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# 061 - Lourdes Documents of Bishop Laurence

Bertrand Severe Laurence

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*Lourdes Documents  
of Bishop Laurence*

BISHOP OF TARBES, 1845-1870

Number 61

## ABOUT THE DOCUMENTS . . . .

This Marian Reprint contains three documents of Bertrand Sévère Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, France, from 1845 until his death in 1870, at the age of eighty.

1. On **July 28, 1858**, less than two weeks after the eighteenth and last appearance of Our Lady to Bernadette, Bishop Laurence published an ordinance appointing a commission to investigate the authenticity of the apparitions.
2. On **January 18, 1862**, three and a half years later, he issued a decree in which he outlined the findings of the commission and declared that the Blessed Virgin really appeared to Bernadette.
3. On **May 31, 1863**, a pastoral letter announced the beginning of the construction of the basilica at Lourdes.

The three translations have been prepared from original documents (nos. 12, 41, 51,) by Father Francis J. Friedel, S.M., S.T.D., Ph.D., of the University of Dayton.

*(published with ecclesiastical approval)*

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## ORDINANCE OF HIS EXCELLENCY, THE BISHOP OF TARBES

*appointing a commission to verify the authenticity and nature of the events which have taken place within the past six months in connection with an apparition, real or imaginary, of the Blessed Virgin, in a Grotto, located to the west of the city of Lourdes*

**Bertrand Sévère Laurence**, by the mercy of God and the grace of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarbes.

To the Clergy and Faithful of our diocese, health and benediction in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Events of serious import, which touch on religion and affect the diocese and even beyond the confines of the diocese, have occurred at Lourdes since last February.

Bernadette Soubirous, a young girl of Lourdes, thirteen years of age\*, was supposed to have had visions in the cave of Massabielle, west of this city; the Immaculate Virgin was supposed to have appeared to her; a spring began to flow there; the water of this spring, taken as drink or used as a lotion was supposed to have worked a number of cures; these cures are regarded as miraculous; people have come in throngs and continue to come every day, either from our own diocese or from neighboring dioceses, requesting this water for the cure of their maladies, while at the same time they invoke the Immaculate Virgin. Civil authority has been moved to take action. From all sides have come requests that ecclesiastical authority give some explanation of these spontaneous pilgrimages.

We believed that the time had not yet come for us to concern ourselves with this matter. In order to pass the judgment which is expected of us, we must proceed with a prudent slowness. We must be mistrustful of the exuberant enthusiasm that marks the reactions of the first days in order to allow minds to calm down, to give sufficient time for reflection, and to seek further light for careful and intelligent observation.

Three groups of persons have appealed to us for a decision but each from a different motive and viewpoint.

There are those, first of all, who even before examining the facts at all, see in the events that have occurred at the grotto and in the cures attributed to the water from the spring, only superstition, hocus-pocus, and a means of duping people. Their newspapers and periodicals have cried out—and with a good deal of noise—that this is all superstition, fraud, and

\*Translator's note: Bernadette was actually 14 at the time, having been born January 7, 1844.



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even bad faith. They have maintained that the events at the grotto have as their basis sordid interest, greed, and thus have done injury to the moral sense of our Catholic people. Taking the position of denying everything, of attributing wrong intentions to others, is the easiest way of getting out of difficulties—we agree—but besides being disloyal, it is unreasonable and calculated more to irritate souls than to convince them. To deny the possibility of supernatural facts is to follow an outmoded school of thought; it is to renounce the Catholic religion and to be dragged in the rut of the skepticism of the last century. We Catholics cannot, in this circumstance, take counsel from persons who deny to God the power of making exceptions to the general laws established by Him for the government of the world which is the work of His hands. Nor can we enter into discussion with them in order to ascertain whether such or such a fact is supernatural when, before examining any question, they declare that the supernatural is impossible. Does this mean that in reference to the matter in question we reject a broad, sincere, conscientious discussion clarified by science and all its advances? Certainly not. On the contrary, we ask for it with all the earnestness possible. We desire that these facts be, first of all, submitted to the severe rules of certitude as accepted by sound philosophy. Then, in order to determine whether these facts are supernatural and divine, we shall call in for the examination of these grave and difficult questions specialists, men who are experts in the sciences of mystical theology, medicine, physics, chemistry, geology, etc. Then, and then only, let science be heard and make its pronouncement. Above all, we wish that not a single means be neglected in order to arrive at the truth.

There is a second class of persons who give neither their approval nor disapproval of the events that are spoken of but suspend their judgment. Before committing themselves they wish to know the decision of competent authority and ask for it in all sincerity.

There is finally, a third class, a considerable number of persons, who have already formed firm, though premature, convictions about the events which are of such concern to us at the moment. With a lively impatience, they expect the bishop of the diocese to give a definitive decision on so vital a matter. Although they are expecting a decision which is favorable to their own pious sentiments, we know their submission to the Church well enough, to be assured that they will welcome our judgment, whatever it may be, as soon as it is made public.

Hence it is to enlighten the faith and piety of so many thousands of the faithful, to answer a public demand, to end uncertainty, and to calm

minds, that we yield to the earnest entreaties that are being continually made to us and have been for a long time and from all quarters. We seek light on the events which are of great interest to the faithful, the cult of Mary, and religion itself. To this effect, we have resolved to establish in the diocese, a permanent commission to gather and verify the facts which have taken place or may still be taking place at the grotto of Lourdes or at the time when they do occur; to point them out to us, to make known their character and thus furnish us with the indispensable elements for reaching a sound conclusion.

THEREFORE, HAVING INVOKED THE HOLY NAME OF GOD,  
WE HAVE ORDAINED AND DO ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

**Art. 1.** A commission is hereby set up in the diocese of Tarbes to examine the following questions:

a. Have the cures been effected by the use of water from the grotto of Lourdes, either as drink or as lotion? Can these cures be explained naturally or must they be attributed to a supernatural cause?

b. Are the visions which the child Bernadette Soubirous claims to have had at the grotto real and, if so, can they be explained naturally or do they bear a supernatural and divine character?

c. Has the apparition made any requests or manifested any intentions to this child? Has the child been charged to make them known and to whom? What are the requests or manifested intentions?

d. Did the spring which flows today in the grotto exist before the vision which Bernadette Soubirous claims to have had?

**Art. 2.** The commission shall present us only with facts that are based on solid proofs; it shall give us very detailed reports on these facts together with its own opinion.

**Art. 3.** The Reverend Deans of the diocese shall be the principal correspondents for the commission. They are asked to make known to the commission: a. the facts which have occurred in their respective deaneries; b. the persons who would be able to present evidence on the existence of these facts; c. the persons who by their knowledge of science could enlighten the commission; d. the physicians who had taken care of the sick before the cure.

**Art. 4.** After this information has been assembled, the commission will then be able to take up formal investigations. The testimony shall be received

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under oath. When they are held in the locality itself, at least two members of the commission shall be present.

**Art. 5.** We recommend insistently that the commission often call in men who are experts in the fields of medicine, physics, chemistry, geology, etc., in order to hear them discuss the difficulties touching on their field of competence, get their diverse points of view, and ascertain their opinion. 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.

**Art. 6.** The commission shall be composed of nine members of the chapter of our cathedral, the superiors of our major and minor seminary, the superior of the diocesan missionaries, the pastor of Lourdes, and the professors of dogma, moral, and physics in our seminary. The professor of chemistry in our minor seminary should be consulted as often as possible.

**Art. 7.** Canon and Arch-Priest Nogaro is hereby named president of the commission. Canons Tabariés and Soulé are appointed vice-presidents. The commission shall choose its secretary and two vice-secretaries from its own ranks.

**Art. 8.** The commission shall begin its work at once and shall meet as often as thought necessary.

Given at Tarbes, in our episcopal palace, under our signature and seal, and the signature of our secretary, July 28, 1858.

BERTRAND SEVERE, BISHOP OF TARBES

By order of the Bishop:

(Arnaud) Fourcade, Canon, Secretary-general

# DECREE OF HIS EXCELLENCY, THE BISHOP OF TARBES

*concerning the reality of the Apparition at the Grotto of Lourdes*

**Bertrand Sévère Laurence**, by divine mercy and the grace of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarbes, Assistant at the Pontifical Throne, etc.

To the Clergy and Faithful of our diocese, health and benediction in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

In all the periods of human history, most beloved brethren, God established communication in wondrous fashion between heaven and earth. From the beginning of the world, the Lord appeared to our first parents to reprove them for their great sin of disobedience. In the following centuries we see Him conversing with the Patriarchs and Prophets. Frequently the Old Testament is the history of heavenly manifestations with which God favored the children of Israel.

These divine favors did not cease with the Mosaic law. On the contrary, under the law of grace, they became more frequent and more remarkable.

In the very beginning of the Church, during the times of bloody persecutions, Christians received visits from Jesus Christ or the saints who came, sometimes to reveal to them the secrets of the future, sometimes to free them from their chains, sometimes to strengthen them in combat. It is thus, according to a judicious writer, that God encouraged these illustrious confessors of the faith when the powerful of the earth were uniting all their efforts to destroy in its germ the doctrine which was to save the world.

These supernatural manifestations were not the exclusive privilege of the first centuries of Christianity. History attests that they continued from century to century for the glory of religion and the edification of the faithful.

Among the heavenly visitations, those of the Most Blessed Virgin hold a very important place and have been for the world an abundant source of blessings. While traversing the Catholic world, the traveller encounters, at intervals, shrines dedicated to the Mother of God. Many of these monuments owe their origin to an apparition of the Queen of Heaven. We ourselves already have one of these blessed sanctuaries established four centuries ago in consequence of a revelation made to a young shepherdess.<sup>1</sup> Here thousands of pilgrims come each year to kneel before the throne of the glorious Virgin Mary to implore her favor.

Thanks be to the Almighty! In His infinite goodness, He reserves a new



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favor for us. He wishes that in the diocese of Tarbes a new shrine be built to the glory of Mary. And who is the instrument He makes use of to reveal the designs of His mercy? Again He has chosen what the world holds weak,<sup>2</sup> a child 14 years old, Bernadette Soubirous, born of a poor family of Lourdes.

It was February 11, 1858.<sup>3</sup> Bernadette was gathering dry wood along the banks of the Gave<sup>4</sup> together with one of her sisters, aged 11, and another girl aged 13. She had come in front of the cave called Massabielle when in the midst of the silence of nature, she hears a sound similar to a gust of wind. She looks to the right of the river bank which is lined with poplars; she sees that they are motionless. Hearing the sound again she turns toward the cave. On the edge of the rocks, in a sort of niche next to which is a thorn bush agitated by the wind she beholds a Lady who signals her to come closer. Her countenance was of a ravishing beauty; she was clothed in a white garment fastened at the waist with a blue sash, a white veil on her head, and a yellow rose on each foot. At this sight Bernadette is disturbed. Thinking that she might be the victim of an illusion, she rubs her eyes but the object becomes clearer and clearer. Instinctively she falls to her knees, takes out her rosary and begins to recite it; when the girl has finished her prayer, the Apparition disappears.

Whether it was by a secret inspiration or at the urging of her companions to whom she had revealed what she had seen, Bernadette returns to the Grotto the following Sunday and Thursday; the same phenomenon occurs both times. On Sunday, in order to be sure that this mysterious being comes from God, the young girl sprinkles her three times with holy water; in return, she receives a look full of sweetness and tenderness. On Thursday, the Apparition speaks to Bernadette; she bids her come back every day for two weeks, to drink and wash in the spring, and to eat of the plants which she will find there. The girl, not seeing any water in the Grotto, starts toward the Gave when the Apparition calls her back and tells her to go to the rear of the Grotto to the place which she points out. The child obeys but finds only some soft earth. She begins at once to scoop out a small hole with her hands; this fills up with muddy water; she takes a drink, washes her face, and eats of the water-cress which was in the spot.

As soon as this act of obedience has been performed, the Apparition speaks to Bernadette; she instructs her to go and tell the priests that she wishes a chapel to be built at the place where she has appeared; the child hurries to the pastor of the parish to fulfill the mission she has received.

The young girl had been invited to return to the Grotto every day for

two weeks. She responds faithfully to this appeal and each day, with the exception of two days, she beholds the same vision in the presence of a large crowd which gathers in front of the Grotto but which sees or hears nothing. During these two weeks, the Apparition several times invited Bernadette to come, drink, and wash at the spot indicated; she recommended her to pray for sinners and renewed her request for the building of a chapel. In turn, Bernadette asked her who she was but for answer received only a gracious smile.

The two weeks of visits had been completed. However, two more apparitions occurred: the one on March 25, feast of the Annunciation of the most Blessed Virgin, the other on April 5\*. On the day of the Annunciation Bernadette three times asked the mysterious being who she was. Then the Lady raises her hands, joins them at her breast, lifts her eyes toward heaven, and exclaims with a smile: **I am the Immaculate Conception.**

This is, in substance, the account which we have from the lips of Bernadette herself given in the presence of the commission assembled to hear her a second time.

Thus the young girl saw and heard a being calling herself the Immaculate Conception and who, though clothed in human form, was not seen or heard by any of the many spectators present at the scene. This would consequently be a supernatural being. What must we think of these happenings?

You are not unaware, dearly beloved brethren, that the Church is prudently slow in the evaluation of supernatural facts. It demands certain proof before admitting them and claiming them as divine. Ever since the original fall and especially in matters such as this, man is prone to error. If he is not led astray by his reason which has been somewhat dimmed, he can become the victim of the devil's trickery. Who does not know that the latter sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light to make us fall more easily into his snares.<sup>5</sup> Thus the beloved disciple warns us not believe all spirits but to put them to the test to see whether they come from God.<sup>6</sup> We have made this test, dearly beloved brethren; the event of which we are speaking has been, for the past four years, the object of our solicitude; we have followed it in its various phases; we have kept ourselves informed of the findings of the commission composed of pious, learned, and experienced priests who have questioned the child, studied the facts, examined and

\*Translator's note: Research indicates this apparition took place on Wednesday, April 7. It must be remembered that Bernadette had no accurate memory of dates but rather of days of the week on which an event occurred. Cf. Laurentin and Trochu.

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weighed everything. We have also called in men of science and we have remained convinced that the Apparition is supernatural and divine and that consequently what Bernadette saw is the Blessed Virgin. Our conviction is based on the testimony of Bernadette but more especially on the other facts which have taken place and which cannot be explained except by divine intervention.

The testimony of the young girl presents all the guarantees we could ask for. First of all, her sincerity cannot be called into question. Who does not admire in being near her, the simplicity, the candor, and the modesty of this child? While the rest of the world speaks of the wondrous things that have been revealed to her, she alone of all keeps silence; she speaks only when she is questioned; then she relates everything with a touching sincerity and without any affectation of any kind. To the numerous questions that are put to her she gives, without any hesitation, clear, precise answers, answers that are to the point and are characterized by a strong conviction. In spite of having to undergo severe trials, she has never been shaken by any threats; she has answered the most generous offers with the noblest disinterestedness. Without once contradicting herself in the different questionings to which she has been subjected, she has constantly maintained what she has said without adding or retracting anything. Bernadette's sincerity, then, is undeniable. Let us add that it has not been challenged. Even those who have contradicted her—and there were some,—have had to render this testimony themselves.

But if Bernadette did not wish to deceive anyone, was she herself not deceived? Did she not believe that she saw and heard what she actually did not see or hear? Was she not the victim of a hallucination?—How could we believe this? The wisdom of her answers reveals in this child an upright spirit, a calm imagination, and good sense beyond her age.<sup>7</sup> Religious sentiment never went to extremes in her; no one has ever dared to say that in the girl there was ever any intellectual disorder, aberration of the senses, oddity of character, nor morbid affections which might have disposed her to creations of the imagination. She saw the Apparition not once but eighteen times; at first she saw it quite unexpectedly and suddenly when there was nothing that could have prepared her for this happening; then during the two weeks when she expected to see the Lady every day she saw nothing on two days although she was in the same place and under identical circumstances. And then, what happened during the apparitions? A transformation took place in Bernadette: her countenance took on a new expression, there was a special sparkle in her eyes, she saw things she would

never again see and heard words she would never again hear. In fact, she did not always understand their meaning but she would always retain the memory of them. These circumstances put together do not permit us to believe in hallucination; the young girl had really seen a being calling herself the Immaculate Conception. Since this phenomenon cannot be explained naturally, we are forced to the conclusion that the Apparition is supernatural.

The testimony of Bernadette, important as it is by itself, takes on added strength, we should even say, finds its complement in the wonderful things that have taken place since the first occurrence. If we must judge a tree by its fruits, then we can say that the Apparition as described by the young girl is supernatural and divine for it has produced supernatural and divine effects. What has happened, dearly beloved brethren? Scarcely had the Apparition become known when the news spread like wildfire. People knew that Bernadette was to go to the Grotto for a period of two weeks: the whole region is stirred up; crowds hasten to the place of the apparition; with religious impatience they await the solemn moment; while the girl in ecstasy is lost in the object of her contemplation, the witnesses of this wonder are touched with emotion as they share in the same sentiments of wonderment and prayer.

The apparitions have ceased but people continue to come in crowds: pilgrims from distant regions as well as from the neighborhood, hasten to the Grotto; here we see people of all ages, classes of society, and conditions. What is the impelling force that draws these many visitors? They come to the Grotto to pray and ask favors of Mary Immaculate. By their recollected bearing they attest to the fact that they are experiencing, as it were, a divine breath which animates these rocks which have become so famous. Souls that are already Christian find themselves strengthened in virtue; men affected by indifference are brought back to the practice of their religion; obstinate sinners are once more reconciled to God in answer to prayers addressed to Our Lady of Lourdes on their behalf. These marvels of grace, which have a universal and lasting character, can only have God as their sole Author: do they not, in consequence, confirm the reality of the Apparition?

If, from the effects produced for the good of souls, we pass over to those which concern the health of the body, what new wonders do we not have to relate? We have seen Bernadette drink and wash her face in the spot pointed out by the Apparition; this circumstance had aroused public attention. People asked themselves if this was not an indication of a supernatural virtue that had descended upon the spring at Massabielle. With this thought in mind, the sick tried the waters of the Grotto and not without

success. A number of those whose diseases had resisted every treatment, even the most energetic, suddenly recovered their health. These extraordinary cures had a terrific repercussion; the news spread far and near. Sick from all countries asked for the water from Massabielle when they themselves could not come to the Grotto. How many sick were cured, how many families consoled! . . . If we should wish to call for their testimony, innumerable voices would be raised, with the note of gratitude, to proclaim the supreme efficacy of the water of the Grotto. We cannot here enumerate all the favors received but what we ought to tell you is that the water of Massabielle has cured sick who had been given up and declared incurable. These cures have taken place with the use of water which lacks any natural curative quality according to the reports of expert chemists who have made a rigorous analysis of it. These cures have occurred, some suddenly, others after the application of this water two or three times, whether in the form of a drink or as a lotion. Besides, these cures are permanent. What is the power that has produced them? Is it a force in the organism? Science, which has been consulted on the subject, answers in the negative. Therefore these cures are the work of God. They are related to the apparition; this is their point of departure; this has inspired the confidence of the sick. There is then a close connection between the cures and the Apparition; the Apparition is divine since the cures carry the mark of the divine in them. But what comes from God is truth! Consequently, the Apparition calling herself the Immaculate Conception, what Bernadette saw and heard is the **Most Holy Virgin Mary!** Let us then cry out: the finger of God is here! **Digitus Dei est.**<sup>8</sup>

How can we fail to admire, dearly beloved brethren, the economy of Divine Providence. Toward the end of 1854, the immortal Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The echoes carried the words of the Pontiff to the ends of the earth; the hearts of Catholics beat with joy and everywhere the glorious privilege of Mary was celebrated by feasts the memory of which will remain forever engraved in our memories. And behold, just about three years later, the holy Virgin, appearing to a child says to her: **I am the Immaculate Conception . . . I desire that a chapel be built here in my honor.** Does she not seem to want to consecrate by a special monument the infallible voice of the successor of Saint Peter?

Where does she wish this monument built? Right at the foot of our own Pyrenees Mountains where numerous foreigners come from all parts of the world to seek health in our hot springs. Might we not say that she invites the faithful of all nations to come and honor her in the new shrine that will be built to her?



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Be glad, you citizens of Lourdes! The august Virgin Mary deigns to cast her looks of mercy upon you. She wishes that, next to your city, there be built a sanctuary where she will spread her favors. Thank her for this evidence of predilection she gives you; since she showers upon you all the tenderesses of a mother, show yourselves her devoted children by the imitation of her virtues and your unshakable attachment to your holy faith.

Moreover we are pleased to recognize that the Apparition has already borne the fruits of salvation among you. Eye witnesses as you have been of the happenings at the Grotto and of their blessed results, your confidence has been great as your conviction has been strong. We have admired your prudence and your docility in following the counsels of submission to civil authority when for several weeks you had to stop your visits to the Grotto; then you had to stem the tide of the sentiments in your hearts, sentiments inspired by the spectacle which you beheld with your own eyes during the two weeks of the apparitions.

And you, dearly beloved faithful of our diocese, open your hearts to hope: a new era of grace is beginning for you; you are all called upon to gather your share of the blessings promised to us. In your supplications, in your hymns, you will henceforth mingle the name of Our Lady of Lourdes with the blessed names of Our Lady of Garaison, of Poeylaün, of Héas, of Piétat.\*

From the heights of these holy sanctuaries, the Immaculate Virgin will watch over you and will shield you with her protection. Yes, my beloved brethren, if, with the heart full of confidence, we keep our eyes fixed on this Star of the Sea, we shall withstand, without fear of shipwreck, the tempests of life and shall arrive safe and sound in the harbor of eternal happiness.

### FOR THESE REASONS:

After having conferred with our venerable brothers the dignitaries, the canons, and the chapter of our cathedral church;

### AFTER HAVING INVOKED THE NAME OF GOD,

Basing ourselves on the rules wisely laid down by Benedict XIV in his book on the beatification and canonization of saints for distinguishing between true and false visions;<sup>9</sup>

Considering the favorable report presented to us by the commission

\*Translator's note: Names of four popular shrines of Our Lady located in the Diocese of Tarbes.

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charged with examining the Apparition at the Grotto of Lourdes and the facts accompanying it;

Considering the written testimony of medical doctors whom we have consulted on the numerous cures following the use of the water at the Grotto;

Considering the fact of the Apparition both from the standpoint of the girl who has testified concerning it and more especially from the extraordinary effects produced so that it cannot be explained except by the intervention of a supernatural cause;

Considering that this cause can only be divine since the effects produced being, on the one hand, sensible signs of grace such as the conversion of sinners, and on the other hand, deviations from the laws of nature such as the miraculous cures, can only be referred to the Author of grace and the Lord of all nature;

Considering, finally, that our conviction is strengthened by the mighty spontaneous concourse of the faithful at the Grotto, a concourse which has not ceased since the first apparitions and the purpose of which is to beg favors or to give thanks for those already received;

In order to respond to the legitimate impatience of our venerable chapter, of the clergy and laity of our diocese, and of so many pious souls who, for a long time, have requested a decision from ecclesiastical authority, a decision which motives of prudence caused us to delay;

Wishing also to satisfy the desire of several of our colleagues in the episcopacy and of a great number of distinguished persons outside the diocese;

After having invoked the light of the Holy Spirit and the assistance of the Most Holy Virgin

WE HAVE DECLARED AND DO DECLARE AS FOLLOWS:

**Art. 1.** We judge that the Immaculate Mary, Mother of God, really appeared to Bernadette Soubirous on February 11, 1858 and following days, eighteen times in the Grotto of Massabielle, near the city of Lourdes; that this Apparition possesses all the characteristics of truth and that the faithful may believe in it with certainty.

We humbly submit our judgment to that of the Sovereign Pontiff to whom is committed the government of the universal Church.

**Art. 2.** We authorize the cult of Our Lady of the Grotto of Lourdes in our diocese but we forbid the publication of any special prayers, hymns, or

books of devotion relating to this event without our written approval.

**Art. 3.** In order to accede to the request of the Blessed Virgin expressed several times during the apparitions, we propose to construct a sanctuary on the terrain of the Grotto which has become the property of the Bishop of Tarbes.

In view of the rugged and difficult nature of the site, this construction will call for much work and for relatively considerable funds. In order to make our pious project a reality, we need the cooperation of the priests and faithful of our diocese, of the priests and faithful of France and other countries. We appeal to their generous hearts and particularly to all pious persons of all lands who are devoted to the cult of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.

Persons who wish to share in this work are asked to send their offerings as follows: in our diocese, to their own pastors, or to the chancery, or to ourselves personally; in other dioceses, to their diocesan chancery where they will be graciously received by their Excellencies, the bishops who will forward them directly to us.

**Art. 4.** We address ourselves with confidence to the educational institutions for girls and boys, to the sodalities and confraternities of the Blessed Virgin, and to the diverse pious associations either of our diocese or of entire France.

**Art. 5.** Every parish, every organization, boarding school, religious community, confraternity, and individual person who will offer by himself or by gifts which he has collected a sum of 500 francs or more, will receive the title of a **Founder of the Sanctuary of the Lourdes Grotto.**

If the contribution, as explained above, is 20 francs or more, the title will be that of a **Principal Benefactor.**

The names of founders and principal benefactors shall be sent to us along with the contributions; they will be kept in a register destined for this purpose; in addition, the names will be placed in a silver heart to be placed on the high altar of the shrine.

Every week in perpetuity, two Masses will be offered each Wednesday for the founders and principal benefactors, and one Mass each Friday will be offered for all those who will have helped in this building by their offering, no matter how small.

It is not without a design of mercy and love that the Blessed Virgin has requested the building of a shrine in her honor in this place. No doubt, in

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consequence, the persons who will have contributed by their generosity to the construction of this monument will receive in exchange some signal favor whether in the spiritual or the temporal order.

**Art. 6.** A very great number of persons from our diocese, from various parts of France, and even from outside France have received remarkable favors at the Grotto of Lourdes. Several have promised to send us their contribution when the building of the sanctuary in this place would be begun. We now announce to them that the time has come. We beg them also to commend the work of the Grotto to persons of their acquaintance and, if need be, to take upon themselves the duty of forwarding their gifts to us.

**Art. 7.** A committee, composed of priests and laymen, will be named to supervise, under our personal chairmanship, the use of all funds.

**Art. 8.** The present decree shall be publicly read in all the churches, chapels, the oratories of seminaries, colleges, and hospitals of our diocese on the Sunday following its reception.

Given at Tarbes, in our episcopal palace, under our signature and seal and the signature of our secretary, January 18, 1862, feast of the Chair of Saint Peter at Rome.

BERTRAND SEVERE, BISHOP OF TARBES

By order of the Bishop:

(Arnaud) Fourcade, Canon, Secretary-general

1. Our Lady of Garaison.
2. I Cor. 1:27.
3. Toward two o'clock.
4. The river which flows near the Grotto.
5. II Cor. 11:14.
6. I John 4:1.
7. The intelligence of Bernadette is noticed only when she speaks of what relates to the Apparition.
8. Exod. 8:19.
9. Book 3, chap. 31.

# PASTORAL LETTER OF HIS EXCELLENCY, THE BISHOP OF TARBES

*presenting a report on the works of the Lourdes Grotto and announcing the beginning of construction of the chapel at the place of the apparition*

**Bertrand Sévère Laurence**, by the mercy of God and the grace of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarbes, Assistant at the Pontifical Throne, etc.

To the Clergy and Faithful of our diocese, health and benediction in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

By our decree of January 18, 1862 we have, dearly beloved brethren, proclaimed the great event which took place in our diocese in 1858, the apparition of the Immaculate Virgin at the Grotto of Lourdes and published the decision given regarding this fact which concerns, to so great a degree, the glory of Mary.

At the same time, we made known our plan to build a chapel at the site of the apparition while making an appeal to your generosity and that of the faithful of the whole Catholic world, to assist in erecting to the Mother of God a shrine that is worthy of her.

Today we believe it our duty to report to you on the situation of an enterprise which is so dear to all Catholic hearts.

Since the publication of our decree, the Grotto has become the place where numerous pilgrims gather and each day their number increases. Eye witnesses who are worthy of credence have assured us that on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin last year, the number of visitors exceeded eight thousand. An active and pious correspondence, requests for the sending of Lourdes water and ex-votos which come to us, give supreme evidence of new favors received through the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Our appeal for funds to aid in the construction of this sanctuary has been heeded; the diocese of Tarbes, the various other regions of France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Austria, Prussia, England, Hanover, and America have sent their offerings to us. We count among them a certain number of **Founders** who have contributed 500 francs or more. Contributions of 20 francs or more are more numerous and those under 20 francs have been received with lively gratitude.

Your zeal and generosity, dearly beloved brethren, in contributing to the work of the Grotto of Lourdes has given us extraordinary encouragement. We did not expect less from a diocese where devotion to the Blessed Virgin is held in honor. Accept our hearty thanks and permit us to count on your further support during the period of construction.

The funds which have already come in to the commission are, you may be sure, not sufficient to meet the estimated costs. However, full of confi-



## DOCUMENTS OF BISHOP LAURENCE

dence for the future, the commission believed it could prudently go ahead with the work as planned. Construction has been in full progress since the middle of October, 1862 under the direction of a very capable architect\* who is, at the same time, supervising the construction of the new seminary at Tarbes.

The **Founders** and **Benefactors** will learn of this good news with marked satisfaction. The faithful, who awaited only the word for the beginning of construction in order to cooperate with the enterprise, will be eager to send in their offerings.

The work will be pushed forward with energy and without interruption, unless the lack of funds calls for a temporary suspension of operations—something which we trust will not happen. In any case, in order to go ahead with due caution, the commission has decided that the building can be carried on in three steps: 1. the sanctuary, choir, and part of the nave; 2. completion of the nave; 3. construction of the spire surmounted by the statue of the Immaculate Virgin. However we have confidence that the funds will come in as needed and the work will be continued without interruption until the whole project is completed.

The commission was especially moved by seeing that persons living in countries far apart from one another, interpreted article 5 of the aforementioned decree in the same manner. That is, they have become the centers of groups of persons who promise each year to send two, three, four, etc. francs during the time necessary for the construction. In the same spirit of zeal, poor parishes and small communities are pooling their contributions that they may have the right to the titles of **Founders** or **Principal Benefactors**.

What is inspiring confidence in the commission is the fact that the graces and favors received through the intercession of Mary Immaculate before the publication of the decree, are just as numerous and striking since that time. These facts will be mentioned in bulletins to be published. This year especially, families of distinction come from afar to spend several weeks or even months at Lourdes, either to give thanks for favors already received or to pray to the Mother of Mercy at the spot where she was pleased to appear.

This present pastoral letter shall be read before the sermon during the parish Mass on the Sunday following its reception in all the churches and chapels of our diocese.

Given at Tarbes, in our episcopal palace, May 31, of the year of Our Lord Jesus Christ 1863, on the feast of the Most Holy Trinity.

BERTRAND SEVERE, BISHOP OF TARBES

By order of the Bishop: (Arnaud) Fourcade, Canon, Secretary-general

\*M. Hippolyte-Louis Durand, diocesan architect.



## MARIAN REPRINTS

- NO. 1—MARY'S PLACE IN OUR LIFE—Rev. T. J. Jorgensen, S.J.  
NO. 2—THE MEANING OF MARY—Lois Schumacher  
LITANY FOR OUR TIMES—Robert L. Reynolds  
NO. 3—MARY AND THE APOSTOLATE—Rev. Emil Neubert, S.M.  
NO. 4—THE IMITATION OF MARY—Rev. Placid Huault, S.M.  
NO. 5—MARY, ASSUMED INTO HEAVEN—Rev. Lawrence Everett, C.S.S.R.  
NO. 6—FATIMA—IN BATTLE ARRAY—Rev. Joseph Agius, O.P.  
NO. 7—MEN, MARY, AND MANLINESS—Ed Willock  
NO. 8—MARY, CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN—Rev. Francis Connell, C.S.S.R.  
NO. 9—RUSSIA AND THE IMMACULATE HEART—Pius XII  
NO. 10—MARY OUR INSPIRATION TO ACTION—Bro. Robert Knopp, S.M.  
NO. 11—SIGN IN THE HEAVENS—Rev. James O'Mahony, O.F.M.Cap.  
NO. 12—SOUL OF MARIAN DEVOTION—Rev. Edmund Baumeister, S.M.  
NO. 13—THE ASSUMPTION AND THE MODERN WORLD—Bishop Fulton J. Sheen  
NO. 14—MOTHER AND HELPMATE OF CHRIST—Rev. James Egan, O.P.  
NO. 15—MARY, PATRONESS OF CATHOLIC ACTION—John J. Griffin  
NO. 16—THE MYSTERY OF MARY—Rev. Emil Neubert, S.M.  
NO. 17—THE BLESSED VIRGIN IN THE LITURGY—Rev. Clifford Howell, S.J.  
NO. 18—OUR LADY OF RUSSIA—Catherine de Hueck Doherty  
NO. 19—THE WITNESS OF OUR LADY—Archbishop Alban Goodier, S.J.  
NO. 20—FULGENS CORONA—Pius XII  
NO. 21—THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND THE UNITED STATES—  
Rev. Ralph Ohlmann, O.F.M.  
NO. 22—THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND THE APOSTOLATE—  
Rev. Philip Hoelle, S.M.  
NO. 23—INEFFABILIS DEUS—Pius IX  
NO. 24—MARY'S APOSTOLIC ROLE IN HISTORY—Bro. John Totten, S.M.  
NO. 25—AD DIEM ILLUM—Pius X  
NO. 26—KNOW YOUR MOTHER BETTER: A MARIAN BIBLIOGRAPHY—  
Bro. Stanley Mathews, S.M.  
NO. 27—THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND MARY'S DEATH—Rev. J. B. Carol, O.F.M.  
NO. 28—IMMACULATE MOTHER OF GOD—James Francis Cardinal McIntyre  
NO. 29—THE WISDOM OF OUR LADY—Gerald Yann, O.P.  
NO. 30—AD CAELI REGINAM—Pius XII  
NO. 31—OUR LADY AT HOME—Richard T. A. Murphy, O.P.  
NO. 32—THE BROWN SCAPULAR OF CARMEL—Henry M. Esteve, O. Carm.  
NO. 33—MARY'S ROLE IN THE MYSTICAL BODY—Thomas A. Stanley, S.M.  
NO. 34—MARY AND THE FULLNESS OF TIME—Jean Danielou, S.J.  
NO. 35—PROTESTANTISM AND THE MOTHER OF GOD—Kenneth F. Dougherty, S.A.  
NO. 36—THE LEGION OF MARY—Edward B. Kotter  
NO. 37—DEVELOPING A SOUND MARIAN SPIRITUALITY—William G. Most  
NO. 38—LAETITIAE SANCTAE—Leo XIII  
NO. 39—THE MOTHERHOOD OF MARY—Emil Neubert, S.M.  
NO. 40—THE HAIL MARY—James G. Shaw  
NO. 41—OUR LADY'S SERENITY—Ronald A. Knox  
NO. 42—OUR LADY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT—Bishop Leon J. Suenens  
NO. 43—CHRIST'S DEVOTION TO MARY—Joseph J. Panzer, S.M.  
NO. 44—MARY, OUR SPIRITUAL MOTHER—William G. Most  
NO. 45—MARY IN THE EASTERN CHURCH—Stephen C. Gulovich  
NO. 46—MARY'S MEDIATION AND THE POPES—Eamon R. Carroll, O. Carm.  
NO. 47—FILIAL PIETY: MARIAN AND FAMILY—Gerald J. Schnepf, S.M.  
NO. 48—MARY AND THE HISTORY OF WOMEN—E. A. Leonard  
NO. 49—OUR LADY, MODEL OF FAITH—Jean Galot, S.J.  
NO. 50—OUR LADY, SYMBOL OF HOPE—Jean Galot, S.J.  
NO. 51—MARY, MODEL OF CHARITY—Henri Holstein, S. J.  
NO. 52—SPIRIT OF THE LEGION OF MARY—Frank Duff  
NO. 53—THE TIMELESS WOMAN—Gertrud von LeFort  
NO. 54—MARY, QUEEN OF THE UNIVERSE—James M. Egan, O.P.  
NO. 55—THE LOURDES PILGRIMAGE—Pius XII  
NO. 56—Our Lady of Lourdes, Guardian & Teacher of the Faith—Bishop Pierre-Marie Theas  
NO. 57—ESTHER AND OUR LADY—Ronald A. Knox  
NO. 58—MARY AND THE THEOLOGIAN—Thomas E. Clarke, S.J.  
NO. 59—EDITH STEIN AND THE MOTHER OF GOD—Sister Mary Julian Baird, R.S.M.  
NO. 60—BEHOLD THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD—Rev. Richard Graef, C.S.SP.