

### **Saint Bernadette Soubirous**

Book Title: *Saint Bernadette Soubirous and Our Lady of Lourdes*

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Saint Bernadette wasn't very smart. She struggled with her lessons at school and she struggled through the simplest tasks at the convent. No one really thought all that much of her, even after she saw Our Lady of Lourdes. But God thought she was precious. Even with all of her shortcomings, God found her worthy to see Our Lady! Saint Bernadette's story is a bit extreme, but the lessons we can draw from her life are universal.

We all have faults, but we are also all blessed by God in one way or another. We tend to focus on our faults. A frustrated child who has problems with fractions will probably avoid them for the rest of his life declaring, "I'm bad at math" any time a number comes up. We hear "I'm bad at" phrases all the time! How many times do you hear someone say, "I'm an excellent musician" or "I'm good at cooking"? Rarely. Maybe on a resume. It just sounds arrogant. People don't talk like that. But it doesn't mean we can't recognize and share our God-given gifts. The next time you are feeling down about something you are having difficulty with, remind yourself of something you do well and say a prayer of thanksgiving for that blessing. Take the focus off the negative. That doesn't mean that you won't have to struggle through difficulties, but at least you can appreciate the things you are good at a little more.

### **Discussion/Written Response Questions**

1. Why does no one believe Bernadette when she tells them about the Lady at the grotto? What does Bernadette do that finally convinces them? Why is honesty such an important character trait? Have you ever thought someone was lying only to find out later that they were telling the truth? How did that make you feel?
2. Bernadette spent most of her life struggling with health problems and schoolwork, but her attitude always remained positive and God gave her a very special

- blessing. Think about something in your life that you have trouble with. What can you do to have a more positive attitude? What blessings has God given you?
3. Saint Bernadette disobeys her parents by going to see the Lady at the grotto, but the Bible tells us to honor our parents. Why did Bernadette's parents forbid her to go to Massabielle? Why did Bernadette choose to disobey her parents? Think of a time when you disobeyed your parents. Why did you make that choice? What were the consequences of your decision? Did you regret disobeying your parents?

### **Language Arts Connection**

Cause and Effect (4<sup>th</sup> grade standard)

Saint Bernadette's visions at Massabielle caused the city of Lourdes to change in a big way. Complete the chart to understand the effects of the appearance of Our Lady of Lourdes. (Cite examples from the book. I might use this requirement with 5<sup>th</sup> graders learning to support their argument with textual evidence.) [See mock-up on following page.]

### **Science Connection**

Respiratory System (5<sup>th</sup> grade standard)

Research Asthma. What are the symptoms and possible causes? What about St. Bernadette's upbringing and environment could have contributed to her struggles with asthma?

Geology (4<sup>th</sup> grade standard)

Research grottoes. Many grottoes are limestone and formed near waterways from erosion. It would take some time, but perhaps there could be an ongoing erosion experiment with a fountain and a larger piece of limestone. Students could periodically take pictures and make observations of the changes over time.

### **Geography Connection**

France

Lourdes

Pyrenees mountain range

Iberian Peninsula

### **Cause and Effect—Saint Bernadette**

Saint Bernadette's visions of the Blessed Mother caused many people and the city of Lourdes to change forever. Complete the chart below.

Cause: Our Lady of Lourdes Appears to Saint Bernadette

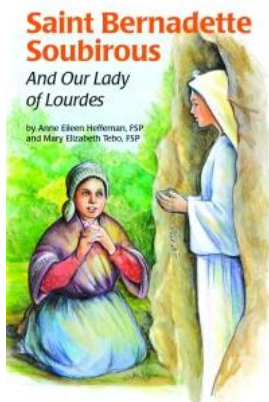
Effects on Bernadette:

Effects on the townspeople of Lourdes:

Effects on the surrounding communities:

Effects on the Church:

Effects on the world:



It was on February 11, 1858, that a beautiful Lady first appeared to Bernadette Soubirous in the small town of Lourdes, France. Bernadette had asthma and was often sick. Her family was so poor that they were living in a cold, damp room that had once been a jail. Even though she was fourteen, Bernadette still could not read or write. She had a bad memory and never could remember her religious instruction lessons, but she loved God very much. She tried to learn all that she could about God, and she tried even harder to please him. The beautiful Lady Bernadette saw appeared in a grotto, a kind of natural cave carved into a rocky cliff. The lovely Lady encouraged Bernadette to pray the Rosary. The Lady appeared eighteen times to Bernadette. She asked her to tell the people to pray, to do penance and to recite the Rosary especially for sinners. During the last apparition, on March 25, 1858, Bernadette asked the beautiful Lady her name. The Lady replied, "I am the Immaculate Conception." Bernadette entered the convent in 1866. She lived a hidden, humble life until her death on April 16, 1879.

*Saint Bernadette Soubirous and Our Lady of Lourdes* is a captivating story of how one girl's trust in Mary has blessed the world. The Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes is a place of reconciliation and healing even today. A child who reads *Saint Bernadette Soubirous* will understand more deeply the love God has for the world and grow in their devotion to Mary.

Ages 8 – 12

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