

## ***With Bernadette, praying the Our Father – Pastoral Theme 2011***

Bernadette's life was profoundly marked by both her relationship with Mary, her relationship with God.

All our prayer is an expression of our relationship with God. We do not just ask God for things. He is well aware of our needs. That's why in the Our Father, Jesus teaches us to ask for what God wants to give us, what we need, and what is good for us.

There are four parts in the Our Father which help us understand the gestures of Mary and Bernadette during the apparitions:

### **1. Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come**

This phrase tells us that God's Name is not to be treated like any other. It is to have a special place, a place apart. We must ***'let God be God.'***

At Lourdes our eyes are opened to the truth that ***'here heaven and earth touch one another.'*** There is an atmosphere of prayer and we see the tireless devotion of volunteers helping the sick and disabled. In every prayer and each act of service we become more conscious of God. This prayer and service proclaims and makes present the Kingdom of God.

#### ***Questions to ask ourselves:***

- *Who taught me to say the Our Father?*
- *When do I say the Our Father?*
- *What thoughts do I have when saying the Our Father?*
- *What importance do I give in my life to the Name of the Father?*
- *How do I hallow the name of the Father?*

#### ***Suggestion:***

Close your eyes and bow your head and recognize that you are the son or daughter of the Father.

### **2. Thy will be done**

The will of the Father reminds us that God comes first. We are created by Him and for Him. To do the will of the Father is a way of praying that we become more like the person God means us to be.

The Good News of the Gospel shows us Jesus carrying out the will of the Father in a perfect way.

Bernadette learned from Mary how to live this way in everyday life. She learned to do what the Lady asked her. Mary expresses her loving will. Little by little Bernadette carries out that will, sometimes in joy, sometimes in uncertainty or even in pain.

We are invited to rediscover in our own experience that the will of the Father is an expression of Love. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is Love. God created men and women in his image that they might live with one another and with him in love.

#### ***Questions to ask ourselves:***

- *How much importance do I place on what I want for myself?*
- *Do I pay attention to what the people around me want?*
- *How do I manifest the will of the Father?*
- *How do I go about discerning the will of the Father?*
- *In the important decisions of my life. How much does my desire to do the will of the Father count?*

#### ***Suggestion:***

Recognise in your own heart the obstacles that exist to doing the will of the Father. Make a promise before the Father to do something for another person.

### 3. Give us the day our daily bread

This central request in the Our Father reminds us of our dependence on God.

Jesus makes a distinction between two types of bread, the bread from the earth and the bread from heaven. ***“Do not work for food that does not last, work for food that endures for eternal life, which only the Son of man can give”*** (Jn 6, 27).

On February 11, 1858, Bernadette was searching for bread. It was the need for daily bread which led her to the grotto to search for wood to sell in order to buy a little nourishment for her family.

On June 3, 1858, Bernadette made her First Holy Communion and her deepest wish was fulfilled. She became completely the daughter of God the Father, who loved her to the point of giving her his own Son (Jn 3,16).

Bernadette prayed, ***‘Give me, I pray, the bread of humility, the bread of obedience, the bread of charity, the bread that will give me strength to replace my own will with yours, the bread of interior discipline the bread of detachment from all that is not you, the bread of patience that I may bear my heart’s pain. O Jesus, you wish me to be crucified in your image, may your will be done! Give me the bread which strengthens me to bear well my suffering, the bread that will help me to see you and only you always and in everything.’***

It is through others that we open ourselves to God’s gifts. This is how we discover the daily bread that the Father gives us - that of the presence in our lives of others.

#### Questions to ask ourselves:

- *Am I conscious of my dependence on God the Father?*
- *Am I dependent on others?*
- *Do I value the bread that nourishes me?*

- *What in my life is essential to give meaning to my existence?*
- *What is it that really nourishes me?*

### 4. Forgive us our trespasses... Lead us not into temptation... Deliver us from evil

The last part of the Our Father brings us face to face with our human frailty and sin. Bernadette knew her human frailty well.

In delivering us from evil, the Father doesn’t return us to what we were before. Instead he opens new life to us.

The words of Mary resonated in Bernadette’s heart, ***“Pray for the conversion of sinners.” “Penance, Penance, Penance.” “Go to the spring, drink and wash there.”*** It is important to point out that Bernadette included herself in this message of penance.

Today we come to Lourdes wounded in our human nature, and we find as we contemplate Our Lady that grace is stronger than sinfulness, that love is greater than our selfishness, and that reconciliation is available for those who open their hearts to it.

#### Questions to ask ourselves:

- *Am I aware that human nature is tainted by sin?*
- *Am I convinced that with the grace that the Father gives me through the Son and in the Holy Spirit I can conquer temptations?*
- *What experiences have I had of being freed?*
- *What importance do I give to forgiveness?*
- *What place does the sacrament of penance and reconciliation have in my life?*

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