

St Bernadette Soubirous 1844 – 1879

(Family sitting around the table, Bernadette sweeping, mother serving)

Narrator 1: It's hard to tell the truth sometimes!

Narrator 2: But it's especially hard when no one else sees things quite the way you do.

Narrator 3: Maybe your friend's gotten into big trouble. You know there's more to the story than the grown-ups know, but no one will listen to you because they say you're just a kid. They think you are too young to understand.

Narrator 1: Maybe Saint Bernadette's story will help you. She was just a young girl who saw something amazing and told the truth about it. Hardly anyone believed her at first, and people even made life difficult for her and her family because of what she said she saw. But Bernadette didn't back down, and the truth she told has helped millions of people, many of whom are still alive today.

Narrator 4: Bernadette did not have an easy life. She and her family lived in a village in France called Lourdes. They were very poor, they lived in a tiny room at the back of someone's house, a building that had actually been a prison many years before.

Narrator 5: Bernadette was sickly and by the time she was fourteen she was only the size of an eight year old and was very thin. She had asthma and so coughed continuously.

Narrator 6: The family slept on three beds: one for the parents, one for the boys, and one for the girls. Every night they were disturbed by mice and rats. Every morning they woke up, put their feet on cold stone floors, and dressed in clothes that had been mended more times than anyone could count. Each day they hoped to find enough work to them the bread they needed to live on for the day.

(Family kneels to pray the rosary)

Narrator 4: Bernadette's life was difficult but she was never miserable. She had a deep, simple faith in God. She worked hard and never complained. One thing really bothered her, because she was so sickly she had not been able to go to school very often so she didn't know how to read. Because she had missed so much school she had not learned enough to be allowed to make her First Holy Communion, but she loved Jesus and said her prayers every day.

(Family moves to background and sits, Bernadette and friends skip along picking up firewood. Take off shoes to cross the river. Bernadette waits and watches and then takes her shoes off and goes across the river. Looks up and is surprised, takes no notice of companions calling her. Falls to her knees and starts to pray the rosary. Companions stand and watch, very puzzled.)

Narrator 5: Like other girls, Bernadette had many friends. She spent time with them in the countryside, playing and gathering firewood. One cold February day, Bernadette was out collecting firewood with her sister and a friend. They were walked alongside the river until they came to a large, shallow cave, called a grotto. Bernadette's sister and her friend took off their shoes and crossed through the river.

Narrator 6: Because she was so sickly, Bernadette's mother had warned her not to take off her shoes or to get wet. However, she became tired of waiting for the other girls to come back so she took off her shoes and stockings and crossed to the other side of the river.

Narrator 7: Suddenly the wind started to blow and the bushes growing out of the rocks in the grotto began to sway. Bernadette looked up and high above her in the grotto stood a beautiful lady.
(Lady appears in the cave, gestures to Bernadette and prays the rosary)

Narrator 8: The lady was wearing a long white dress with a blue sash and white veil. Yellow roses were at her feet, and she held a rosary. She nodded at Bernadette and then stretched out her arms.

Narrator 9: Bernadette was afraid. She stared at the lady, knelt down, took her rosary out of her pocket and started to pray with the lady. When she finished, the lady disappeared.

(The lady disappears, Bernadette and friends return to village, villagers crowd round, gesture to her, threaten her)

Narrator 7: Many people did not believe Bernadette's story and were unkind to her and her family. The mayor forbade her to go to the grotto because so many people started to follow her that life in the village was totally disrupted. Bernadette disobeyed this command because she knew she had to visit the lady.

(Bernadette returns to the grotto, the villagers follow her, kneel to pray)

Narrator 8: During the next few weeks, Bernadette returned to the grotto and saw the beautiful lady many times. Each time she went, more of the townspeople followed her. Even though only Bernadette was the only person who could see the lady, the other villagers prayed with her at the grotto. They said they felt peaceful and happy when they were praying.

Narrator 9: During the visits to the grotto the lady spoke to Bernadette. She told her to dig in the mud, and a spring began to flow near the rocks. She told her that people needed to pray for forgiveness for their sins. She also said to Bernadette, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

(Bernadette goes back to village and talks to priest. He understands and is kind to her)

Narrator 7: Bernadette had no idea what this meant. She repeated it over and over to herself on the way back to the village. When she told her parish priest what the lady had said he was surprised. He knew that this meant that the lady was the Mother of God.

Immaculate Conception means that she was born without sin.

(Townfolk sit in circle and talk amongst themselves, exclaiming about the miracles they have seen)

Narrator 8: People began to talk of cures after they had visited the grotto or blessed themselves with the water from the spring. The priest believed her story and slowly many other people began to believe her as well.

(Pictures of Lourdes on the overhead)

Narrator 9: Today, millions of people go to Lourdes every year. They go to the grotto where Bernadette saw Mary. They go to pray, to process and sing in candle light processions, they wash their sick bodies in the spring. Hundreds of crutches, wheelchairs and walking sticks hang in the grotto, they have been left there by people who have been cured.

Narrator 7: Not everyone who goes to Lourdes is cured physically but many people say they leave there with peace in their hearts and the strength to face their difficulties.

Narrator 8: Let us now light a candle as we pray for those we know who are sick. Grade 7 R will lead us in saying one decade of the rosary.

Narrator 9: Our Lady of Lourdes. Pray for us.
Saint Bernadette. Pray for us.

Sing: Immaculate Mary

Reference: Welborn, A. Book of Saints. Loyola Press. USA. 2001
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