

Dear Friend,

Approximately six million people pilgrims a year visit the shrine at Lourdes where Mary is venerated. The celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the claimed apparitions of Mary at the site just recently took place there in September '08. The climax of the festivities was the Pope's presence to worship Mary and honor the young peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, who was alleged to have heard directly from Mary. Very few Christians have ever analyzed the essence of the message of Lourdes. This we have done in the article below. It especially important for a correct analysis to be understood since many are fascinated with the happenings at Lourdes. I ask that you forward the article to Catholics whom you think would be interested. And please send it to other Christians across the nation and overseas. I request also, if possible, that you post it on your Webpage.

Trusting only in the Lord's Gospel of grace,
Richard Bennett

Pope Benedict XVI at Lourdes: A Descent into Darkness

Pope Benedict XVI visited France September 12-15, 2008, in Paris he cordially greeted a Muslim delegation and wished them "a good Ramadan".

The Pope was at Lourdes from September 13th through the 15th where he participated commemorating the 150th anniversary of the apparitions of Mary. It is estimated that there were 200,000 Catholics attended with over 2,000 national police, not to mention the city police, the county police, the Vatican secret service, and Swat teams on roofs.

The Vatican claims that on March 25, 1858, Mary allegedly appeared at Lourdes to a young peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, and announced, "I am the Immaculate Conception". The Pope at that time took the apparition as a verification of his dogma that the Virgin Mary was conceived without original sin, which he had proclaimed four years earlier. In 1858 Bernadette said that she had seen the Virgin Mary eighteen times at a grotto near the Gave River. In 1862 Catholic Bishop Bertrand-Severe Laurence announced that the apparitions were genuine. Bernadette herself left her home in 1866 to become a nun in Nevers in central France. She never returned to Lourdes. The Catholic authorities decided to build a large basilica on the site of the claimed apparitions. It was completed in 1872. In the years that followed, more places of worship were built around the precinct. These include the Rosary Basilica and the underground Basilica of St. Pius X. In 1870 the sickly Bernadette died at the age of 35. She was canonized as a Roman Catholic saint in 1933. From about 1948 onward, millions of pilgrims have visited Lourdes, at the present time their number is estimated at about six million a year. Miraculous cures are claimed to have taken place at the shrine.

Last year Pope Benedict offered a plenary indulgence to those who make a pilgrimage to Lourdes. On December 7th, 2007, the *London Telegraph* headlined the news, "Trips to Lourdes to cut time spent in purgatory." Benedict's indulgence, which allegedly reduces the time a Roman Catholic has to spend in purgatory to be purged of his sins, is still available for Catholics across the world until December 8th 2008.¹ The commemorative visit of the Pope

¹ December 8th is the official date for the annual celebration of "The Immaculate Conception."

to the shrine in September rather than in December brings into the limelight of the world a special emphasis on the papal dogma of “The Immaculate Conception”. It carries in its train the consistent use of mysticism by the Papacy in particular and by the Roman Catholic faith as a whole.

The Dogma underpinning Lourdes

The dogma of the “Immaculate Conception” presents Mary as “full of grace” and completely sinless. Official Catholic Church teaching is as follows,

“Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, ‘full of grace’ through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.”² And, “...By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.”³

Thus it is seen that the dogma of “Immaculate Conception” is not dealing with the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ, as many think, but rather Mary’s own conception in the womb of her mother. It is asserted that she was “full of grace” and that she was free from original sin and sinless for her whole lifetime. The Papacy asserts that the term “full of grace” is found in Luke 1:28. However, even in the Catholic *New American Bible* the text reads, “*And coming to her, he said, Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.*” In official dogmas “favored one” is erroneously rendered as “full of grace”. Thus the key attribute that Catholic Church fallaciously assigns to Mary is that she is “full of grace”. In total contrast to such a notion, the central idea of the Scripture text is that Mary has become the recipient of God’s favor. Nevertheless, the official teaching furthermore declares, “From among the descendants of Eve, God chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of his Son. ‘Full of grace’, Mary is ‘the most excellent fruit of redemption’: from the first instant of her conception, she was totally preserved from the stain of original sin and she remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life.”⁴

What makes the attribute “full of grace” assigned to Mary so appalling is the biblical truth that the fullness of grace is distinctly Christ’s own prerogative. God’s grace and love in salvation is the high-priestly work of Christ and of Him alone. “Full of grace” is the distinct attribute of His office. This unique feature in Scripture is ascribed to Christ Jesus the Lord alone. “*He dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.*”⁵ All that went before Him was but a type and a representation of Him. All that came after Him points back to Him. “*Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,*”⁶ the Apostle John proclaimed, “*and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.*”⁷ It is by His grace that true believers are made acceptable before the All Holy God. “*For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.*”⁸ The Father’s will was that all fullness should dwell in Him. There is the abundance of grace only in the “*Word made flesh.*” As the source of all grace to His people, He has fullness of merit and righteousness. It delighted the Father that in Him alone as Savior, all fullness

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), Para. 491.

³ *Catechism*, Para. 493.

⁴ *Catechism*, Para. 508.

⁵ John 1:14

⁶ John 1:17

⁷ John 1:16

⁸ Colossians 1:19

should dwell, “*the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*”⁹ He alone abundantly gives to His own people, “*grace for grace.*”¹⁰ Alleging that Mary is “full of grace”, as a distinctive attribute is utter blasphemy. It shows an arrogant disregard for the One who alone is the incarnate Son of God. In Scripture He is thus uniquely described, “*Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*”¹¹ To direct anyone toward Mary as “full of grace” is attempted robbery of the distinctive feature of Christ Jesus the Lord.

To call Mary “full of grace” is also an insult to her person. She rejoiced that she had a Savior. She proclaimed, “*my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior...*”¹² God is called “Savior,” as He saves His people from sin. Even the mother of the Lord had need of her Savior. The blessedness of Mary was a demonstration of divine favor toward her, especially in calling her to be the physical mother of the Lord. This was an act of sovereign choice on God’s part. She, as a virgin and as a believer and according to God’s Word to her, conceived and brought forth Christ Jesus the Lord. Later in obedience to the Lord’s Word she was wife to Joseph and mother of their children. As for in Matthew’s gospel, “*Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?*”¹³ Like all other genuine believers, Mary of Bethlehem was a sinner saved by God’s grace, through faith, not by any essential righteousness or preserving grace granted in her own birth.

End result of the Dogma

The end product of what is celebrated at Lourdes is worship that is offered to the Mary of the Papacy’s imagination. At Lourdes and across the world this Mary is worshipped as “the All-Holy One.” The official text states, “By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the ‘Mother of Mercy,’ the All-Holy One.”¹⁴ The Bible, however, clearly teaches that God alone is the all Holy One. His Holiness is the attribute that covers all attributes so that His righteousness is Holy, His truth is Holy, and His justice is Holy. He is each of His attributes, and the overall attribute of holiness is that which separates Him from all beings. He is totally other. The reason why we need to be made right before the All Holy God is because in the words of Scripture, “*there is none holy as the Lord there is besides Thee: neither is there any rock like our God.*”¹⁵ And, again the Word of the Lord proclaims, “*who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for thou only art holy: and all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.*”¹⁶ To attempt to address a creature as “the All-Holy One” is consummate blasphemy and immoral idolatry. The worship of the papal Mary has its own special prayers as the one they call “Our Lady of Lourdes”. Thus for example they show divine reverence in praying,

“Blessed, most pure Virgin, you chose to manifest yourself shining with life, sweetness and beauty, in the Grotto of Lourdes. To the child, St. Bernadette, you revealed yourself, ‘I am the Immaculate Conception.’ And now, Immaculate Virgin, Mother of Mercy,

⁹ Ephesians 1:23

¹⁰ John 1:16

¹¹ Hebrews 1:3

¹² Luke 1:46-47

¹³ Matthew 13:55

¹⁴ *Catechism*, Para. 2677.

¹⁵ I Samuel 2:2

¹⁶ Revelation 15:4

Healer of the Sick, Comforter of the Afflicted, you know my wants, my troubles, my sufferings. Look upon me with mercy. By your appearance in the Grotto of Lourdes, it became a privileged sanctuary from which you dispense your favors. Many have obtained the cure of their infirmities, both spiritual and physical. I come, therefore, with confidence in your maternal intercession. Obtain for me, O loving Mother, this special request.”¹⁷

The imaginary Mary whom the Pope worships at Lourdes is also alleged to have a saving office. The Catholic Church states that the one they address as “the All-Holy One” is also alleged to be the cause of salvation. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* declares, “...As St. Irenaeus says, ‘Being obedient she [Mary] became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.’”¹⁸ This claim is sacrilegious and affects the ordinary person who desires to be saved before God. It assumes Mary’s influence with God, and actually credits her as being an effective cause in salvation of souls, including her own. In this it shows an arrogant disdain for the love of God as the original cause of the salvation of souls. The Bible teaches that the salvation of men is a divine initiative because “*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*”¹⁹ He is “*merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.*”²⁰ To point anyone toward Mary as “the cause of salvation” is an outright betrayal of a person’s only hope, which through the love of God is in Christ Jesus alone.

An entry point into the occult

The disaster of the Lourdes celebration is that on an everyday family level, the cult of Mary leads directly into the occult. Pope Benedict XVI is teaching the world how it is done. In giving honor to any created being as “the All-Holy One” through an “Immaculate Conception”, the Pope flagrantly sins against the First Commandment. By example, he encourages the ordinary Catholic not only to likewise turn away from the true worship of God, but also to enter into the occult realm of the spirit world. Such behavior brings the judgment of God on nations and families, as His Word declares, “*The LORD is known by the judgment which he executes: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.*”²¹

In Catholic countries, wonder-working Madonnas lead easily into the occult realm of devils and demonic miracles, including apparitions of angels, a Mary, and dead people. There is a revealing parallel between the Roman Catholic false Mary and pagan goddesses. The heartbreaking reality, however, is that such behavior is the entrance into Satanism, pornography, suicide, and a general decline in morals. The Catholic Cult of “the Immaculate Conception” leads one into the occult and is found in the occult. The papal Mary, as the “Divine Feminine” has the blended attributes of pagan goddesses. Thus on the White Moon webpage under the heading of “Mary And Other Goddesses” it is stated that “when you pray to Mary, mother of Jesus, you pray, without knowing it, to the World Mother in one of her many forms.” The snare is not just for adults but is also for children. One webpage has a special kids’ coloring page where young children are lead into the occult as they color Mary and other goddesses. The dangers of entering the world of the occult cannot be exaggerated.

The Consequence

¹⁷ <http://members.aol.com/mstringy13/page5.html> 9/10/2008

¹⁸ *Catechism* Para. 494

¹⁹ John 3:16

²⁰ Exodus 34:6

²¹ Psalm 9:16

All that has been documented here regarding Lourdes—the Catholic Mary being “full of grace”, “the All-Holy One”, the “the cause of salvation” and having an “Immaculate Conception”—is utterly profane and blasphemous before the All Holy God and the exclusive Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The splendid drama of the Pope’s visit to Lourdes in September was in fact a siren call to descend into darkness. It endangers the eternal welfare of people across the world because while claiming to be Christian, it does not teach them anything of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures state that “*Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light,*”²² Yet it still comes as a shock to see the work of Prince of Darkness in the official dogmas that sustain Pope Benedict’s descent into the darkness at Lourdes in September 08.

The Apostle John wrote, as did Peter and Paul, in order that we would know how we can have the peace and security which comes from being in right standing with God. As we already stated, God is the only All Holy One. His holiness is the distinguishing factor in all His essential characteristics. This is the reason why we need to be in right standing before the one and only All Holy God on the terms He prescribes. By His grace alone the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin is turned by the conviction of the Holy Spirit from his sin to Him in faith alone for the salvation that He alone gives. This salvation is based only on Christ’s perfect life and death, for by it He has paid the full price for the sins of His people. God alone by His grace opens the ear of the sinner so that he can by faith believe on Him alone, “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*”²³ ♦

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²² II Corinthians 11:14

²³ Ephesians 2:8, 9