

FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Sunday we celebrate World Marriage Day! World Marriage Day is an annual observance celebrated on the second Sunday of February, dedicated to honoring the sacrament of matrimony, the beauty of Christian marriage, and the vital role of husbands and wives as the foundation of the family and society. In the Catholic Church, it emphasizes the lifelong commitment, faithfulness, sacrifice, and joy of married couples, while encouraging renewal of vows and blessings for those in the sacrament. It is closely tied to National Marriage Week in the United States, which runs from February 7 to February 14 (encompassing Valentine's Day). This period provides an opportunity for parishes, dioceses, and families to focus on building a culture of life and love rooted in marriage and family.

With the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes drawing near on February 11, the Lord invites us once more to stand before the mystery of His Mother's appearance in that humble grotto of Massabielle. Let us not live this as a pious devotion, but as a living proclamation—a kerygma. Mary appears to Bernadette Soubirous, a poor, illiterate girl of fourteen, rejected by many, yet chosen by God to receive the message of the Immaculate Conception. "I am the Immaculate Conception," the Lady declares on March 25, 1858, confirming the dogma proclaimed only four years earlier. This revelation is no abstract truth; it is the announcement of what God has done in Mary and what He desires to accomplish in each of us through the power of His grace.

Think of the waters that sprang forth at Mary's command. Bernadette was told to drink from the muddy spring, to wash in it, to eat of the bitter herbs growing there. What a scandal to human reason! Yet from that very spot flowed healing waters that have brought physical and spiritual restoration to countless souls. This is the mystery we rediscover in our own baptismal journey. We can return again and again to the font of baptism—not as a past event, but as the ongoing reality where sin is conquered, where the old man dies, and the new man rises in Christ. We can be washed clean, healed of our wounds of pride, fear, and division, and made capable of loving as the Lord loves.

Mary, the Immaculate One, is the first fruit of redemption. Conceived without sin, she is completely open to the action of the Holy Spirit—no obstacle, no resistance to God's transforming love. In her, we see the fulfillment of what the Lord promises to every baptized person: to be remade in His image, to live in humility, simplicity, and praise. We can learn to walk together toward the promised land of resurrection.

This feast calls us to a deeper conversion. In a world marked by self-centeredness, where the slogan is often "my will be done," Mary at Lourdes cries out for penance, for prayer for sinners, for trust in God's mercy. She invites Bernadette—and through her, each of us—to "pray to God for sinners." How urgently we need this today! Have we witnessed brothers and sisters who have been healed of resentments, addictions, and broken relationships? The spring continues to flow in the sacraments, in the fraternal life we share, in the mission as we are sent on to proclaim the Gospel to the poor and the distant.

Let us make this feast a moment of grace for our parish. Let us ask Bernadette's intercession for the humility to accept God's surprises, for the courage to drink from the springs He provides—even when they seem muddy at first. And let us entrust to Our Lady of Lourdes all those who suffer in body or spirit: the sick, the lonely, those far from the faith, our own families in need of healing.

Mary points always to her Son: "Do whatever He tells you." In obeying this word, we find freedom, joy, and the fullness of life. Through the intercession of the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Lourdes, may the Lord pour out His Spirit anew upon us, that our parish may become a sign of His mercy in this world.

Peace,