

Reflection Saturday Week 5 Our Lady of Lourdes 2023

In 1858 the immaculate Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous, near Lourdes in France, in the cavern called “de Massabielle.” Through this poor, fourteen-year-old girl, Mary calls on sinners to change their lives. She has inspired in the Church a great love of prayer and good works, especially in the service of the poor and the sick.

“Only if we see ourselves, not as a world apart but in a fraternal relationship with others, can we develop a social practice of solidarity aimed at the common good. We should not be afraid to regard ourselves as needy or reliant on others, because individually and by our own efforts, we cannot overcome our limitations. So we should not fear, then, to acknowledge those limitations, for God himself, in Jesus, has humbly stooped down to us (cf. Phil 2:8) and continues to do so, in our poverty, He comes to our aid and grants us gifts beyond our imagining.”...Pope Francis

The purpose of this Sacrament of Anointing is to bring spiritual and sometimes physical strength and occasionally even healing in the duration of an illness, especially when one is near to death. Sacraments are an outward sign established by Jesus to confer inward grace. They are a rite that is performed to convey God’s grace to the recipient; through the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Like all sacraments, the anointing of the sick was instituted by Jesus during his ministry on earth. The anointing of the sick conveys many graces and gives gifts of strength through the Holy Spirit against anxiety and temptation, and will even convey peace and fortitude. The oil used in administering the sacrament is called the Oil of the Sick. It is one of three Holy oils blessed by the bishop of the diocese in their cathedral on Holy Thursday morning, the other two being Holy Chrism and the Oil of Catechumens, the latter being used in Baptism. The Oil of the Sick is pure olive oil, nothing is added except blessing by the bishop.

The grace of the sacrament lies in the anointing and the short prayer which follows:

Prayer for the Sick:

*God of hope and healing,
be with those whose bodies burn with fever,
rage with pain, struggle for breath,
cry out for limbs that used to be,
or crave addictive substances.
Be with those whose minds and emotions
face the wait of a diagnosis,
wrestle with the choices for treatment,
adapt to a life altered by chronic illness,
recover from abuse,
or push against the encroaching clouds of dementia.
Be with those whose spirits are exhausted by the quest for health,
doubt the existence of love, question the fairness of life,
or stare into the face of death.
Cool the fever, bring balm to the pain,
ease the fight for air, adapt the body for new ways to move,
and calm the cravings.
Ease anxiety and fear.
Build trust in your everlasting love and care.
God of all, hear our prayer. Amen.*

An elderly lady slipped and strained her knee. Her doctor bandaged it and warned her, *'If you don't take great care, it's unlikely to heal properly. Don't rush around and **don't climb any stairs!***

A fortnight later the old lady returned to have the bandage removed. The doctor was delighted to see that the leg had healed perfectly. *'Thank goodness for that!' said the old dear. 'I can't tell you what a fool I've felt, shinning up and down the drainpipe.'*