assistant nurse, is worried seeing that 'he is drowning', without lamenting:

"It's necessary, this is nothing," Bernadette replied (L 41).

They watch over it for precaution, as had happened in Lourdes more than once. Bernadette's main concern is that she can sleep the sister who watches over her.

"Rest in that armchair," says Sister Éléonore; "I will call you." when necessary (L 34).

His availability has no reservations.

The good Lord sends it to me, it is necessary that I accept it.

She is confused by the care that surrounds her.

The poor should not be treated this way.

It's not that I don't care or that I don't want it. The early days she was happy that her novice companion, Léontine Mouret, was sent. to help in nursing. The nurse sister had been pro-
She postpones that choice. But soon it is another novice who goes up to the infirmary.

Is Léontine sick? asks Bernadette.

No, but the novice teacher has forbidden me to bring her.

—Ah, I understand now, replies Bernadette (L 48).

You can't hide what it costs you to eat. In front of the breakfast plate. what Sister Émilie Marcillac takes, she used to say:

What you bring is my penance.

But he took it without complaining (L 42).

In his sufferings, he looked at the crucifix with an expression that said mucho' (B2, p. 36).

When he got better, he knew how to laugh, make jokes, and even 'sing songs in Pyrenean patois.

She openly laughed seeing that I didn't understand anything, account sor Émilie (L 44).

He welcomed joys just as much as sorrows, saying:

All of this is good for heaven.

On October 25, his condition worsens. Candles are lit in front of the image of the Most Holy Virgin. Doctor Robert Saint-Cyr, physician of the community, assures that it will not last until night. To Sister Marcelline, her roommate, they move her to the adjoining room. The mother Marie-Thérèse prepares Bernadette to die. The chaplain, Father Victor Sweet, administered to the 'last rites'.

As Bernadette is about to leave the world, it is best that she does the profession at the point of death. But that requires a dispensation from the bishop. Monsignor Forcade is on a pastoral visit. Upon his return, at 7 in the evening, come in person:

I do not want to yield to anyone the honor of receiving their profession.

He is the one who recounts the following:

I find the sick woman gasping if not to say in a death rattle. I had just vomited a basin full of blood, which was still next to his bed. He spoke to him:

You're going to die, my dear daughter, and they tell me you want to make your profession. I am here to receive it.

Then she says in a dying voice:

I couldn't pronounce the formula, I don't have the strength.

That is not any difficulty. I will pronounce it for you; it will be enough. with which you respond.

With the poverty of a simple amen, Bernadette pronounced the vows. that definitively linked her to God in the Congregation of the sisters of charity.

The superior general... remained by the bedside with the pious one. intention of closing his eyes, continued the bishop. I had just finished. to leave, when recovering her words, the dying woman said smiling:

You have made me take up the profession because you thought that I would die tonight; well, I will not die tonight.

There has been much discussion about the counterclaim of the superior (mother Josephine), which Monsignor Forcade relates as follows:

— How is that? Did you know you weren't going to die that night and didn't tell me? What did you say? You were the reason we had to bring Monsignor to a untimely hour, and that we turned everything upside down for you! You are a little stupid! I assure you that if you are not here tomorrow morning dead, I take off your veil of a nun... And I send you to the novitiate with a simple novice's veil...

As you wish, my dear mother.

Without a doubt, the bishop has softened the conversation, from which he was not witness, and certainly it must be understood in a humorous tone without consequences. There is clear evidence of this: Bernadette kept the insignias of her profession and showed them to her novice companions joyfully and in peace:

-Thief!, said Sister Charles Ramillon, looking at the veil of the bedspread and the crucifix placed on the bed.

— Thief, agreed, —Bernadette responds, but in the meantime they are mine and I keep them; I belong to the Congregation and they cannot take me fire(L54).

Although the recovery of a sick person nullifies a profession death article, according to the provisions of canon law, such act it compromised the council in front of Bernadette, still uneasy about knowing whether they would keep her in the congregation, given that since the second month of the novitiate had revealed itself as a perpetual illness. They did not want depriving her of that comforting security, which made her say showing the profession crucifix:

I have it, it is in my possession, it is mine...

—El buen Dios no me ha querido,decía también a sor Émilie. Yo he
I arrived at the door and he told me: 'Get out of here, it′s too early.'
(L 53).

Y a sor Louise:

I am still too bad, the good God has not wanted to know about
my(L 53).

But she had loved her mother. Louise Soubirous died on the 8th. December 1866 during the eve of the Immaculate Conception, to
at 41 years of age, consumed by work, misery, and the nine
lightings, of which only four children remained:

I could not express the sadness I have felt, Bernadette wrote.
Before his death about his illness (L 55).

The time of the 'tests'

On February 2, 1867, Bernadette is healed and returns to the novitiate. Mother Marie-Thérèse Vauzou urges her to make up for lost time.
lost

—Well, Sister Marie-Bernard, we are going to enter the period of the tests.

The prudent Bernadette responds with a smile:

Oh my mother! I beg you not to hurry too much.
69).

According to Sister Léontina Villaret, the head teacher would have even said:

Now we are going to hit you.

To which Bernadette would have responded:

I hope you do it sweetly.

A phrase that did not 'edify' Mother Vauzou, Sister Léontine assures.

The novices are abundant in testifying to piety.
solid and sober of Bernadette:

Nothing that distinguished her from the others, except her regularity, her accuracy, her silence and above all her extreme charity, testifies Sister Joseph Caldairou (RC, p. 71.72).





Down,
la "test" of
Bernadette
With habit

En cuanto a las pruebas anunciadas, las que se nos refieren apenas they go from simple jokes.

One day, during the reading of the rule in the novitiate, sister recounts Stanislas, Sister Marie-Bernard was sitting on a step next to the novice mistress, and was mending her apron. In a certain passage of the the reading dealt with the issue of the apparition of the Virgin to a shepherdess. In At that moment, Mother Marie-Thérèse Vauzou turned to Sister Marie-Bernard, he said to him:

This is how the Holy Virgin always acts towards the pastors, is it not true, Sister Marie-Bernard?

She kindly responded:

Yes, my dear sister.

One day, a statuette of a saint is drawn by lots among the novices. German Cousin, and it’s Sister Marie-Bernard's turn. Mother Marie-Thérèse.

Vauzou comments 'in an ironic tone':

A shepherdess could only fall into the hands of another shepherdess. (testimony of Sister Isabelle, L 91).

Another day, Sister Marie-Bernard was waiting for her turn to direct 'to the the door of the novice mistress', and Sister Margueritte thought she noticed in it a certain fear (L 13); but Bernadette did not seem affected 'when she ma- Dre Vauzou dismissed her for her 'coughing fits' (RC, p. 83).

Other testimonies reveal the happy side of their relationships. According to Justine Pelat seemed happy [...] when the large novitiate hall I was ready to receive our mother Marie-Thérèse. Oh! then it was seen shining in her the pinnacle of her happiness. The maternal air from our revered teacher seemed to want to draw our attention towards herself hearts to bury them in yours (B2, p. 51).

One day when the teacher was returning from a trip (sor Stanilas refers) the we were waiting in the cloisters Suddenly, Sister Marie-Bernard appeared she falls into his arms like a girl deprived of her mother for a long time. And my sister Molinery (teacher of studies in the novitiate) says to her:

—And well, Sister Marie-Bernard, what eagerness to see you again! teacher!

Oh yes, my dear sister! she replied, it was too much natural... I regret it (L 90).

These testimonies must be placed in the context of religious life of the 19th century. The novices arrived very young, most of the time from very sheltered environments, with no experience, and not weaned from the protective presence of their mother under whose shadow they lived. In the Convents were necessary for a change in the maternal role. And that motherhood the superior was of such greater importance as it dealt with a collective and sacred motherhood. In that atmosphere, one operated a differentiation: many young religious women found their peace and their balance on a path of spiritual childhood. Strong personalities, the that manifested both as a safeguard of tradition and as community pilot elements found a higher balance in the exercise of a responsible spiritual motherhood, whose most model known is that of Teresa of Ávila. Unlike the women of the world, then more or less reduced to the home and passivity, they had to decide, create, govern, travel... The difficult position was that of the

strong personalities who, for very different reasons, did not have access to those maternal functions and suffered from the non-fulfillment of their possibilities human. That was, undoubtedly, on the human level, the case of Bernadette, gifted for responsibilities, but whose position is extraordinary
he made her stay in a 'protected' situation. She suffers for not being able to fulfill her human possibilities. And this helps to explain why he died young.

The trials of that time were the visits that could not be saved. completely to Bernadette, who took refuge there to hide. How to refuse the audience with bishops, with members of the papal curia, with benefactors insignia or to a Henri Lasserre, who is preparing his History of appearances, request of the bishop of Tarbes? To free oneself from important nuisances, What other means were left but to grant them the satisfaction of 'seeing' the Bernadette? For this purpose, she is sometimes assigned strange tasks, which they aim to have her pass in front of the visitor, whom, if necessary it is hidden in the sentry boxes or in some blind corner of the chapel. Bernadette does not let herself be fooled, and, since the order given to her only refers to to the transmission of a message or the transfer of an object, it happens that to Sometimes it is eclipsed by changing the planned itinerary.

On the contrary, Bernadette does not establish the connection between her presence in the nursing and the fact that the bishop attends to administer the sacrament of penance. It only says:

It is strange for a bishop to take the trouble to confess to the sick sisters (L 107).

Clumsiness

During that period, joy prevails over trials. Bernadette has the easy laughter. Her 'clumsiness' as a novice provides her with the opportunity to to practice it.

One day they send someone to fetch hot water from the kitchen, where there isn't any. nobody. She serves herself. And here comes Sister Cécile, the cook, 'quite rigid' woman, and exclaims:

You should ask for permission! Return that water to where it belongs. You have taken!

The fun idea of 'putting the water back in the tap' delighted Bernadette.

Sister Cécile was disarmed.

Wow, this little sister frog is laughing, while an older one. gimotearía (L 486).

Bernadette has suggested to Luoise Brusson to give a good lesson to a candidate, who often looked at herself in the mirror of a case placed among the underwear.

Put something in that mirror, says Bernadette.

I take paper and pencil—sister Louise relates—and I write: —Look at yourself also the soul.

The initiative has exceeded the powers of the two novices. The Mother Marie Thérèse asked about the guilty ones. Bernadette was the first. in confessing it.

Another day, in the refectory, the vigorous clink of Sister Marie's fork Bernard in the hard carrots sliced into rounds, makes them roll 'as the length of the entire table'. The laughter was so contagious that we could not continue eating, says Sister Louise. When the meal is finished, Sister Marie-Bernard turned to me saying: —Let′s go!

I understood her, and we went to confess our guilt to our teacher. of novices (L 86).

Once again, according to Sister Madeleine, Bernadette was tasked with fix a 'torn from top to bottom'. She entrusted her concern to the nurse:

I will never be able to fix that touch.

"Don't worry," replies Sister Madeleine, "I have some for you." the remedies that aren't bad. I'll give you one.

But the 'workshop teacher' was not satisfied and the reprimand was severe.

This is not the one I gave you!

In the novitiate, one should not prefer intelligence over obedience. Sister Madeleine, who was trying to excuse her, Bernadette replied:

I was not right, I did not return the cap that had been given to me. 189).

But she does not appreciate those patches nor the choice that has been made. for her of specially used garments.

Look, they only give me rags, she said to Sister Elisabeth, that replied:

Oh, it seems that your virtue is no higher than theirs!

Bernadette never adopts the statue-like demeanor of that time. I expected something from a fortune teller. Upon her arrival, she surprised everyone. asking:

Do you skip rope in the novitiate?

And after the negative response, he explained without any hesitation:

I really enjoy spinning the rope so that they can jump. others (L 14).

During a break, her sister jokingly challenged her to to drink a freshly laid egg. Before Bernadette had time Upon reflection, both ends of the egg were drilled with a blow of pin, and the slurped egg; but then he added,

Now I have to go to the assistant mother to ask for permission. 370).

And so he did.

She laughs at her photos listed for sale at 10 cents. The prices they have decreased.

He/she laughs about his/her small stature, the reason for little scenes for alegrar a su compañera de fila, sor Joseph Caldairou, que es un centímetro taller than her... and she also parades with her at the head of the processions. They have fun making themselves taller or shorter, like the jester dwarfs. from the old times. Bernadette doesn't have a 'little' complex. Is it because our Lady appeared to him humbly with a stature similar to yours?

Bernadette retains the taste for the picturesque, the gift of the replica and modest appreciation of your person.

One day she wants to push her into the position of the absent 'guard' to let him pronounce the word of construction provided by the rule. And he responds,

I don't know how to speak. I am a stone. What were you going to get out of a stone?(L 81).

At least that humble response was given in such a way that it surprised Stéphane Vareillaud never forgot it...

On May 16, 1867, 18-year-old Antoniette Dalias arrives in Nevers. native of Gers, who will be called Sister Bernard and who will be one of the many Bernadette's friends.

It is a friendship that begins in a strange way.

On May 19, the newcomer asks Sister Berganot:

I have been here for three days and no one has introduced me yet. Bernadette.

—Bernadette? That's her! the sister responded, showing her. your neighbor.

—Is this? exclaimed Brother Bernard, who had forged an ideal much more complicated than the seer.

Well, yes, miss, just this, he replied kindly. Bernadette, who since then showed him a true sympathy (L 72).



Bernadette the religious

10
THE RELIGIOUS PROFESSION
30 de octubre de 1867

On October 30, 1867, Bernadette made her religious profession before Monsignor Forcade. His voice is 'firm and unpretentious', observes Sister Bernard. Dalias, but 'it trembles a little', according to Sister Véronique. Bernadette commits for life to practice the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and charity.

Vote of charity

This fourth vote, established in 1682 by Lord de Laveyne, founder from the congregation, was suppressed a little later, when Rome made the review of the constitutions according to legal norms. Charity does not It lends itself to canonical forms.

'Bernadette, to nowhere'

In the afternoon, each teacher receives, following the custom, 'a obedience' (that is, the destiny to a religious house). It is Monsignor Forcade who presides over the ceremony in the novitiate hall. The 43 companions of Bernadette is being called one after another, and each one receives the crucifix, the Book of Constitutions and the letter of obedience (Forcade, page 32).

Monsignor seems to have finished. Has he forgotten about Bernadette? This she went towards her neighbor, Sister Anastasie:

They have given it to everyone... And I would like to do like everyone else. world (PONev 624, 6251.

It is then that Monsignor Forcade turns to the mother. general:

—And Sister Bernadette?

—Monsignor, it is useless.

Mother Joséphine says it 'smiling', as Sister Caldairou specifies. and in a low voice, so that only those in the front rows have heard it (PONev 1297v).

When Bernadette approaches, the bishop says, this time loudly:

--Sister Marie-Bernard, to nowhere!(PONev 533v).

And then, addressing Bernadette herself:

Is it true, Sister Marie-Bernard, that you are good for nothing?

It is true.

And so, my poor daughter, what are we going to do with you?

I already told him in Lourdes, when you wanted to get me in the community and you told me that it wouldn't matter (Forcade, p. 32-33).

Here the general superior intervenes, according to a planned schedule:

If you wish, Monsignor, we could keep it out of charity. in the mother house and somehow use it in nursing, although it was only to do the cleaning and prepare herbal teas. As always it is sick, that will precisely be her occupation.

The use of the sentence

The bishop nods and turns to Bernadette:

—Lo procuraré,responde ella.

And then the bishop says in a solemn tone:

I entrust you with the use of the prayer (PONev 1297v).

The scene had been set to resolve the matter of conscience. next. She didn't want to send Bernadette to a house where she would stay exposed to 'public curiosity'. But jobs at the parent company are they were considered the 'first of the congregation'. Therefore, it was avoided to occupy there the new teachers, except in exceptional cases. It was about, well, to give an aspect of humiliation to an 'obedience', which without it it would have seemed the height of honor, according to the testimony of Monsignor Forcade to Count Lafond.

During the subsequent recess, Bernadette does not show her wound.

to glimpse his feelings through the breath that he infuses shortly after to one of his first patients, Louise Brusson, who was bedridden with bronchitis in the infirmary, and that she was 'very tried by the poultices and bladders

Come on, my daughter, this is for the good Lord. We must suffer for him. He He suffered a lot for us (L 116).



Novitiate room where Bernadette received her obedience.

11

BERNADETTE NURSE

(October 30, 1867-June 1873)

Here is Bernadette as a nursing assistant. She is in charge of all the little jobs, ranging from flowers for the Holy One Virgin until the night glasses; a task she is trained for, since during his novitiate he was assigned the cleaning of the reserved areas. That does not it doesn't pose any problem for her.

The ascendant

She likes the profession of nursing. Thus, she found her way in Lourdes. Sister Marthe, the nurse, is amazed to see the rise of that one. little sister about the sick. A discreet joke is enough to impose silence (L 136) and a single word:

—Dissipated!, to indicate to Sister Pelagie that she is having difficulties in master their language (L 137).

His humor, his authority, and his advice create a good atmosphere in the nursing.

She knows how to empathize without lamenting. And she says to Sister Bernard Dalias, to whom you address familiarly as a compatriot of Gers:

My poor Bernard, you can't take it anymore; you are a wreck.

And it worries Sor Dominique Brunet greatly about a dental operation in perspective:

Miss, don't you want to suffer?

The arrival of Bernadette is timely, because Sister Marthe, the nurse, is sick, and increasingly exhausted from her job. On the 12th of In April 1870, they ordered him to rest.

Nursing is not affected by this. There is Bernadette, who...
It is done with the reins of everything, without lacking anything.

The nurse returns on June 9th, worse than when she left. On the 23rd of December his condition worsens. On March 22, 1871, the bishop goes to visiting her, a sign that her state is desperate. She died on November 8. from 1872.

Head Nurse

Silently, Sister Marie-Bernard has taken upon herself all the tasks and responsibilities. Without a title or official appointment, it has converted into the head nurse of the motherhouse.

He has taken the trouble to learn the trade, including the change of the units of measurement. In the nurse's notebooks, she has recorded the difficult equivalences that we have forgotten today:

1 grain equals 5 centigrams

3 scruples or 1 drachm 4 grams

1 ounce to 32 grams

And it underscores the importance of such calculations.

How a change in the position of the comma can behave very big differences, it is to be wished that, in the formulas, they are written with all the letters the amounts in grams, centigrams, and milligrams (ESB, p. 311).

In order to avoid any mistakes, write the account according to the double. measure in the recipe sheets that has been established for all types of enfermedades: expectoración con sangre, disentería, humor frío, scrofula, lampers. Here is your recipe for 'articular rheumatism-rivers'

3 cups of elderberry infusion.

Add 5 drops of aconite tincture to each one.

Aconitine liniment: 18 grains... 1 gram.

Olive oil: 36 grains, 2 grams.

Manteca: 1 ounce, 32 grams (ESB, p. 312).

Has a clinical eye and initiative:

You embarrass me with such hands, says Sister Angèle whose cracks Bleeding. Come to the infirmary and I will treat you.



Nursing
of Saint-Gildard
with the used jars
by Bernadette

There, sister Angèle says, it was putting honey in my hands, and to the a few days ago I was healed (L 161).

It was undoubtedly beeswax... It also healed his eyes. And, like the eye drops made her cry, Bernadette said:

—How is that! I give you a drop and you give me back many... (L 164).

He/she enforces the rule with a somewhat rigid conviction, according to the uses of then, but with skill. The sick women confide in him their difficulties and even their dreams, like Sister Julienne Capmartin. Her key to the dreams were certainly not Freud's nor astrology's, but it had a good psychological intuition. Sister Julienne had been strongly impressed by a dream in which the child Jesus testified to her about something discontent. Bernadette discovered her hobby a little based on that disheveled one of her classmates. And Sister Julienne was warned. 311).

To that same Sister Julienne, who reads her Book of the Daughter of Mary in the bed, when it has been recommended that it be well covered to sweat, he/she says to him/her:

Here is a fervor trimmed with disobedience!

And the book disappears (L 313).

Sister Eudoxie, who leaves the infirmary without permission, expresses to her his disagreement so clearly that that independent sister question:

What needs to be done?

Back to bed!

And add:

The sacrifice is worth more than the prayer.

The next day, the patient gets up with permission from the nurse and he is authorized to return to the novitiate (L 305 c).

The rule, which applies to others, according to the norms of time, is it also applied to herself.

Feeling an excessive heat (a winter day when the fire was really exaggerated) open the window. The superior general arrives who [...] he is surprised and rebukes Sister Marie-Bernard:

Don't you think it's wrong?

Oh, no, my dear mother!

But, after that first movement, he closed the windows and, a quarter of an hour later, he went to the community to confess his guilt (L 282).

Daily life in nursing

Her nursing shifts regularly started at 7:45.
sister Eudoxie Chatelain informs us. Upon arrival, she was informed about our state and served us breakfast that a novice brought from the kitchen. It goes from one stay to the next without time to sit down. From time to time we he said a kind word, for example:

Love the good God very much, my daughters, for there lies everything.

Did not hesitate to stay up to watch over the sick or to get up for the Night to get out of trouble for the old ladies who placed him as improvised helpers. Sister Clémence Chassan, whom Bernadette has started in the trade, testifies to having woken him many times (B2 117-118). Bernadette confided in him:

I would like to go take care of the sick in hospitals. I'm afraid that my health has been the reason they haven't sent me; but I I submit to the will of God so that He may do with me what pleases Him.

The alerts of 1869

The black spot is the ups and downs of his health. In 1869 he has celebrated the Easter party in bed. A violent crisis, although not long, according to his letter of April 6, 1869 (RSL, no. 21, 1968, p. 25).

In October of that same year, he is back in bed. In the mother house. Sister Cécile Pagès remains, appointed nurse of the house in Paris, who

gives us the following details:

Bernadette was then in bed, coughing up blood.
the basins. I would put bladders on them. And she would tell me:

You can leave, I am tough against illness... like cats.

Things are going bad enough to think about death:

If the sacrifice of one's own life is done well, is it not true that
Will she go to heaven? Bernadette then asked me in the presence of the superior.
general, mother Joséphine Imbert. I said to her cheerfully:

We would have at least one saint, whereas now we have none.
none in the congregation.

And our revered mother said to me:

Do you believe there aren't any? I think there are.

"But not canonized!" I replied.

Al salir, le enfermera suplente explica sus inquietudes a la superiora general:

The doctor says he could die from vomiting blood.

The protest

Bernadette has gotten up on October 13, 1869, for a
delicate testimony. The chaplains of Lourdes have begun to publish
In the Annals, a small history of the apparitions. They have decided to do so.
request from the public, because the story requested from Henri Lasserre is taking a long time in
appear. The popular and familiar tone of the little story greatly irritates.
al escritor, que tiene el proyecto de dar gran altura a esa historia. Acude a
Never to gather Bernadette's criticisms against her rivals. Record.
even the smallest oddities and denials of the seer, she expresses them in form
literary and legal and has him sign the document.

Counter-protest

On November 16th, Father Sempé, superior of the chaplains of Lourdes, also comes to defend her work. And there is Bernadette.
subjected to opposing demands. As far as history is concerned, the
complaints only affected tiny details, whose critical study we have

made elsewhere (B2, p. 79-107). This controversy, once confronted with the rest, it ends up contributing a small stone to the historical building of the apparitions. But Bernadette then discovers the human disputes regarding to which the event that marks his entire life is subjected. And check above all how much has been forgotten! It is an impressive experience, trauma- They realize that their minor indications are used as a tip. launches into a war that is foreign to him. The memory of the apparitions starts to get confused in her, like that of the famous procession, under the Peyramale shock, on March 2, 1858.

The alert of 1870

On April 12, 1970, both are simultaneously in bed. nurses. And, as for Bernadette, once again it seems to be something serious, according to Sister Honorine Laffarge:

I enter the infirmary and find, so to speak, that dear one. sister in agony. It seems that she only has a few hours left to live.

My dear sister, I tell you, our teacher sent me to I want to ask you how you spent the night.

Tell her not to worry, I will not die today! (L 160).

Sister Honorine sees in those words a prophecy. In fact, Bernadette He started to experience some setbacks in his asthma attacks.

The war of 1870

The war does not disturb her. When in the autumn of 1870 the ... Prussians very near Nevers, Bernadette only says:

I only fear bad Catholics (L 174).

And in November 1870 he writes:

It is said that the enemy is approaching Nevers; I would have a great time. without seeing the Prussians, but I do not fear them. God is everywhere, even in the midst of the Prussians [...]. Being very small, after a sermon from the priest, I heard the people saying:

—Bah! He fulfills his duty.

I believe that the Prussians also fulfill their duty. 223, ESO, p. 279.

The death of his father

That was the last letter her father received from her.

Shortly after, Sister Madeleine Bounaix finds her bathed in tears and leaning against the fireplace. She had just received the news: François Soubirous had died on March 4, 1871, on the anniversary since the last appearance of the fortnight. He, who was so willing to set out on the journey when Bernadette was no longer in Lourdes, but that jamás había abandonado sus Pirineos, no había ido a Nevers... Bernadette he did not hide his sadness.

I come to cry with you, writes to her sister Marie (Toinette), on the 9th. in March. But let us always remain submissive, even if afflicted, to the the 'fatherly' hand that has been hitting us so hard for some time. Let us fill the cross and embrace it.

It is the same spirit with which he had embraced the war as a sign. of the times.

A lot of intelligence

On September 3, 1872, Dr. Roben Saint-Cyr, president of the society of doctors of Nièvre and the chief house doctor extends this laudatory judgment:

Nurse who perfectly fulfills her duty.

Small, with a frail appearance, she is 27 years old. By nature calm and sweet, takes care of her sick with great intelligence and without omit nothing from the prescriptions made; also enjoys a great authority and, on my part, of full trust (ESB, p. 309).

Those lines were written in 1872, to respond to the issues that had prompted a public statement from Dr. Voisin, physician of the Salpêtrière

The miracle of Lourdes is founded on the faith of a girl amazed that she is "trapped" in the agreement of the "ursulines" of Nevers'(ES/3, p. 309).

The apex

May 1870-1872

From May 15, 1870, until early 1872 Bernadette goes through its best period. And writes without any restrictions:

My health is pretty good (December 25, 1870; ESB, p. 280).

My health is marvelous.

It is true that there are some asthma crises, but in January 1872, can you draw this reassuring picture:

My health is not worse than last year. Only the harsh cold of This winter has tormented me a bit. I breathe with less ease.

The decline

It fell into the following winter (1872-1873). They admitted her to the nursing Sainte-Julienne, on January 17, 1873 (diary of the community). On February 3, she is still very ill (ibid.; cf. L 318). New relapse at Easter (April 13). He has to keep an eye on it for 15 days. days (ESB, p. 321; cf. P. 319).

On May 12, 1873, Mother Joséphine Imbert, superior In general, you can take her with you by car to the orphanage in Varennes, where the double visit is a great celebration. But Bernadette is in convalescence treatment: and she is placed in a wheelchair. From he pronounces his exhortation to the orphans:

My daughters, love the Most Holy Virgin greatly... Pray a lot. She will protect you (L 320).

On June 3, the relapse is more serious. For the third time, at least, he receives the anointing of the sick (community diary). Shortly after, without embargo, resumes their occupations and tells those who feel fortunate to verla:

They haven't wanted me up there.

But on October 30, 1873, she was dismissed from her job.

A psychotherapeutic and spiritual resource

Not without regret, because her position as a nurse was a good opportunity. to send, as a form of care or pension, to the novices in difficulties, about their advice, their stimulating energy, and their simplicity wonderful processing. At home, it was a resource both psychotherapeutic

as spiritual...

And Mother Marie-Thérèse frequently invited her to recess.
novitiate, although she was already a professed member (B2, p. 122).

What frustrated her was when they fired her at the moment when she
I was reading the History of the Apparitions by Henri Lasserre. But the historian, didn't he
I had made the sisters promise that 'Bernadette would never read that
book? (B2, 126-128).

Bernadette was not deceived by those abrupt messages,

—¿Por qué tan pronto?, le preguntaba un día Julie Garros.

Because I want to read something about Lourdes, they put me at the door.
(L 233).

On the contrary, Bernadette was invited to redo the account of the
appearances on June 1, 1869 before four new sisters; it was the
an opportunity to renew the slogan that after that no one should
to talk to him about the matter again. Sometimes the exception confirms the rule.
132).

One could deal so freely with her because she remained with
firmness in their position, discouraging any veneration or exaltation. A
the novitiates welcomed her with excessive ceremony, after a long absence
Hi. She laughed and said:

Since you bestow upon me honors that I do not deserve, I do not
I will stay with you during recess.

And it wasn't without effort that we managed to preserve it. We had to promise her
be simple with her. Then she uplifted us with her simplicity and joy,
according to Sister Clémence Chasan (L 272).

Her invigorating laughter disarmed any affections. Sister Éléonore
Bonnet learned it at his own expense. 'To show his beautiful voice, he sang in the
novitiate

Stole
without veil
done in my eyes
hatch
the dawn
of a radiant day

(Veiled star, make the dawn of a radiant day shine in my eyes).

You have intimidated me, protested Sister Éléonore.

It's true that I laughed, but you will acknowledge that there were good ones. reasons for this (L 265).



Nursing
of Saint-Gildard
with the pharmacy
that Bernadette used

12

LAST ACTIVE JOBS

(octubre de 1873 - diciembre de 1874)

On November 5, 1873, Sister Gabriel is appointed nurse. Vigouroux, 28 years old. Bernadette (29 years old), who has never held. officially that title becomes a simple assistant, not without having to master it because I perfectly managed the nursing. It's hard to move on to a second plan on a land where certain responsibilities have been exercised. Still when Bernadette has good reasons to hold her viewpoints and her way of acting, the head nurse now treats her with pride (L 683). Hence the concern that Bernadette notes upon completing her retreat from July 1875: to work to become indifferent...

Between the sacristy and the infirmary

In January 1874, she shares the functions of assistant nurse and the of the second sacristan. Prepares the altar boys, washes and reviews the purifiers previously washed in three successive waters by the owner priest. But he continues to work in the hospital doing strenuous jobs. Julie Garros —Lourdes' former classmate, who has enrolled in Nevers is sent to the infirmary to begin caring for the sick.

One day, she says, Bernadette asked me to take the... Mother Anne-Marie Lescure, who was blind. She told me:

Take the same care as if it were the good God.

I replied to him/her:

Ah! The difference is notable.

I asked her why that patient was not wearing her habit completely. religious. To what he told me:

Come see it this afternoon.

I went, indeed, and saw the wound of that sick person, filled with worms. that Bernadette was gathering on a plate. I couldn't stand that sight.

Bernadette told me:

What a charity sister you are going to be! You have little faith.

The next day I attended to the sick person, but without touching her. wound. Bernadette placed the dressing on it with great care.

When that nun died on June 29, 1874, Bernadette invited Julie to help her with the washing of the dead body:

I didn't want to out of disgust.

She told me:

You are a slacker. You will never be a good sister to the charity.

When the dead woman was dressed, the sisters came to kiss her. It was very difficult for me to behave like the others. However, I did it. but I didn't feel well. Then Bernadette told me:

What is this that a sister of charity cannot touch the dead? (L 350).



Bernadette
y
Sister Victorine Poux

Bernadette knew very well what she had on her hands. Julie had a living sensitivity, but an iron temperament. Stimuli and provocations worked well. Julie showed great enthusiasm and joy in recounting these memories and others in the process of canonization of Bernadette.

It was Bernadette who put the cap on her the day Julie took the habit. telling him:

All the ones I put are solid (L 289).

Julie has kept the memory of the advice that Bernadette gave her. on July 14, 1874, when she left to assume the duties of nurse.

Undoubtedly instructed by the experience of Aunt Bernarde's tavern, she he said:

When you are with men in a room, make sure that the may the door always be open (L 351).

And he insisted on the care of the sick:

Don't forget to see our Lord in the person of the poor[…] The more disgusting the poor man is, the more one must love him (L 356).

When caring for a sick person [...], one must withdraw before receive your gratitude [...]. The honor of have bestowed our cares (L 357).

Then the two friends part ways to never see each other again.

There is no need to leave any memories behind when two people truly love each other [...]. One must love without measure and surrender without calculations[…]. Let's give each other a hug one last time (L 360).

And Bernadette adds:

Embrace illness as a caress... Devote yourself to service of the poor, but with caution. Never give in to discouragement. He/She loves the Most Holy Virgin very much.

Indifferent

Sister Victorine Poux visited her in September 1874. She remembers her. her reactions as a wild girl in the Lourdes orphanage, and especially her uprisings against 'small injustices' and 'false accusations':

Now, I am indifferent, replies Bernadette (L 368).

For that reason. She demonstrates it a little later, when the mother Joséphine treated her —just like Sister Casimir— as 'people 'useless'. Sister Casimir cries about it, but Bernadette tells her:

—Is that all? For the rest, you have kindness! You will see. how things change (L 435, B 2, p. 180)

She accesses serenity, in obedience, that for a long time it has been a disconcerting test for her.

He/She had blue eyes.

The clashes he had with Sister Gabriel de Vigouroux, the new nurse, they were painful for her, although without any resentment. And so she did. an exception in your favor. In October of that same year, 1874, he She referred to the sightings. The nurse noted the account immediately. Bernadette ended with the same words with which she had finished her autobiographical account of 22 gesture of 1864: 'I had blue eyes' (H 1, p. 61, line 500.

13

THE EMPLOYMENT OF SICKNESS

(1875-1878)

Starting in 1875, the story of Bernadette will become intertwined with the history of their illnesses. 'Useless' from now on, will strive to to assume that new situation as a 'job' in the service of God: 'the employment of a nurse, according to her own expression.

The others

That job is fruitful because it constituted a good opportunity to send the novices to help in the infirmary and take advantage Thus from Bernadette's testimony, always more attentive to others than to herself. same. It is a lively and simple preaching. When it gets better, it the ingenuity to provide some service: marks the pages of the books of reading for the other sick women (sister Josephine), teaches sister Rosalie (a novice) to 'fold a veil'. She remains insightful in her diagnoses. In 1873, when Julie Garros wanted to leave disheartened —and this was frequent in that ardent and impatient nature—will make it an object of jokes to bring her back to her course. But he didn't do the same with Marie. Champagnan, who entered the mother house at the age of 19, on the 31st of August 1875. Bernadette simply said to Sister Ursule Millien:

He still needs his mother.

Evidence that was imposed: on September 14, the applicant I was returning home.

Bernadette adopts the language of the Cure of Ars to encourage Sister. Joseph Cassagnes, who feels nostalgic for his family:

You don't see that it's that hook-nosed villain... When he approaches you, you have to spit in his face (L 416).

Sister Casimir Callery, whose father has suddenly died in disturbing conditions, he tells her:

Don't be distressed... Good God does not allow for the condemnation of the...

parents of the religious. And grants them a particular grace for the sacrifice they have made... My mother died on December 8, 1866. The Most Holy Virgin wants to make me understand that I should only love her. and to trust in her alone[…], that she will replace my mother... (L 433).

Return to Lourdes?

At the end of June 1816, an entire delegation from Nevers is heading to Lourdes for the festivities of the consecration of the basilica and the coronation from the image. The delegates are going to see Bernadette to receive their charges and letters. His family recommends him to Abbot Perreau, especially to his little brother Pierre-Bernard:

She asked for her loved ones not so much health and well-being as virtue and the practice of religious duties... I looked at certain tests that they had come upon them like punishments, for, she said, God could not bless that (L 441).

Before leaving, Monsignor de Ladoue, the new bishop of Nevers, the question:

Would you like to come to Lourdes?

She responds to him:

Oh no, monsignor, I prefer to stay in my bed! (L 400).

To others, he says whimsically:

If I could take a hot air balloon to the cave and pray for a few moments, When there would be no one, I would go gladly; but if I have to travel like everyone else the world and find myself in the middle of the crowd, I prefer to stay here (response given to Sister Ambroise Fenasse, superior of the Saint- hospital) Étienne; L 402).

He also said:

If I could see without being seen...(L 399).

I have made the sacrifice of Lourdes. I will see the Most Holy Virgin in the sky, and that will be more beautiful (L 401).

The photographs of the transformed place make him say:

Oh, my poor cave! I wouldn't even recognize it anymore.

For her, it is a 'sacrifice' to talk about the matter. One of the visits does not insisted more:

I had the impression that we were making her suffer by continuing to talk. on the subject... And we say goodbye (L 454).

Bernadette sends private messages to her parish priest, the abbot. Peyramale, very saddened for having been stripped of the organization of the pilgrimage he had founded and without resources for the construction abandoned from her parish church.

Make sure to transmit this response to Bernadette:

Tell her that she is still always my daughter and that I bless her 398).

The following year Bernadette will hear of her death, which occurred on the Saturday, September 8, 1877, on the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin. The news arrived by telegram, it was taken by Bernadette Sister Nathalie Portat. to the pulpit of the church where he was praying. She also cried for him. Bernadette.



The 'white chapel'

Health Bulletin

1875-1877

During these years, the disease progresses with ups and downs. disconcerting factors that characterize Bernadette's health. It is the plot of her existence.

In 1875, he was confined to bed from April until mid-June (according to Guynot, 1936, p. 201), rises in summer and relapses in October

(community diary). On November 19, a hemoptysis raises fears.
for his life (community diary). Remains in bed until May of
1876; the good weather brings life back to him. In June, he attends mass.
Sunday, from which it has been deprived for six months (ESB, p. 475).
Your stomach seems refractory to food. It's always made a...
Carraca, she acknowledges in her letter of June 25, 1876 to her mother.
Alexandrine Roques, despite her tendency to always see the good side of
the things and his optimism for the future (ibid. p. 424). Make the most of it
his forces, to the point that Sir Joseph Biermann finds her
ready to sweep the nurse's office in August 76, and takes away the broom
but Bernadette scolds her amidst laughter:

You will not achieve it. Victory or death! (L 413).

It is the martial side of Bernadette's soul, excited by the
arms made by his godfather, the fighter of Solferino. A book (not
identified), which he read during that same summer of 1876, inspired him this
reflection:

Oh this book inspires in me the desire to go to war!
417).

His letters from August-September assure that he suffers very little or not at all.
a lot (ESB, p. 434-436) But it cannot hide a weakness that nothing
can dominate. You need to shorten your letter from September 7.

My hand trembles like an old woman's.

Likewise on September 13 (to Rachel Dufo):

I'm leaving you because I can't hold the pen, and I don't really know how.
What I tell you. Goodbye! (ESB, p. 439)

With Rachel, a friend since the sightings, but who belonged to
the upper bourgeoisie of Lourdes, mixes with the tú.

His letters from November assure that he is doing better (ESB, p. 444-447).
but it is always on the occasion of an improvement when he writes. Hence the
paradox of its correspondence: generally announces an improvement
while their health deteriorates.

He insists on the good care he receives, like a little baby.
(ESB, p. 434).

On December 16, 1876, the visit of Monsignor Ladoue, the new bishop. He has succeeded Monsignor Forcade, promoted to Archbishop of Aix in 1873. After her first visit, Bernadette had said:

It's small and it's cold. It won't last much longer.

He actually died on July 23, 1877.

Now he arrives at the infirmary with the purpose of taking Pope Pius IX. an autograph from Bernadette. A wooden desk is prepared on the bed, she supports herself on her knees, one of which is sore. Her the first draft is reviewed as a conciliar text. It is about the pope. And Bernadette has naively referred to the familiar terms of which Monsignor had used to convince her: 'The best means to Obtaining a blessing is to write a letter. It is not possible to discover the... the bishop's batteries!

Bernadette says, at the moment when the papal zouaves are exalted as a symbol of fidelity to the pope:

I have been a zouave for a long time, although unworthy, of yours holiness. My weapons are prayer and sacrifice.

This trait will preserve, which can touch the heart of the Holy Father, but giving it greater height and modesty:

It has been a few years since I have constituted myself, although indignantly, in little Zouave of your holiness.

Bernadette ended up saying:

From heaven, the most holy Virgin must often place her eyes upon you, most holy father, because you have proclaimed it immaculate, and four years later that good mother comes to earth to to say:

I am the Immaculate.

I didn't know what that meant. I had never heard that 'never'. word. Later, reflecting, I said to myself: 'The Most Holy Virgin is good, it would be said that he has come to confirm the word of our holy father.

This ending is too abrupt. And it drags on with some more sentences. solemn and rich in epithets (less conforming to the style of Bernadette):

I hope that... that 'good' Mother... will deign to put once again her foot on the head of the 'cursed' serpent, thus putting an end to the 'cruel'

tests of the holy Church and the pains of her 'august' and 'beloved' pontiff

A nun is copying the second draft onto paper again. minister with the letterhead of the congregation (ESB, p. 456) and Bernadette she copies it onto her sick person's desk. She gets tangled in the strange ending about the head of the 'damned snake', forget a member of the phrase and it amendment between lines (ESB, p.451). And, furthermore, has committed faults of Spelling. Impossible to send that to the pope! We need to start over. But that knee, that fatigue... However, she achieves it, and it will be that last one. Copy that Monsignor de Ladoue will place in the hands of Pius IX. 448-456).

On January 14, 1877, he will return from Rome with the blessing betrothed.

The year 1876 ends badly, although Bernadette writes to Abbot Pomian. December 28:

My stomach[…]not very accommodating[…]keeps the food a little more than a month ago (ESB, p.473).

What does not prevent him from having barely left the bed that year.

Here it has been more than a year since I have been in my chapel. Blanca, write to Monsignor Peyramale that same day.

It has only risen occasionally during the summer, and it has not out of the infirmary more than transported or supported to attend Mass.

The surprise of the summer of 1877

During the summer of 1877, a surprising improvement occurs. Bernadette then writes:

I walk around the garden every day to regain strength. Pierre Soubirous, from July 17, 1877; ESB, p. 486.

And to Abbot Pomian, on September 15:

My health has greatly improved. I can follow a large part of the community exercises. I walk and I have a good appetite.

MISSING 198 AND 199

The last summer

In September 1878, he suffers a lot from knee decay. But the improvement allows him to go to the chapel to attend the preacher's instruction that prepares the community for perpetual votes. It even kneels. Although poorly during the exercises. Until finally he has to resign.

I can't take it anymore, I won't go back: I will stay in the infirmary, he/she says. towards the end of the retreat (L 517).

On September 22, he goes down to the chapel for the vows ceremony, renewed according to the formula established in the new constitutions of 1870:

—Yo, Sister Marie-Bernard, wishing to dedicate myself to the service of God. and to the charitable works in the congregation of the sisters of the charity and Christian teaching, established in the diocese of Nevers, I make a vow for the rest of my life, of poverty, of chastity, and of obedience, in the manner expressed in the constitutions of mine congregation. I pray to our Lord Jesus Christ, through the intercession of the most holy Virgin, my good mother, grant me grace to fulfill with fidelity to these commitments.

After the ceremony, congratulate the singers:

I will create myself in heaven, I will repeat it twice that same day. Yes If I were to die, I would be sure of my salvation, because vows are a second. baptism (L 519-520).

Don't look for anything better on earth (L 529).

The Holy Cross

On October 30, 1878, the nurses' infirmary of the professors was installed in the first floor, in the room 'Santa Cruz', located in the other wing of building of the mother house. Bernadette reaches her final earthly resting place.

You can still come down on November 12th and 13th to see the new ones. applicants. She glimpses the longing of the last one who has arrived:

Are you bored?

Oh yes, a lot!

Bernadette puts her hand on his shoulder and says:

Come on, calm down; you will persevere in the congregation (L 530).

On December 11, 1878, he finally goes to bed.
'white chapel', as he calls the great canopy bed. And he placed beside her
the image of Saint Bernard.

Do you pray to your patron, then? Sister Agathe asks him.

—I do beg you, she says, but I hardly imitate him. Saint Bernard
I loved suffering, and I avoid it as much as I can (L 410).

At a time when there was much talk (and improperly) about love
the suffering, Bernadette has not managed to become a
masochist.

In that new childhood in which it feels like it is sliding, affected as
it is in its vitality, its tone and its memory, Bernadette returns to gestures
traditional from childhood: the small altars and religious decorations
what he was doing in the fields of Bartrès or in the 'dungeon', like the little
sick Jean-Marie Doucet, in the chimney of the Piqué farm, during the
spring of 1858. One of the drawings evoked the masses that were
they celebrated perpetually all over the globe:

I join all those masses, especially during the night that
Sometimes I go without sleep, Bernadette said to Sister Ambroise Fenasse in January.
from 1879.

And to not leave her in the sad memory of her sleepless nights,
agregaba:

What bothers me is that little altar boy who never touches the...
tink... Sometimes I feel like shaking it off (L 500).

Bernadette, immobilized, uses her last strengths as best she can.

In August 1876, Sister Agathe had found her sitting in the
bed making threads.

Since Easter of 1877, she is often occupied in painting or embroidering.
hearts, which are distributed according to the devotion of the time. She
joke

They won't say that Sister Marie-Bernard is heartless.

And also:

If someone tells you that I don't have a heart, tell them that I do.

hearts all day long (L 463).

In October 1878, Sister Thérèse Lacoste finds her coloring. small images 'and drawing the crown of thorns that surrounds the sacred Heart'. Sister Marie-Bernard tells him

with a certain mischievous air, although very serious:

If you want to be religious, miss, it will be necessary to learn to love the suffering. Our Lord gives his crown of thorns to his friends.
529).

Good for nothing

What he struggles with the most is not precisely the suffering, but the inaction

Always in the infirmary, always 'good for nothing,' she says,
repeating this expression that has accompanied her since the first conversation about his religious vocation and the famous ceremony of the obediences (L 499).

And add:

The good God has done well in not giving me the choice of my gender life. Surely I would not have chosen this inaction to which I
I see reduced. I would have loved to have a job!

You pray for those who do not pray, says Sister Victoire Cassou.

And she replies:

--I have nothing else to do... My prayer is my only weapon. Just
I can pray and suffer (L 515).

This is the subject of your letter to the pope:

My weapons are prayer and sacrifice that I will keep until my last breath. Only then will the weapon of sacrifice fall, but that of the
A prayer will accompany me to heaven, where it will be more powerful (ESB, p. 453).

A great joy

In September 1875, a breath of mercy entered Saint
Gildard with Abbot Febvre. This 43-year-old priest replaces the chaplain. from the mother house, Father Douce, whose austerity symbolized Bernadette in this acrostic:

Pain

Forgetfulness

Union

Trust

Experienced

However, this last word has put her in the second time for sweeten the image, as the word demanding is crossed out.

Abbot Febvre was encouraging and inspired confidence, as personally Bernadette for the others: tact, penetration, docility to the motions of God were the charisms of his ministry.

In October 1877, one of Father Febvre's instructions it unleashes great joy in Bernadette. Upon leaving the chapel, she says to Sister Casimir Callery:

Oh, seraphim, how happy I am!

Sister Marie-Bernard called me 'seraph' because in the dialogue recited on the occasion of the feast day of our mother teacher, I was the future. The name Casimir did not occur to him, as he had not met anyone. with that name before me...

"And what is it that you have?" I said to him.

Haven't you heard the sermon?

Of course.

Well, the chaplain has said that when one does not want to commit a sin, it is not committed.

Yes, I've heard it. So what?

Well, since I have never wanted to commit a sin, I haven′t. committed!

The joy radiated from her face... I envied her happiness, because I could not say the same thing (L 420).

14

Daily Holiness of Bernadette

On the threshold of the transition

We have reached the end of Bernadette's life. For her, it is the step mysterious to the beyond: the one that every man gives in a certain solitude: it can only be seen 'with their backs turned', according to the expression of a doctor, who has dedicated himself to study of the dying. That step has been taken through tests mysterious, on a deep night: that of suffering, although also of faith and hope.

Radiant night

After the transparencies of the appearances, after the return to the normal condition of faith: that of a starry night, now a tunnel arrives without stars. The final darkness of Bernadette's destiny shakes hands with the initial darkness of his childhood, in a new degree of silence, of secret and poverty. But for those who approached Bernadette —and for we who are going to follow her in this last stage— that night is a irradiation of God.

At the beginning of this book, we had perceived in the 'passion' of the Bernadette girl — ruin, misery, contempt — a surprising light and tonic of the Gospel. His final passion, that of the suffering and death, is more enlightening still, although also more secret.

The inner axis

If we want to glimpse that radiation through the words and of the everyday gestures of Bernadette, as they will be objectively referred to in in these last pages, it is necessary that we take the axis of your life: that of a daily holiness, without superstructures, without ideology or reasoning, without any complacency. That holiness comes from a direction

deep that constitutes the unity of his life and that allows capturing the co-
lies and the end, despite the fog and the twilight, because it is the same
fundamental line, from one end to the other, in contempt or glory, the
freedom or confinement, health or illness.

Ese eje lo percibió perfectamente el abate Febvre, el último confesor
from Bernadette, the most penetrating, the one who best knew how to recognize and respect
Your grace. And thus he writes:

When the humble Bernadette knocks on the door of the convent of the
sisters of Nevers, already possessed some lights, some teachings and like a
course of conduct that should guide her and at the same time help her
directors and superiors to guide her on the path of perfection.
Thus, she will draw from the meditated memories the 'words',
recommendations and secrets that were communicated to him by the Immaculate
Conception, and later, of the intelligence of the mysterious 'actions'
fulfilled in the cave, he will issue some rules of conduct aimed at
to bring her to the ideal of holiness that was demanded of her.

Furthermore, and similar in this to the prophets of the ancient law, whose
acts and life constituted a tangible confirmation of the great
truths announced by them will not have as its sole mission to transmit
the celestial wills, but will practice 'works that speak', and their
habitual state of suffering will reveal to the souls the way, the
the need for penance, to be 'happy not in this world, but in the
other...

Bernadette will once again feel the same inner strength in her heart.
that in Lourdes she was being pushed to the grotto, to receive visits there from
our Lady. Those inner impulses will not be any less powerful for
drag it into practice.

The words of that speech are tender. The language is wrapped up,
like life itself of Bernadette, in the narrowness of the frames of the century
XIX. One must take that bargain into account and set it aside to receive everything.
light. The wonderful Christian generosity of that time was exercised in a
great cultural indigence, through heavy legal burdens. During that
century, and during the life of Bernadette, the congregation of the Sisters of Nevers,
arising from the evangelical breath of Dom de Laveyne (1683), was poured into
the molds of legalism and in the narrow conception of obedience; it is
what symbolizes the suppression, living still Bernadette, of the vote

paradox of 'charity', irreducible to legal forms. It is in the narrowness of that frame that Bernadette has been able to keep, capture, and find again the essence of the Gospel, reconnecting with the inspiration itself of Dom de Laveyne. And that is what Abbot Febvre has been able to discern.

What he has perceived in those notes, curiously written in future, in a style that is of the time, is that the axis of holiness of Bernadette is interior, awakened by the Spirit. That was what was imposed. to Bernadette herself and to those who had the mission of guiding her.

Bernadette's axis is not just the set of words she has heard in the appearances, but something deeper, something that springs from the root, in 'works that speak' in prophetic or mystical 'acts', as it says vi- gluttonously Abbot Febvre. Bernadette has not put into practice the message from Lourdes on how a law or a rule is applied. In it, the spring it is only by love that all the law is fulfilled. Neither nagging nor recipes. And that dynamism is prior to the appearances. She has known how to capture, for a long time, the emergence of the source of living water: the Gospel, which the apparitions of Massabielle have come to intensify and channel within her, and that her religious family has helped her to assume better.

The axis of Bernadette's holiness is the message of Lourdes, but situated in that previous and inner source that evokes the 'works that speak' of Bernadette.

Revival of the message of Lourdes

That message is not limited to the mere words received in Massabielle: prayer and penance, in the profound evangelical sense and positive conversion, which is the act of returning to God. It is above all the poverty written in Bernadette's very choice and the influx of the the poor who were the first to embrace that echo of the good news: the undeniable confirmation has been made personally by the police commissioner, Mr. Jacomet. In short, that message is, in the final analysis, the name and the identidad de la mensajera: aquella cuya gracia mana de la fuente, Immaculate, the Virgin of the Magnificat, prototype of the Church: the source of Radically lived Gospel.

The apparition reveals its meaning there. Bernadette has received much. from that encounter with the mother of Christ, in the communion of saints, which

for a moment it becomes transparent. That contact has been made under concrete and tangible forms, which Bernadette could understand according to the tradition that had been received: in the form of a living icon. Contemplating that woman, clothed and preceded by a light 'like that of the sun when it arrives to illuminate the shadow', Bernadette has better understood what she was already living in the darkness of faith. The attitudes of the appearance, her prayer, her smile and his sadness, a reflection of his compassion for sinners, the crowd them I saw it reflected in the face of the seer, in an ecstasy detached from attitudes hysterical: the right head, the gaze simply directed upwards.
Bernadette has significantly taken the Virgin Mary as a model, work teacher of God, formator of the humanity of Jesus and prototype of the Church.

When we have referred to or studied words (occasional or fortuitous) From Bernadette, the big surprise has been seeing that they resembled each other formally. to the key words of Lourdes' message: poverty, prayer and penance. Because those were the guidelines that drove the life of Bernadette and they pushed her from the inside, like a tree throws out the branches, like a flower develops its petals, its colors and its aroma. That it was what Abbot Febvre clearly saw. And that modest flower, Bernadette, it resembled the model, foreseen long ago, and that was given to him appeared in the crevices of the rock: Mary Immaculate, messenger of that Bible of the Poor.

'God-charity'

Once all of Bernadette's words are gathered around those four significant themes of the message of Lourdes, there was one part left important —and even essential— that revolved around two others keywords, located on the same axis:

Charity, in the strong sense of the word, that of the Greek Agape: unique love expanded and communicated, which constitutes the whole of the Trinity the same as that of the Church.

Only God (L 857).

These last words reflect the spirituality of Dom de Laveyne, founder of the Sisters of Charity. The first, charity, designates precisely to the congregation he founded and is inscribed on the front Saint Gildard: God is charity. And the formula only God, that Bernadette made it hers, appears in the coat of arms of the congregation. Now then, those

words have been taken by Dom de Laveyne from the Gospel, of which they are the quintessence. Bernadette agreed on that essential point since her childhood, before what we know. She returned to always find the same source, and knew how to separate it from the muddy sludge, as I had done materially in the cave.

The axes of Lourdes' message, prayer, poverty, and penance, are the prologues of the Gospel, inscribed in the Magnificat of Mary, in the preaching of John the Baptist and in the message of the Beatitudes. Likewise, the expressions that summarize Bernadette's deep life, Charity, only God, constitutes its essence and its final word. It was the intimate impulse of the Holy Spirit that made him connect instinctively all those values.

The congregation in which Bernadette ended her life was, therefore, in the same line, by a kind of pre-established harmony, with the axes intimates of their spirituality, since the key themes that inspire that the congregation identifies them like this, Father Ravier: prayer, penance, poverty, service of souls, charity towards the sick and the poor (ESB, p. 228).

These are the axes of Bernadette's religious life... Each one of them you will be able to recognize in your life and in your actions, in those 'works that speak', without that it is necessary to detail them more.

But we must go higher. Those evangelical axes, very close to lived realities, are evident from their childhood, before even from appearances, and they only affirm themselves in the life of Bernadette until the end... a bit like the dotted line extends into a stroke thick, according to a single straight line.

That spiritual line of Bernadette was founded on the robust simplicity of its nature and the fundamental securities received since his early childhood: the shared love of the family home persisted always as a deep resource throughout his life. The tests that they descended upon Bernadette from the age of 10, her condition of little maid in Bartrès, misery and contempt, only revealed to give a gift of always, received from a living Christian tradition, in that time and environment. She knew how to embrace it with a very spiritual instinct. sure, that flows from a good source: ultimately, the source of your baptism

15

THE TESTS OF BERNADETTE

We are already ready to follow Bernadette during the last months of his life.

But, to delve deep into that night, we must pause for a moment. moment when it was the crescendo of everyday tests of Bernadette during her religious life up to the very threshold of the last. step.

This is important because it affects the first word of the message that she received, the most unsettling, the most paradoxical.

I do not promise to make you happy in this world, but in the next one. another (words from February 18, 1858).

This eschatological promise orientates Bernadette towards realities. last, breaking with all human support.

This is an abrupt promise in the form of a negative way, at night and of nothing, according to the language of Saint John of the Cross.

We must, therefore, consider the evidence that wove the canvas. daily life of Bernadette's religious life and prepared her for the test last.

How far Lourdes!

The first test of Bernadette's religious life, the one that he shed tears during his first Sunday of Sant Gildard, it is the uprooting from his homeland in Bigorre, and more especially the nostalgia of the cave: a well overcome sorrow, without reservations, with humor. Bernadette has perceived his tears like a rainbow in the sky, like a rain that was going to to water his vocation. With the tenacious skill he knew how to unfold to let go Bartrès, Bernadette, a nun, could have obtained the return to Lourdes, at least on the big occasions. For that, it would have counted on good support, and would have known how to make use of it. She was always good lawyer for others. But to those who suggested her, like Julie Garros in 1871, that return to the village, he told them:

No, never!

And also:

My place is here (L 405).

I stay in my corner.

I have left Lourdes forever.

Even more:

For me, it would be a very great sacrifice to go back to Lourdes (L 375).

Finally:

I am happy staying here.

Her wait goes beyond:

—Return to Lourdes? Oh, I will see her in heaven! she says to sister Ramplou, in 1873 (L 334).

Family concerns

The second test, linked to the first, was his request for firstborn (of 'heir', as it was said in Lourdes) in relation to the yours. Faithful to traditions and social relationships, Bernadette does not. grants rest. Suffers for not being able to fulfill his responsibilities. so entrenched in her. She participates in the joys and sorrows of her family, and especially in the duels of her sister Toinette, who loses a child after child. He tries to calm and resolve family disputes. He worries about the faithfulness of his own to their religious duties (L 406). He worried to see that her sister is opening a store of religious items in Lourdes, and tries to dissuade her: 'I have written to her, but she hasn't paid any attention.' confides in Julie Garros, her hospice companion, that she has become Sir Vincent (L 198).

Later he will resign himself to his brother Pierre opening a business, but on the condition that 'he does not sell on Sundays', according to the rigor that then it covered that command.

In October 1873, he says to Sister Aurélie Gouteyron:

I do not ask that they be rich, but that they love good God and be like they must be (L 341).

Three years later he insists with Abbot Perreau, that he will see them:

—But do not let them get rich. Insist that they do not get rich. 406).

The most irritating of the tests was undoubtedly the visits, which did not they ceased in Nevers, contrary to what seemed agreed (L 662-
In Lourdes, she had confronted everyone who came, not without repugnance, but sustained by the demand of a mission that only she she could fulfill, because only she could answer for what she had seen and ear. But once the pilgrimage was established and taken on by the bishop, once the chapel was built, whose crypt had been inaugurated shortly before After her departure from Lourdes, the matter had ended for her. The the pilgrimage was no longer needed. And thus he had marched to Nevers 'to to hide oneself.

But there, the thing turned out to be very difficult and even impossible. It is not hidden. a city built on a hill, says the Gospel (Mt 5:14).

And the superiors were forced to make exceptions, which ended up being numerous, in order to channel the wave. 'The closures The withdrawals were painful for Bernadette because she was sought after like a strange bug (L 768), as he confided to Sister Marie Delbrel.

After his death, Abbot Febvre and the superiors revealed to the father Cros his 'extreme repugnance to the phone booths':

There was, so to speak, a need to drag her there. When she was found her, because she was hiding, she needed to be consoled for it road, while she repeated:

But how annoying this is!

It was necessary to resort to the authority, because she objected with all reason:

They promised it to me!

His obedience was not blind. There too he retained his reactions. free.

One day, a certain sister gets permission to look for Bernadette. so that a relative can see it. She invites her companion to come down, but honestly add:

The superior allows you, but leaves you free.

Will you let me go? Oh, well then, no! No and no!

And he runs to the bottom of the garden.

Bernadette does not create false duties for herself, and at this point she escapes from the masochism of the era.

Mientras ejerce su función de sacristana, algunas personas que they come to observe her during a profession ceremony, they ask her:

Sister, where does Bernadette go?

There is no possibility, she replies, he will not be in his place today. habitual.

And having said this, he disappeared.

In February 1871, Sister Victorine Girard arrived at the motherhouse, ask your novitiate neighbor:

Could you introduce me to Sister Marie-Bernard?

The neighbor was none other than Bernadette, who replied to him with her peasant prudence

Yes.

And it was the next day, when I made the same request to another sister, sister Victorine heard:

Yesterday afternoon you were by their side (L 179).

One day Sister Augustin Fort obtains from the superiors to let pass to Bernadette in front of the towers to 'show it to' a priest who I was just passing through. Bernadette understands the subterfuge and makes a gesture with the hand

Ah, little one! You will pay me back for this!

Once again, they task Sister Julienne Capmartin with stopping her in her... path for them to see it. Sister Julienne improvises a speech about the flowers she talks about there. Has Bernadette sniffed out the trap? In fact he continues his path toward sewing without saying anything more than this word:

Chatty!

But Sister Maric-Joseph Berger had more success with the mime. stratagem in presenting not to great figures, but to a little niece of three years. Bernadette loved children, and she gladly stopped. That was a human relationship and not the false situation of a weirdo,

One day during a procession, a lady discovers her and rushes to put herself in her place. side and cannot hide her slightly exalted joy.

I'm going to give her a shock, Bernadette says quietly to Sister Bernard.

Dalias.

And it passes between the wall and the bench, disappearing into the background of the chapel.

Oh, oh!, exclaims the elderly lady.

You have talked too much, says Sister Bernard Dalias.

If the superiors did everything possible to protect Bernadette,
there was an exception that was a rule... The bishops who were just passing through they had the right to see her. In addition to those who occupied the Nevers headquarters:
Monsignor Forcade, Monsignor de Ladoue (1873) and then Monsignor Lelong (1877), the documents allow identifying a dozen of prelates. Among them, Monsignor Chigi, apostolic nuncio (L 128) and to Monsignor Dupanloup (L 295). And the list is certainly not exhaustive.

These poor bishops would do better staying in their dioceses.
Bernadette said, according to the testimony of Sister Marie Delbrel (L 766).

When Monsignor Forcade was announced, he was bringing someone colleague

The Monsignor wishes to see you.

Bernadette managed to respond:

—Decide better how you want me to be seen...(L 765).

In order to spare Bernadette any trouble, it was sought to 'show her' in fortuitous situations.

One day, Sister Victoire Cassou recounts, Monsignor Bourret, bishop of Rodez had arrived at Saint Gildard and wanted to see Sister Marie-Bernard, and to see it without her noticing, a strategy was resorted to:
gathered the whole community in the novitiate hall and after having them addressed to all, the bishop said a few words of edification, the superior. she called the ones from Avevron. They got up. Then the ones from ... were named.
the Pyrenees that rose in turn. Then the Monsignor passed through
the lines to kiss the ring, while the superior or the
the teacher made some observations about each of the sisters...
Finally, Sister Marie-Bernard understood what it was all about:

Be calm, I know very well what I am going to do.

And immediately he slipped through a small door that did not remain far from her. I told her then:

—And the forty days of indulgence?

Such was the 'fee' for kissing a bishop's ring.

She answered me:

--My Jesus, mercy! There are 300 days!

Because that prayer was then categorized with 300 days of indulgence.

Monsignor Bourret did not give up. And he had with Bernadette a revealing conversation, which we will quote later.

Another bishop, who was undoubtedly Monsignor Léseleuc de Kerouara, admitted to visit Bernadette confined in the infirmary, had an idea more superficial. Distractedly playing with a purple zucchetto, he left it fall onto the bed. It was 'calculated' for Bernadette to pick it up. But Bernadette does not move. The conversation dies down... and so does she. The bishop takes the initiative again:

Well, sister, will you give me my stipend?

She responds:

Monsignor, I did not ask for your zucchetto. You can take it. same.

In the end, she had to pick it up out of obedience, following the order given by the superior who was present.

The wild 'nature'

Bernadette considered one of her serious trials to be 'the struggle against nature', for which he felt strictly responsible. Let us remember that at that time the utmost was valued against, no without artifice. Fortunately, in Bernadette, nature was solid and resourceful. But lamented the wild movements:

--My fiery nature again! --she said (L 772).

And also:

It boils inside. You can't see what's happening there. We wouldn't have merit, if we did not dominate ourselves!(L 773).

Sometimes I would get downhearted:

I am discouraged.

But those difficult moments reignited the hope that I placed in the

prayer and in the Eucharist.

In a crisis where it was thought that the end had come. moment, he said:

Do not worry. I will not die yet. It is necessary that before the old man should die. And he is still very much alive (L 773).

He took his difficulties with flexibility.

The first movement does not belong to us, but the second, she said to Julia Garros (L 253).

Bernadette accepted the long term in this matter and sighed:

Oh my God, grant me patience!(L 558).

That test reminded him of the cross, which was the resource in his difficulties.

Useless...

What cost Bernadette the most was not being able to serve according to her desire. Frustration all the deeper because it contradicted the very project. of her vocation. Being treated as useless and good for nothing (L 4 523, etc.) it didn't mean much to her. What really cost her was being useless indeed, to be deprived of all possibility of serving, of taking care of oneself the others, to help others, to be frustrated in those visible works with the ways in which a person expresses themselves, affirms themselves, and finds their fulfillment in the eyes of others and of herself.

Severity of the superiors

The most famous test, the one that has inspired literature and cinema, was the severity of the superiors towards Bernadette; specifically of the mother Joséphine Imbert, superior general (died on May 1, 1878) and so- from the mother Marie-Thérèse Vauzou, novice master.

The evidence exists. And it was mentioned by numerous witnesses due to of the two processes of beatification (L 3, p. 168-175 and B 2, p. 244-269). But it has been exploited to the extreme and has been fictionalized about it. pleasure, according to mythologies and more superficial tastes.

It has been exaggerated for many reasons and at many levels:

First of all, the severity of the superiors surprised the sisters when referring to Bernadette, the seer of Lourdes, object of a discreet fervor.

The processes of canonization were meticulously extended in this point, which was of great importance in the chapter of obedience, of the heroism of virtues and also of the 'objections' that they investigations must be resolved thoroughly and with all scrupulousness. If the superiors had been severe with Bernadette, the obvious reason was not that Did she deserve it? In similar cases, the excessive insistence is already classic. in the small aspects of convent life. The process of Teresita of Lisieux has unveiled the struggles and disputes of the two clans. rivals who were sharing the Carmelo at that time; a situation that much less normal than that of Nevers.

3) Finally, for a long time it was suspected that behind the revealed documents had others hidden, and certainly worse. This The last myth has been dispelled by the complete examination of all the pieces. It is not It is necessary to reiterate here the documents and their detailed analysis that we have. already done in Logia (vol. 3, p. 168-175) and in Bernadette speaks to you (vol. 2, p. 344-394

Here is the whole truth summarized, as it emerges from those reports.

The severity of the superiors is a fact. But it is nothing more than a a specific case of a rule that was general in that austere era. In less balanced convents than that of Nevers the novice teachers They practiced truly humiliating measures that today shock us. In Saint Gildard there was nothing absurd, repugnant, or brutal; but there was indeed an effort to break the will with a view to training in the obedience. Those tests were dosed according to each nun, forcing the measure for strong and recalcitrant temperaments. Regarding Bernadette the tests were precisely motivated by the care of not to ruin a select temperament, to which its exceptional position it put in danger of spiritual intoxication. But Bernadette was not the only one to 'benefit' from a more demanding treatment. And the superiors insisted deliberately in it, because they themselves had to face with rigidity a veneration that would have been out of place.



Mother M.T.Vauzou



Mother Josephine Imbert

Those reasons seem to fully explain the attitude of the superior. General, Mother Joséphine Imbert, who humiliated Bernadette and treated her with coldness, out of fear of yielding to any type of favoritism. A day that He was returning from Rome, saying a word to each novice as he went. hugging. Upon arriving, he hugged Bernadette without saying a word. According to the testimony of Monsignor Forcade (p. 26) referred to her as a useless person until foolish. Bernadette commented:

—Mother Josephine, oh how I fear her!(L 502).

And there is nothing more in the bulky report of the confidences made under the seal of secrecy.

The case of Mother Marie-Thérèse Vauzou is more complex.

Many of the 'tests' that she subjected Bernadette to were common. to all the novices: kissing the ground was, at that time, the most trivial of the penances:

I would search in vain for the tile of the novitiate that I have not. kissed, said Julienne Capmartin (B 2, p. 127).

And Bernadette wasn't the only one who was treated as foolish and proud.

The witness testimonies show discrepancies: sister Stéphanie Vareillaud, novice with Bernadette, said in the process:

I would not have wanted to be in their place (PANey 327).

In contrast, Sister Julienne Capmartin, whom Mother Marie-Thérèse

had been treated especially harshly, he said:

I never glimpsed anything that could seem like an injustice or a hardness... He always treated Sister Marie-Bernard like the others, without considerations, certainly, but without any injustice (Guynot, 1926, p. 86-92).

What is clear is a certain fear of Bernadette towards her mother. Vauzou.

There was also some evolution in the novice teacher regarding Bernadette.

What prevailed at the beginning was the happiness of welcoming 'the girl. privileged of the Virgin Mary,' as she said in the novitiate before the arrival of Bernadette (B 2, p. 10).

During the first months, one day that I had sent to Sister Marie-Bernard who went up early to the bedroom, the teacher referred his story to the novices and repeated to them that they were very fortunate to be able to contemplate the eyes that had seen the Most Holy Virgin (testimony of Sister Cécile Pagés, B 2, p. 252.

When the profession is at the point of death (October 1866) the mother Vauzou said:

We are not worthy of keeping it, but we must commit violence against the sky.

It was after that, at the beginning of the active period (February of 1867), when mother Marie-Thérèse announces to Bernadette the time of The tests (L 69). It was, therefore, a clear and deliberate severity.

Without a doubt, something else was added: a disappointment regarding Bernadette.

She said, "She is an ordinary nun."

The novice teacher had a demanding conception of holiness, centered on Christ; which suited Bernadette very well, but with certain mystical or heroic reliefs, strange to the humble path towards which it was. oriented from within the seer of Lourdes: the way of the poor, the 'hidden' way, according to the Gospel (Mt 11:25-27; Lc 10:21-22), without works or brilliant actions, without an introspective consciousness, according to a pure transparency, and in the school of the first among the poor that was the Virgin Mary. This completely confounded the reference points. from the novices' teacher.

Mother Marie-Thérèse did not see Bernadette on the altars.

Sor Stanislas Pascal heard him exclaim with a 'negative' gesture:

Oh, for me to give my vote for the canonization of Bernadette...!

While she was general superior, from January 1881 to May of... 1899, the question of introducing Bernadette's cause was not raised in the Roman curia. Mother Joséphine Forestier, who succeeded her, was not unaware that opposition. And she went to it to submit the project. The mother Vauzou replied to him,

Wait for me to die.

What exactly was she blaming the psychic for? That side from nature hinted at 'self-love'. But Sister Fabre, who He openly discussed that assessment with her, but he couldn't get 'more. test that this is' (L 682): Bernadette had improvised one day one of those parables that germinated in his sententious spirit. There was drawing a circle on the ground while saying: The one who has no love just as she put her finger here (L 682). As Bernadette had put the finger in the circle to explain the rule of the game, mother Marie. Thérèse thought she considered herself exempt from pride. But that it was surely not Bernadette's idea. Quite the opposite. Haughty, sensible to susceptibility and militant for justice, had awareness. to be proud (L 683): a possibly excessive awareness. His words it testify abundantly (table of the Logia, volume 3, under the word 'pride' [pride], p. 309). He knew he would have to fight against that flaw until his last day

I have been assured that he will die a quarter of an hour after me. death, she said to Jeanne Védère (B I, p. 354).

The clearest are the causes that provoked Marie's rigidity. Thérèse with Bernadette.

Firstly, a relative skepticism regarding Lourdes:

And yet, the rose bush has not bloomed, she said to her mother. Bordenave.

In 1895 or 1896, he specified to Canon Boillot, then chaplain of the mother house, which had preached fervently about Lourdes, two others Reasons: There are bishops who do not believe in it (PONev 1228-1229).

She had specifically cited Monsignor Dupanloup, Bishop of Orléans (whose position was the subject of contradictory testimonies: L 295).

Oh, she was a little peasant girl! (she had concluded). [...] If the The Holy Virgin wanted to appear in some place on earth, why? I was going to choose a rude and uneducated peasant woman instead of a religious, virtuous, and educated? (PONev 1229; B 2, p. 357).

Some days after this conversation, Canon Boillot he expressed his astonishment to three sisters of the council. And he was answered without shawl

So you don't know that our revered mother does not feel sympathy for the things of Lourdes. With us, he has maintained the same language (ibid.)

But we cannot simplify too much here either:

She died uttering these words:

Our Lady of Lourdes, protect my agony!

Their reservations were linked to their spiritual classicism, to their distrust. against the new devotions, apparitions, charisms, etc. Its vigorous Christocentrism (anchored in the Sacred Heart) was distrustful of the Marian polarizations as popular forms of devotion. In this, it anticipated certain currents that have triumphed in recent times.

The second reason is a difference in class and social environment that They have highlighted, Mother Bordenave and numerous witnesses:

I do not understand why the most holy Virgin has appeared to Bernadette when there are so many delicate and elevated souls! Anyway... (PANev 327-328 and other testimonies in B 2, p. 358-359).

But the most decisive reason for the misunderstandings and hardships undoubtedly stem from the fact that Mother Marie-Thérèse liked the young sisters a lot... with a great openness of soul. And found Bernadette too reserved (PANev 225).

She [...] appreciated the piety of the novitiates according to the confidences that were made to her, confirms Mother Bordenave (PANev 327-328).

I doubted Bernadette's delicate heart.

That's what Sister Bordenave told me personally. 326).

And the mother Vauzou herself confessed to mother Villaret:

Every time I had to say something to Bernadette, I felt inclined to say it with bitterness 1...1. In the novitiate I had novices before those I would have kneelt before rather than in front of Bernadette(PANev 1123).

The closure was mutual. As the abbot clearly warned Febvre, Bernadette only trusted naive people like she, especially to children. But it closed off with the least people simple (ESB, p. 515).

The situation became tougher due to the fact that Bernadette was opening up. more enjoyable to other superiors, particularly to Sister Éléonore Cassagnes, that had its trust.

From there, a certain shadow in the spirit of Mother Marie-Thérèse. Vauzou (PANev 336).

It even happened that [...] the venerable confided her sorrows to sister Nathalie Portat, second assistant [...]. Hence a certain antagonism, has said J. Garnier (PANev 1 545v).

The teacher stumbled not only with simplicity, but also with certain mystery of Bernadette, that mystery of clarity that makes her so admirable in direct speech and so strange in the analysis of states of soul.

It is also necessary to have the impressive character of a mother. Vauzou, an outdated woman in her ideas (B 2, p. 361-362). She had a a certain awareness of it and felt scruples about having been too serious with Bernadette. At the end of her life, during one of her last retreats in Lourdes, consulted there with Father Jean Léonard, abbot of Cistercian monastery of Fontfroide, which calmed her down (B 2, pp. 361-362). And this is how he expressed himself two months before dying:

God has allowed that mother Joséphine Imbert and I were you will be severe with Sister Marie Bernard, in order to keep her in humility (PONev 104v, etc.)

5) And finally, we must also take into account the artifices of the time, in that being natural, frankness, and clarity were not such valued things like today:

Dry character, very susceptible, mother Marie had noted. Thérèse Vauzou in her secret note about the novices.

Note compensated by another, equally confidential:

Pious, modest, helpful, she is orderly.
82, p. 364.

The test was painful for Bernadette, due to the attraction it exerted. about her novices, the rich personality of Mother Marie-Thérèse, well soon elected general superior, and considered as one of the most highlights of the era.

Bernadette feels happy when Mother Marie-Therese comes to the nursing to visit her. We have seen with what enthusiasm (excessive, she thought she herself) lunged at the novice teacher, upon her return from a trip (L 90). Two factors increased that collective enthusiasm: then very young girls were admitted, who entered into the convent without having been formed by life, and in which a child abandonment, and it projected onto the superiors, representatives of God, a transfiguring halo that enhanced his importance as a sign and transmitter of the will of God.

There was also a tension between the established power of the teacher. of novices and the charismatic prestige enjoyed by the person of Bernadette. We must do justice to Mother Marie-Thérèse that she is not showed distrustful. Far from trying to destroy or eliminate that pole of attraction, knew how to recognize it and use it for the benefit of the novices, like we have already seen. She felt strong enough, confident enough. and widely accepted enough not to be worried about it. And the Bernadette's proverbial docility allowed her a way of life, knowing use its radiation in a perfectly controlled manner... even though not without tensions.

The tension was reciprocal, because Bernadette did not have the flexibility. diplomacy of certain novices. Her mission had trained her to do in front of the commissioner, the prosecutor, the judge, the parish priest, etc.

But between those two very different women there was a sympathy. Secret, a conflicted attraction. Here is a significant symptom: when Bernadette was in the infirmary and Mother Thérèse was passing by there (without entering), I coughed to make a signal to which Bernadette also responded in the same way. That compensatory language certifies its desire for communication and the inhibition that dealt with it (L 281; B 2, p. 129 and 352).

The last test

We still need to delve into the latest tests that more deeply marked Bernadette's life: physical trials and moral tests; these the worst last ones in the judgment of sor Marie-Bernard herself.

16

NIGHT AND FOG

Secret tests of Bernadette

From December 12 until the month before his death, Bernadette will be the subject of questioning again under conditions singularly painful for her...

The company of Father Cros

And yet, the historian and all the friends of the truth do not they can only sympathize with those who subjected her to that penultimate test... at the moment when so many reasons advised against bothering her.

The case of conscience was raised on August 24, 1878. That day the Father Cros arrives at Saint Gildard. He is a Jesuit responsible for writing a scientific history of appearances; a project dear to the chaplains since the time when Lasserre had managed to stop his Petite histoire, gathering against them the protest of Bernadette and denouncing them in a Memory of the company sent 'to the bishops' and 'to the holy office' of Rome.

Father Cros had been a fervent devotee of Lourdes for a long time. time. I had found Bernadette in 1864 and 1865. And already those meetings had inspired him to write the history of the appearances. He wanted to get to work immediately. And, had he done so, the the aspect of things would have changed, because his provocative genius of the investigator would have brought out Bernadette's most hidden resources. But his superiors ordered him to finish his story about Juan first. Berchmans (who was more interesting to the company). It was only in 1877, after of the death of Bernadette's parents and of many other witnesses, when it undertakes systematic research among the survivors of 1858, still numerous twenty years later. In Lourdes, in the spring in 1878, he questioned more than two hundred witnesses: Bernadette's wet nurse, her companions from February 11, Jeanne and Toinette, the miller Nicolau. He directly recorded all his statements (Cros, 1, p. 509-520).

It was essential to interrogate the only witness of the apparition:

Bernadette... And to think that in 1864 she had proposed to him in a way spontaneously give her account (because among them a had been established a sympathy current), and he had rejected it, arguing that he believed it enough without the need for more!

A wall

On August 24, Father Cros is in Saint Gildard, during a trip in which he has managed to dispel a thousand apprehensions and had removed from his hiding thousands of unheard documents, among them those that concealed the former officials of Lourdes, from 1858. He had always managed his purpose... But in Nevers, his unrestrained diplomacy clashes against a wall. The nuns are chastened by the issue of the protest and they fear that the conflict will flare up again. They want to spare Bernadette that test, according to the promise they had made to him. The ingenious alacrity of the father, who often performed wonders, achieves here nothing more than strengthen the defenses. The sisters refer him to the bishop; he sends him again to the sisters, in a futile back and forth.

Cros has managed to win the sympathy of the simple people. He has put into his I played with the bishopric's camera help and the postal employees for those who are informed about the telegrams, because he has requested it from the bishop of Tarbes I urgently telegraphed in your favor. Everything is useless. Your last attempt to seek camera assistance to obtain some response or challenge of the bishop, it only allows him to hear from a distance 'the nervous, shrill voice and "choleric" of the prelate ordering his servant not to let him go up.

Cros makes one last attempt near the general superior:

Ask the Blessed Virgin to incline your heart.

And receive the following response:

My heart is not inclined, it is straight.

Appeal to the Pope

It is clear that only an order from the pope can solve that. conflict. Cros had drafted the project since November 1871. In November of the following year, the Archbishop of Reims, Monsignor Langénieux, it takes him to Rome. On December 8, 1878, he announces the complete success of the company.

Leo XIII has signed the Brief where he declares in advance that will appreciate anyone who is kind enough to help carry the project to good term […] or that he testifies as a witness (Cros, Tales and Mysteries, Toulouse, 1901, p. 12.

And there is Bernadette and her superiors to provide a service to the. own dad.

The negotiation is renewed at Saint Gildard. But it does not want to be seen. more to Father Cros. His persuasive fervor and ability are feared. infiltration. On the contrary, Father Sempé is accepted, who has shown himself discreet, conciliatory, and modest in his inquiries, due to the counter-protest in November 1869.

Intervention of Bernadette

He is, therefore, the one who subjects Bernadette on December 12, 1878, to the interrogations prepared by Father Cros. But the most response frequent is to the fifty questions divided into two series is this:

I don't remember.

Time and uprooting have slowly erased the details in the memory of Bernadette. Very soon, just a few months later, she had forgotten the dates and did not distinguish the particularities of each one of them appearances. The historians' complaints have taught him the difficulty to clarify the details of the events to which it is impossible return to verify them. And their honesty in the subsequent pillaging is appreciated what makes their testimonies. Unlike in imaginative seers, in which the event and the message proliferate, Bernadette has not adding a single word or fact to your original testimony. No develops but clarifies. Has internalized the appearances, to the point of not knowing nor to represent them. It can only evoke the memory to through a painful distance, and it would cause him vertigo if he stopped in her.

Memories emerge sometimes sporadically. Before the father Sempé remembers Bernadette finding the warm water while crossing for the first time the Gave, on February 11, 1858. And it can specify the sentences that I knew at that time:

Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed [...] in French, as well as the invocation 'Oh Mary, conceived without sin' (B 2, p. 241).

What is best to rediscover are the words of the Virgin, in patois, which is copied once again under its dictation.

The next day (December 13), Father Sempé sees again... Bernadette 'joyful and relaxed'. For him, it evokes this childhood memory:

His uncle, his godmother's husband, brought back a a certain number of small rings for her companions. All they were too big for Bernadette's little fingers.
She felt sad. Her uncle comforted her by promising to take her one to the measurement of her finger. The uncle kept his word and brought her a small ring. But it was so small that she couldn't fit it in. Bernadette didn't he becomes disheartened, and makes such efforts, using his teeth to help him, that the ring after great difficulties he finally managed to enter. But his finger starts to hurt. and soon it starts to swell. Swelling and pain grew as time. The ring had to be sawed with a small file. Sister Marie-Ber-Nard said laughing with all his soul:

I never wished to have such a ring again.

Once again, the words of the apparition were collected from his mouth. But Cros is not satisfied. He has problems and objections against certain abrupt answers from Bernadette. He is baffled by her forgetfulness, with certain discrepancies in minor details, especially chronological ones. Bernadette speaks as if all the words had been pronounced in a single and same appearance, on February 18, the first day she heard it hablar. Su cabezonería proverbial resiste a las argumentaciones del padre Cros, sometimes hardening his viewpoint, as he always does when he is contradicted. The research is revived again. The questions They rain from Father Cros accompanied by arguments. blunt. These demands now arrive in Nevers with the authority of Leo XIII. The sisters repeat with increasing vigor each time:

It's the last time!

But, tired of fighting, they themselves are the ones who formulate the new questions to Bernadette, with no witnesses outside the community, the January 12, then on the 30th, and after that on March 3, 1879 (L 447-553).

Night about the apparitions

These interrogations were a suffering for her. It leaves her to glimpse a surprising confession from the previous year. It was made to her Bernadette to Monsignor Bourrett, Bishop of Rodez, who had so much

insisted on seeing her. It was September 1, 1877, and Bernadette was telling her.
his aversion to talking about the vision of his youth.

They are far away now... very far away... all those things. I don't remember anymore.
I don't really like talking about it, because, oh my God, if I had...
wrong!(L 461)

Let's not be surprised. Such forgetfulness and similar doubts.
they constitute a classic phenomenon among mystics. It is difficult, and often
impossible, to evoke the memory of those second states, of those moments
of exceptional light, as it is difficult for the Lapps to imagine the light
permanent of the summer solstice during the long night of the solstice
winter, and how it is difficult for us to imagine the return of the sun when
the rain and the fog continue. Teresa of Lisieux knew, more
rigorously yet, the same eclipse. Yielding to that vertigo and to
scruple, believed she had 'lied' after recounting the vision of the Virgin that she
had healed.

Bernadette did not let herself be carried away by vertigo. Her deep conviction
it remains intact. But she knows that, from now on, it will be better for her
focus your attention elsewhere, on the everyday, on the future that God
do it in her like in a chrysalis, according to the austere word, which does not give her
promises to be 'happy in this world, if not in the next'. It can no longer return.
back towards her past. From this point of view, we only see her now.
backwards.

The evidence and the strength that had held her before the commissioner,
The prosecutor, the judge, and the ecclesiastical opponents have evaporated.
Those bright lights can no longer move her. She finds it so difficult to think about.
Hello, like a blind person by accident representing the time when they could see.
daylight

Night of Suffering

And that is nothing more than the lesser and most external aspect of his trial.
For her, the double night of suffering and of her own faith has now arrived.

Cardinal Veuillot, stricken by illness, spent his last
energies (the only ones that remained after having emptied himself in the
service of the Church) in this surprising phrase:

Tell the priests not to speak of suffering. Let them not
they talk about him, because they don't know what it is!

Physical suffering is an incomprehensible night. No one can talk about it in an objective and lucid way. No one can dominate it. Bernadette has humbly accepted it, better than the intellectuals and the wise and the scholars. She had known for a long time those dark tunnels, during the asthma crises that put her on the brink of death. And, however, in the course precisely of one of those crisis, I said to Julie Garros:

It is very painful not to be able to breathe; but it is much more distressing to be tortured by inner pains. It is terrible (L 345).

It was between July and October 1875. And from then dates the plus sign. ancient that has been given to us from the deep purifying trial that marked his last years.

Night of Hope

Bernadette knew how to appreciate the difference in degree, in depth, between the physical suffering and the one that affected her more deeply in the exercise of her hope. She felt the dark shadow pass by the tempting. The little he talked about it coincides with the cure of Ars and with Bernanos.

All of this is the same thing. For the past few months, Mrs. Tourriol she heard him address (firmly in his tribulation) the spirit of evil:

Go away.

Her lucidity remained great in the midst of that night. October 1877 says, upon learning of the death of Abbot Peyramale:

Oh, now my turn will arrive soon, but first it is necessary that fulfill 'another death'!(L 466).

Sister Marthe du Rais testifies in the same sense:

One day I saw her bathed in tears [...]. And I said to her:

--Sister Marie-Bernard, why are you crying? Are you feeling unwell?

She replied to me:

Oh no! That's not it... If you knew everything that's happening to me... Pray for me(L 806).

That test was known very soon. Father Sempé will talk about it. the day after Bernadette's death.

Jean-Baptiste Estrade, informed by him, has written in his History

In time of appearances, edited for the first time in 1898.

In the last years of her life, she was besieged by moral terrors, a thousand. times more terrible than physical pain.

Abbot Febvre, Bernadette's last confessor, clarifies the point more notable of that intimate suffering:

She often reproached herself for not 'surrendering' to God in accordance with the thanks received.

Night of Faith

But that test sank into a more radical night, which allows to catch some very faint signs. Bernadette met, like Teresa of Lisieux, the night of faith. She no longer lived from light and attractions, but from a faith. fidelity to the word of the hidden, silent God, put to the test by the clamor of doubts and inner temptations. Also from that aspect we only see from behind; I mean concerning their freedom always alive in the midst of that apparent collapse.

Passion of Bernadette

The life of Bernadette ends in a 'passion, like hunger was, ruin and also the disorders of his health. Now it is the illness, the impotence, the physical and moral darkness. The word passion is fulfilled. here in its etymological sense, according to this observation of his confessor:

The 'passive' virtues have abounded in her: a life of penance, sanctified by divine action..., shaped by the crosses.

And also (referring to God's mysterious action in her):

It has been worked more than she worked (ESB, p. 515, B 2, p. 414).

Like a broken pot

That 'passion —she uses the word— Bernadette takes on with a active awareness, identifying with all its strength with the passion of Crucified Christ. She recognized herself in him more and more, albeit gropingly.

Already in 1877 it was said:

Our Lord was treated like a broken pot.

415).

17

THE LAST MONTHS

(December 1878 - April 1879)

Since December 11, 1878, Bernadette 'falls ill. definitely' (Lasserre, Bernadette. 1879, p. 3491: a being in bed that will no longer allow him more than the comings and goings from the bed to the armchair.

Receptacle of all pains

Abbot Febvre, a regular visitor in recent months, does this review of your illnesses:

- A chronic asthma, tearing of the chest, accompanied by blood vomits that have lasted for two years. Aneurysm (development of the aorta), gastralgia, a tumor in the knee... Finally, during the for the last two years the bone decay, so that his poor body was the receptacle of all pains. Meanwhile, they were forming abscesses in the ears of Sister Marie-Bernard, which tormented her with a partial deafness, very distressing for her, which did not cease more than a little before his death.

From their perpetual vows (September 22, 1878), the sufferings increased in intensity and did not cease until their death. Her ambition, which she concealed as best as she could, was to be a victim of the heart of Jesus (L 554).

The superiors have pointed out one of the most sensitive aspects of their suffering, the one that worried the nurses.

A tumor stiffened his knee...atrocious suffering; a knee enormous, the diminished leg, not knowing how to move it. Sometimes 'it I needed an hour to find the position. [The] physique 'had' changed, and she seemed like a dead person. She, who was so energetic to suffer, she was defeated by evil; even while sleeping, the slightest movement of the leg 'tore away' a scream... and 'those' high-pitched screams prevented sleep from her nursing companions. She spent the nights sleepless. In her sufferings had diminished... It had reduced to nothing

(stenography of Father Cros, A I; ESB p. 516).

A terrible enemy

Doctor Robert Saint-Cyr, bewildered by the ups and downs of the previous years, it was all the more tense as I would have wished to alleviate it to the extent that he had expressed the esteem he had for her when she was a nurse (see chap. 11). In her helplessness she arrives and consider her as 'a capricious sick person'. As a form of diagnosis, it It serves as enigmatic phrases, like this one:

You have a terrible enemy!

And, having said this, Bernadette refers,

turned halfway... I'm starting to believe that he/she understands nothing (letter from 28 de diciembre de 1876. ESB p. 473).

At the beginning of 1879 he says:

I don't want him back! (L 546).

The heels and the tip of the nose

He has to 'endure' so many evils that he avoids useless trials: the drops of water that would overflow the glass. Bernadette does not get upset in a stoic heroism. Know that one must remain sincere and have compassion for herself. She humbly accepts herself as she is.

In January 1879, a sister visits her and makes her '36 recommendations, asking for sentences of all kinds:

She did not reveal anything, even though she was suffering at that moment. horribly, Sister Victoire Cassou recounts. On the contrary, she showed very funny. But, when the sister came out, she couldn't hold back from to say

I prefer to see his heels rather than the tip of his nose. When he one suffers from the need to be alone.

I told him:

You will say the same about me when I am gone.

She answered me:

Oh no, my poor friend! It's not the same.

In a letter dated January 5, 1879, he attempts for the last time

to reassure his own

I am feeling better, I cough less since the weather has improved a bit. (ESB, p. 508).

The longest nights

Starting from February 1879, it must be watched over in the infirmary of the Santa Cruz; has 'his right leg outside the bed, resting on a chair. They are painful nights, with continuous uninterrupted moans, someone testifies that she watched over her that month, Sister Michel Duhème (L 551). She was, says, a kind of muffled cry, half choked between the teeth and cut short by brief silences. I could tell he was making efforts to hold back for me... He realized that I was awake. In at a certain moment I told him, obeying the order that I had received:

My dear sister, you surely need some. What. Can I offer you any service?

No, she replied, sleep, sleep. I will call you if I need you. I need.

I had made an effort to maintain complete stillness. to give her [...] the illusion that he was asleep; but she did not deceive herself. When I said goodbye to her to go to prayer, she said to me:

You haven't slept, have you?

The nurse sister came to warn me that she would not return again. to the sick person. Bernadette herself had told her:

I don't want that sister to watch over me again... I want sisters. let them sleep (L 551).

Last sign of his inner freedom: he still knows how to say: I want, I I don't want to, and I say it for the benefit of others, with an authority that... makes obey.

Impotent to stifle some laments, he says:

I apologize for complaining so much.

And also:

Do not believe in my contortions.

Presence

Wherever he is, his contact stimulates rather than depresses. The 20 in March, a young candidate (Camille Labaume) is still presented. Bernadette is exhausted and comes out of the trance saying:

Miss, I suffer too much and I can't give you a hug, but I will pray for you.

He knows how to appreciate the 'good broths' that are brought to him and the good ones. intentions that demonstrate to him/her:

I am better cared for than a princess.

On March 19, he confides to Abbot Febvre that he has asked Saint Joseph 'for the grace of a good death'. He no longer wants to hear about novena:

—Request my healing, no!(L 561).

The chaplain's consolations are timely and revive his hope:

—Oh, yes!... That thought has done me good (L 579).

But sometimes it adds:

—How long it takes for the end to arrive!(L 578).

Last Rites

(28 de marzo de 1879)

On March 28, they will impose it once again (at least the fourth time since 1868) the anointing of the sick. She protests:

I have healed every time I have received it (L 568).

After receiving the per diem, the blessings, and the speech from the abbot Febvre, she also states:

My dear mother, I ask for your forgiveness for all the distress I have caused you. caused by my infidelities in religious life, and I also ask for forgiveness. to my companions for the bad examples I have given them... especially with my pride!

The accent of conviction moves everyone: thunderous voice like a preacher who wants to be heard, notes Abbe Febvre (L 569, B 2, p. 269.

It's not that bad, says the secretary general.

They make 'requests' for heaven (L 419).

I will not forget anyone.

On March 29, Abbot J.E. Greuzard brings him a photograph of a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, created by Armand Caillat, famous artist from Lyon.

Bernadette says indulgently:

It's the least bad.

Although it adds:

I don't know why they depict the holy Virgin like this; always I said that I did not have my head tilted back that much. It's not like that. way he looked at the sky (L 571).

The stones and the eggs

At the end of March, Sister Philomène Roques obtains permission to cover it and hear its complaints in a painful nightmare, so it goes to its help:

What do you have, my dear sister? Are you suffering?

—Oh yes, I was 'down there' and a little boy was throwing. stones to the torrent.

Was it the stone of Jeanne Abadie that was resurfacing in her anguish? of the agonizing?

That same morning, a folded sheet needs to be placed underneath him. body.

His poor body is nothing more than a sore (the nurse notes). In all of his lower limbs, he no longer has skin (L 472).

As Easter approaches, take advantage of a small improvement to decorate. an egg scratching the pink paint with a small pocket knife (L 575). Repeat, renewing it a bit, a reflection that knows how to brighten their spirits. visits.

Men no longer have a heart, so I put it in my balls.

They cut his hair for the last time, as they used to do. periodically, for the benefit of missionary works. This would take out some resources for the rescue of slaves. Hence her response to sister Marie Guerre, one morning raises her little hat for grooming and...

find with the shaved skull:

It's to buy a black one.

Bernadette has always given her all, and with all her heart.

Holy Week

During Holy Week (April 6-13, 1879), the escars... agravan and Bernadette asks for relief to 'endure':

If you could find something in your pharmacy to relieve my kidneys, I am all skinned (L 577).

And also:

Search among your medications... something to relieve me. I am so weak that I can't breathe. Send me strong vinegar to smell (L 577).

It is time to strip away everything:

He made her remove all the pictures she had on her bed.

And explain the fact by showing the crucifix:

This one is enough for me.

On Monday, April 7, the interrogations and disputes return to their spirit. from the historians. And finds the energy to tell the secretary general, mother Éléonore Cassagnes:

I don't want disputes. I have strongly recommended to my relatives. to stay on the sidelines (L 576).

And add:

I have said the things. Let them remember what I said the first time. I may have forgotten and others may have forgotten. How much is it Writing in simpler terms will be better. When I read the passion, I get excited. more than when they explain it to me (L 576).

18

Bernadette's Transit

On Easter day, April 13, 'I was coughing continuously'. And he confides to sister Saint-Cyr Jollet:

This morning, after the holy communion, I asked for
Our Lord, five minutes of respite to be able to speak to you at my leisure.
But he hasn't wanted to give them to me… 'My passion will last until my death.'

Goodbye, Bernard

On Easter Monday, Sister Bernard Dalias visited:

The curtains have been drawn. The patient has her face turned away.
against the wall and it doesn't move [...]. I'm going to lean for a moment at the foot of
his bed to see her for the last time.

So, with one of her funny little girl pouts, which always
had preserved, opened an eye that he directed towards me and that made a
a small signal for me to get closer... Her thin hand brushes against mine:

Goodbye, Bernard, she tells me, this time it's over.

In an impulse of reverence, I was going to take that little hand to
my lips, but she immediately withdrew it under the blankets (L 583).

Bernard Dalias was the one who said upon meeting for the first time the seer:

—Bernadette? Is this all there is?

And he remembers it then.

In that first encounter, Bernadette had extended that to me.
same hand smiling. Today I was taking it away... Our twelve years of tenderness
friendship is thus framed by two handshakes... She
I had not noticed the presence of my classmates, which earned me that
privilege of a personal goodbye.

Like a grain of wheat

This same Easter Monday, Bernadette continues to fight. And she has said to

sor Cécile Pagès (the pharmacist of the house):

Would you not find anything to ease my heart... to make me breathe? (L 584).

And also adds:

I do not know any relief. The chaplain has told me that the good God wants to make me worthy while I am on the earth. It is necessary. that I resign myself.

His face is congested. The prostration worsens. A memory childhood emerges over her broken being, and says to Sister Léontine:

I am exhausted like a grain of wheat.

And continues:

I would not have believed that one must suffer so much to die. 585).

Fights

On the night from Monday to Tuesday of Easter, he enters into the 'agony spiritual'. Her confessor hears her repeat these words several times:

Get away, Satan!

On Tuesday morning, Father Febvre tells me that the the demon had tried to scare her, but she had invoked the saint name of Jesus and all speech has disappeared (L 586).

That same day, he still receives the holy communion; but in the course of the Tomorrow she suffered a very strong oppression crisis. She called me and wanted to receive the sacrament of penance. I then applied the indulgence. plenary 'at the point of death'. As I would tell him to renew with love the sacrifice of his life, he responded to me with surprising liveliness:

What sacrifice? It is not a sacrifice to leave a poor life behind. that so many difficulties are experienced to belong to God (L 587).

He/She strives to repeat the ejaculatory prayers that are suggested to him/her. And he/she says:

—How right the author of the 'Imitation' is in teaching that one should not to wait until the last moment to serve God! One is capable of such little thing!

Give thanks until the end

It is 7 in the evening. Sister Nathalie arrives at her bedside. It is a sister who has a rare gift of sympathy, contact, and presence, who has developed by focusing on the deaf-mutes. Bernadette says to him:

My dear sister, I am scared. I have received so many thanks and I have taken so little advantage of them.

Sister Nathalie encouraged her to offer all the merits of the heart of Jesus. She promises to help her give thanks to the Blessed Virgin until the final. And he adds some words in a low voice; he does not refer to his fear, but only this answer from Bernadette:

—Ah! I thank you!

It is the last time the sun sets over Bernadette.

The last night

On the night of April 15 to 16, the candle was a novice, Sister Alphonse. War:

I went up to the infirmary after the evening prayer, around the 9, she refers. Our dear sick one... she answered me sweetly, weakly. I found her so tired that I thought it wise not to lie down, as the one who preceded me had done. I sat down, then, at her header to be ready to provide assistance.

From time to time, suffering would tear away some light complaint, that made me shudder in the chair. She begged me several times to let her helped himself to turn in order to find a little relief, because his poor the body was raw flesh and it can be said that it lay on sores.

We then tried to come to an agreement to carry that out. maneuver that was difficult. I took the foot of the sick leg (you know which had a horrifically swollen knee due to bone decay) and I struggled to follow the movements of her body, so that she could turning at the same time without the joints of the leg needing to function. I noticed that during that endless night there was no not let slip a word of impatience or disgust... The rest has disappeared from my memory (L 590)

In the morning, visit from Mother Marie-Louise Bourgeot. Bernadette always with her cheerful presence, she thinks of giving an image for one of the nuns of Beaumone: Sister Madeleine Bounaix.

At 11:30, he/she wants to be lifted.

They put her in an armchair. She then notices the time by the clock chimes... She apologized to the companions who were with her. side for having to delay the meal time for her (L 593).

The crucifix

She was looking at the crucifix, placed in front of the armchair, the mother said. Éléonore Cassagnes (L 593).

Between twelve and one in the afternoon, try to 'have a little bit of food without obtaining it,' states mother Joséphine Forestier.

His state of extreme weakness impressed me... I believed it was my duty warn the sick person and alert the community (L 594).

Father Febvre comes, confesses her again and recites with her the prayer of the dying. She repeats it, with a weak but clear voice (L 595). Their gaze is always fixed on the crucifix that is on the wall (L 593, II). 'In a moment of calm,' the chaplain refers, I urged her with the biblical words of the 'Divine Spouse':

Set me as a seal upon your heart (Song of Solomon, 8.6)

We saw her then take the crucifix and place it over her heart. squeezing it tightly. His desire was for it to always remain fixed there, it was even tied with a ribbon, so that it would not move with the involuntary movements caused by pain (L 596).

With that sign, Bernadette intends to seal her alliance with Jesus. crucified.

Between one thirty and two, Mother Éléonore Cassagnes returns to take the word:

You are on the cross.

Bernadette extends her arms towards the crucifix.

Oh my Jesus! Oh, I love you!

At a quarter past two, one of her classmates asks her:

Sister mine, do you suffer a lot?

All this is good for heaven.

I am going to ask our Immaculate Mother... to give you her consolations.

No, replies the sick woman, no consolations, but strength and patience. (L 599. Testimony of Abbot Febvre).

He then remembers the blessing that Pius IX had granted him. for the time of his death. And he wants to have that sheet in his hands, in order to upon receiving your application. It is noted that this was not necessary, it was enough... with his intention, invoking the name of Jesus (L 600).

At that moment, he tried to sit up a little by supporting himself with his hand. right on the arm of the chair, she raised her gaze to the sky and brought her hand up left to the forehead. His eyes had a moving expression, and they remained for a few moments at a fixed point. The features of their face they expressed calmness, serenity, and at the same time a certain seriousness melancholic. Then, with an indefinable tone of voice, indicating surprise more than pain, and with growing emotion, he let out this triple exclamation:

Oh! Oh! Oh!

And she experienced a tremor throughout her body (L 601).

It is two thirty.

At five to three, the clock chimes for the litanies, that the The community prays daily in the chapel. Bernadette wishes to take a a little rest. The confessor leaves her. The nuns withdraw. Someone suggest to the dying this reason for trust:

The Most Holy Virgin will come down to meet you.

Oh yes!, I await it.

At around three in the afternoon, the patient seemed to be a victim of tortures of an inner suffering impossible to express... He takes his crucifix (the one that Monsignor de Ladoue speaks to him brought from Rome in 1877), it contemplates a lovingly instante and then kisses slowly one by one the wounds of Christ (L 605).

Sister Nathalie, who arrives at that moment, finds her absorbed in the contemplation of his crucifix.

Suddenly [Bernadette] raises her head […] with a look indefinable [...]

My dear sister, forgive me, pray for me... Pray for me.

Sister Nathalie and the two nurses fall to their knees to pray. the sick person joins in their ejaculations, which they repeat in a low voice (L 606).

He quickly gathers himself, head bowed towards the side of the nurse sister who is on his left, and then with a

expression of pain and supreme abandonment, lifts his eyes to the sky, extends his arms in a cross and lets out a great shout:

Oh my God!

A shiver... runs through the three nuns still. kneeling.

Bernadette rejoins the prayers of her companions:

Holy Mary, Mother of God...

Then it is revived and repeats twice:

Saint Mary, Mother of God, pray for me, poor sinner. 608).

She looks intently at Sister Nathalie and reaches out her arms towards her. That sister who had taught the deaf-mutes, reads beyond the words.

And with her questioning gaze, she responds to Bernadette's look: What do you expect from me?

Not a single word has been spoken; but the dying one has understood. And he says in a loud voice:

It's so that you help me!

Sister Nathalie remembers the promise she made the night before to Bernadette: help her to thank the Virgin until the end.

A few moments later, the patient, with an expressive gesture, asks to drink. He makes a large sign of the cross, takes the bottle with the drink tonic they offer you, take a few drops in two attempts, and tilting the head, sweetly delivers its soul (L 611).

Sister Gabrielle de Vigouroux, the nurse, enters at that moment:

I arrived just in time to receive his last breath, which he gave very sweetly, resting on my arm. She had the crucifix in her hand, supporting it against the heart. I think they had even tied it up. It was leaning to the right side, but closing her eyes. I remember that I It cost to close his right eye that opened repeatedly (L 611).

Lasserre saw her dead (Zola notes this in his Journal de Lourdes, in 1892). And it is said that she was very beautiful.



The nursing of the
Santa Cruz in which
Bernadette died



Armchair in which he died
Bernadette



If the grain
What falls to the ground
does not die,
he/she is left alone.
If he/she dies,
produce
much fruit



DIARY DEDICATED TO THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN (1866)

How blessed was my soul, oh my good mother,
when I had the happiness of contemplating you!
I like to remember those sweet moments
passed under your eyes
full of kindness and mercy for us.

Yes, my tender mother, you have lowered yourself to the ground
to appear to a weak girl,
[…], vos, la reina del cielo y de la tierra,
you have wanted to serve yourselves with what was most humble,
according to the world.

Bernadettc, Diary dedicated to the queen of heaven. 1886.

Acronyms

This book is aimed at a general audience. The references have been reduced to a minimum. With them, the reader is referred to the fundamental works. where you can find the evidence, foundations, and supplements detailed. The abbreviations used are as follows:

File from the Cros archives. We especially cite A III, A VI, and A VII: Minutes of the survey 1878-1880.

Annals of Notre Dame de Lourdes.

ArchFiles.

AzunT.M.J. Azun of Bernétas, The Groite of the Pyrenees, Larrieu, Tarbes 1061.

BR. Laurentin, Bernadette speaks to you, Lethielleux, Paris 1972, 3 volumes, 432 and 448 paid (detailed biography).

Barbet J. Barbet, Bernadette Souhirous, Pau 1909 (we cite the edition of Tarbes 1923.

CrosL.J.M. Cros,Histoire de N.D. de Lourdes,Beauchesne, Paris 1927 3 volumes.

Dr. Laurentin. Authentic documents (in collaboration with B. Ticket) 7 volumes. Lethielleux, Paris 1957-1966.

ESBA. Ravier, Writings of Saint Bernadette, Lethielleux, Paris 1961.

GuynotE. Guynot, Saint Bernadette. The following figure indicates the date from the different editions (where the chosen traits are partly renovated.

HR. Laurentin, Authentic History of Apparitions, 6 volumes, Lethielleux, Paris 1961-1964. It is the basis for the apparitions.

LR. Laurentin and M.T. Bourgeade, Logia of Bernadette. Critical Study

from his words from 1866 to 1879 (3 volumes), Lethielleux, Paris 1971. The number following that acronym indicates the number of the lodge. The mention p. is formally specified where it is useful to indicate the page.

RR. Laurentin, Authentic account of the apparitions. Lethielleux, Paris 1966 (summary of H).

OGOlphe-Galliard, Lourdes 1858. Witnesses of the event, Lethielleux, Paris 1957.

RCRegister of contemporaries, 1907. Arch. Nevers.

RSL Researches on Lourdes. Work published in Lourdes by B. Billet.

VB. Billet,Bernadette, Une vocation... Lethielleux, Paris 1965.

Passage added by us in the quote of a document.

[…] Passage omitted from the citation of a document.

The illustrations are taken from the collection of R. Laurentin, From Matt, Durand and Viron.

1879 Centennial of Bernadette 1979

Saint Bernadette of Lourdes died on April 16, 1879. Here is her centenary, 20 years since the apparitions. Since then it has not cessation of increasing the importance of the seer in the pilgrimage.

Who is Bernadette? The daughter of a ruined miller, whom in the to the height of their misery they put in prison; a shepherdess, a seer, a amazing witness: a small David victorious against the numerous Goliath associates against her: a nun, a nurse who ended up in "el empleo de enferma', asumiendo su pasión de forma conmovedora. En All of this has been mythologized a lot. The truth is more beautiful than the Myths. Bernadette is a saint, plain and simple. And she reveals holiness. of the poor, received from a good source. That unknown holiness was even before the apparitions.

After 20 years of studies and 25 volumes of scientific publications that they feel authority, René Laurentin, professor at the Catholic University, Doctor in Literature, and also a journalist, has written a transparent life and simple like Bernadette, according to the guideline she gave to the future historians, on their deathbed: "The simpler it is written, Better. By forcefully trying to embellish things, they become distorted.

Nothing fictionalized... a lively style, a story... alive; I wish that many Christians read this book, which is rightly the centennial book.

(Preface by Monsignor Donze, Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes).

Cover: Rerato of Bernadette in blue, preserved by the descendants of Jean Soubirous, cousin of Bernadette (photo Durand).