

2.8.2020

THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

Where is God in the Equation

As we start the New Year eager for a new start and fresh beginnings – we are taking some time to recognize a 19th Century Saint who was touched by visitations from the Immaculate Conception as a young girl. How we can become a Better Man by understanding the message that was given to Bernadette and how it can positively impact our current day happiness. We know that the Risen Christ accepts each and every man in his brokenness; in the very place and time where he is at today...what could a 19th century peasant girl possibly say to us in 2020?



St. Bernadette was born in Lourdes, France on January 7, 1844. Her parents were very poor and she was the first of nine children. She was baptized on January 9, two days later, because of high rates of infant mortality at the time. She was not expected to live. As a toddler, Bernadette contracted cholera and suffered extreme asthma. She lived the rest of her life in poor health.

At the age of 14, she had a series of visions of the Virgin Mary in a nearby grotto. Mary revealed her identity with the words "I am the Immaculate Conception". Among other messages and affirmations, Mary told Bernadette that a chapel should be built there. She saw the Virgin Mary 18 times. Bernadette steadfastly defended the genuineness of these visions despite strong opposition from her parents, the local clergy, and civil authorities, as she faithfully transmitted Mary's messages

Though many townspeople believed she had indeed been seeing the Holy Virgin, Bernadette's story created a division in her town. Many believed she was telling the truth, while others believed she had a mental illness and demanded she be put in a mental asylum.

Some believed Bernadette's visions meant she needed to pray for penance.

**"God loves me and whom I love.
He is now taking care of us all."**

St. Hilary Men's Group



Church authorities and the French government rigorously interviewed the girl, and by 1862 they confirmed she spoke truth. Since Bernadette first caused the spring to produce clean water, 69 cures have been verified by the Lourdes Medical Bureau, and after what the Church claimed were "extremely rigorous scientific and medical examinations," no one was able to explain what caused the cures. Cures continue to this day. There are many that are not documented.

For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them. Matthew 18:20

Following the miracles and various chapel and church constructions, Bernadette decided she did not like the attention she was getting. She retreated to a school run by the Sisters of Charity, where she was taught to read and write. Her health was very fragile.



In 1866, Bernadette joined the Sisters of Charity and spent the rest of her life there working as an infirmiry assistant, and later a sacristan. People admired her humility and spirit of sacrifice. Once a nun asked her if she had temptations of pride because she was favored by the Blessed Mother. "How can I?" she answered quickly. "The Blessed Virgin chose me only because I was the most ignorant."

Later in life, she was diagnosed with tuberculosis of the bone in her right knee and was unable to take part in convent life. She died at the age of 35 on April 16, 1879, while praying the Holy Rosary.

Even on her deathbed Bernadette suffered severe pain and, keeping with the Virgin Mary's admonition of "Penance, Penance, Penance," she proclaimed "all this is good for Heaven!" Bernadette's last words were, "Blessed Mary, Mother of God, pray for me; a poor sinner, a poor sinner."

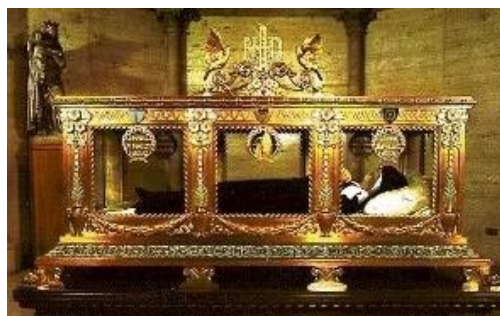
Her body was exhumed 3 times over a 46 year period. The first time was to place her in a more suitable and honored burial site because of the miracles that were occurring at the grotto, as she was hurriedly buried in 1879. Upon examination of her body then, it was discovered she was incorrupt. That is, no disintegration or breakdown of the flesh had taken place upon her body.

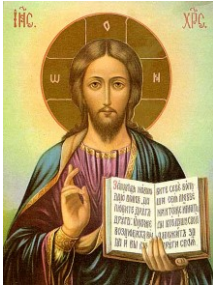
As the miracle cures began to accumulate, a more thorough investigation of her body prompted further exhumations. It remains incorrupt.

Bernadette brings a very simple message to us from Our Lady. During the third apparition, February 18 1858, the Virgin spoke for the first time and said:
"I do not promise to make you happy in this world but in the other."

Mary spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven as defined by Jesus in the Gospels. He invites us to discover the "another world" within our world as it is. Wherever there is love, God is present.

What happens to our lives when we make a shift in our attitude and admit that Jesus is our Savior and invite Him into our heart of hearts? Let us listen attentively to the wisdom found in Holy Scripture, our Catechism and in Modern Comment.





John 2:1-11 The Mother of Jesus

There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."

And Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter."

So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although they who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now."

Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs at Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

Psalm 37:3-4 Happiness is in the Lord

Trust in the LORD and do good that you may dwell in the land and live secure. Find your delight in the LORD who will give you your heart's desire.

The Word of the Lord

Catechism

Teaching of the Church – Belief of the apparitions at Lourdes is not an Article of Faith for Catholics

The appearance of Our Lady to Bernadette is considered to be private revelation and adds nothing to the public deposit of faith – and so no Catholic is obligated to believe. It is not in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The millions of believers, Catholic and non-Catholic, who visit Lourdes each year are, though, a testimony to the fact that those who do not believe in Our Lady's appearance at Lourdes must be something of a minority.



Modern Comment THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

David Eich

In 1943, 20th Century Fox released a new film based on the writings of Franz Werfel entitled, *The Song of Bernadette*. Based on a true story about peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, and her miraculous experience with a vision of a beautiful lady, the spiritual encounter is responsible for millions of visitors to Lourdes, France. The story about Bernadette is about a promise that there is something more to look forward to in the world to come. This covenant was best illustrated when the Lady said to Bernadette, "I cannot promise you happiness in this world, only in the next."

For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them. Matthew 18:20

Did the lady mean that we will never experience happiness in this world? Was she suggesting that we shouldn't waste our time searching for something only heaven can provide? And what about our right to pursue happiness? Surely, God would not object if we explored what life has to offer.

If the "pursuit of happiness" as mentioned in the Declaration of Independence is a good thing, perhaps the internet offers a formula, process, or roadmap, one can follow that will provide the necessary insurance needed to obtain happiness.

Astonishingly, there are approximately 3 million references on the topic as website after website offers invitations such as, "The Art of..." or "The Process for..." happiness. Advertisers offer camps, clubs, tips, resources, journals, newsletters, galleries, seminars, retreats, and a host of experts all willing to help find "the way" to happiness.

Parents have a unique site. Women too, have their domain. Searchers from different races or cultures can differentiate which path to follow while even atheists are invited to join the quest.

Those interested in raising their self-esteem are invited to log-on. One can register for "authentic happiness," "profound happiness," or "full happiness." There are opportunities to sign up for "happiness hikes," take "happiness vitamins," or even participate in 'happiness hypnosis." And for those that complain they have so little time, a site guaranteeing the "secret of happiness" in only six weeks is available.

Other sites offer the "Happiness Instruction Kit," "Happiness in a Box," and "Happiness on \$7 a week," (good luck with that one). If you can carry a tune there is actually a site that shows how to "hum" your way to happiness. Certain sites help discover one's Karma or "keys" to happiness. For those mathematically inclined, there are "9 Pillars of Happiness," "10 Laws of Happiness," or "12 Secrets of Happiness." If you like a good mystery, be sure to check out, "The Goddess of Happiness," "Sonic Order of Happiness," "Alchemy of Happiness," or the "Magic of Happiness."

If you believe in Heaven and wish to go there, you may find the discussions that follow helpful. If you believe in Hell and prefer not to go there, what you experience this year may also be of value. If however, you believe that there is nothing beyond this world and the "pursuit of happiness" is life's only mission, there are tens of thousands of web sites at your disposal.

Ultimately, though, there may come a time in your life when you will ponder, "Is that all there is?" Should that happen, you may want to take the necessary steps needed to achieve what the lady promised Bernadette 162 years ago.



Questions for Discussion:

1. Can you recall a time in your life when your search for God got in the way of your search for Happiness? Please explain.

2. Have you ever known a person whose unhappy disposition was overcome by a spiritual encounter? Give an example.

3. If happiness in this world is not the goal, what is? Are you happiest when you are serving others or yourself? Is it better to give than to receive?

"I shall spend every moment loving. One who loves does not notice her trials; or perhaps more accurately, she is able to love them."
"Love overcomes, love delights. Those who love the Sacred Heart of Jesus rejoice."
St. Bernadette - Feast Day April 16th

Men's Group Calendar
A Man who never quits is Never Defeated.



2/22/2020	Leadership Meeting	8 AM Sacred Heart Library
3/14/2020	Men's Group	7 AM Mass
3/21/2020	CMFNEO CONFERENCE	Holiday Inn Rockside
3/28/2020	Leadership Meeting	8 AM Sacred Heart Library
4/4/2020	Men's Group	7 AM Mass



ACTION PLAN

This week I will do my best to listen for God's will in my life by:

- Creating a daily prayer practice.
- Seeking God in prayer and being quiet in His presence.
- Paying more attention to God's Blessings in my life.
- Asking Jesus for help in becoming a better servant.
- Finding Happiness in the Search for God.



Lord, God and Savior, by your love you draw me to yourself. Forgive me – the sinner that I am, and fill me with every good thing, not withholding even the gift of your most beloved son. Come dwell in my heart.

Send forth your Holy Spirit to guide me in your path. Make me worthy of your love, and teach me how to forgive as you forgave.

Thank you for your tender mercies. I ask you to bless my family, friends and those who I meet in my comings and goings.

Where there is joy, give them continued joy. Where there is pain or sorrow, give them your peace and mercy. Where there is self-doubt, release in them a renewed confidence. Fill their every need with your Holy Grace.

You are indeed my Lord, God and Savior. Amen

Ask God's Forgiveness, do your best to rectify, and walk away from it. Walk away from yesterday, like a healthy, normal person. That is the first thing one must do in starting a new life every morning.

This you must do for yourself. For Happiness.



THE REST OF THE STORY: The Song of Bernadette is considered one of the twentieth century's greatest novels of triumphant religious faith.

How the book came to be written is itself an inspirational and even miraculous story. In 1940, famed Austrian author Franz Werfel and his wife were on a desperate flight from the Nazi invaders, whom Franz had publicly denounced. Repeatedly thwarted in their attempts to cross the

French border, they found temporary refuge in Lourdes, home of the famous shrine where Bernadette received visions of the Virgin Mary and where millions come in faith to seek a miracle. Werfel became fascinated with Bernadette's story and began to visit the sacred grotto every day, swearing that, should he and his wife be granted escape from the Nazis, he would write the story of Bernadette for all the world. Franz's prayers were answered, and in America he wrote his masterpiece, The Song of Bernadette, a beautiful fusion of faith and craft.

