St. Bernadette

1844–1879

Feast Day:
April 16

St. Bernadette was the oldest of nine children born to a poor family in Lourdes, France. Bernadette was a sickly child and suffered many ailments throughout her life. When she was 14, Bernadette was collecting firewood when she heard the sound of rushing wind. When she looked around, she saw a rose floating in a grotto (a small cave). Then she saw a beautiful woman dressed in white with a blue sash. The woman asked Bernadette to come to the grotto every day for the next two weeks. Bernadette's parents did not believe her when she told them what she had seen. Many townspeople accused Bernadette of making the whole thing up

In all, Bernadette saw the apparition (or supernatural vision) 18 times. The woman instructed Bernadette to pray for sinners, do penance, and to have a chapel built on the spot of the visions. The woman also led Bernadette to discover a spring of water that had not been there before. Bernadette decided to ask the woman who she was. The woman replied "*Je suis L'Immaculate Conception*," French for "I am the Immaculate Conception." Immaculate Conception is a title of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

When she was old enough, Bernadette became a nun. She struggled with numerous illnesses. But in faithfulness to Jesus' command to beard wrongs patiently, as she did when she was a child, Bernadette offered all of her sufferings as penance for the sins of others. She died when she was 35. St. Bernadette was canonized by Pope Pius XI on December 8, 1933, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. To this day, water still flows from the miraculous spring at Lourdes. Every year, 5 million people come from all over the world to drink and bathe in its healing waters.