



2008 Lourdes Jubilee

Lourdes and the New Evangelization

Bishop Jacques Perrier of Lourdes

Pope Paul VI first spoke about evangelization and the need for the Church itself to be continually evangelized. How is evangelization related to Lourdes? Perhaps you might reply that evangelization means eliminating all the “commercial interests” which surround Lourdes or that Lourdes should divest itself of the offerings which it receives to maintain the structures and the many programs which take place at Lourdes. However, the evangelization of which I speak deals with the symbols and the examples of religious faith and practice which you can see at Lourdes.

Why is Lourdes so well known throughout the world? Because the

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One hundred and fifty years ago, in a small town in the Pyrenees mountains of southeast France, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to a fourteen-year old peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, in the grotto of Massabielle on the Garonne River. In the course of that year, from February until July, eighteen apparitions occurred.

Bernadette faithfully transmitted the messages given: the need for prayer and penance (February 25) and the request that a chapel be built and pilgrimages be made (March 2). In response to Bernadette’s question, the lady identified herself as the “Immaculate Conception” (March 25). Bernadette was told to dig into the ground, and a fountain of water sprang up. “Go and wash in the spring.” She did so, others followed her, and miraculous cures were reported.

The bishop of Lourdes, Msgr. Laurence, appointed a canonical commission to investigate the authenticity of the accounts. This body first interviewed Bernadette and was impressed by her testimony and by a growing number of cures. In January 1862, nearly four years after the apparitions, the bishop delivered his verdict on Lourdes: “We judge that the Immaculate Mary, Mother of God, really appeared to Bernadette Soubirous on February 11th, 1858, and subsequent days, eighteen times in all, in the Grotto of Massabielle, near the town of Lourdes: that this

apparition possesses all the marks of truth, and that the faithful are justified in believing it certain.”

An integral element of the Lourdes story is the witness and courage of Bernadette who, despite harassment by civil and church officials and threats of imprisonment and insane asylums, remained steadfast and unwavering in relaying the message she had received. At the same time, she resolutely rebuked those who promoted her for personal fame. Bernadette left Lourdes on July 4, 1866, never to return; she died at Nevers on April 16, 1879. Her humility and insistence on the integrity of the message which had been conveyed to her impressed the Catholic world, as did her transformation from an illiterate peasant girl into a woman of extraordinary strength and reserve. Before dying, Bernadette said: “Everyday since the apparitions, I go on pilgrimage to the Grotto in my heart.”

It is hard to underestimate the significance which Lourdes has had on modern Catholicism. In 1854, Pope Pius IX declared the Mary’s Immaculate Conception as a dogma of faith, and the apparition four years later appeared to be a confirmation of the pope’s deed. Lourdes revived the sense of pilgrimage within the Catholic world. An extensive, well-organized program of national pilgrimages, made possible by the newly in-

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troduced railroad, brought thousands of handicapped individuals to Lourdes, accompanied by an army of volunteers. The miraculous cures at Lourdes, certified by teams of medical experts, confounded the “scientism” of an increasingly secular world which ruled out any possibility of divine presence in the world.

Anticipating the 2008 Jubilee

Bishop Perrier of Tarbes-Lourdes has indicated that the 2008 Jubilee will be different from the past observances and will focus on the future. The 1908 celebration had an apologetic tone, and the 1958 celebration underscored the necessity of historical documentation and the dedication of the new underground basilica of St. Pius X.

While commemorating a wondrous past event, Lourdes is part of the Church’s mission of evangelization. Preparation for the 150th anniversary began several years ago with year-long programs highlighting Lourdes’ natural symbols: water, the rock and light; the sick who visit Lourdes and those who serve them, and Lourdes’ international character.

2002: Water is a fundamental biblical and sacramental symbol, central to the sacrament of Baptism. Bernadette was told “Go drink at the spring and wash yourself here” (ninth apparition). Water at Lourdes symbolizes a desire for healing and purification. Used with faith, the water of Lourdes is intended to revitalize.

2004: The Rock. The grotto of Lourdes is located within a large limestone rock face known as *Massabielle*, which means “the Old Rock.” Many, especially at night, take time to touch the rock seen as a symbol of God’s strength and fidelity. In one of her letters, Bernadette asked for prayers, “When you go the Grotto, that is where you will find me in spirit, at the foot of

the rock which I love so much” (20 July, 1866).

2005: Pilgrims. Around 30,000 pilgrims are present in Lourdes each day between April and October. Some 70,000 sick people are welcomed to Lourdes each year. There are about 3,000 volunteers a week, organized by the *Hospitaliers* (who annually coordinate the activities of over 100,000 volunteers who cover their own expenses) and *Unitals* (the Italian union for transporting the sick to Lourdes). Recently, Lourdes has become a meeting place for refugees and displaced persons.

2006: Light. During the apparition of April 7, 1858, Bernadette held a lighted candle which touched her hand without burning the skin, which was symbolic of divine light. Each

evening, thousands of lit candles form the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. The candle, the symbol of Christ, is given to each baptized person.

The Jubilee 2008 will be characterized by evangelical “missions”—major programs and pilgrimages attracting many diverse groups: the Lourdes Volunteers and Associates; *International Hospitaliers* (December); the Handicapped and Disabled—HCPT (March); Young People: *Fraternel* (April); International Pilgrimage—*Order of Malta* (May); Ecumenical Pilgrimage; Exiles and Refugees: Eucharistic Pilgrimage—National Pilgrimage of France (August); Interreligious Pilgrimage: *Tamil*. 🇨🇪

Past Jubilee Celebrations at Lourdes

In 1908, the first fifty-year jubilee at Lourdes took place in a turbulent period in France. A few years earlier, the anticlerical government had expelled the religious who were teaching in schools. But, much as the government might have wished to close Lourdes as a remnant from an unenlightened era, it was unable to do so because of economic advantages which large-scale pilgrimage brought to the region.

The 1908 jubilee was marked by many grandiloquent sermons and discourses (“rhetorical prowess” is the term used by the present Bishop of Lourdes) recorded in the *Annales de Notre-Dame de Lourdes*. Among the events of the 1908 celebration was the testimony of some three hundred people—*miraculés*, who claimed to have been cured at Lourdes. (A repeat from the 1897 celebration, marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of national pilgrimages to Lourdes, when the first three hundred *miraculés* were featured.) The 1908 celebration also saw a replica of Lourdes grotto placed in the Vatican gardens, a symbol of the close associa-

tion of the popes with Lourdes.

The hundredth-anniversary celebration in 1958 was presided over by Bishop Pierre-Marie Theas who, with others, was responsible for founding the international Catholic peace group *Pax Christi*. In 1954, Bishop Theas asked Abbé René Laurentin to write the “authentic” history of Lourdes. Laurentin’s response was presented in seven volumes of documentation on Lourdes. Pope Pius XII had intended to visit Lourdes, but was prevented because of illness. His 1958 encyclical, *On Pilgrimage to Lourdes*, reviewed the favors which previous popes had bestowed on Lourdes. On March 25, 1958, Cardinal Angelo Roncalli presided at the consecration of the underground basilica named in honor of Pope Pius X. (Later that year Cardinal Roncalli became Pope John XXIII.) The 1958 celebration also witnessed the International Mariological/Marian Congress dedicated to the theme “Mary and the Church,” a meeting whose proceedings anticipated Vatican II’s document on Mary and the Church. 🇨🇪

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symbols and signs (water, rock, and light) converge together in the open space of the shrine as the remembrance of Mary’s presence. In the last few years we have tried to show the biblical and the liturgical significance of these natural symbols. For example, 2004 featured the rock of Massabielle, a symbol of security: “The Lord is my rock.”

As you visit the grotto, take note of the symbols—the rock in which the grotto is found, water from the source coming into the baths, the candles in the evening procession: these are rituals of Lourdes. They are never exhausted. Everyone can understand their meaning, even if they are merely amused. Evangelism at Lourdes is explaining to individuals the deeper meaning of the symbols. In popular religion, evangelization is addressed to the individual. The Good News of Jesus Christ is for living people.

“Come and see,” said Jesus. The contemporary church is often accused of speaking too much and not providing enough to see. Although our faith is direct to the invisible, Catholicism is the religion of the Incarnation which provides symbols as icons through which we see something about God (cf. Benedict XVI’s *God is Love*, 16-17). Shrines are accessible to all—believers and non-believers. Lourdes is open twenty-four hours a day and provides something for the eyes. What do you see at Lourdes?

- ◆ You see a great number of people, similar to those found anywhere,

but of all ages, from all countries, from all social and economic classes, from all languages.

- ◆ You see a great many people who are sick or handicapped and who do not hide or conceal their infirmity. You also see the many volunteers who accompany and assist the sick and are at their service. Between the two groups, friendship and bonds of union develop.
- ◆ You see many people quietly praying at the grotto, without ostentation. In France today, the only ones who can be found praying in public are the Moslems. Here at Lourdes, you can see Christians praying.
- ◆ You see bishops, priests, and religious. During the summer, seminarians seem to find their identity—one of service. Such service may strengthen their calling.

At Lourdes and at all Marian shrines, there is a great liberty. Shrines are not places for indoctrination. Visitors come and go as they please. There are events and programs throughout the day. Dialogue and conversation is possible. Each one chooses what he or she will attend – no pressure is used.

Lourdes provides many images, and many leave Lourdes with souvenirs of these images. But the image alone is not enough. Jesus used images, but he also explained the meaning of the images. At Lourdes and at Marian shrines, the spoken word is always related to what one sees.

A rule for preachers at Lourdes is that reference be made to the symbols of Lourdes. Sermons at Lourdes



Bishop Jacques Perrier
Bishop of Tarbes of Lourdes

always include references to something that can be seen and experienced.

Bernadette herself is a symbol of one who lived the Gospel. “Blessed are the poor in spirit: the Kingdom of God is theirs.” In following Christ, she gave witness to living the Way of the Cross.

At Lourdes, the word takes hold of pilgrims by what they see and experience. What better way to preach the Gospel? 🍷

~Address by Bishop Jacques Perrier, given at Knock, Ireland, Meeting of the Rectors of Marian Shrines. *Documentation Catholique*, Dec. 17, 2006, No. 2370

The Fifth Latin American Bishops' Conference

Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida

Before Vatican II, Marian devotion was frequently expressed in devotions such as the rosary, novenas, processions, pilgrimage, which, to distinguish them from the Liturgy, were known as “popular devotions.” Vatican II’s only reference to popular devotions was in the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy, which directed that “popular devotions be reformed and conformed to the spirit of the liturgy which by its nature is superior to popular devotion” (SC 13). This subordination of popular devotion to the liturgy led many to question the value of popular devotions—which contributed to the turmoil in Marian devotion in the wake of Vatican II.

A change in attitude began in Pope Paul’s VI 1974 letter, *Evangelii nuntiandi*. Popular devotions were “particular expressions of the search for God and for faith,” which manifest “a thirst for God...an acute awareness of profound attributes of God: fatherhood, a loving providence and constant presence.” Furthermore, “they engender interior attitudes such as patience, the presence of the Cross in daily life, detachment, openness to others.” Similarly, the Pueblo and the Medellín documents from the Latin American Episcopal Conference spoke about popular devotions, especially about their role in evangelization and inculturation.

The fifth conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Conference took place at the Marian shrine of Aparecida, Brazil, in May, 2007, attended by Pope Benedict XVI. In his opening address, the pope referred to the “rich and profound sense of popular religion which expresses the soul of the Latin-American people” which is “the precious treasure of the

Catholic Church in Latin America.”

The document from Aparecida lists various expressions of devotion: the celebration of patronal feastdays, novenas, rosaries, the Way of the Cross, processions, dances and songs, devotion to the saints and to the angels, prayer within families.

The Aparecida document also speaks of shrines and pilgrimage as part of the Christian spiritual journey. “Pilgrimage is an expression of devotion where one joins the People of God ‘on the way.’ On pilgrimage, believers form a company of people, who journey toward the God who awaits them. Christ makes the pilgrimage with them, especially present in the poor and the marginalized. The beginning of pilgrimage—leaving the familiar—is an act of faith, the journey is a song of hope, and the arrival at the shrine or sanctuary is an encounter with love. The images at the shrine mirror the tenderness and the nearness of God. Love gazes on them in silence and dwells on the mystery....”

At a shrine, the pilgrim can experience “the mystery...not only of God, but also of the Church, a mystery which transcends the family and

the particular culture. At shrines, people frequently make decisions which will influence their lives....”

The Latin American bishops’ document outlines the role of the Virgin Mary. “As in the human family, the Church family is formed around a Mother who gives soul and tenderness to human interaction. Mary, mother of the Church, as well as model and paradigm of humanity, is the one who makes communion possible. One of the principal events in the Church history was her ‘yes’ to God. She brings multitudes to communion with Jesus and the Church, as is especially evident at Marian shrines. Here especially the Church is mother, as is the Virgin Mary. This Marian vision of the Church is the best remedy for a Church which may at times seem functional or bureaucratic.”

Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano; V Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe: Aparecida, 13-31 de mayo de 2007. Venezuela: Conferencia Episcopal de Venezuela, 2007.



Madonna of the Carnation By Bernardino Luini

This stamp, produced by the United States Postal Service, depicts Bernardino Luini’s painting *The Madonna of the Carnation*. Luini’s work dates from 1515, and the original painting is housed at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

George Henri Tavad

A Life Dedicated to The Restoration of Unity

Fr. George H. Tavad, A.A., died suddenly at Charles De Gaulle Airport in Paris, on August 13, 2007. Funeral services were Tuesday, August 21, in the Church of St. Dominic in Paris. Fr. Tavad was buried at the Assumptionist plot in the Paris Montparnasse Cemetery.

Born in Nancy, France, 1922, Tavad was a member of the Augustinians of the Assumption (A.A.), studied at Nancy and Lyon, and was ordained in 1947. In 1953, he came to the United States. For seven years he taught at Mount Mercy College (now Carlow College) in Pittsburgh, and for eighteen years at the Methodist School of Theology in Delaware, Ohio. He was also a professor at Marquette University, visiting professor at the Josephinum School of Theology, the International Marian Research Institute and at Catholic University of America. At Vatican II, he was named a *peritus conciliaris* by Pope John XXIII and consultant to the Pontifical Secretariat for the Unity of Christians.

Described as “a gentle theologian who has been a giant in ecumenical work,” he was a member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission from its beginning until 1983, and the International Catholic-Methodist dialogue from 1983 until 2006. In the United States, he was part of Anglican-Roman Catholic Conversations and the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue.

A message from Cardinal Walter Kaspar, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, noted that Tavad’s life was “dedicated to the restoration of unity among Christians.... He must be considered one of the great pioneers in Catholic ecumenical work, who put his mind, heart and soul at the service of Christian unity....”

His colleagues in the ecumenical dialogues remember him as one who carried “his learning lightly, with simplicity and humility being part of his charm.” James Haire, member of a Methodist dialog, wrote of “the grace of working alongside someone so deeply nourished by the Catholic tradition yet who understood the depths of Methodist theology and spirituality so well.” Dr. Bill Franklin, an Episcopalian, spoke of him as “the living embodiment to Episcopalians of the richness that might come in Christian life from the goal of the full communion of our two churches” (Cf. Donald Bolen’s “George Henri Tavad, A.A.—*in memoriam*,” *Ecumenical Trends*, 36/8 [September 2007]: 13-14).

Tavad authored over 55 books, numerous articles, and was busy writing and lecturing until his death. Among his most influential works were *Holy Writ or Holy Church* (1959); *Woman in the Christian Tradition* (1973); *The Vision of the Trinity* (1981); and *The Thousand Faces of the Virgin Mary* (1996). A doctoral dissertation on Tavad’s writings on church and ministry was written by Marc R. Alexander, for which George expressed, in the introduction, “deep appreciation.”

George also wrote on mystical themes and, not surprisingly, his poetry, which he wrote in French and English, reflects his contemplative outlook. In *The Vision of the Trinity* he concludes: “The doctrine of the Trinity, as I have tried to show, finds its depths in the fact that it is primarily a vision. Only a vision can awaken the hopes that lie dormant in the human soul. Only a vision can lead humankind to a really new future.”

A gracious adaptability served George well in the ecumenical dialogues. In one dialogue, he might be



Fr. George Tavad, A.A.

called to unravel the threads of the medieval philosophical position which influenced theology, while, in another, he might remain quietly seated in prayer with the participants awaiting the Holy Spirit.

He possessed the deep patience which is indispensable for the ecumenist who is confident that God’s spirit is bringing union to believers in Christ. His life was characterized by serenity. When many were distraught by the changes brought about by the Vatican II, he concluded his path-breaking work on woman in the church: “Although these reforms may be far-reaching, there is no reason to envisage them otherwise than with serenity. Indeed, the anxiety and the panic that seized many in the wake of Vatican II have been immeasurably wasteful and have certainly not shown much depth of Christian conviction and of confidence in the God-given structures of the Church.... Should we balk at the idea of introducing into the already hard-pressed church such a leaven of self-transformation? Yes, indeed—unless we believe that the Catholic Church is still the *Ecclesia* to which the word of eternal life were entrusted, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, and in which the spirit dwells, leading it unto all the truth” (*Woman in Christian Tradition* [Notre Dame Press, 1973] 225). 📖

Marian Update

- ◆ **The 59th Annual Meeting of the Mariological Society of America** will take place May 20-23, 2008, Stonehill College, Easton, Massachusetts. The meeting's theme: "Mary's Cooperation in the Redemption."
- ◆ **The 22nd Mariological-Marian International Congress**, organized by the Pontifical International Marian Academy, will take place at Lourdes, September 4-8, 2008, with the theme "The Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary Within History, Faith, and Doctrine."
- ◆ To mark the the sixtieth anniversary of its foundation, the **Pontifical International Marian Academy** is organizing a symposium in Rome from Nov. 8-10, 2007. The theme is "Proposals for New Ways and New Directions for Studying Mariology." <http://accademiamariana.org>
- ◆ **"Mary in the Life of the Parish"** Symposium sponsored by the International Marian Research Institute/the Library, July 21-23, 2008. For information contact: Fr. Francois Rossier, S.M. (937-229-4214)



New on the Mary Page

- ◆ **"Christmas Variations"** comprising Children's Drawings, Paper Creches, and Paintings of Malaik Favorite.
- ◆ **"Mary and Poetry"** by Fr. Johann Roten, S.M.
- ◆ **Crèche Exhibits.** Marian Library Creche Museum (Nov. 21-Jan. 6), Dayton Art Institute, Bergamo Center in Beavercreek, OH.

Find all this and so much more on The Mary Page at:

<http://www.udayton.edu/mary>

Book Notes

The Mother of the Lord: Memory, Presence, Hope. The Pontifical International Marian Academy. Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 2007.

This work from the *Pontificia Accademia Mariana Internationalis* (PAMI) was originally published in 2000 as a letter to students and organizations that promote Marian studies. In a fraternal way, the letter proposes to chart a course for theological reflection on the Virgin Mary in the new millennium. The work begins by establishing the context for Marian studies. At the beginning of the third millennium, the world manifests some frightening tendencies toward violence, genocide, and materialism, as well as some heartening movements toward solidarity, cooperation, and complementarity. Marian theology must speak to people within this context. One way to integrate Marian theology into contemporary theological currents is for interdisciplinary studies involving other branches of theological inquiry—soteriology, pneumatology, ecclesiology.

A second section deals with "themes and questions" to integrate Virgin Mary not only into doctrine but also into the hearts and lives of believers—the Marian dimension of the Christian life. A third section deals with prayer in the spirit of Mary and the role that the Virgin Mary has in the Church's liturgy and devotional life.

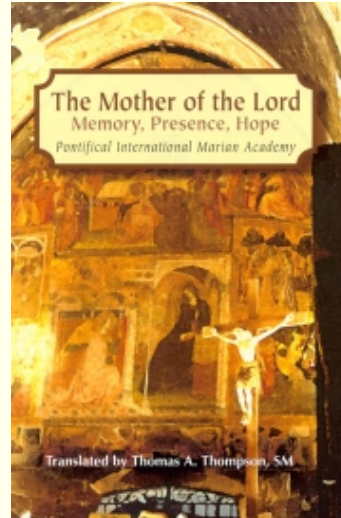
The letter from the Pontifical Academy is a refreshing document. It insists that reflection on the role

of the Virgin Mary must speak to contemporary men and women.

The centuries-old theology developed in Western Europe is not devalued or repudiated, but, at the beginning of the third millennium, "the situation has changed." People of the Third World participate in theological discourse with original insights. Women have acquired the theological status which, because of

historical circumstances, was previously denied them. Ecumenism and the interreligious dialogue offer new ways of dealing with traditional Marian themes. Studies of the Virgin Mary are to reflect this panoramic context presented by the pontifical academy.

A recent review in *America* (Nov. 19, 2007) by Nancy Hawkins expresses appreciation for many features of the work: "The historical development of Marian doctrine is explained thoroughly and clearly.... Its writing style is more inviting than the *Catechism*, and its conciseness makes it easy to use." But she concludes, other approaches are also needed. "There is definitely a place on the library shelf for *The Mother of the Lord*, but only if it is placed next to *Truly Our Sister*, by Elizabeth A. Johnson, C.S.J., or another work by a contemporary Catholic theologian. The two books combined will give the reader a balanced, ecclesial and liberating vision of a graced woman of faith who has a key role to play in our lives." 📖



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