

## Lancaster Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes 2017 - Mass of Farewell

27 July 2017 - Homily

(Ex. 19:1-2, 9-11, 16-20. Mt. 13:10-17)



Our Blessed Lord implied in that gospel that the mysteries of God's Kingdom are only accessible to those who have faith, who are humble and have the right frame of mind to listen to his word, and to believe in it. Lourdes is first and foremost a place of faith which gives us another vision entirely, a new way of looking at things. *Blessed are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear!* Each one of us pilgrims has heard and seen much this week, and we have opened our hearts in faith to hear the message of this holy place.

Here in Lourdes we discover the peace and tranquillity which flows from and seems to surround the grotto, where Our Lady from heaven came and spoke to Bernadette. We hear with fresh ears her message to the world of the need of prayer and penance and try to make that message our own. We have witnessed and admired the many sick who have come to Lourdes, seeking in patience and acceptance that spiritual strength and consolation which Christ wishes to confer on them through the intercession of his Mother and St. Bernadette.

Christ's great command was that we love one another, and we see that love exemplified in the compassion, the care and the devotion of those who care so selflessly for the sick pilgrims. As we watch the long procession of the sick being brought to Mass or to the grotto, we are reminded of those sick and afflicted of long ago who flocked to hear and to be near the Son of God in Palestine during his ministry on earth. We need have no doubt that the Lord has spoken this to each of our sick and has touched them with spiritual healing. Our faith assures us of that.

The people of Israel long ago trembled in awe at the foot of Mount Sinai because they knew that they were in the presence of the Lord God himself and so were standing on holy ground. We likewise are standing on holy ground here in the demesne and especially at the grotto which seems to summon us again and again. When we are near the grotto we sense we are in a holy place, and have been truly privileged. Simply being there is a prayer.

With a deep sense of gratitude we take our leave of Lourdes, this much loved grotto where the figures of Our Lady and St. Bernadette look down on us, encouraging and inspiring us on our journey as disciples of Christ. We have prayed for each other, and those who couldn't be with us, and remembered past pilgrims no longer with us. We have brought all our needs and intentions, along with countless other pilgrims, and laid them confidently at the feet of Our Lady of Lourdes. To have been in Lourdes has been a wonderful experience, a gift of grace from God. We can therefore at the end of our pilgrimage make the words of Christ in the gospel our own: *Blessed are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear!* Amen!

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