

(See also 3 May)

1 Bernadette Soubirous was of a very poor family in Lourdes, a small village at the foothills of the Pyrenees in the south of France. It was on this day in 1858, whilst she and her sisters went to collect brushwood for the house fire, that Bernadette saw the first of 18 visions of a lady. As time went on, it became clear that it was Our Lady who was appearing. During one of the visions, the Mother of Jesus told Bernadette to scrape some earth from the ground. A steady spring of water then flowed, and many of the thousands of people who now visit Lourdes each year bathe in that running water.

2 In the convent that she joined, Bernadette said: *"I am getting on with my job."* She was asked: *"What **is** your job?"* She replied in a positive way, saying: *"Living as somebody who is ill."* Bernadette prayed:

"Lord, I do not ask that I never be afflicted, but only that you never abandon me in affliction."

3 Today is the feastday of Our Lady of Lourdes, and it is appropriate that this day is also set aside each year as *"The World Day of the Sick"*.

4 When Pope John Paul visited Britain in 1982, he said:

"Today I make an urgent plea to this nation. Do not neglect your sick and elderly. Do not turn away from the handicapped and dying. Do not push them to the margins of society for, if you do, you will fail to understand that they represent an important truth. The sick, the elderly, the handicapped and the dying teach us that weakness

is a creative part of human living, and that suffering can be embraced with no loss of dignity. Without the presence of these people in your midst you might be tempted to think of health, strength and power as the only important values to be pursued in life."

5 *Let us pray:*

Father, we pray that we may live cheerfully and patiently and positively both in sickness and in health. We bring before you all who are sick and all who care for them... Bring healing of one kind or another to those we know who are ill, afraid or worried. We think of those who suffer from constant sickness or weakness and those who never get well. Father, be with them all, and be with us. Amen.

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org