

Homily
At the Mass to mark the Conclusion of Novena to Our Lady of Lourdes
St. John Vianney, Blackpool

12 February 2017

(Isaiah 66:10-14. John 2:1-11)



The language of motherhood and the part played by the mother of Jesus are the themes of our Scripture readings this evening. The prophet Isaiah speaks of the holy city of Jerusalem as being like a tender mother towards her children, a place where her children/citizens find comfort and strength, and the peace of God. In the loving arms of such a mother, the prophet declares, they will rest secure and content. The liturgy wishes us to think of Our Blessed Lady in such terms. If we but turn to her in faith and in trust we will discover that she is a true mother who loves each of her children equally. Pilgrims who go to Lourdes know the truth of Mary's motherhood.

When Our Lady appeared and spoke to Bernadette in Lourdes she asked for prayer and penance on behalf of sinners, for those who have strayed from God. For the numerous sick who make their way to Lourdes, the journey can be long and exhausting, but with good grace and often with a smile they make that part of their Lourdes penance. We go to Lourdes on pilgrimage for we know that when we approach Mary we are also drawing near to her Son. When she spoke quietly to her Son to save the newly-married young couple at Cana in Galilee from embarrassment when the wine ran out, so equally she will turn to the Lord Jesus now on our behalf. Whatever we want to say or ask for, she will listen from her place in heaven, and what is more, she will answer!

Those who are burdened with illness of any kind, be it physical, spiritual, or mental, know that Our Lady of Lourdes has a special care for them. There may not always be obvious cures, but through Mary's powerful intercession God's grace and healing touch will assuredly rest upon the sick. Her words in the gospel to the servants, "*Do whatever he tells you*" are still valid for us today. She will help us to do the will of her Son, no matter how challenging it may be. When we try to follow Jesus as best we can when are then on the road to life, and the prayers and protection of Mary will keep us safe on that road.

So as we honour the patroness of our diocese tonight, we can be sure that she is looking out for us, and she did for the couple at Cana, and know that from her heavenly place beside her Son she will continue to be a mother to us, and protect us here on earth. **O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee!**

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