

Lourdes 1858

Apparitions, Judgment, and the Discernment of Cures

A source-audited apparition study

What the Church has judged, on what record, how reported cures are examined, and what that judgment
does and does not oblige

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1 The Judgment First

On 18 January 1862, the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter at Rome, Bertrand-Sévère Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, closed nearly four years of diocesan inquiry with a *mandement* “bearing judgment on the Apparition which took place at the Grotto of Lourdes.” Its operative articles are short, and everything in this study hangs on reading them exactly.

Operative text — Mandement of the Bishop of Tarbes, 18 January 1862, operative articles (French, as printed in Henri Lasserre’s contemporary reproduction, collated against the Sanctuary of Lourdes’ own transcription)

Art. 1^{er}. Nous jugeons que l’IMMACULÉE MARIE, MÈRE DE DIEU, a réellement apparu à Bernadette Soubirous, le 11 février 1858 et jours suivants, au nombre de dix-huit fois, dans la Grotte de Massabielle, près de la ville de Lourdes ; que cette Apparition revêt tous les caractères de la vérité, et que les fidèles sont fondés à la croire certaine.

Nous soumettons humblement notre jugement au jugement du Souverain-Pontife, qui est chargé de gouverner l’Église universelle.

Art. 2. Nous autorisons dans notre diocèse le culte de Notre-Dame de la Grotte de Lourdes ; mais nous défendons de publier aucune formule particulière de prières, aucun cantique, aucun livre de dévotion, relatifs à cet événement, sans notre approbation donnée par écrit.¹

In editorial rendering: “Art. 1. We judge that the Immaculate Mary, Mother of God, really appeared to Bernadette Soubirous on 11 February 1858 and following days, eighteen times, in the Grotto of Massabielle, near the town of Lourdes; that this Apparition bears every mark of truth, and that the faithful are justified in believing it certain. We humbly submit our judgment to the judgment of the Sovereign Pontiff, who is charged with governing the universal Church. Art. 2. We authorize in our diocese the cult of Our Lady of the Grotto of Lourdes; but we forbid the publication of any particular formula of prayers, any hymn, any book of devotion relating to this event without our written approval.” A third article announces the bishop’s intention, “to conform to the will of the Holy Virgin, several times expressed during the Apparition,” to build a sanctuary on the Grotto land that had become the property of the Bishops of Tarbes, and a fourth appeals for the support of the faithful.²

That is the whole positive judgment: a declaration that the Immaculate Mary, Mother of God, really appeared to Bernadette Soubirous eighteen times, that the faithful are justified (*fondés*) in believing the apparition certain, and an authorization of cult within the diocese, with devotional publications kept under episcopal control. The act is diocesan, made by the local ordinary under the discipline of his time, in which such judgments belonged to him; the bishop himself submits it to the judgment of the Roman Pontiff. It is not a papal definition, not an exercise of infallibility, not a source of new public Revelation, and not an advance certification of every narrative, image, secret, devotion, or reported cure that would later attach itself to Lourdes. What the judgment means for the believer was stated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2000 in words the current Dicastery’s norms still cite as the standing account: ecclesiastical approval of a private revelation means “the message contains nothing contrary to faith or morals; it is lawful to make it public; and the faithful are authorized to accept it with prudence.”³

Governing thesis

This is an ecclesial-judgment-first study, not a devotional narrative. It reconstructs the eighteen reported apparitions of 1858 from the nearest genuinely accessible witnesses; it traces the textual history of the one sentence the apparition is reported to have spoken about herself—*Que soy era immaculada councepciou*—and handles its relation to the dogma defined four years earlier with the care that relation demands; it identifies the 1858–1862 episcopal commission and the exact operative wording, date, and object of the 1862 judgment; it treats the discernment of cures as what it is—a deliberately limited medical procedure feeding a separate episcopal act—from the Bureau des Constatations of 1883 through the 72nd recognition of 2025; and it states what the judgment obliges. Public Revelation is complete in Christ; no Lourdes event adds to it, and even a positively judged private revelation asks only a prudent human assent (*fides humana*), never the divine and Catholic faith owed to Revelation. Medical inability to explain a cure is a bounded negative finding, not a scientific proof of divine action; the water of the spring is ordinary water; and Bernadette was canonized in 1933 for her response to grace, not to re-judge the apparitions. Where the record is thinner than the received narrative—above all in the loss and later critical recovery of the 1858 police and judicial interrogation records—the ceiling is stated rather than papered over.

The study runs in the order the evidence demands: the events of 1858 as the nearest witnesses transmit them, including the civil interrogations (§2); the self-identification of 25 March and its textual history (§3); the commission and the 1862 judgment (§4); the medical discernment of cures from 1862 to the present list of seventy-two (§5); Bernadette’s later life, death, and canonization (§6); liturgical and papal reception from the 1890 proper office to the 2008 sesquicentenary (§7); the doctrinal boundary—what approval does and does not oblige (§8); and the current standing of the 1862 judgment under the 2024 norms (§9). Work-wide bounds, taxonomy, and qualifications are gathered in the terminal appendix; witnesses and rights are in the References.

2 The Events of 1858 in Their Nearest Witnesses

2.1 The witnesses and their ceilings

No stenographer stood at Massabielle. What can be known of the eighteen reported apparitions rests on identifiable strata of testimony, and this study names the stratum for every claim it makes. The strata are: (1) Bernadette Soubirous’ own oral accounts of 1858, given to family, clergy, police, and magistrates, which survive today chiefly *inside* other documents—interrogation records, letters, reports—rather than as her own text; (2) her later written accounts, composed from 1861 onwards after she had learned to write; (3) the contemporaneous administrative and judicial paper of 1858, whose complicated survival history is treated at §2.5; (4) the 1858–1861 episcopal commission record summarized in the 1862 mandement (§4); (5) early narrative literature, above all Henri Lasserre’s *Notre-Dame de Lourdes* (1869/1870), written with access to living witnesses but as apologetic narrative, and the much later memoir of Jean-Baptiste Estrade (1899), an eyewitness of several apparitions writing four decades after the events; and (6) the present-day Sanctuary of Lourdes’ institutional chronology, a custodial harmonization of the earlier strata.⁴ The critical edition of the documentary record is René Laurentin and Bernard Billet, *Lourdes: Documents authentiques* (Paris: Lethielleux, 7 volumes, 1957–1966), which published the surviving official and private papers of 1858; it was not accessible to this project, and its existence is recorded here precisely so that the reader knows where the fuller record lives (Appendix A).⁵

The Sanctuary’s chronology is therefore the working scaffold of this section—quoted as the custodian’s own received account, in the “reported” register, not as a critical edition. Where the 1862 mandement, itself resting on the commission record, states a fact differently or more cautiously, the mandement is preferred.

2.2 Lourdes and the Soubirous household

Bernadette Soubirous was born at the Boly mill in Lourdes on 7 January 1844, the first child of François Soubirous, a miller, and Louise Castérot, and was baptized two days later. By 1858 the family had lost the mill and lived in the *cachot*, a single disused room of the former town lock-up. Bernadette, fourteen years old, small, and asthmatic since a childhood weakened by illness, could neither read nor write; she had spent the autumn of 1857 at Bartrès minding sheep, returned to Lourdes on 21 January 1858, and was preparing at last for her First Communion, which she made on 3 June 1858.⁶ The poverty was real, but the Sanctuary’s own biography warns against the purely miserabilist portrait: the first ten years of her childhood were secure and affectionate, and those who interrogated her in 1858 met, in the words the bishop would adopt, “clear, precise responses, impressed with a strong conviction.”⁷

2.3 The eighteen reported encounters: a dated inventory

The table gives the eighteen reported apparitions as the Sanctuary itself dates and describes them. Three bounds govern the whole inventory. First, the register is *reported*: the table transmits the custodial account, not an adjudicated transcript. Second, the “fortnight” asked for on 18 February was not fifteen consecutive apparitions: the mandement itself records that during the fortnight, “when she expected to see every day, she saw nothing for two days,” and the Sanctuary’s chronology likewise contains no apparition on 22 or 26 February and reports the morning of 3 March as empty until a later return.⁸ Third, the crowd figures are the Sanctuary’s received round numbers, useful for scale only.

No.	Date (1858)	Presence reported	Received content (Sanctuary chronology; reported register)
1	Thu 11 Feb	Bernadette, her sister, a friend	Gathering wood by the Gave; “a noise like a gust of wind”; “a lady dressed in white, . . . a blue belt and a yellow rose on each foot”; sign of the cross; Rosary; the Lady vanishes.
2	Sun 14 Feb	companions	Bernadette sprinkles holy water at the vision; “the lady smiled and bent her head.”
3	Thu 18 Feb	first adults present	First words. Asked to write her name: “It is not necessary”; “I do not promise to make you happy in this world but in the other”; “Would you be kind enough to come here for a fortnight?”
4	Fri 19 Feb	family members	Bernadette brings a lighted blessed candle—the received origin of the grotto candles.
5	Sat 20 Feb	small crowd	The Lady teaches her a personal prayer (never published); a great sadness at the end.
6	Sun 21 Feb	about 100	Early-morning apparition; that day the police commissioner Jacomet interrogates her; she will call the vision only <i>Aquerò</i> (“that thing”).
7	Tue 23 Feb	about 150	A secret “for her alone.”
8	Wed 24 Feb	crowd	“Penance! Penance! Penance! Pray to God for sinners. Kiss the ground as an act of penance for sinners!”
9	Thu 25 Feb	about 300	“She told me to go, drink of the spring. . . I only found a little muddy water. At the fourth attempt I was able to drink”; the bitter herbs; “It is for sinners.”
10	Sat 27 Feb	about 800	Silent apparition; she drinks at the spring; penitential gestures.
11	Sun 28 Feb	over 1,000	Ecstasy, prayer, penance; she is then taken before Judge Ribes, who threatens prison.
12	Mon 1 Mar	over 1,500, first priest present	That night Catherine Latapie plunges her disabled arm into the spring water; its movement returns (§5.4).
13	Tue 2 Mar	growing crowd	“Go and tell the priests that people are to come here in procession and to build a chapel here”; Father Peyramale demands the Lady’s name and a winter flowering of the grotto rosebush.
14	Wed 3 Mar	about 3,000 (morning)	No vision in the morning; after school she returns on an inner invitation; asked again for a name, the vision smiles; Peyramale repeats his demand.
15	Thu 4 Mar	about 8,000	End of the fortnight; the vision is silent; no name is given. For twenty days Bernadette does not return, no longer feeling the call.
16	Thu 25 Mar	crowd	The self-identification in Gascon Occitan, treated fully in §3; the rosebush does not bloom.
17	Wed 7 Apr	crowd; Dr Douzous observes	The “miracle of the candle”: the flame plays over her hand without burning it, reported at once by the physician Douzous (§5.5).
18	Fri 16 Jul	from across the Gave	The grotto now fenced off; from the far bank: “I felt that I was in front of the Grotto, at the same distance as before. . . she was more beautiful than ever!”

All quoted phrases are the Sanctuary’s English chronology of the apparitions, read 2026-07-25; the register throughout is the custodian’s received narrative.⁹ The eighteen dated encounters of this table are exactly the corpus the 1862 judgment covers: “le 11 février 1858 et jours suivants, au nombre de dix-huit fois” (§1).

2.4 The reported words

The reported message of Lourdes is brief, and its center of gravity is unmistakable. To Bernadette personally: a promise of happiness “not in this world but in the other” (18 February), a personal prayer and a secret never disclosed (20 and 23 February). To all, through her: penance, prayer for sinners, and penitential gesture (24–25 February); procession and a chapel, addressed to “the priests” (2 March); and the name of 25 March (§3). Nothing in the received corpus is a doctrine, a prophecy of dated events, a political instruction, or a new devotion complete with formulas:

the words fold entirely into the Gospel’s own call to conversion and intercession, which is precisely the ground on which later papal teaching commends Lourdes (§7).¹⁰ The private prayer and the secret are recorded here as received narrative facts about which nothing more is known; this study reconstructs neither, and no internet “Lourdes secret” is admitted into the corpus.

Two received details deserve their exact shape. The Rosary runs through the whole cycle—Bernadette prays it at the first apparition and repeatedly thereafter—but the received accounts describe the Lady joining the doxology rather than reciting the Aves; Benedict XVI drew from precisely this detail the “profoundly theocentric character” of the Rosary.¹¹ And the famous fortnight promise—“I do not promise to make you happy in this world but in the other”—is a promise to one person, not a general doctrine of compensation; Pius XII reads it simply as the frame of Bernadette’s subsequent hidden life (§6).¹²

2.5 The civil authorities: the interrogations at their ceilings

The events of 1858 unfolded under the eyes of a skeptical civil administration, and its officers questioned Bernadette repeatedly: the police commissioner Jacomet on 21 February, the examining magistrate (Judge Ribes) on 28 February with a threat of prison, and the imperial procurator Dutour in the same season; the prefect Baron Massy pressed the affair from Tarbes. That the interrogations occurred is multiply witnessed: the Sanctuary’s chronology records Jacomet’s interrogation and the Ribes threat; the Sanctuary’s biography of Bernadette preserves the received sharp exchanges of the Jacomet session (“Aquerò—I didn’t say ‘the Holy Virgin’... Monsieur, you’ve changed it all”); and Lasserre, writing within a decade, reconstructs the Jacomet interrogation at length and names Dutour’s reports to the procurator-general.¹³

The documentary ceiling must be stated with equal care, because it is itself part of the history. Lasserre records in a footnote of 1869 that he asked the prefecture of the Hautes-Pyrénées for Jacomet’s report of the 21 February interrogation and was told the dossier “had disappeared,” whether by disorder, accident, or interested removal; that the procurator-general’s office at Pau refused on principle to communicate Dutour’s reports; and that the Ministry of Cults refused likewise.¹⁴ A century later the critical edition of Laurentin and Billet assembled and published the surviving administrative, judicial, and private documents of 1858; this project could not consult that edition, so it asserts neither the exact contents of any procès-verbal nor the completeness of what survives. What the accessible record establishes is bounded but real: hostile, contemporaneous official scrutiny existed; it questioned the visionary within days of the events; and it produced paper whose later fate ran through loss, refusal, and eventual critical publication. The bishop’s commission worked in the same season with its own interrogations (§4), and the mandement’s argument leans expressly on how Bernadette withstood questioning—“never shaken by threats; to the most generous offers she answered with a noble disinterestedness.”¹⁵

2.6 The spring and the first reported cures

On 25 February, at the ninth apparition, Bernadette scraped at the muddy ground of the grotto floor and, at the fourth attempt, drank; a usable spring emerged at the spot and has flowed since. The received narrative is of uncovering, not of creation from nothing: neither the Sanctuary nor the 1862 act claims that no subsurface water existed before that morning, and this study says “uncovered” accordingly. What the Sanctuary says about the water today is deliberately deflationary and is quoted here as the custodian’s own doctrine of the site: the water “has no therapeutic properties or specific properties”; “it is not holy water”; and it may not be sold. The Sanctuary even preserves Bernadette’s own caution: “We take the water like medicine... We must have faith, we must pray: this water will have no virtue without faith!”¹⁶

That ordinary water is not a sacramental merely because it comes from Massabielle. Sacramentals are instituted by the Church; their spiritual effects are obtained through her intercession and dispose persons to receive grace (CCC 1667–1673). Nor does a quantity of water, a repeated visit, or an external gesture work automatically. Attributing efficacy to the mere performance apart from the dispositions it requires is superstition (CCC 2111), while magic and every attempt at occult control remain categorically excluded (CCC 2116–2117). These safeguards do not condemn prayerful use of the water; they keep that use a free devotional sign rather than a talisman, dosage, or technique.

The first reported cures attached to the spring almost at once. In the night after the twelfth apparition (1 March 1858), Catherine Latapie of Loubajac plunged an arm disabled since an accident into the spring water and recovered its movement; the Sanctuary’s own list of recognized cures opens with her and with six other cures of 1858, all seven

recognized by Bishop Laurence in the mandement itself on 18 January 1862 (§4.4, §5).¹⁷ From the beginning, then, the Lourdes pattern was set: the cure is reported at the spring, the examination is a distinct act, and the recognition belongs to a bishop. Everything in §5 is the institutional history of that distinction.

3 “Que soy era immaculada councepciou”: the Self-Identification of 25 March

3.1 The sixteenth apparition

After the silent apparition of 4 March, Bernadette stayed away from the grotto for twenty days, “no longer feeling the irresistible invitation.” The parish priest of Lourdes, Father Peyramale, had fixed the terms on which he would take the affair seriously: the Lady must give her name, and the wild rosebush at the grotto must flower in winter. On the feast of the Annunciation, Thursday 25 March 1858, Bernadette returned before dawn. In the Sanctuary’s received account she asked the name again, and this time received it; the rosebush, the Sanctuary states flatly, “did not bloom.”¹⁸ She ran to the presbytery repeating words she is consistently reported not to have understood, and delivered them to Peyramale.

3.2 The Gascon sentence and its transmission

What Bernadette reported is one sentence in her own language, the Gascon Occitan of Bigorre. The Sanctuary’s French chronology transmits it, inside an account it attributes to Bernadette’s own telling, in this form:

“Elle leva les yeux au ciel, joignant en signe de prière ses mains qui étaient tendues et ouvertes vers la terre, et me dit : *Que soy era immaculada councepciou*.”¹⁹

The transmission history of this sentence must be stated exactly, because it is better than the transmission of almost any other reported apparition sentence of the nineteenth century, and yet it has real ceilings. Bernadette could not write in March 1858; there is therefore no autograph of the sentence from the day itself. Its earliest carriers were oral—her repetition on the road, her delivery to Peyramale—and the French paper of 1858 renders it at once in translation: the mandement four years later summarizes that the girl “saw and heard a being calling herself the Immaculate Conception” and, in its motivation, gives the words in French: “la sainte Vierge, apparaissant à une enfant, lui dit : *Je suis l’Immaculée Conception*. . .”²⁰ The Gascon form itself was written down later, by Bernadette (who learned to write from 1860 onwards and repeated the sentence in her autograph accounts) and by the early witnesses and historians; the Sanctuary’s French page above is the custodial descendant of that stream. Orthography varies across carriers as Occitan spelling conventions vary: the same Sanctuary’s English chronology prints “*Que soy era Immaculada Councepciou*,” without the *-oun-* spelling of the French page, and the nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature knows further variants.²¹ This study therefore claims exactly this much: the sentence is securely transmitted in substance from 1858 (through the translations in the contemporaneous and 1862 record) and in Gascon wording from Bernadette’s own later writing and telling as the Sanctuary transmits it—and no more precise textual claim is honest at this project’s ceilings.

The sentence’s meaning, on the other hand, has never been in doubt: “I am the Immaculate Conception.” In that form it entered the Church’s own speech—the canonization homily of 1933 gives it in Latin, *Immaculata Conceptio ego sum*; Pius XII’s centenary encyclical and Benedict XVI’s sesquicentenary homilies give it in the modern vernaculars.²²

3.3 Four years after the dogma: the theological care the date demands

On 8 December 1854, Pius IX had defined in *Ineffabilis Deus*: “We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful.”²³ The reported sentence of 25 March 1858 stands three years and three-and-a-half months after that definition, and everything doctrinally important about the relation runs in one direction only.

First: the dogma does not rest on Lourdes. The definition preceded the apparition; its authority is the solemn Magisterium defining a truth contained in the deposit of Revelation, and, in Pius XII's words about precisely this case, "the infallible word of the Roman Pontiff, the authoritative interpreter of revealed truth, needed no heavenly confirmation that it might be accepted by the faithful."²⁴ A private revelation can echo, illustrate, and pastorally seal a defined truth; it cannot ground, complete, or certify one. That is the constant teaching on private revelation (§8), and Lourdes is its textbook case rather than its exception.

Second: the Church has nonetheless read the echo as significant. Bishop Laurence's own mandement marvels that "about three years" after the definition the Virgin appeared saying *Je suis l'Immaculée Conception*: "does she not seem to wish to consecrate, by a monument, the infallible oracle of the successor of Saint Peter?"²⁵ Pius X, marking the dogma's fiftieth anniversary, wrote that Pius IX "had hardly defined it to be of Catholic faith that Mary was from her very origin exempt from sin, when the Virgin herself began performing miracles at Lourdes," and Pius XI chose 8 December 1933, in the basilica where the dogma had been defined, to canonize the visionary—an arrangement the canonization allocution itself underlines.²⁶

Third: the argument from Bernadette's ignorance must be used at its true weight. The received narrative insists that she carried the words without understanding them and that the "theological expression" was unknown to her; the mandement builds part of its case on her lack of instruction. That is a serious historical datum about a girl who had not yet made her First Communion and could not read. It is not, and this study does not convert it into, a laboratory-grade exclusion of every natural channel by which a phrase four years in the air of a Catholic town—preached, celebrated, and inscribed in the years after 1854—could have brushed a child's memory. The Church's judgment never rested on that exclusion alone: the mandement argues from the whole pattern—her demeanor under interrogation, the gaps in the fortnight, the absence of morbid signs, and above all the "facts" that followed (§4.2)—and the theological weight of the sentence lies not in a psychological proof but in its exact consonance with what the Church had just defined. A reported private word that repeats a defined dogma adds nothing to the dogma; what it adds, if the event is what the bishop judged it to be, is a maternal signature under it.²⁷

Finally, the grammatical strangeness of the sentence—*I am the Immaculate Conception*, an abstraction where a title would be expected—has itself been part of its reception: the phrase identifies the person with the privilege rather than merely claiming it, and preachers and theologians from Peyramale's troubled first hearing onward have taken the very awkwardness as a mark that the formula was not a child's paraphrase of catechism language. This study records that line of reflection as reception, not as proof; it belongs to the theology of the Immaculate Conception, whose dogmatic content stands entirely on the 1854 definition.²⁸

4 The Commission and the Judgment of 1862

4.1 The commission of 28 July 1858

Bishop Laurence moved quickly by the standards of episcopal prudence: the eighteenth reported apparition was on 16 July 1858, and on 28 July he constituted a commission of inquiry. The Sanctuary transmits the commission's mandate from the episcopal ordinance: "to collect and to ascertain the facts which have happened or which could still occur in or around the grotto of Lourdes, to report them to us, to highlight their nature, and thus to provide us with the components necessary for us to reach a conclusion"; and, in the French of the Sanctuary's anniversary notice, the commission was "chargée de constater l'authenticité et la nature des faits qui se sont produits."²⁹

The questions the commission pursued, as the Sanctuary summarizes its work, were the sober ones: had cures in fact occurred after use of the grotto water; was the water natural or supernatural; were Bernadette's visions real, and if real, did they have a divine character; had the apparition made requests, and which; had the spring existed before 25 February. The bishop's ordinance insisted on breadth of method—establishing facts, questioning witnesses, consulting men of science, "in particular the doctors who would have treated the sick before their recovery, but also experts in the fields of physics, chemistry, geology"—and on an open outcome: "The commission must not neglect a single thing to obtain all the information possible in order to arrive at the truth, whatever it may be."³⁰ The commission interrogated Bernadette itself—the mandement speaks of hearing her "in presence of the Commission, assembled to hear her a second time"—and worked for nearly four years before the bishop concluded.³¹

4.2 The mandement’s argumentation

The mandement of 18 January 1862 is not a bare decree; it argues its conclusion across a doctrinal preamble, a narrative, a discussion, and formal considerations, and the argument deserves to be reported in its own structure, because its restraint is part of what the Church later approved of in it.

It opens by setting apparitions within salvation history and then states the Church’s method in a sentence that could serve as the epigraph of the whole Lourdes dossier: “the Church brings a wise slowness to the appreciation of supernatural facts: she demands certain proofs before admitting them and proclaiming them divine,” since the devil “sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light”; the bishop cites the Johannine command to test the spirits.³² The test, he says, has been made: “We have kept ourselves informed through the Commission, composed of pious, learned, and experienced priests, who questioned the child, studied the facts, examined everything, weighed everything. We have also invoked the authority of Science, and we have remained convinced that the Apparition is supernatural and divine, and that, consequently, what Bernadette saw is the Most Holy Virgin. Our conviction was formed on the testimony of Bernadette, but above all on the facts that have occurred, which can be explained only by a divine intervention.”³³

The discussion of Bernadette’s testimony then runs on two rails. Sincerity: her simplicity and modesty, her silence unless questioned, her constancy across interrogations “without adding anything, without retracting anything,” her imperviousness to threats and to offers—“the sincerity of Bernadette is therefore incontestable. Let us add that it is uncontested,” even by her contradictors. Sanity: the wisdom of her answers, a calm imagination, no intellectual disorder, no morbid affection; and then the argument this study flagged at §2.3—she saw not once but eighteen times, saw suddenly the first time when nothing prepared her, and *failed* to see on two days of the fortnight though the circumstances were identical; therefore hallucination is excluded, “the young girl really saw and heard a being calling herself the Immaculate Conception,” and since the phenomenon cannot be explained naturally, “we are justified in believing that the Apparition is supernatural.”³⁴

But the bishop does not rest the judgment on the visionary alone. The testimony “borrows a wholly new force—we shall even say its complement—from the marvelous facts” that followed: the immediate, immense, and persevering concourse of the faithful; the conversions and returns to practice attributed to the invocation of Notre-Dame de Lourdes—“marvels of grace, which bear a character of universality and duration, [and] can have only God for author”—and the cures. On the cures the mandement is specific in a way that anticipates the whole later medical apparatus: the sick used water “deprived of any natural curative quality, on the report of skilled chemists who made a rigorous analysis of it”; cures came “some instantaneously, others after two or three uses”; the cured included the “abandoned and declared incurable”; the cures “are permanent”; asked whether organic power could have produced them, “Science, consulted on this subject, answered negatively.” “These cures are therefore the work of God.”³⁵ The peroration claims the classical sign: *Digitus Dei est hic*—and immediately reads the event against the dogma of 1854 (§3.3).

The formal considerations before the operative articles bind the reasoning to authority: the bishop grounds himself “on the rules wisely traced by Benedict XIV in his work on the Beatification and Canonization of saints, for the discernment of true and false apparitions”; cites the favorable report of the commission and “the written testimony of the Doctors-Physicians whom we consulted about numerous cures”; and reasons in three considerations that the fact “cannot be explained except through a supernatural cause,” that the cause “can only be divine” since the effects are on one side sensible signs of grace (the conversion of sinners) and on the other “derogations from the laws of nature” (the miraculous cures), and that the conviction is fortified by the immense and spontaneous concourse of the faithful.³⁶

4.3 The operative articles and their exact object

The operative articles are printed and translated at §1; what needs analysis here is their scope, clause by clause.

What the 1862 act judged—and what it did not
Event judged: The apparition of “the Immaculate Mary, Mother of God” to Bernadette Soubirous, “on 11 February 1858 and following days, eighteen times,” at the grotto of Massabielle: the bounded eighteen-event corpus of §2.3, no more.

Modality: “The faithful are justified in believing it certain” (*fondés à la croire certaine*): a judgment of credibility warranting assent, in the register of the pre-conciliar discernment of apparitions; it neither imposes belief nor converts the event into public Revelation (§8).

Cult: Authorized “in our diocese”—a diocesan authorization of the cult of Notre-Dame de la Grotte de Lourdes; universal liturgical extension came only by later Roman acts (§7.1). Devotional publications remained under written episcopal approval—a control clause, not a blank endorsement of Lourdes literature.

Cures: Seven cures were recognized as miraculous in connection with the same act, on the examination of Professor Vergez and the consulted physicians (§4.4); the act did not canonize any general theory of the water, which its own argumentation had described as naturally inert.

Submission: The judgment is expressly submitted “to the judgment of the Sovereign Pontiff”; no papal act of confirmation is claimed by the mandement, and none is asserted by this study. Later papal engagement (§7) received and honored the judgment without re-issuing it.

Not judged: The verbal inerrancy of any reported sentence; the candle episode of 7 April as a distinct prodigy (§5.5); the private prayer and secrets; any later narrative, image, book, or devotion (expressly reserved); any physical mechanism; any obligation of divine faith.

Witness ceiling: Operative wording quoted from Lasserre’s 1870 reproduction, collated with the Sanctuary’s French and English transcriptions (readings agree); the 1862 diocesan imprint and archive original were not consulted (Appendix A).

The signature and date clause close the act in the classical diocesan form: given at Tarbes, under the bishop’s sign and seal and the counter-signature of the chancery secretary (Fourcade, canon), “le 18 janvier 1862, fête de la Chaire de Saint-Pierre à Rome.”³⁷

4.4 The seven cures of 18 January 1862

The same act carried the first cure recognitions. The Sanctuary’s institutional history states that the bishop “used three criteria to establish that the Immaculate Conception had actually appeared to Bernadette Soubirous: reliability of the seer, spiritual fruits, cures of the body,” and that on 18 January 1862 “he declared by Decree that seven cures, among the hundreds examined by Prof Henri Vergez, were ‘miraculous.’”³⁸ The Sanctuary’s list of recognized cures names the seven, each with recognition date 18 January 1862: Catherine Latapie (Loubajac), Louis Bouriette (Lourdes), Blaisette Cazenave (Lourdes), Henri Busquet (Nay), Justin Bouhort (Lourdes), Madeleine Rizan (Nay), and Marie Moreau (Tartas).³⁹

Two things follow from the 1862 recognitions that shape everything in §5. First, the juridical form was set at the beginning: a medical examination (here Vergez and the consulted physicians) feeding an episcopal declaration—the physician never declares the miracle, the bishop never certifies the medicine. Second, the evidential standard was already the demanding one: the mandement’s own description of the cures it accepted—grave illness, no natural curative agent, suddenness, permanence, negative verdict of consulted science—is recognizably the profile that the Lambertini criteria would supply to the modern process. The Lourdes medical tradition did not soften the standard over time; it institutionalized it.

5 The Cures and Their Discernment: a Medical-Recognition Dossier

Lourdes is the one Marian shrine with a standing medical institution whose whole purpose is to *resist* easy miracle claims, and the honest way to present the cures is to present the institution first. Throughout this section, two registers are kept rigorously apart: the medical register, whose strongest possible verdict is “unexplained in the present state of medical knowledge,” and the ecclesial register, in which a diocesan bishop—never a physician—may declare a cure miraculous. The first register is a bounded negative finding; the second is an act of religious judgment. Neither ever converts into the other.

5.1 From 1862 to the Bureau des Constatations (1883)

The mandement’s cure recognitions of 1862 (§4.4) were episodic: consulted physicians, a professor’s examinations, an episcopal declaration. The permanent institution came a generation later. At the request of Father Rémi Sempé,

first rector of the sanctuary, Dr Georges-Fernand Dunot de Saint-Maclou established the Bureau des Constatations Médicales in 1883, turning the occasional summer consultations he had held since 1879 into a permanent office, “so that no one, who thought he had been ‘cured,’ would leave Lourdes without having submitted the story of his cure to a rigorous and collegiate medical assessment.”⁴⁰ Roman assent followed early: the Sanctuary records a letter of the Archbishop of Cagliari, Vincenzo Gregorio Berchialla, dated 3 September 1886 and forwarded from Rome, relating “the assent of Pope Leo XIII to the Bureau’s rigorous procedures”; and in 1905, after the 1904 jubilee visit of Bishop Schoepfer of Tarbes with Dr Boissarie, “the Holy See confirmed to the Bishop of Tarbes—in his capacity as Guardian of the Grotto—the right to use the procedures of the Bureau des Constatations Médicales to investigate any declared cures. This right is still valid today.”⁴¹ The succession of permanent physician-presidents runs from Dunot de Saint-Maclou (†1891) through Gustave Boissarie (from 1892), Auguste Vallet (1927–1947), François Leuret, and their successors, to Alessandro de Franciscis, fifteenth president, in office from 2009; in February 2026 the Sanctuary announced that Dr Giada Monami, an Italian internist and pharmacist and a decade-long volunteer physician with UNITALSI, would take up the office of permanent physician of the Bureau from mid-April 2026, the first woman appointed to the post.⁴²

Around the Bureau grew the associations that supply its collegial character: the Association Médicale de Notre-Dame de Lourdes, announced in the *Journal de la Grotte* of 6 September 1925 and opened “to all doctors wishing to participate, whether Catholic or not”; internationalized under Vallet as the Association Médicale Internationale de Lourdes (AMIL), with a quarterly bulletin from February 1928; and its later companion associations of pharmacists (1935), dentists (1991), healthcare workers (1993), and nurses (2014). The president of the Bureau is also president of AMIL.⁴³

5.2 The International Medical Committee (CMIL)

A second, deliberately external tier was added after the Second World War. In 1947 Bishop Pierre-Marie Théas of Tarbes and Lourdes and Dr François Leuret, then president of the Bureau, constituted a Lourdes Medical Committee of physicians and professors of established reputation; in 1954 the bishop gave it an international dimension. The task of the Comité Médical International de Lourdes (CMIL) is precise: “assessing and, as may be the case, ‘certifying’ that the course of the cure, which has been declared ‘unexplained’ by the Bureau des Constatations Médicales of Lourdes, is indeed ‘unexplained’ on the basis of current medical knowledge.” The committee numbers about thirty members and is co-presided by the Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes and a physician member appointed by him (Prof Olivier Jonquet on the page as read); the president of the Bureau serves as its secretary.⁴⁴

5.3 The current process and its criteria

The Sanctuary publishes the process in three stages, and the stages deserve exact reproduction because each one is designed to *stop* cases rather than advance them.

Stage one: from the “declared” to the “unexpected” cure. Declarations are spontaneous and voluntary. The Bureau’s permanent physician gathers all available information, builds the medical file, assesses the person “in order to rule out trickery, acting, illusion, a possible hysterical or delirious pathology,” and judges whether the cure is “clearly beyond the normal medical provisions of the illness” and occurred “according to extraordinary, unforeseen, striking or remarkable conditions.” Most declarations end here, marked “no follow-up” or “pending”; a minority are registered as an “unexpected cure” for study, and the bishop of the person’s home diocese is informed that an inquiry exists.

Stage two: from the “unexpected” to the “confirmed” cure. The file is completed by a comparative study of the medical documents before and after the cure, to establish “an indisputable change from a precise medical diagnosis of a known illness to a situation of restored health,” out of character with the illness’s development; outside specialists are consulted before the file goes to a plenary CMIL session, which either closes it or validates the cure as “thoroughly discussed and confirmed.”

Stage three: the opinion for recognition. The CMIL affirms the “exceptional character” of the cure “according to present scientific knowledge”; the file is then sent by the Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes to the bishop of the diocese where the cured person lives—with whom, alone, the decision about a miracle rests.⁴⁵

The evaluative grid is the classical one. The Sanctuary states that the criteria “were defined by Cardinal Lambertini (future Pope Benedict XIV)” and are “the same criteria used by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints”—the very rules the 1862 mandement had already invoked (§4.2). In the Sanctuary’s current enumeration, seven criteria govern:

the illness must be serious and of unfavourable prognosis; known and recorded by medicine; organic and lesional, established by objective criteria (so that functional, psychiatric, and similar pathologies without objective markers are not eligible—“this does not mean that these diseases cannot be cured,” the page notes, only that they cannot be *certified* in this process); there must have been no treatment to which the cure could be attributed; the cure must be sudden and without convalescence; it must be a return of function, not a mere regression of symptoms; and it must be lasting and definitive, not a remission.⁴⁶

5.4 The recognized cures at their source

Since 1858, the Sanctuary states, more than 7,000 declarations of cure have been recorded at the Bureau, and seventy-two cures have been recognized as miraculous by the competent bishops—the most recent, that of Antonia Raco, proclaimed in 2025.⁴⁷ The proportion is the first datum of Lourdes medical epistemology: roughly one recognition per hundred declarations, across 167 years. The Sanctuary’s older statistical page (still reflecting the seventy-cure state before the 2024–2025 recognitions) adds that more than 80% of the recognized cures concern women, that the youngest person recognized was two years old, and that a handful of the recognized persons never came to Lourdes at all, having invoked the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes from elsewhere.⁴⁸

The Sanctuary publishes the complete list of the seventy-two with their recognition dates, and its shape is itself historical evidence. After the seven of 1862 (§4.4), no recognition followed for forty-five years; then, in the years around the fiftieth anniversary and the universal feast—1907 to 1913—thirty-three cures were recognized in a single great series, the era of Boissarie’s Bureau and of the canonical processes of Bishop Schoepfer’s time. The table reproduces that series from the Sanctuary’s list; ordinals follow the list’s own order.⁴⁹

No.	Person	Origin	Episcopal recognition
8	Pierre De Rudder	Jabbeke (Belgium)	25 July 1908
9	Joachime Dehant	Gesves (Belgium)	25 April 1908
10	Elisa Seisson	Rognonas (France)	2 July 1912
11	Sr Eugenia (Marie Mabile)	Bernay (France)	30 August 1908
12	Sr Julienne (Aline Bruyère)	La Roque (France)	7 March 1912
13	Sr Joséphine-Marie (Anne Jourdain)	Goincourt (France)	10 October 1908
14	Amélie Chagnon	Poitiers (France)	8 September 1910
15	Clémentine Trouvé (Sr Agnès-Marie)	Rouille (France)	6 June 1908
16	Marie Lebranchu (Mrs Wuiplier)	Paris (France)	6 June 1908
17	Marie Lemarchand (Mrs Authier)	Caen (France)	6 June 1908
18	Elise Lesage	Bucquoy (France)	4 February 1908
19	Sr Marie de la Présentation (Sylvie Delporte)	Lille (France)	15 August 1908
20	Fr Cirette	Beaumontel (France)	11 February 1907
21	Aurélie Huprelle	Saint-Martin-le-Nœud (France)	1 May 1908
22	Esther Brachmann	Paris (France)	6 June 1908
23	Jeanne Tulasne	Tours (France)	27 October 1907
24	Clémentine Malot	Gaudechart (France)	1 November 1908
25	Rose François	Paris (France)	6 June 1908
26	Fr Salvator	Rouelle (France)	1 July 1908
27	Sr Maximilien	Marseille (France)	5 February 1908
28	Marie Savoye	Cateau-Cambresis (France)	15 August 1908
29	Johanna Bézenac	Saint-Laurent-des-Bâtons (France)	2 July 1908
30	Sr Saint-Hilaire (Lucie Jupin)	Peyreleau (France)	10 May 1908
31	Sr Sainte-Béatrix (Rosalie Vildier)	Evreux (France)	25 March 1908
32	Marie-Thérèse Noblet	Avenay (France)	11 February 1908
33	Cécile Douville de Franssu	Tournai (Belgium)	8 December 1909

No.	Person	Origin	Episcopal recognition
34	Antonia Moulin	Vienne (France)	6 November 1910
35	Marie Borel	Mende (France)	4 June 1911
36	Virginie Haudebourg	Lons-le-Saulnier (France)	25 November 1912
37	Marie Biré	Sainte-Gemme-la-Plaine (France)	30 July 1910
38	Aimée Allope	Vern (France)	5 August 1910
39	Juliette Orion	Saint-Hilaire-de-Voust (France)	18 October 1913
40	Marie Fabre	Montredon (France)	8 September 1912

After 1913 the pace changed permanently: the second table gives every recognition from the Second World War to the present—the last thirty-two entries—from the same list; the Sanctuary’s articles anchor the tail of the numbering by expressly counting Sr Bernadette Moriau 70th, John Traynor 71st, and Antonia Racó 72nd.⁵⁰

No.	Person	Origin	Episcopal recognition
41	Henriette Bressolles	Nice (France)	4 June 1957
42	Lydia Brosse	Saint-Raphaël (France)	5 August 1958
43	Sr Marie-Marguerite (Françoise Capitaine)	Rennes (France)	20 May 1946
44	Louise Jamain	Paris (France)	14 December 1951
45	Francis Pascal	Beaucaire (France)	31 May 1949
46	Gabrielle Clauzel	Oran (Algeria)	18 March 1948
47	Yvonne Fournier	Limoges (France)	14 November 1959
48	Rose Martin	Nice (France)	17 March 1958
49	Jeanne Gestas	Bègles (France)	13 July 1952
50	Marie-Thérèse Canin	Marseille (France)	6 June 1952
51	Maddalena Carini	San Remo (Italy)	2 June 1960
52	Jeanne Frétel	Rennes (France)	20 November 1950
53	Théa Angele (Sr Marie-Mercédès)	Tettwang (Germany)	28 June 1961
54	Evasio Ganora	Casale (Italy)	31 May 1955
55	Edeltraud Fulda	Vienna (Austria)	18 May 1955
56	Paul Pellegri	Toulon (France)	8 December 1953
57	Fr Léo Schwager	Fribourg (Switzerland)	18 December 1960
58	Alice Couteault	Bouillé-Loretz (France)	16 July 1956
59	Marie Bigot	La Richardais (France)	15 August 1956
60	Ginette Nouvel	Carmaux (France)	31 May 1963
61	Elisa Aloï	Patti (Italy)	26 May 1965
62	Juliette Tamburini	Marseille (France)	11 May 1965
63	Vittorio Micheli	Scurelle (Italy)	26 May 1976
64	Serge Perrin	Lion d’Angers (France)	17 June 1978
65	Delizia Cirolli	Paternò (Italy)	28 June 1989
66	Jean-Pierre Bély	La Couronne (France)	9 February 1999
67	Anna Santaniello	Salerno (Italy)	21 September 2005
68	Sr Luigina Traverso	Casale Monferrato (Italy)	11 October 2012
69	Danila Castelli	Bereguardo (Italy)	20 June 2013
70	Sr Bernadette Moriau	Beauvais (France)	11 February 2018
71	John (“Jack”) Traynor	Liverpool (England)	8 December 2024
72	Antonia Racó	Tursi-Lagonegro diocese (Italy)	16 April 2025

The recognition dates are the competent bishops' acts, not the cure dates; the list's sequence does not simply follow either column (Capitaine's 1946 recognition precedes Bressolles' 1957 within the same stretch), and the gap between cure and recognition has at times been very long. The three most recent dossiers show the modern process at work, at three different tempos:

The 70th: Sr Bernadette Moriau. A Franciscan Oblate of the Sacred Heart, disabled by cauda-equina-territory disease treated over four decades (four operations, neurostimulation, morphine, a permanent brace and foot orthosis), she made the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes in July 2008—the sesquicentenary year—and received the Anointing of the Sick; on 11 July 2008, back home, during Eucharistic adoration, she experienced a sudden restoration, removed her appliances, and stopped morphine and neurostimulation. The Bureau decided collegially on 7 July 2016 on the “unexpected, instantaneous, complete, lasting and unexplained character of the cure”; the CMIL confirmed “unexplained according to current medical knowledge” on 18 November 2016; and on 11 February 2018 Bishop Jacques Benoit-Gonnin of Beauvais, Noyon and Senlis declared the cure miraculous.⁵¹

The 71st: John Traynor, a century later. A Liverpool veteran gravely wounded in the First World War (machine-gun fire at Gallipoli, 1915; a failed trepanation for epilepsy in 1920 leaving partial paralysis), listed for the incurables' hospice for 24 July 1923, he was cured on 25 July 1923 during the first Liverpool diocesan pilgrimage, after the baths and the Eucharistic procession. He declared his cure to the Bureau on 7 July 1926 (dossier no. 26014); on 2 October 1926 the Bureau recognized the cure as “unexplained in the state of scientific knowledge” in a procès-verbal signed by its president Dr Auguste Vallet; the medical report was published in the *Journal de la Grotte* of 26 December 1926. The file's ecclesial completion waited almost a century: a canonical commission constituted by the archdiocese of Liverpool in 2024 led to Archbishop Malcolm McMahon's official proclamation of the miracle on 8 December 2024—the first such recognition for an English pilgrim.⁵²

The 72nd: Antonia Raco. An Italian woman diagnosed in 2006 with primary lateral sclerosis, progressively tetraparetic with respiratory and swallowing decline, she came to Lourdes with UNITALSI (30 July–5 August 2009) and at the baths “reported feeling an unusual sense of well-being and being able to walk again.” She declared the cure in July 2010; the Bureau opened a file and met on it in 2010, 2012, 2013, 2016, and finally 2017, when the members present collegially qualified the cure as unexplained; the Milan university neurology department confirmed the diagnosis and assumed follow-up from 2013. In November 2024 the CMIL put to the vote the question whether she was cured of PLS “in accordance with the 2020 consensus, validated in 2024, in an unexpected, complete, lasting and unexplained manner according to medical knowledge”; the majority voted yes. On 15 November 2024 the Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes informed the Bishop of Tursi-Lagonegro, her home diocese, and on 16 April 2025 Bishop Vincenzo Carmine Orofino proclaimed the miracle.⁵³

5.5 What “medically inexplicable” does and does not claim

The medical epistemology of Lourdes must be stated with complete candor, because both credulity and debunking routinely misstate it.

What the process claims, at its strongest, is this: that a specific, documented, organic illness of grave prognosis ended suddenly, completely, and permanently, without attributable treatment, and that a standing committee of physicians, after years of file study, could not explain that course by current medical knowledge. Every term is bounded. “Current medical knowledge” names a moving frontier, and the process itself has tightened as the frontier moved—diseases without objective markers were progressively excluded, the pace of recognitions fell from the great 1908 series to roughly one per decade in recent times, and at least one case now on the list waited a century for its ecclesial completion. A verdict of “unexplained” is therefore a dated, revisable, negative finding by a finite discipline. It is not, and no organ of the process claims it is, a demonstration that no natural explanation exists or will ever exist; “science proves a miracle” is not a sentence any stage of the Lourdes process asserts.

Conversely, the deflationary reading—“merely unexplained, therefore nothing”—misses what the bishop's act actually is. The Church does not ask medicine to certify divine action; medicine cannot. The episcopal declaration is a distinct, religious judgment that in this cure, so bounded, God's gracious action may be recognized and thanksgiving is warranted; it is made in the same register as the 1862 judgment itself, and it binds nobody to a philosophy of nature. Between the two registers stands a deliberate institutional asymmetry: more than 7,000 declarations, 72 recognitions. The unrecognized thousands are not thereby judged frauds or illusions; most simply do not meet criteria designed to make certification, not cure, rare. The Sanctuary's own theology of the water points the same way: the water is ordinary; it “will have no virtue without faith,” in Bernadette's words; nothing in the process encourages anyone to

substitute a pilgrimage for treatment, and the modern shrine surrounds the baths with medical accompaniment, not against medicine but within it.⁵⁴

Two boundary cases fix the limits of the corpus. The “miracle of the candle” of 7 April 1858 (§2.3), medically observed at the time by Dr Douzous, belongs to the received narrative of the apparitions; it is not on the list of recognized cures, no episcopal decree specific to it was located by this project, and it is accordingly reported here as narrative, not as a seventy-third recognition.⁵⁵ And the seven cures of 1862 (§4.4) show that the corpus’s evidential texture is not uniform: recognitions span three procedural eras—the mandement’s consulted physicians, the Bureau-era files, and the modern CMIL process—and the list is a single juridical series, not a single clinical dataset. Treating the seventy-two as statistically homogeneous “cases” misreads what the Church has actually done, which is to attach, era by era, a consistent religious judgment to the strongest files its contemporary medicine could not explain.

6 Bernadette After the Apparitions: Nevers, Death, Canonization

6.1 The hospice years, 1860–1866

After 1858 Bernadette’s position in Lourdes became impossible in a way modernity recognizes at once: she was a celebrity, and the crowds came for her. The received exchanges preserve how she carried it—no payment (“I want to remain poor”), no blessing of rosaries (“I don’t wear a stole”), no selling of medals (“I’m not a merchant”), and, faced with pictures of herself at ten sous, “Ten sous, that’s all I’m worth!” To shelter her, the parish priest and the mayor agreed to place her with the Sisters of Nevers at the town hospice, where she was admitted as “a sick poor person” on 15 July 1860; there she finally learned to read and write, cared for the sick, and weighed a vocation she thought closed to a poor girl without dowry or health. She chose the Sisters of Charity of Nevers, in her own reported words, “because they did not try to attract me.”⁵⁶

6.2 The hidden life at Nevers, 1866–1879

In July 1866 she left Lourdes—taking leave of the grotto she would never see again—and entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity and Christian Instruction at Nevers, becoming Sister Marie-Bernard. The *Litterae decretales* of her canonization record the community’s founding discipline about her past: the day after her arrival, at the superior’s order, she recounted all the apparitions once, before the assembled sisters, “candidly and simply”—and thereafter never spoke of them again unless obedience required it. Falling mortally ill in the novitiate, she made her religious profession *in extremis*; recovered, she completed it in regular form on 30 October 1867, and made perpetual vows on 22 September 1878.⁵⁷ Her assignment history was thin by design—assistant infirmarian, sacristy work, and finally the long assignment of being ill; on profession day, the bishop reportedly declared that her work would be “the work of prayer.” She understood her own position with the lucidity that marks all her recorded sayings: “I came here to hide myself”; “My mission in Lourdes is finished”; and, writing to the Pope, “My weapons are prayer and sacrifice.”⁵⁸

She died at Nevers on 16 April 1879, aged thirty-five, having received the sacraments. The *Litterae decretales* record the immediate sequel with documentary soberness: the whole town converged on the convent; the body remained supple and of natural color for the four days of the viewing; she was buried in the Saint-Joseph chapel within the convent enclosure, and the grave quickly became a place of concourse and of reported cures.⁵⁹

6.3 Beatification and canonization

The cause proceeded at Rome through the Sacred Congregation of Rites: Pius X signed the introduction of the cause on 13 August 1913; Pius XI declared her heroic virtue on 18 November 1923, approved two beatification miracles by decree of 1 May 1925 (the instantaneous cures of Henri Boisselet, of acute tubercular disease, and of Sr Melania Maria Meyer of the Congregation of Divine Providence, of a stomach ulcer), and beatified her in the Vatican Basilica on 14 June 1925, in the holy year. For the canonization two further cures were selected and judged: the instantaneous cure of Alexis Lemaître, Archbishop of Carthage, of long-standing severe amoebiasis, at Nevers during the solemnities of the Beata’s translation; and the cure of Sister Marie de Saint-Fidèle (Amata Baugé) of the Good Shepherd sisters at Lourdes, of tubercular disease of the spine and knee, during a novena to Blessed Bernadette in February 1928. Pius XI issued the decree on the two miracles on 31 May 1933 and the *tuto* decree on 2 July 1933, held the secret

consistory on 16 October, and canonized her on 8 December 1933—the feast of the Immaculate Conception, in the basilica where the dogma had been defined seventy-nine years before.⁶⁰

Operative text — Canonization formula of Pius XI, 8 December 1933 (Latin, as published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*)

Ad honorem Sanctae et individuae Trinitatis, ad exaltationem Fidei catholicae et christianae Religionis augmentum, auctoritate Domini Nostri Iesu Christi, Beatorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli ac Nostra; matura deliberatione praehabita et divina ope saepius implorata, ac de Venerabilium Fratrum Nostrorum S. R. E. Cardinalium, Patriarcharum, Archiepiscoporum et Episcoporum in Urbe existentium consilio, Beatam MARIAM BERNARDAM SOUBIROUS SANCTAM esse decernimus et definimus, ac Sanctorum catalogo adscribimus; statuentes ab Ecclesia universali eius memoriam quolibet anno, die natali illius, nempe die XVI Aprilis, inter Sanctas Virgines pia devotione recolere debere.⁶¹

6.4 A saint of humility—what the canonization does and does not establish

The Sanctuary’s biography closes with a sentence that this study adopts as exactly right in both halves: “The Church proclaimed her a saint on 8th December, 1933, not for having been chosen for the Apparitions, but for the way in which she responded to that grace.”⁶² A canonization is an act about a person’s holiness and her intercession, resting on heroic virtue and approved miracles; it neither re-issues nor upgrades the 1862 apparition judgment, and it does not make her every recollection inerrant. The Church’s current norms state the general principle expressly: even a *Nihil obstat* granted in a canonization process “does not imply a declaration of authenticity regarding any supernatural phenomena present in a person’s life.”⁶³ That said, the 1933 acts do not bracket Lourdes: the homily glories in it, and the canonization was staged on the dogma’s feast in the dogma’s basilica (§3.3). The Church of 1933 was not distancing itself from the apparitions; it was locating their visionary’s greatness where the Gospel locates greatness. Pius XI’s homily makes the point in its choice of texts: God chose “what is foolish in the world to shame the wise”—an unlettered miller’s daughter, “rich in nothing but the candor of her most sweet soul”—and the enduring Lourdes of the sanctuaries and crowds is, in the homily’s words, at once the glory of the Immaculate Virgin and “the singular monument of the proven holiness of Marie-Bernard Soubirous.”⁶⁴

Her liturgical memory was fixed by the canonization formula on 16 April; in France she is widely kept on 18 February. This study records the universal date from the formula itself and the French usage as common knowledge of the calendars, not re-verified in a typical edition (Appendix A).⁶⁵

7 Liturgical and Papal Reception

Reception is its own category of evidence: feasts, encyclicals, pilgrimages, and papal visits establish that the Church has taken Lourdes into her public life, each act within its own object; none of them re-judges the event or enlarges the 1862 act. This section documents the principal chain.

7.1 The feast of 11 February

The liturgical reception ran in the classical two steps: proper grant, then universal extension. A proper Office and Mass of the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate were approved by the Sacred Congregation of Rites under Leo XIII on 11 July 1890, for the churches and religious families that petitioned for them. On 13 November 1907, Pius X extended the feast to the whole Latin Church, by the Congregation’s *Urbis et Orbis* decree, as a double major on 11 February, beginning with 1908, the fiftieth anniversary; the decree grounds the extension in the worldwide spread of the name of “Notre-Dame de Lourdes,” the petitions of cardinals and bishops “led by the Bishop of Tarbes,” the popes’ earlier privileges for the sanctuary, and the unceasing pilgrimages.⁶⁶

Operative text — Sacred Congregation of Rites, Urbis et Orbis decree, 13 November 1907, operative sentence (Latin, from the Acta Sanctae Sedis; one clause elided where the scan’s OCR is unreliable)

Quare Sanctitas Sua... festum Apparitionis B. M. V. Immaculatae, quod a plurimis dioecesibus et regularibus familiis iamdiu celebratur, inde ab anno insequenti, qui a Deiparae Virginis ad Gavi fluminis oram apparitionibus quinquagesimus erit [...], in universali Ecclesia sub ritu duplici maiori, cum Officio et Missa iamdiu approbata, undecima die Februarii quotannis recolendum iussit: servatis Rubricis et Decretis. — Die 13 Novembris 1907. S. Card. Cretoni, Praefectus.⁶⁷

In the reformed calendar the day continues as the memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes—the rank in the current universal calendar (an optional memorial in the post-1969 books) is reported here at ceiling, the typical edition not having been consulted; that 11 February remains the liturgical commemoration of Our Lady of Lourdes is attested by the papal acts that build on it, above all the institution of the World Day of the Sick.⁶⁸

7.2 The World Day of the Sick (1992)

On 13 May 1992, John Paul II wrote to Cardinal Fiorenzo Angelini, president of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers: “I have decided to institute the World Day of the Sick, to be celebrated on 11 February of each year, the liturgical memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes.” The letter makes the Lourdes logic explicit: Lourdes, “a Marian shrine among the dearest to the Christian people, is place and symbol together of hope and grace in the sign of the acceptance and offering of salvific suffering”; the Day is to be “a special time of prayer and sharing, of offering one’s suffering for the good of the Church and of reminding everyone to see in his sick brother or sister the face of Christ.” The first celebration followed on 11 February 1993.⁶⁹ The institution is the strongest structural fact in the whole reception history: the universal Church’s annual day for the sick is deliberately anchored to the Lourdes memorial, making the shrine’s pastoral specialization—the sick at the center, cure or no cure—part of the general calendar’s meaning.

7.3 From Pius IX to Pius XII

Papal engagement began in the founding generation. Pius IX honored Henri Lasserre’s *Notre-Dame de Lourdes* with a special brief to the author (printed at the head of the 1870 edition), reading the book as an instrument for propagating “piety and confidence” toward the Mother of God; and the 1907 decree’s retrospect speaks of predecessors who “honored the Lourdes sanctuary with many privileges”—the accumulating indulgences, coronations, and favors of the Pius IX and Leo XIII years, which this study reports at the decree’s summary level without reconstructing act by act.⁷⁰ Leo XIII’s assent to the Medical Bureau’s procedures (1886) and the 1890 proper Office are at §5.1 and §7.1; Pius X’s 1904 testimony connecting the dogma’s jubilee with Lourdes and the 1905 confirmation of the Bureau’s standing are at §3.3 and §5.1.

Pius XII gathered the whole tradition into the one encyclical the Church possesses on Lourdes: *Le pèlerinage de Lourdes*, 2 July 1957, issued for the centenary of 1958. It recalls his own 1935 legatine pilgrimage closing the Jubilee of the Redemption; recounts the apparitions and notes that Bernadette’s testimony was “wisely put to the test by episcopal authority and approved as early as 1862”; rehearses the papal chain from Pius X’s jubilee document through Benedict XV and Pius XI (beatification, canonization, the promise “happy not in this world, but in the next”); and then turns the centenary into an examination of conscience about materialism: “a terrible temptation to materialism,” raging “in a love of money,” “in the cult of the body, in excessive desire for comforts,” in “scorn for human life, even for life which is destroyed before seeing the light of day,” and “in selfishness which crushes” one’s brother. Against it the encyclical sets exactly the Lourdes message of 1858: penance, prayer, conversion, and the procession of the sick and lowly in whom the shrine’s meaning is read.⁷¹

7.4 John Paul II and Benedict XVI at the grotto

John Paul II came to Lourdes twice as pope—the fact is attested by his successor on the spot—and his second visit, 14–15 August 2004 for the 150th anniversary of the dogma’s definition, was the last journey of his pontificate outside Italy: a visibly sick pope presiding at the grotto among the sick. His homily of 15 August 2004 grounds the visit in

the dogma’s anniversary and the grotto’s own speech: “From this grotto of Massabielle the Blessed Virgin speaks to us too, the Christians of the third millennium. . . Let us listen to her!”; and it greets “with special affection. . . the sick and all who have come to this holy place to seek consolation and hope.”⁷²

Benedict XVI’s apostolic journey of 12–15 September 2008, for the 150th anniversary of the apparitions, is the fullest papal reading of Lourdes on record, and three moments carry its teaching. At the torchlight procession (13 September) he retold the events with the sesquicentennial frame—“One hundred and fifty years ago. . . a simple young girl from Lourdes, Bernadette Soubirous,” the “very simple messages on prayer, penance and conversion,” the name given on 25 March—and read the candles and the rosary of the grotto as a school of theocentric prayer. At the anniversary Mass (14 September) he preached the message’s evangelical center: Mary chose Bernadette, “the eldest daughter of a very poor family, with neither knowledge nor power, and in poor health,” in full accord with Christ’s “What you have hidden from the wise and understanding, you have revealed to babes.” And at the Mass for the sick (15 September), with the Anointing of the Sick conferred, he preached the theology of the “smile of Mary”: Bernadette contemplated it at the apparition of 3 March, before any name was given; in it “is reflected our dignity as children of God, that dignity which never abandons the sick person”; “the spring that Mary pointed out to Bernadette. . . is the humble sign” of the living water flowing from her believing heart; and to those tempted to despair of life he said, “turn towards Mary! . . . With her, equally, is found the grace to accept without fear or bitterness to leave this world at the hour chosen by God.”⁷³

The reception chain since 2008 has continued in the modes already established—World Day of the Sick celebrations, jubilee years of the shrine, the 2024–2025 cure recognitions (§5.4)—and, as this study is finalized, a further papal pilgrimage stands announced but not yet made: the Sanctuary states that Pope Leo XIV will come to Lourdes on Sunday 27 September 2026, within an apostolic journey to France, to pray at the grotto, preside at an open-air Mass on the prairie, and join the torchlight procession; the Sanctuary counts it the fourth papal visit, after John Paul II (1983, 2004) and Benedict XVI (2008). This is recorded as an announced future event, nothing more.⁷⁴ Each act in this chain proves reception within its object: liturgy, teaching, pilgrimage, pastoral structure. None is a second event-judgment, and none needs to be.

8 What the Approval Obliges—and What It Does Not

8.1 Public Revelation and private revelation

The doctrinal frame is fixed and prior to every fact in this study. Public Revelation is complete in Christ: “no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Private revelations, even recognized ones, “do not belong. . . to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ’s definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history.”⁷⁵ Lourdes falls entirely on the private-revelation side of that line. The 1862 judgment declares the faithful *justified* in believing the apparition certain; it does not, and could not, make that belief an article of divine and Catholic faith. The assent invited is what the tradition calls *fides humana*: a prudent human assent, resting on the quality of the evidence and the Church’s discernment, revisable in principle as human judgments are, and never the theological faith owed to God revealing.

The Holy See’s standing formula for what approval means was quoted at §1: the message contains nothing contrary to faith or morals; it is lawful to publish it; the faithful are authorized to accept it with prudence. Three verbs—contains, is lawful, are authorized—and none of them is “must.” A Catholic who, without contempt for the Church’s judgment, remains personally unpersuaded by the Lourdes evidence sins against nothing; a Catholic who finds in Lourdes a support of faith stands authorized and, since 1862, on the express judgment of the competent bishop that the ground is solid. What is not open to either is to treat the apparition as a second deposit of faith, or its approval as a dogma.⁷⁶

8.2 The exact objects of the standing acts

Because reliance risk lives in the details, the objects of the several acts are restated here at their exact scope.

The *1862 judgment* covers the eighteen apparitions of 1858 to Bernadette Soubirous and authorizes diocesan cult (§4.3). It does not certify any particular narrative of the events beyond its own summary, any relic, image, book, or later devotion (its own art. 2 keeps those under separate approval), any physical theory of the spring, or any cure beyond the seven it recognized.

The *cure recognitions* (§5) each cover one named person's cure and nothing else. They do not make the water curative, predict anyone else's healing, or convert the Bureau's negative medical finding into a scientific doctrine. No one is obliged to believe any particular recognized cure miraculous; the recognitions authorize thanksgiving, they do not legislate it.

The *liturgical acts* (§7.1–7.2) establish a memorial and a world day of prayer; they commit the Church to the celebration, not to a chronicle. The *canonization* (§6) infallibly proposes Bernadette as a saint to be venerated; it leaves the apparitions where the 1862 act put them, as the current norms' own principle confirms (§6.4). And *papal words* at and about Lourdes—encyclical, homilies, messages—teach with the authority proper to each genre; none of them is an event-decree.

8.3 Devotional practice within the boundary

Everything the approved devotion asks can be stated without strain inside ordinary Catholic doctrine, and the guardians of Lourdes have repeatedly said so themselves. The water is ordinary; its use is a gesture of faith and penance, not a medicine, sacrament, talisman, or technique, and “will have no virtue without faith” (§2.6). The baths, the processions, the candles are pious exercises framing the shrine's actual center, which its own practice makes unmistakable: the Eucharist and the sacraments. The Eucharistic procession and blessing of the sick stand at the heart of the Lourdes day; the cures themselves cluster around the sacraments as much as the baths—Traynor after the Eucharistic procession, Moriau in Eucharistic adoration after receiving the Anointing of the Sick (§5.4). Pius XII's rule of interpretation governs: “Everything about Mary directs us to her Son, our only Savior”; Mary's role at Lourdes, as everywhere, is created, maternal, subordinate, and wholly derived from Christ's unique mediation—which is exactly how Benedict XVI preached the “smile of Mary” to the sick, as “a true reflection of God's tenderness,” not an independent source of grace.⁷⁷

Two pastoral boundaries deserve their own sentences, because Lourdes' whole modern credibility hangs on them. First: nothing in the approved devotion may displace medicine. The shrine's own apparatus is saturated with physicians; declaring a cure begins with medical documentation; and no organ of Lourdes counsels anyone to abandon treatment, diagnosis, or public-health instructions in favor of the baths. Second: the dignity of the sick person does not depend on being cured. The overwhelming majority of Lourdes pilgrims who are sick go home sick; the shrine's theology—from the 1858 promise “not in this world” through the World Day of the Sick to Benedict XVI's “that dignity which never abandons the sick person”—locates the grace of Lourdes in conversion, endurance, communion, and hope, with bodily cure as a rare and unowed sign. Any use of Lourdes to tell an uncured person that their faith failed inverts the approved message.⁷⁸

That dignity must also govern conduct. The Catechism locates human dignity in the person as endowed with reason, freedom, conscience, and responsibility (CCC 1700–1706), not in whether a cure occurs or whether a testimony helps an institution. A pilgrim may refuse touch, immersion, photography, public testimony, or disclosure of medical information. Consent must be free and specific; fear, coercion, immaturity, and other pressures can diminish voluntariness and responsibility (CCC 1734–1735). Devotion, hospitality, documentation, and safeguarding therefore serve the person; none licenses pressure or makes access to care, prayer, or belonging conditional on participation.

8.4 Disagreement preserved

A judgment-first study must also say plainly where the record invites, and the Church tolerates, disagreement. The 1862 act itself argues from evidence—testimony, fruits, cures—and evidence-based judgments can be weighed differently by serious minds; the Church has never anathematized the historian who weighs them otherwise. The nineteenth-century controversies (rationalist re-readings of Bernadette's psychology, Zola's literary appropriation, later source-critical disputes about the harmonized narratives) are part of Lourdes' reception history; this study has not adjudicated them, and its own corpus boundaries (Appendix A) mark exactly where its warrant stops. What the Church's acts secure is narrower and firmer than victory in those debates: that a Catholic may, with the Church, prudently believe; that the devotion is doctrinally safe; and that the sick are to be honored. Nothing in this study should be read as claiming more.⁷⁹

9 Current Standing Under the 2024 Norms

9.1 The current procedural law

Since Pentecost 2024 the discernment of alleged supernatural phenomena is governed by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith's *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena*, given 17 May 2024, approved by Pope Francis on 4 May 2024, effective 19 May 2024, replacing the norms of 25 February 1978. Under them the diocesan bishop examines cases in his territory and formulates a judgment “to be submitted to the Dicastery for approval” (art. 1); the possible conclusions are six exactly—*Nihil obstat*, *Prae oculis habeatur*, *Curatur*, *Sub mandato*, *Prohibetur et obstruatur*, *Declaratio de non supernaturalitate* (nn. 17–22); and, as n. 23 states the governing rule, “as a rule, neither the Diocesan Bishop, nor the Episcopal Conferences, nor the Dicastery will declare that these phenomena are of supernatural origin, even if a *Nihil obstat* is granted. . . It remains true, however, that the Holy Father can authorize a special procedure in this regard.”⁸⁰

The 2024 norms therefore mark a deliberate contrast with the very genre of the 1862 act: the ordinary modern conclusion is a pastoral *Nihil obstat* without a supernaturality declaration, where Bishop Laurence, under the discipline of his own time, judged and declared the apparition real and divine. The norms do not erase that contrast retroactively.

9.2 The 1862 judgment as a legacy act

The 1862 mandement is a completed positive judgment of the competent authority of its era, and it stands in its own historical formula. Nothing in the 2024 norms relabels it: it is not a *Nihil obstat*, and this study does not translate it into one; it is what its own words say—*nous jugeons que l’Immaculée Marie. . . a réellement apparu*, with the faithful *fondés à la croire certaine*—made under the pre-1978 regime in which the diocesan bishop’s judgment was the ordinary conclusive act, and expressly submitted by its author to the Roman Pontiff. The apparition it approved has since been woven into the universal Church’s liturgy, teaching, and practice by the distinct acts of §§6–7, each with its own object. No later act of the Holy See or of the diocese superseding, restricting, or reversing the 1862 judgment was located by this project; the modern Holy See documents that touch Lourdes—from Pius X’s 1907 feast extension to the 2024 norms’ own presentation, which cites the Lourdes-anchored explanation of approval—uniformly build on the judgment rather than reopen it.⁸¹

9.3 Controlling-status dossier

Lourdes 1858 — controlling status as of 2026-07-25

Event identity: Eighteen reported apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Bernadette Soubirous, grotto of Massabielle, Lourdes, 11 February–16 July 1858.

Jurisdiction: Diocese of Tarbes in 1858–1862; today the Diocese of Tarbes and Lourdes (Bishop Jean-Marc Micas, appointed 2022), Latin Church, France.

Controlling act: Mandement of Bishop Bertrand-Sévère Laurence, 18 January 1862: judgment that the Immaculate Mary, Mother of God, really appeared eighteen times; the faithful justified in believing it certain; diocesan cult authorized; judgment submitted to the Roman Pontiff. Witness: Lasserre 1870 reproduction collated with Sanctuary transcriptions; originals not consulted.

Procedural regime: Pre-1978 diocesan discernment, following Benedict XIV’s rules; episcopal commission of 28 July 1858; consulted physicians and scientists.

Later acts (own objects): Seven cure recognitions in the 1862 act and sixty-five further episcopal cure recognitions through 16 April 2025 (total 72); proper Office and Mass 1890; universal feast 13 November 1907 (11 February); Bureau des Constatations 1883 with Roman assent 1886/1905; CMIL 1947/1954; beatification 14 June 1925; canonization 8 December 1933; World Day of the Sick instituted 13 May 1992; papal visits 1983, 2004, 2008 (announced: 27 September 2026).

Current status: Positive legacy diocesan judgment of 1862 in force in its historical formula; no superseding, restricting, or reversing act located; no DDF act under the 2024 norms concerns Lourdes (DDF documents index checked 2026-07-25); the 2024 norms govern any new discernment, not this completed one.

Not established by any act: Obligation of divine faith; verbal inerrancy of any reported sentence; scientific demonstration of supernatural causation in any cure; curative property of the water; authentication of every Lourdes narrative, image, or publication; any doctrine beyond the deposit of faith.

Register: “Reported” remains the default register for all words and phenomena attributed to the apparition; the 1862 act’s own qualifications and this study’s ceilings are in §4 and Appendix A.

The standing of Lourdes, stated in one sentence for the reader who needs only one: a competent, completed, positively judged, and continuously received private revelation, whose approval authorizes prudent belief and warm devotion, obliges neither, and leaves the whole weight of faith where it always was—on the public Revelation of God in Jesus Christ, which Lourdes at its best does nothing but serve.

10 Notes

1. Bertrand-Sévère Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, *Mandement de Mgr l’Évêque de Tarbes, portant jugement sur l’Apparition qui a eu lieu à la Grotte de Lourdes*, 18 January 1862, arts. 1–2, quoted from the reproduction printed in Henri Lasserre, *Notre-Dame de Lourdes* (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1870), pp. 397–409 (operative articles at pp. 408–409), read 2026-07-25 in the Internet Archive scan of the 1870 imprint (References), with the quoted pages collated against the page images. Article 1 was further collated against the Sanctuary of Lourdes’ own French transcription (<https://www.lourdes-france.com/1862-2022-160-ans-de-la-reconnaissance-des-apparitions-de-lourdes/>) and its English presentation (<https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/the-decree/>); the readings agree. Lasserre prints the mandement “dans ses principales dispositions,” abridging the bishop’s narrative summary and the appeal articles (arts. 3–4); the diocesan original and its 1862 imprint were not consulted (Appendix A). All web loci cited in these notes were read on 2026-07-25 unless another date is stated. English renderings of French, Latin, Italian, and Occitan sources in this study are editorial working translations, visibly commentary, not received translation witnesses, except where a Holy See or Sanctuary English text is expressly quoted.
2. Mandement, arts. 3–4, as printed in Lasserre 1870, pp. 408–409; art. 4 is abridged in that printing with an ellipsis. The purchase of the Grotto and the Massabielle rocks from the town of Lourdes is recorded by Lasserre immediately after the mandement text (p. 409).
3. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *The Message of Fatima* (26 June 2000), theological commentary, summarizing E. Dhanis; cited in the presentation of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena* (17 May 2024), English text at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dcf_doc_20240517_norme-fenomeni-soprannaturali_en.html.
4. The stratification is editorial. The Sanctuary’s chronology used throughout this section is “The apparitions,” <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/the-apparitions/> (English) and <https://www.lourdes-france.com/les-apparitions/> (French), both read 2026-07-25. Lasserre’s volume is cited from the 1870 Palmé imprint (References). Estrade’s *Les apparitions de Lourdes: souvenirs intimes d’un témoin* was not consulted at first hand (only later translations were located, under copyright); it is named here as a received witness class, and no claim below rests on it.
5. The edition is identified from its standard bibliographical description; no claim in this study is sourced to its contents. This is a recorded ceiling, not a verification.
6. Sanctuary of Lourdes, “Bernadette Soubirous,” <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/bernadette-soubirous/> (birth at the Boly mill 7 January 1844; the cachot; her stature, asthma, illiteracy; Bartrès September 1857; return 21 January 1858; First Communion 3 June 1858). The birth and baptism dates and the parents’ names are also given in the canonization *Litterae decretales* of Pius XI, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 26 (1934), pp. 73–74, which add that she was entrusted for some fifteen months to a wet-nurse, Marie Lagües, at Bartrès (§6).
7. Sanctuary biography page, quoting the 1862 mandement; the underlying French is at Lasserre 1870, p. 401 (“des réponses nettes, précises, pleines d’à-propos, empreintes d’une forte conviction”).
8. Lasserre 1870, p. 401 (“durant la Quinzaine. . . elle n’a rien vu pendant deux jours, quoiqu’elle se trouvât dans le même milieu et dans des circonstances identiques”); Sanctuary chronology for 3 March. The mandement turns the gaps into an argument against hallucination (§4.2).
9. “The apparitions,” <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/the-apparitions/>. The French page of the same chronology was read in parallel; its material differences from the English page concern the 25 March wording and are treated in §3.2. The 16 July barrier reflects the municipal closure of the grotto site in mid-1858; this study did not verify the administrative acts of closure and reopening at source and asserts only the barrier as the Sanctuary reports it.

10. The characterization is editorial synthesis over the Sanctuary chronology quoted above; Benedict XVI's summary is congruent: the Lady "instructed her to deliver certain very simple messages on prayer, penance and conversion" (homily at the torchlight procession, Lourdes, 13 September 2008, References).
11. Homily of 13 September 2008: "it is notable that Bernadette prays the rosary under the gaze of Mary, who unites herself to her at the moment of the doxology."
12. Pius XII, *Le pèlerinage de Lourdes* (2 July 1957), n. 26, English text at vatican.va (References): Pius XI "so to say, authenticate[d] on his part the promise made by the Immaculate to young Bernadette that she would 'be happy not in this world, but in the next.'"
13. Sanctuary chronology (21 and 28 February entries); Sanctuary biography page (the Jacomet exchanges, quoted as the Sanctuary's received account); Lasserre 1870, pp. 59–76 (the officials and their dispositions; the interrogation narrative). The officials are identified as Lasserre's narrative identifies them ("M. Jacomet"; "M. Dutour, Procureur impérial"; "le baron Massy"); their forenames circulate in the later literature and are not asserted here, having not been re-verified at source.
14. Lasserre 1870, footnote printed across pp. 73–74: "il nous a été impossible d'en avoir communication. . . le dossier relatif à cette affaire avait disparu. . ." (prefecture); "M. le Procureur-général nous a opposé un principe absolu et a refusé de nous communiquer ces pièces"; the Ministry of Cults "a agi comme le parquet, avec la politesse en moins."
15. Lasserre 1870, pp. 400–401 (mandement text): "Soumise à de rudes épreuves, elle n'a jamais été ébranlée par les menaces; aux offres les plus généreuses, elle a répondu par un noble désintéressement."
16. Sanctuary of Lourdes, "The Water of Lourdes," <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/the-water-of-lourdes/>, read 2026-07-25. The chemists' analysis already cited by the 1862 mandement pointed the same way: the cures were worked "par l'emploi d'une eau privée de toute qualité naturelle curative, au rapport d'habiles chimistes qui en ont fait une rigoureuse analyse" (Lasserre 1870, p. 404).
17. Sanctuary chronology (1 March); Sanctuary list "Miraculous healings," <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/miraculous-healings/> (Catherine Latapie through Marie Moreau, each "Date of recognition: 18th January 1862").
18. Sanctuary chronology, 2 March, 3 March, 4 March, and 25 March entries (English page, References). The explicit negative—"the wild rose bush, on which she stood during the Apparitions, did not bloom"—is the Sanctuary's own, and this study repeats it deliberately against the embroidered image of a flowering bush: the received sign was the name, not a botanical prodigy.
19. Sanctuary chronology, French page (<https://www.lourdes-france.com/les-apparitions/>), 25 March entry, read 2026-07-25: "She raised her eyes to heaven, joining in a sign of prayer her hands, which had been stretched out and open towards the earth, and said to me: *Que soy era immaculada councepciou*" (editorial translation). The Sanctuary introduces the account with "Bernadette raconte."
20. Lasserre 1870, p. 399 ("la jeune fille aurait vu et entendu un être se disant l'Immaculée-Conception") and pp. 404–405 ("la sainte Vierge, apparaissant à une enfant, lui dit: *Je suis l'Immaculée Conception. . . Je veux qu'on élève ici une chapelle en mon honneur*"). The chapel clause in the mandement's French joins the 2 March request to the 25 March name; the Sanctuary's chronology keeps the two dates distinct, and this study follows the chronology while reporting the mandement's conflation as the bishop's own summary style, not an error requiring harmonization.
21. Sanctuary chronology, English page, 25 March entry. The variation (*councepciou/concepciou*; capitalization) is between two live pages of the same custodian, read the same day, and is preserved here as found. No critical edition of Bernadette's autograph écrits was accessible to this project (Appendix A), so no autograph spelling is asserted; the form in the section heading follows the Sanctuary's French page.
22. Pius XI, homily at the canonization, 8 December 1933, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 26 (1934), p. 8; Pius XII, *Le pèlerinage de Lourdes*, n. 16; Benedict XVI, homily of 13 September 2008 ("during the apparition of 25 March 1858—she reveals her name in this way: 'I am the Immaculate Conception'").
23. Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, 8 December 1854, definition sentence; English from the widely circulated translation at Papal Encyclicals Online (References; translator unnamed, rights unresolved, quoted within scholarly limits). The Latin original is public domain; the definition sentence is Denzinger–Schönmetzer 2803.
24. *Le pèlerinage de Lourdes*, n. 16. The same paragraph records how the faithful in fact received the reported sentence—"with what emotion and gratitude did the Christian people and their pastors receive from the lips of Bernadette this answer which came from heaven"—holding both truths together: no dependence, real consolation.
25. Lasserre 1870, pp. 404–405. The bishop's "environ trois ans" counts from December 1854 to February–March 1858.

26. Pius X as quoted in *Le pèlerinage de Lourdes*, n. 21 (the encyclical’s note refers the quotation to *Ad diem illum*, 2 February 1904, not independently consulted); *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 26 (1934), pp. 5–6 (the consistorial advocate’s address before the canonization formula recalls that Pius IX defined the dogma “in hac fulgenti Petrianae Basilicae maiestate”).
27. Editorial synthesis; the components are severally documented above. For the doctrinal frame, see CCC 66–67: private revelations “do not belong. . . to the deposit of faith”; their role “is not to improve or complete Christ’s definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., n. 67).
28. Editorial synthesis, in the reported register throughout. The Sanctuary’s chronology carries the reception datum: “These words troubled the brave Parish Priest.”
29. Sanctuary of Lourdes, “The Decree,” <https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/the-decree/>, and “Recognition of the apparitions,” <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/recognition-of-the-apparitions/>; French mandate clause from “1862–2022: 160 ans de la reconnaissance des Apparitions,” <https://www.lourdes-france.com/1862-2022-160-ans-de-la-reconnaissance-des-apparitions-de-lourdes/>, all read 2026-07-25. The 160th-anniversary notice also records that the Sanctuary prepared a special re-edition of the mandement in 2022; that re-edition was not consulted.
30. “Recognition of the apparitions” page, quoting the ordinance in its own English; the page is the Sanctuary’s institutional presentation of its founding documents, and the quotations are used at that ceiling (Appendix A). The commission’s composition—“pious, learned, and experienced priests”—is the mandement’s own description (Lasserre 1870, p. 400).
31. Lasserre 1870, p. 399 (“en présence de la Commission, réunie pour l’entendre une seconde fois”); p. 400 (“L’événement dont nous vous entretenons est, depuis quatre années, l’objet de notre sollicitude”).
32. Lasserre 1870, pp. 399–400: “l’Église apporte une sage lenteur dans l’appréciation des faits surnaturels: elle demande des preuves certaines, avant de les admettre et de les proclamer divins,” with 2 Cor 11:14 and 1 Jn 4:1 in the mandement’s own notes.
33. Lasserre 1870, p. 400 (editorial translation; French quoted in the note at §2.2 and in the source audit). The Sanctuary’s English “Recognition” page renders the same passage; the two renderings were compared and agree in substance.
34. Lasserre 1870, pp. 400–402. The italicized failure-to-see is the mandement’s own evidential use of the empty days, an argument from the phenomenon’s independence of the visionary’s expectation.
35. Lasserre 1870, pp. 402–404. The sequence—serious illness, no natural curative agent, instantaneous or near-instantaneous cure, permanence, negative scientific verdict—is materially the profile the Lambertini criteria formalize and the modern process still uses (§5.3).
36. Lasserre 1870, pp. 406–407, including the mandement’s own note citing Benedict XIV, *De servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione*, book III (the printed note reads “Liv. III, ch. ii”; the exact chapter reference was not verified against an edition of Benedict XIV and is reported as printed).
37. Lasserre 1870, p. 409. The choice of the feast of the Chair of Peter harmonizes with the submission clause that precedes it; the mandement was ordered read in all churches, chapels, and oratories of the diocese on the Sunday after reception.
38. Sanctuary of Lourdes, “The Medical Bureau of the Sanctuary,” <https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/medical-bureau-sanctuary/>, read 2026-07-25. Vergez is identified here only as the page identifies him (“Prof Henri Vergez”); his appointment and faculty were not separately verified.
39. Sanctuary of Lourdes, “Miraculous healings,” <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/miraculous-healings/>, entries 1–7. The list gives recognition dates; the cure events themselves belong to 1858 in the received narrative (Latapie and Bouriette at §2.6), and individual cure dates are not asserted here beyond it.
40. Sanctuary of Lourdes, “The Medical Bureau of the Sanctuary,” <https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/medical-bureau-sanctuary/>, read 2026-07-25; the same history in compressed form on “The miracles of Lourdes,” <https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/the-miracles-of-lourdes/>. Both are institutional self-description and are used at that ceiling; the Bureau narrating its own origins.
41. Medical Bureau history page. The page cites its own documentation (a 2014 biography of Dunot de Saint-Maclou for the 1886 letter; the exact 1905 Roman act is not identified on the page and was not located by this project—a recorded gap, not a doubt about the page’s good faith).
42. Presidents: Medical Bureau history page. Appointment: Sanctuary of Lourdes, “Nomination du docteur Giada Monami à Lourdes,” 17 February 2026, <https://www.lourdes-france.com/nomination-du-docteur-giada-monami-a-lourdes/>, read 2026-07-25 (succeeding de Franciscis after “17 années au service du discernement médical”). Currentness note: the Sanctuary’s general “Miracles” page still described the Bureau as “today under the responsibility of Doctor Alessandro de Franciscis” when read the same day; the dated announcement is treated as controlling (Appendix A).
43. Medical Bureau history page, including its quotation of the 1925 *Journal de la Grotte* announcement. The nonconfessional openness of the Bureau’s sessions—any physician present in Lourdes may attend the examination meetings, “regardless of

religious belief”—is the same page’s standing claim and has been part of the institution’s apologetic since Boissarie’s era; this study repeats it as the institution’s own self-description.

44. Medical Bureau history page, quoting its own citation of J. Perrier, *Expliquez-moi les miracles* (2011). Currentness ceiling: the page as read 2026-07-25 names “Mgr Nicolas Brouwet” as the episcopal co-president; the see of Tarbes and Lourdes passed to Bishop Jean-Marc Micas, appointed 30 March 2022 (Vatican News, “France: le Pape nomme un évêque à Tarbes et Lourdes,” <https://www.vaticannews.va/fr/eglise/news/2022-03/pape-francois-nominations-france-eveques-tarbes-lourdes-micas.html>). The page’s institutional facts are used; its stale personal name is recorded and not repeated as current. Whether Prof Jonquet remains co-president was not separately verified.
45. Sanctuary of Lourdes, “Recognition of a miracle,” <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/recognition-of-a-miracle/>, read 2026-07-25; quoted phrases from the page’s own English.
46. “The miracles of Lourdes” page (References), whose enumeration is quoted and compressed here; the Lambertini attribution and the Causes-of-Saints parallel are the page’s own notes 3–4. The underlying rules are in Benedict XIV, *De servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione*, book IV in the standard accounts; this study did not consult an edition of Benedict XIV and asserts the criteria only as the Sanctuary’s operative grid.
47. “The Miracles,” <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/the-miracles/> (“Since 1858 in Lourdes, seventy-two cures have been recognised as miraculous; the most recent, that of Antonia Raco, dates from 2025. The Bureau of Medical Observations... has recorded more than 7000 dossiers of cures”), read 2026-07-25.
48. “The miracles of Lourdes” page, whose country tally (France 56, Italy 8, Belgium 3, Germany, Austria, Switzerland 1 each) sums to the seventy recognitions it describes; Traynor (England, 2024) and Raco (Italy, 2025) postdate it. The staleness is recorded; the page’s aggregate statistics are used only for the seventy-cure corpus they describe.
49. “Miraculous healings” list (References). The temporal clustering is read off the list itself; no causal claim about the jubilee beyond the dates is asserted. The list is the witness used here; individual case files are not, and nothing about any individual case is asserted beyond the list’s own fields.
50. “Miraculous healings,” <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/miraculous-healings/>, read 2026-07-25; the three anchor articles are cited below. The list gives person, origin, and recognition date; cure dates are not given on the list page and are supplied below only for the three most recent cases, from the Sanctuary’s dedicated articles. The earlier decades (recognitions of 1862 and 1907–1913, including the seven of the mandement and the great 1908 series after the fiftieth anniversary) are in the same list and are described in §4.4 and the source audit rather than tabled here.
51. AMIL, “70. Sr Bernadette Moriau,” <https://www.amilourdes.com/en/post/70-sr-bernadette-moriau-1>, read 2026-07-25 (AMIL is the international medical association headquartered at the Bureau, §5.1; institutional ceiling as for the Sanctuary’s own pages). Note the geography: the cure occurred at her community chapel after the pilgrimage, and was nonetheless processed and recognized—the intercession, not the location, is the object of the recognition.
52. Sanctuary of Lourdes, “John Traynor, 71st miracle at Lourdes,” <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/john-traynor-71st-miracle-at-lourdes/>, read 2026-07-25, including its chronology of the procedure and its quotation of the 1926 procès-verbal (“he was designated for the hospice des incurables...”). Some press coverage dates the cure 1926; the Sanctuary’s chronology—cure 25 July 1923, declaration and Bureau recognition 1926—controls here. He returned yearly as a stretcher-bearer until 1939 and died 8 December 1943 “of a completely different ailment.”
53. Sanctuary of Lourdes, “Antonia Raco, 72nd Lourdes miracle,” <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/antonietta-raco-72nd-lourdes-miracle/>, read 2026-07-25 (the article’s own chronology; its URL slug and one sentence use “Antonietta” while its heading and prose use “Antonia”—the heading form is used here). The reference to a diagnostic “consensus” is the article’s; it reflects the criterion that the illness be “known and recorded by medicine” (§5.3) applied to a rare diagnosis.
54. Synthesis over the sources of §§5.1–5.4 and §2.6; the register distinctions are editorial but track the Sanctuary’s own three-stage vocabulary (declared/unexpected/confirmed/recognized) and its criteria notes. For the dignity of the uncured—the pastoral center of the whole apparatus—see Benedict XVI at §7.4 and the World Day of the Sick at §7.2.
55. Negative finding, bounded to the Sanctuary’s published list and pages read 2026-07-25 and to this project’s searches; a competent act unknown to this project would supersede it.
56. Sanctuary of Lourdes, “Bernadette Soubirous” (<https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/bernadette-soubirous/>), read 2026-07-25; all quoted phrases are the Sanctuary’s received account. The canonization *Litterae decretales* add the canonical sequence: her request to enter was handled from 1864 with the counsel and authority of the Bishop of Nevers, and poor health held her at the Lourdes hospice two further years (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 26 (1934), p. 76).
57. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 26 (1934), pp. 76–77 (“ac deinceps de iisdem apparitionibus, nisi obedientia adacta, haud amplius loquuta est”). The Sanctuary’s biography describes the same rule from the community’s side: she gave her account “before the assembled community on the day after she arrived; thereafter it was not to be spoken of.”

58. Sanctuary biography page (received sayings, quoted as the Sanctuary transmits them). Her sicknesses included the asthma that the *Litterae decretales* say she bore “with an even mind to the last days of her mortal life” (AAS 26 (1934), p. 76).
59. AAS 26 (1934), p. 77. This study repeats the 1933 acts’ own description and asserts nothing further about the preservation of the body or its later exhumations, which it did not verify at source.
60. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 26 (1934), pp. 78–80 (the *Litterae decretales*’ procedural narrative) and pp. 5–7 (the canonization rite of 8 December 1933). The cause chronology (1913 introduction under Pius X; 1923 heroic-virtue decree; 1 May 1925 miracles decree with the Boisselet and Meyer cures) is at pp. 77–78; the OCR of the volume is imperfect at the Boisselet diagnosis, which is reported summarily here.
61. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 26 (1934), p. 6 (the volume’s OCR reads “ad exarationem Fidei catholicae”; the standard formula reads *exaltationem*, and the reading above follows the formula with the OCR variant recorded here). In editorial rendering: “... we decree and define that Blessed Marie-Bernard Soubirous is a Saint, and we inscribe her in the catalogue of the Saints, establishing that her memory is to be devoutly kept by the universal Church every year on her heavenly birthday, 16 April, among the Holy Virgins.”
62. Sanctuary biography page. The canonization homily’s exhortation identifies what is proposed for imitation: “let us imitate her Christian lowliness of soul and her humility; her faith; the ardent charity with which she burned” and “her zeal for penance” (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 26 (1934), pp. 8–9, editorial translation of “Eius nempe christianam animi demissionem humilitatemque imitemur; eius fidem, impensam eius, qua aestuabat, caritatem... eius tamen paenitentiae studium... persequi contendamus”).
63. DDF, *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena* (17 May 2024), n. 13, English text (References), citing the canonization decree of St Gemma Galgani as its example. The principle is stated by the norms as a general one; its application to Bernadette’s 1933 canonization is this study’s, and is consistent with the 1933 acts, which canonize her virtue while narrating the apparitions as the received history of her life.
64. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 26 (1934), pp. 7–8 (1 Cor 1:27 quoted; “indoctam pistorum filiam, nulla re alia, nisi suavissimi animi sui candore, praedivite”; “Lapurdum, en suspicite... Mariae Bernardae Soubirous singulare comprobatae sanctitatis monumentum”).
65. Universal date: the formula quoted above. The French date is a particular-calendar usage reported at ceiling; no particular-law act was consulted.
66. Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Urbis et Orbis* decree *quo festum Apparitionis B. M. V. Immaculatae extenditur ad universam Ecclesiam*, 13 November 1907, *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 40 (1907), pp. 747–748, read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See’s OCR scan of the volume (References); the 1890 approval date is given in the appended notice on the addition to the sixth lesson of the proper Office (ASS 40, pp. 748–749, approved 27 November 1907), which credits the extension to Pius X “pro sua erga Deiparam pietate.” The feast title in the decree is *festum Apparitionis B. M. V. Immaculatae*, “vulgo de Lourdes.”
67. ASS 40 (1907), p. 748. Editorial rendering: “Wherefore His Holiness... ordered that the feast of the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate, long since celebrated by very many dioceses and religious families, be kept every year in the universal Church, from the following year—the fiftieth from the apparitions of the Mother of God by the bank of the river Gave—as a double major, on the eleventh day of February, with the Office and Mass long since approved, the rubrics and decrees being observed.” The elided clause is a parallel year designation whose numerals the OCR garbles; it is omitted rather than reconstructed.
68. Rank ceiling recorded in Appendix A. The 1992 letter of institution (next note) calls the day the “memoria liturgica della Beata Maria Vergine di Lourdes.”
69. John Paul II, Letter instituting the World Day of the Sick, 13 May 1992, Italian text at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/letters/1992/documents/hf_jp-ii LET_13051992_world-day-sick.html (editorial translation of “ho deciso di istituire la «Giornata Mondiale del Malato», da celebrarsi l’11 febbraio di ogni anno, memoria liturgica della Beata Maria Vergine di Lourdes” and of the Lourdes sentence); first celebration and the quoted purpose clause in the English message for the first Day, 21 October 1992, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/message/s/sick/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_21101992_world-day-of-the-sick-1993.html.
70. Lasserre 1870, front matter (“ouvrage honoré d’un bref spécial adressé à l’auteur par Sa Sainteté le Pape Pie IX”) and the brief’s French text printed there; ASS 40 (1907), p. 748 (“Praedecessorum suorum vestigiis inhaerens, qui Lapurdense Sanctuarium permultis attributis privilegiis cohonestarunt”). Individual privilege acts were not consulted (Appendix A).
71. Pius XII, *Le pèlerinage de Lourdes*, 2 July 1957, English text at https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_02071957_le-pelerinage-de-lourdes.html, nn. 1–2 (the 1935 legation and the centenary committee), 11 (the 1862 approval sentence), 21–28 (the papal chain), 45–47 (the materialism passage), read 2026-07-25.

72. John Paul II, homily at Lourdes, 15 August 2004, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2004/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20040815_lourdes.html, read 2026-07-25; the two-visits fact: Benedict XVI, homily of 13 September 2008 (“My venerable Predecessor, Pope John Paul II, came here to Lourdes on two occasions”). The characterization of the 2004 journey as his last outside Italy is common public record, reported at that ceiling.
73. Benedict XVI, homilies at Lourdes of 13 September 2008 (torchlight procession), 14 September 2008 (150th-anniversary Mass), and 15 September 2008 (Mass for the sick with Anointing), English texts at vatican.va (References), all read 2026-07-25; the Angelus of 14 September adds the Immaculate-Conception frame (“a total and entire freedom before God... thanks to the privilege of her Immaculate Conception”). Bernadette received the Anointing of the Sick four times in her life, the 15 September homily notes.
74. Sanctuary of Lourdes, “Pope Leo XIV to Visit Lourdes on September 27, 2026,” <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/pope-at-lourdes/>, read 2026-07-25 (“The detailed programme for this visit is currently being finalised”). The page quotes the current Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, Jean-Marc Micas—an at-source confirmation of the present ordinary noted at §5.2.
75. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., nn. 66–67 (n. 66 quoting *Dei Verbum* 4), English text read 2026-07-25 at https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___PH.HTM (the Vatican web edition of CCC 65–67).
76. Doctrinal synthesis over CCC 66–67, the 2000 CDF explanation as cited in the 2024 norms’ presentation (§1), and the 1862 operative wording (*sont fondés à la croire certaine*—a warrant, not a precept).
77. *Le pèlerinage de Lourdes*, n. 23; Benedict XVI, homily of 15 September 2008; doctrinally, *Lumen gentium* 60–62 (Mary’s subordinate mediation) and CCC 970 govern, and nothing in the approved Lourdes corpus strains them—a fact worth stating because it is not true of every reported apparition.
78. Editorial synthesis; components at §5.5, §7.2, §7.4. The 1992 institution letter’s purpose clause—offering one’s suffering, seeing in the sick brother “the face of Christ”—is the controlling pastoral text.
79. The named controversies are identified as reception history only; none of their texts was consulted for this study, and no characterization of their arguments is offered or should be inferred.
80. DDF, *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena* (17 May 2024), arts. 1–2, nn. 16–23, and art. 27 (replacement of the 1978 norms), English text (References), read 2026-07-25. A *Nihil obstat* under n. 17 acknowledges “signs of the action of the Holy Spirit” and permits and encourages pastoral appreciation “[w]ithout expressing any certainty about the supernatural authenticity of the phenomenon itself.”
81. Bounded negative search, recorded with its limits: the DDF’s online documents index (<https://www.doctrinafidei.va/en/documenti.html>, English list, checked 2026-07-25) contains no Lourdes entry; web searches in English and French for any DDF act under the 2024 norms concerning Lourdes returned none; the diocesan and Sanctuary sites present the 1862 judgment as standing. The search did not extend to print-only registers, and silence is not a guarantee (Appendix A).

A Scope, Status, and Qualifications

Question and thesis boundary

This study answers one question: what was reported at Lourdes in 1858 on the nearest genuinely accessible record; what exactly the competent ecclesiastical authority judged on 18 January 1862, in which words and with what object; how the reported cures are and have been examined and recognized; how Bernadette, the liturgy, and the popes received the event; and what all of that obliges and leaves open. It is a source-audited study instrument, ecclesial-judgment-first in method: not a devotional narrative, a critical edition, a magisterial act, a medical investigation, or a complete history of Lourdes. It proposes no judgment of its own on supernaturality and re-diagnoses no medical file.

Corpus and exclusions

Included: the eighteen reported apparitions of 11 February–16 July 1858, bounded to the witness strata named in §2.1; the civil interrogations at their documented existence; the 1858–1862 commission and the mandement, quoted from Lasserre’s 1870 reproduction collated with the Sanctuary’s transcriptions; the self-identification’s textual history at the accessible witnesses; the medical-recognition institutions and the Sanctuary’s published list of 72 recognized cures with the dossiers of the 70th–72nd; Bernadette’s later life through the 1933 canonization acts in AAS 26 (1934); liturgical reception (1890, 1907, 1969-era rank at ceiling, 1992); papal reception (Pius IX to Benedict XVI at the

cited texts; the announced 2026 visit as announcement only); and current standing under the 2024 DDF norms. Excluded or bounded: any certification of physical or medical mechanism; any reconstruction of the personal prayer or secrets; the candle episode beyond received narrative; the contents of the police and judicial dossiers (not consulted); Estrade and the memoir literature (not consulted); the nineteenth-century controversies (named as reception history only); apparitions claimed elsewhere; and every claim of the comprehensive “all approved apparitions” type—this is a single-event study and asserts no registry.

Geography, chronology, and currentness

Subject geography: Lourdes and the grotto of Massabielle; Bartrès; Tarbes; Nevers; Rome; the dioceses of the recognized cures. Subject range: 1844 (Bernadette’s birth) to the acts and announcements current at the as-of date. As-of date: all mutable claims—current controlling status, the DDF documents index, Sanctuary pages, the cure count of 72, the Bureau staffing, the announced papal visit—were checked on 2026-07-25. No later act superseding the 1862 judgment was located. Stable historical facts are not given artificial currentness. Negative results are bounded searches, correctable by better evidence, never guarantees. Two Sanctuary-site internal stalenesses found during research are recorded rather than harmonized: a general page still naming Dr de Franciscis as currently responsible after the dated announcement of Dr Monami’s appointment, and an older statistics page still counting 70 cures.

Taxonomy and terminology

Kept distinct throughout: *received custodial narrative* (Sanctuary chronology and pages); *period narrative literature* (Lasserre); *documentary reproduction* (the mandement as printed by Lasserre; the AAS/ASS acts); *competent judgment* (the 1862 act; each cure recognition; the canonization); *medical finding* (“unexplained in the present state of medical knowledge”—never more); *liturgical reception* (feast, World Day of the Sick); *papal teaching and act of piety* (encyclical, homilies, visits); *announcement* (the 2026 visit); and *editorial synthesis*. “Reported” is the default register for all words and phenomena attributed to the apparition. *Fondés à la croire certaine* is the 1862 act’s own formula and is not translated into the 2024 taxonomy. *Fides humana* names the prudent human assent invited by approved private revelation.

Source hierarchy and method

Priority: the exact operative and documentary texts in identified witnesses (the mandement in the 1870 reproduction with page-image collation; AAS 26 (1934); ASS 40 (1907); the Holy See’s web texts for 1957–2024); then the Sanctuary’s and AMIL’s institutional pages for the custodial narrative, the medical institutions, and the cures list, always at institutional-self-description ceilings; then period narrative (Lasserre) for what only it witnesses, marked as such; then common public record, marked as such and used sparingly. Quotations are exact from the named witness; French, Latin, Italian, and Occitan sources are quoted in the original where wording is operative, with editorial translations visibly editorial. No project or AI rendering is offered as a received translation; no prayer text is printed for recitation in this study.

Qualifications and unresolved items

(1) The 1862 mandement was read in Lasserre’s 1870 reproduction (pages collated as images) and the Sanctuary’s transcriptions, not in the diocesan original or 1862 imprint; Lasserre abridges the narrative portion and arts. 3–4. (2) The critical edition of the 1858 documents (Laurentin-Billet, *Documents authentiques*) and Bernadette’s autograph écrits were not accessible; the police and judicial records are asserted only as to documented existence, and officials’ forenames are not asserted. (3) Estrade’s memoir was not consulted. (4) The Gascon sentence’s orthography varies between the Sanctuary’s own pages; no autograph spelling is asserted. (5) The apparitions table rests on the Sanctuary’s chronology, a custodial harmonization; crowd figures are received round numbers. (6) AAS 26 (1934) and ASS 40 (1907) were read in the Holy See’s OCR scans; OCR defects are noted where material (the canonization formula’s *exaltationem*). (7) The current rank of the 11 February memorial and the French particular date for St Bernadette are reported at ceiling without typical-edition verification. (8) The cures list is the Sanctuary’s; its ordinals are its order anchored by its own 70th–72nd designations; cure dates are asserted only where a dedicated

institutional article gives them; the aggregate statistics describe the 70-cure state. (9) The 1905 Roman act confirming the Bureau’s procedures and the pre-1890 privilege acts were not located as documents; the Sanctuary’s summaries are used at ceiling. (10) The 2026 papal visit is an announcement and may change. (11) No independent Mariological, historical, canonical, archival, Occitan or French philological, liturgical, medical, or scientific review has occurred; no ecclesiastical review or approval is claimed or implied.

Rights

Project prose is original and intended for CC BY 4.0. Quotations remain under their own status: the 1862 mandement and the other nineteenth-century French and Latin documents are public domain in text (Lasserre died in 1900; official acts), quoted with citation; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* and *Acta Sanctae Sedis* material and Holy See web texts are quoted within ordinary scholarly limits with citation; Sanctuary of Lourdes and AMIL institutional pages are © their publishers and are quoted briefly with citation; the Papal Encyclicals Online rendering of *Ineffabilis Deus* has an unidentified translator and unresolved translation rights and is quoted once, briefly, with attribution. Online availability is not treated as a reuse license; no complete document is reproduced; scan images were consulted for collation and are not redistributed.

B References

Witnesses are listed with role and rights notes; access date for all web loci is 2026-07-25 unless stated. Stable source identities for the starred entries are registered in the repository source library; this publication’s bindings are in `research/source-bindings.toml`.

The 1862 judgment and its witnesses

- *Bertrand-Sévère Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, *Mandement de Mgr l’Évêque de Tarbes, portant jugement sur l’Apparition qui a eu lieu à la Grotte de Lourdes*, 18 January 1862. Role: the operative approval act, quoted exactly in §1 and analyzed in §4. Witness: the reproduction in Lasserre (next entry), pp. 397–409, with the operative pages collated against page images; collated further against the Sanctuary’s French transcription of art. 1 (<https://www.lourdes-france.com/1862-2022-160-ans-de-la-reconnaissance-des-apparitions-de-lourdes/>) and English presentation (<https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/the-decree/>). Ceilings in §4.3 and Appendix A. The 1862 text is public domain.
- *Henri Lasserre, *Notre-Dame de Lourdes* (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1870), read in the Internet Archive scan (<https://archive.org/details/notredamedelou00lass>; OCR text and IIIF page images, leaves collated for printed pp. 397–409 and the pp. 73–74 footnote). Role: period narrative witness and documentary carrier of the mandement, the officials’ identities, the refused-access footnote, and the Pius IX brief. Public domain (Lasserre d. 1900); apologetic narrative, used at that ceiling.

Holy See acts and documents

- *Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Urbis et Orbis* decree *quo festum Apparitionis B. M. V. Immaculatae extenditur ad universam Ecclesiam*, 13 November 1907, with the appended Office addition approved 27 November 1907: *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 40 (1907), pp. 747–749, read in the Holy See’s OCR scan (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/ass/documents/ASS-40-1907-ocr.pdf>). Role: the universal feast extension; the 11 July 1890 approval date of the proper Office and Mass.
- *Pius XI, canonization acts of St Marie-Bernard (Bernadette) Soubirous: the canonization rite and homily of 8 December 1933 and the *Litterae decretales*, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 26 (1934), pp. 5–9 and 73–80, read in the Holy See’s OCR scan (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-26-1934-ocr.pdf>). Role: canonization formula (quoted, §6.3), homily, and the competent biographical narrative; OCR imperfections recorded.
- *Pius XII, *Le pèlerinage de Lourdes*, encyclical, 2 July 1957, English: https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_02071957_le-pelerinage-de-lourdes.html. Role: the papal-reception chain, the 1862-approval sentence, the dogma–apparition relation (n. 16), the materialism warning.

- *Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, 8 December 1854; English quoted from Papal Encyclicals Online (<https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9ineff.htm>); translator unnamed, rights unresolved, quoted once within scholarly limits. Role: the definition the 25 March sentence echoes (§3.3).
- *Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena* (given 17 May 2024; approved 4 May 2024; effective 19 May 2024): https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20240517_norme-fenomeni-soprannaturali_en.html. Role: current procedural law; six conclusions; n. 23 rule; n. 13 canonization principle; its presentation's citation of the 2000 explanation of approval. Checked negative: the DDF documents index (<https://www.doctrinafidei.va/en/documenti.html>) lists no Lourdes act.
- John Paul II, Letter instituting the World Day of the Sick, 13 May 1992 (Italian): https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/letters/1992/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_13051992_world-day-sick.html; Message for the first World Day of the Sick, 21 October 1992 (English): https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/sick/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_21101992_world-day-of-the-sick-1993.html. Role: the institution and purpose of the Day (§7.2).
- John Paul II, Homily at Lourdes, 15 August 2004: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2004/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20040815_lourdes.html. Role: the 2004 visit's teaching (§7.4).
- Benedict XVI, Homilies at Lourdes, 13 September 2008 (torchlight procession), 14 September 2008 (150th-anniversary Mass), 15 September 2008 (Mass for the sick), and Angelus of 14 September 2008: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20080913_lourdes-processione.html; https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20080914_lourdes-apparizioni.html; https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20080915_lourdes-malati.html; https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/angelus/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20080914_lourdes.html. Role: the sesquicentenary teaching (§7.4).
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., nn. 65–67, Vatican web English: https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___PH.HTM; and nn. 1667–1673, 1700–1706, 1734–1735, 2111, and 2116–2117, USCCB second edition (2019), registered exact passages in the repository source library. Role: the private-revelation boundary (§8.1); the nature of sacramentals and rejection of automatic or occult efficacy (§2.6); and dignity, agency, voluntariness, and consent (§8.4).
- Vatican News, “France: le Pape nomme un évêque à Tarbes et Lourdes,” 30 March 2022: <https://www.vaticannews.va/fr/eglise/news/2022-03/pape-francois-nominations-france-eveques-tarbes-lourdes-micas.html>. Role: the current ordinary's appointment (§5.2, §9.3).

Sanctuary of Lourdes and medical-institution pages

All are institutional self-description, cited as the custodian's or association's own account (ceilings in Appendix A); © Sanctuaire de Lourdes / AMIL, quoted briefly with citation.

- “The apparitions” (English) and “Les apparitions” (French): <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/the-apparitions/>; <https://www.lourdes-france.com/les-apparitions/>. Role: the eighteen-event chronology and the Gascon sentence (§2–3).
- “Bernadette Soubirous”: <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/bernadette-soubirous/>. Role: biography; the Jacomet exchanges; the canonization sentence quoted in §6.4.
- “The Decree” and “Recognition of the apparitions”: <https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/the-decree/>; <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/recognition-of-the-apparitions/>. Role: the commission's mandate and the Sanctuary's English presentation of the judgment (§4).
- “The Water of Lourdes”: <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/the-water-of-lourdes/>. Role: the ordinary-water statements (§2.6).
- “The Miracles”; “The miracles of Lourdes”; “Recognition of a miracle”; “Miraculous healings”; “The Medical Bureau of the Sanctuary”: <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/the-miracles/>; <https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/the-miracles-of-lourdes/>; <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/recognition-of-a-miracle/>; <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/miraculous-healings/>; <https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/med>

ical-bureau-sanctuary/. Role: the medical institutions, process, criteria, statistics, and the list of 72 (§5); stalenesses recorded in Appendix A.

- “John Traynor, 71st miracle at Lourdes”; “Antonia Raco, 72nd Lourdes miracle”; “Nomination du docteur Giada Monami à Lourdes”; “Pope Leo XIV to Visit Lourdes on September 27, 2026”: <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/john-traynor-71st-miracle-at-lourdes/>; <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/antonietta-raco-72nd-lourdes-miracle/>; <https://www.lourdes-france.com/nomination-du-docteur-giada-monami-a-lourdes/>; <https://www.lourdes-france.com/en/pope-at-lourdes/>. Role: the 71st–72nd dossiers, the Bureau appointment, the announced visit.
- AMIL, “70. Sr Bernadette Moriau”: <https://www.amilourdes.com/en/post/70-sr-bernadette-moriau-1>. Role: the 70th-cure dossier (§5.4).

Not consulted at first hand (recorded ceilings)

The 1862 diocesan imprint and the Tarbes archives; René Laurentin and Bernard Billet, *Lourdes: Documents authentiques* (7 vols., 1957–1966), and Bernadette’s autograph écrits; the 1858 police and judicial dossiers; J.-B. Estrade’s memoir; Benedict XIV, *De servorum Dei beatificatione*; Pius X, *Ad diem illum* (quoted via Pius XII); the 1905 Roman confirmation of the Bureau’s procedures; the pre-1890 privilege acts; the Sanctuary’s 2022 re-edition of the mandement; the typical editions fixing the current rank of the 11 February memorial and the French date for St Bernadette; the diocesan proclamation texts of the recognized cures.

Last revised (UTC): 2026-07-25T09:39:08Z

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