

COMMUNITY CELEBRATION LOURDES GESTURES

This year, the sanctuary invites you to experience the gestures of popular devotion which are at the heart of the Lourdes Pilgrimage.

These gestures are the same as those that Bernadette made during the apparitions: entering the Grotto and touching the rock, drinking and washing at the spring, lighting a candle.

These gestures can be experienced individually but, this year, we are suggesting that you take an ecclesial and community approach to them.

Below, you will find here some suggestions to help you to experience these gestures of faith as a pilgrimage or in a group.



The gesture of the Rock

This suggestion for your celebration aims to prompt people's hearts to experience the passage to the Grotto as a real inner journey (and not a simple visit). This celebration has two stages: a time of preparation in a place of gathering, for example after a mass or a time of instruction, then the passage to the Grotto. This suggestion is suitable for use with a complete pilgrimage or with small groups. The passage to the Grotto is always done in silence.

GREETING

The celebrant:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R/ Amen

The celebrant:

The Lord be with you.

R/ And with your spirit

INTRODUCTION

The celebrant or another person addresses the congregation with these or other similar words:

It was here, in this Grotto, that the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, appeared 18 times to Bernadette Soubirous, between 18th February and 16th July 1858.

The gesture of the Rock

It was in this place that Bernadette accepted the Lady's invitation; "Will you do me the honour of coming here for 15 days?" (3rd apparition).

Inside the Grotto is the spring of water that Bernadette discovered following the Lady's request to, "Go to the spring, drink and wash yourself there" (9th apparition).

It was on this rock that the Immaculate Conception Basilica was built in response to the Lady's request to, "Go and tell the priests to build a chapel here and that people should come in procession" (13th apparition).

It was here that the Mother of God revealed her Name on 16th July 1858: "I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION" (16th apparition).

THE WORD OF GOD

Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew

Mt. 16:13-19

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'

HOMILY

The homily is given by an ordained minister, bishop, priest or deacon.

MEDITATION

Ps 45

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

The gesture of the Rock

Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult

R/ The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.

The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.

R/ He is with us, the Lord of the universe; citadel for us, the God of Jacob!

Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.

He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

'Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.

R/ He is with us, the Lord of the universe; citadel for us, the God of Jacob!

PASSAGE TO THE GROTTO

The passage to the Grotto is made in sacred silence. Upon entering the Grotto, pilgrims are invited to make the sign of the Cross, to contemplate the spring, to touch the rock, to open their hearts to Our Lady, and to entrust an intention. When leaving the Grotto, they can bow in silence before the statue of Our Lady.

Prayer for pilgrims to read as they arrive in the Grotto:

O Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes, you here, present in this Grotto and you hear the prayers of all your children. Some you comfort, others you help discover their vocation by giving them the strength to say 'yes'.

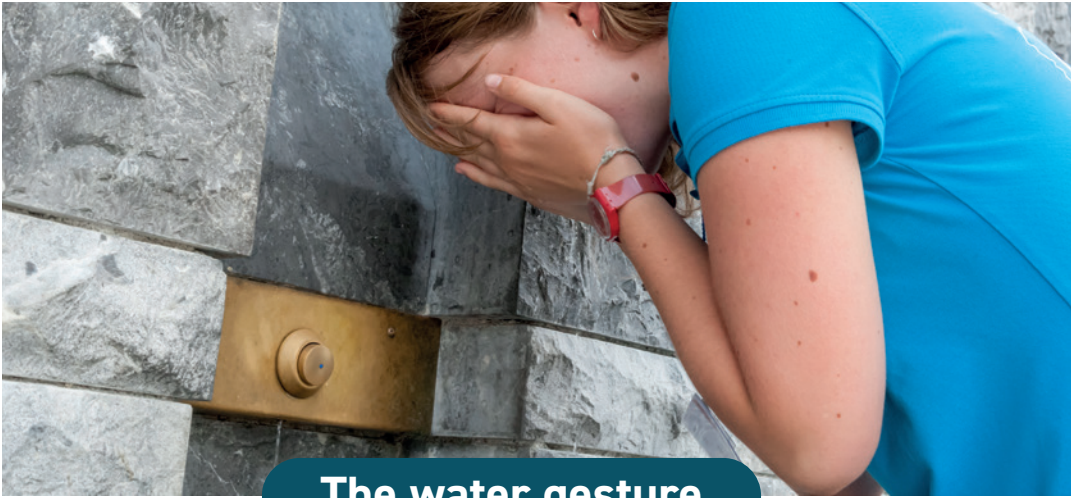
Today, like Bernadette, I too am entering this holy place following this great crowd of people from every nation and every language.

The gesture of the Rock

As the Mother of Jesus and Mother of the Church, you see each one as a unique individual. Cast your gaze upon me and let the light of your Son dwell in and soothe my heart.

“Hail Mary...
Our Lady of Lourdes, Pray for us!
Saint Bernadette, Pray for us!”





The water gesture

With a small group, this celebration can take place in the fountain garden, or in any other place depending on the number of pilgrims.

GREETING

The celebrant:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R/ Amen

The celebrant:

The Lord be with you.

R/ And with your spirit.

THE WORD OF GOD

Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Saint John

Jn. 7:37-39a

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. Ask the scripture has said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive.

HOMILY

The homily is given by an ordained minister, bishop, priest or deacon.

The water gesture

PROFESSION OF FAITH

The distinctive characteristic of the water gesture is the renewal of the grace of Baptism. This is why it is important to make a profession of faith. If a priest or a deacon accompanies the pilgrims, the profession of faith should be made in dialogue form. Otherwise, pilgrims can recite the Apostles Creed.

It is of course possible for an unbaptised person to experience the water gesture. This person is free to answer the questions asked or not.

The celebrant addresses the participants:

Do you reject Satan?

A/ I do..

And all his works?

A/ I do.

And all his empty promises?

A/ I do.

Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

A/ I do.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, was buried, died and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

A/ I do.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

A/ I do.

THE WATER GESTURE

The celebrant:

Let us pray to the Holy Spirit before we perform water the gesture.

Hymn (or prayer) to the Holy Spirit.

The water gesture

The celebrant or another person addresses the congregation with these or other similar words:

On 25th February 1858, during the ninth apparition, Our Lady of Lourdes spoke these words to Bernadette Soubirous:

"Go to the spring, drink and wash yourself there".

Following Bernadette, and countless pilgrims from all over the world, we are here to make this gesture.

The "spring" is God the Father who gives us his own Son, Jesus Christ.

The "spring" is the person of Christ who gives himself to each of us: "if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink" (Jn. 7:37).

The "spring" is the person of the Holy Spirit: "but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (Jn. 4:14).

Hymn to the Holy Spirit.

The celebrant or another person continues:

To drink water from the Grotto and to wash in it is to let the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit come to meet us.

To drink water from the Grotto and to wash in it is to ask the Lord to make us receptive to his Word and to the Sacraments of the Church which are the spring of life.

To drink water from the Grotto and wash in it is to allow ourselves to be transformed by the grace of conversion and to allow ourselves to be reconciled with God and our brothers and sisters.

The celebrant makes the water gesture followed by all the people.

Everyone drinks from the palm of their hand and puts water on their face.

During the water gesture, a hymn such as the Ave Maria of Lourdes can be sung.

OUR FATHER

When everyone has performed the water gesture, the celebrant says:

United in the same Spirit, we dare to say, Our Father...

The water gesture

BLESSING

The celebrant:

The Lord be with you.

R/ And with your spirit.

The celebrant:

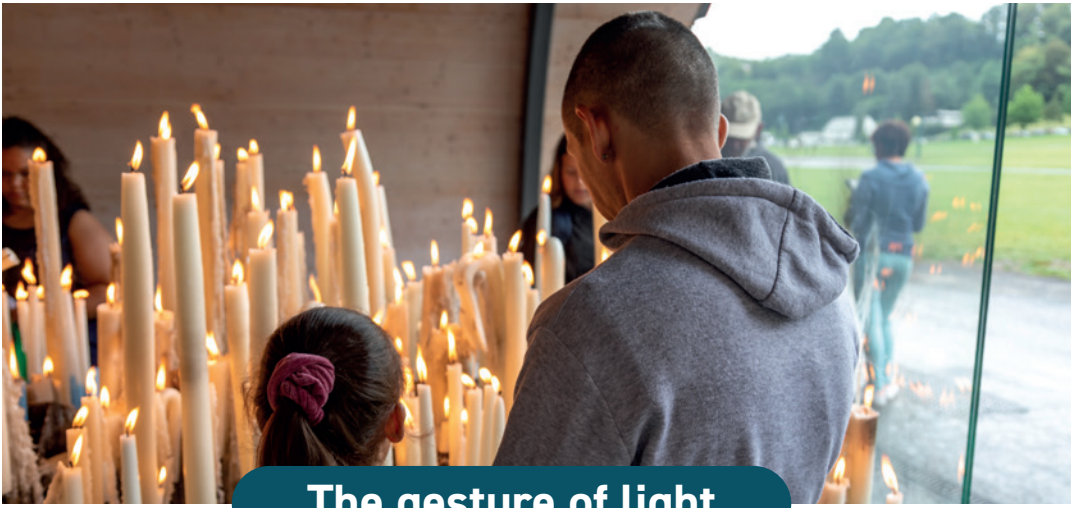
May Almighty God bless you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes and Saint Bernadette.

R/ Amen

FINAL HYMN

A hymn such as "At your side, Bernadette, we travel on, t'wards heaven's holy light" can be sung.





The gesture of light

GREETING

The celebrant:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R/ Amen

The celebrant:

The Lord be with you.

R/ And with your spirit.

INTRODUCTION

The celebrant or another person addresses the congregation with these or other similar words:

Why do Lourdes pilgrims bring and light candles?

Here are a few of the many possible answers:

To share in the experience of Bernadette, who carried a candle during 15 of the 18 apparitions of Our Lady.

Because the candle reminds us of our Baptism by which we received the dignity of adoption as children of God. Let us recall the words of Jesus: "You are the light of the world" (Mt. 5:14).

Because once we leave the sanctuary, we would like our prayer to continue after we leave.

Because we have received a grace. And so, our hearts are open to the hope of a new life promised by the Lord.

The gesture of light

This is how this simple candle concretely expresses the faith of each pilgrim. By placing it among the many other candles, we know that we are full members of the Church. We are called to be missionaries of the grace found at the sanctuary. Finally, this candle lit in the sanctuary or at home is a powerful manifestation of the living God in a secularised world.

On the day of our Baptism, the priest lit a candle signifying our membership in the church community. May this light of faith accompany us until the day of the blessed resurrection.

THE WORD OF GOD

Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke

Luke 2:25-32

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.'

HOMILY

The homily is given by an ordained minister, bishop, priest or deacon.

At the end of the homily, the candle representing the whole pilgrimage is lit, or pilgrims' individual candles can be lit. During this time, you can meditate on a psalm, or sing an appropriate hymn.

A hymn such as *Christ be our Light* or another appropriate hymn can be sung.

The gesture of light

PRAYER (When placing a candle in the chapels of light.)

Jesus,

“Light from light, true God from true God.

Bernadette told us: “I saw a small young lady enveloped in light who looked at me and smiled”.

This light of your Immaculate Mother is the reflection of your Light,
You the conqueror of evil, sin and death! You, the Risen Christ!

Today I place my candle in this burner.

Today or later it will burn in your presence.

May it illuminate my joy, my gratitude, my thanksgiving,
your forgiveness and your immense mercy.

May it clear my doubts, extinguish my pain, my hurt,
my suffering, my lost cause!

It also symbolises my most secret thoughts, wishes and desires.

May the storms of life not extinguish the flame of love!

May I become like Him burning with love for You
and for my brothers and sisters!

You, who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us!

Saint Bernadette, pray for us!

