



**Our Lady of Lourdes**  
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One day, fourteen-year-old Bernadette was gathering firewood by the river near the French town of Lourdes. Close by was a tall, rocky hill with a natural grotto, like a small cave. The sound of rushing wind surrounded Bernadette, but the trees were still. Only those near the grotto were rustling. Suddenly, a cloud golden with light filled the grotto, and within the cloud was the most beautiful lady Bernadette had ever seen. She wore a flowing white robe with a blue sash and a long white veil, and on her feet gleamed golden roses. She beckoned Bernadette to approach, and the young girl sank to her knees and pulled out her rosary. Together they prayed. When the Rosary was finished, the lady and the golden cloud vanished.

On the following Sunday, the lady appeared to Bernadette as before, and they prayed the Rosary. This time, several of Bernadette's friends also came, but they saw and heard nothing. Soon, reports spread throughout the village about Bernadette's vision. Many thought that Bernadette was pretending or that she was crazy. But that didn't stop Bernadette from visiting the grotto. When the lady next appeared, she asked Bernadette to come visit her every day for the next fifteen days.

Many townspeople followed Bernadette on her visits with the lady, though they could see nothing. Bernadette found the crowds of people disturbing. But when she saw the lady's kind and beautiful face, she forgot everything else. The lady asked Bernadette to pray for sinners, and during one of her visits, she told Bernadette to drink from a nearby spring. Bernadette could not find a spring, so she dug into the ground and drank the muddy water. The crowd laughed at her, but the next day the mud had turned into a clear spring that flowed into the river. The townspeople said it was a miracle, and many who were sick and injured bathed in the spring and were miraculously healed.

Bernadette finally asked the lady who she was. The lady replied, "I am the Immaculate Conception," revealing that she was the Blessed Virgin Mary (the Immaculate Conception is a title given to Mary because she was conceived without original sin). Mary asked for a chapel to be built near the grotto. Today, a great shrine stands above the spring Bernadette found. The water was channeled into a place where people can bathe in it and receive healing. Many people from all over the world travel to this shrine every day to be healed. Our Lady of Lourdes, ask your Son to heal my soul from sin!