

Happy Feast of Mary, Mother of God! Last year at this Mass I challenged all of us to make at least one resolution for 2021: **get to Know Mary better**. I hope you have been able to do this because I know that Jesus wants us to get to know her better. From the Cross, Jesus said to the beloved disciple, to you and to me, Behold, your Mother.

I watched a youtube video of Venerable Fulton Sheen giving a talk on Mary. He opened with this joke that had nothing to do with Mary. I'd also like to share it with you: Once there was a man who had a good leg and a bad leg. He went to the doctor, who told him he needed the bad leg amputated. After he woke up from the surgery, the doctor said to him, "Well, I have bad news and good news. Bad news is I amputated the wrong leg. But the good news is that your other leg is getting better!"

Speaking of physical healing, to help us get to Know Mary, her goals and desires, we need to understand her desire, her goal, to win spiritual and physical healings and conversions through her prayers AND to bring people closer to her son Jesus, ESPECIALLY in the Blessed Sacrament.

If you haven't seen the movie The Song of Bernadette starring Jennifer Jones, do yourself a favor and watch it soon. On February 11, 1858, in the town of Lourdes, France, a young peasant named Bernadette Soubirous was collecting firewood with a sister and a friend near a stone grotto. In the grotto, Bernadette saw a beautiful lady appear holding a rosary. The lady asked Bernadette to return to the Grotto. Later, when Bernadette asked her who she was, she replied, "Que soy era Immaculada Conception," the local dialect that translates to, "I am the Immaculate Conception.". Bernadette had never heard of this title, but she reported it to the local priest. He was amazed, because just recently, the Church had declared the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

Later, Mary told Bernadette to dig in the dirt to find a healing spring of water. Pilgrims began travelling there and bathing in the water, and soon many were cured of various physical problems. Also, through her prayers, Mary has converted atheists and agnostics who have visited Lourdes, and strengthened the Faith of millions, including myself as I was blessed to visit Lourdes when I was in college.

There have been at least 7000 reported cases of physical healing. Officially, the Church has only approved 70 of those cases, after rigorous and careful examination to rule out any natural or medical explanation. Many of these cures

were brought about not only by the prayers of Mary, but also by the Close presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, since there is a daily procession with the Blessed Sacrament followed by Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the local Basilica.

Dr. Alexis Carrel was a doctor in France in the early 1900's. His friend invited him to help sick patients who were brought on a train from Lyons to Lourdes. Carrel was born Catholic but was an agnostic. He did not believe in miracles. He agreed to help his friend, hoping to discover natural causes for the supposed miracles.

On the train, he met Marie Bailly who was suffering from acute tuberculous peritonitis. She had abdominal distension with large hard masses. Carrel believed that she would pass away soon after arriving at Lourdes, if not before. Other physicians agreed.

When the train arrived, Marie was brought to the Grotto where three pitchers of water were poured over her distended abdomen. Her stomach immediately began to flatten and her pulse returned to normal. Carrel was standing nearby taking notes. He wrote: "The enormously distended and very hard abdomen began to flatten and within 30 minutes it had completely disappeared. No discharge whatsoever was observed from the body."

Marie sat up, had dinner, got out of bed by herself. The next day she returned to Lyons. She joined the Sisters of Charity and served the sick and poor, dying in 1937.

When Carrel witnessed this event, it was difficult for him to believe it was a supernatural miracle. He didn't return to His Catholic faith. He returned to Lourdes many times, and eventually witnessed the instant cure of an 18-month-old blind boy. Even after these two miracles, Carrel could not admit to the possibility of miracles.

In 1938, one year after Sr. Marie Bailly died, Carrel became friends with the Rector of the Major Seminary in Rennes. The rector told him to consult with a Trappist monk, Fr. Presse, which he died. In 1942, Carrel experienced a conversion, and announced that he believed in God, the immortality of the soul, and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Two years later, he died.

I share this story to encourage us to ask our Mother Mary to pray for big, bold things. She wants us to ask her to win the conversion of our fallen away family members, to win the physical and spiritual healing of our friends, and of ourselves, to help us to get to know her AND her Son better in 2022.

To conclude, here's a poem by Mary Dixon Thayer called Lovely Lady Dressed in Blue, that Venerable Fulton Sheen made popular:

Lovely Lady dressed in blue -----

Teach me how to pray!

God was just your little boy,

Tell me what to say!

Did you lift Him up, sometimes,

Gently on your knee?

Did you sing to Him the way

Mother does to me?

Did you hold His hand at night?

Did you ever try

Telling stories of the world?

O! And did He cry?

Do you really think He cares

If I tell Him things -----

Little things that happen? And

Do the Angels' wings

Make a noise? And can He hear

Me if I speak low?

Does He understand me now?

Tell me -----for you know.

Lovely Lady dressed in blue -----

Teach me how to pray!

God was just your little boy,

And you know the way.