

THE FOURTH, FIFTH AND SIXTH LESSONS
from the
ROMAN BREVIARY
for the Feast of the
APPARITIONS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
IMMACULATE (at Lourdes)

LESSON IV

In the fourth year from the dogmatic definition of the immaculate Conception of the blessed Virgin, at the bank of the river Gave near the town of Lourdes of the diocese of Tarbes in France, the Virgin herself in a bend of the rock above the grotto of Massabiele, often shewed herself to a certain girl, called in the vernacular tongue Bernadette, indeed most poor but noble and pious, to be seen. The immaculate Virgin appeared with a young and kind appearance, clothed with a white garment and white veil, and girt with a blue girdle; she adorned her bare feet with a golden rose. On the first day of the apparition, which was the eleventh of February in the one thousand eight hundred fifty-eighth year, she taught the girl the sign of the cross to be duly and piously made, and she incited her, by her example, to the recitation of the sacred rosary, turning over with her hand the chaplet, which before was hanging down from her arm: which she supplied also in the other apparitions. And on the second day of the apparition, the girl in the simplicity of her heart, fearing diabolic fraud, flung holy water on the Virgin; but the blessed Virgin, smiling gently, shewed her face more kindly to her. And when she appeared a third time, she invited the girl to the grotto for fifteen days. Thence she often addressed her; then commanded, that it might be declared to the priests, a chapel to be built there, and to be approached there for supplications in a manner of solemnity. Moreover she commanded that from the spring, which thus far was hidden under the sand but now was about to erupt, she might drink the water, and by it cleanse herself. Finally on the feast day of the Annunciation, to the girl earnestly inquiring her name, the Virgin, for whose appearance she was so often deemed worthy, the Virgin, her hands having been moved to her breast and her eyes raised to heaven, answered: I am the Immaculate Conception.

LESSON V

The fame of favours becoming widespread, which the faithful were said to have received in the sacred grotto, in time the assembly of men increased, whom the sanctity of the place called to the grotto. Therefore the bishop of Tarbes moved by the fame of the wonders and the purity of the girl, after a juridical inquiry of the happenings, approved by his decree the signs of the apparition to be supernatural, and permitted the worship of the immaculate Virgin in the same grotto. Soon a chapel is built: from that day the almost innumerable crowds of the faithful, for the purpose of of prayer and supplication, from France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and the other provinces of Europe and also from the remote regions

of America arrived there in every year, and the name of the Immaculate of Lourdes becometh famous of countries everywhere. The water of the spring, having been carried into all parts of the world, restored health to the sick. And the Catholic world mindful of such great favours, built holy shrines there with wonderful work. Innumerable banners, as if monuments of received benefits, sent there by cities and nations, decorate the shrine of the Virgin with wonderful adornment. In this as if her own seat the immaculate Virgin is continually honoured: indeed by day with prayers, religious chant and other solemn ceremonies; and by night with those solemn supplications, by which the almost infinite crowds of pilgrims proceed with candles and lit torches and sing the praises of the blessed Virgin.

LESSON VI

It is known by all for certain the pilgrimages of this sort to have stirred up faith, in a world becoming cold, the soul to have increased to profess the Christian law, and to have spread the worship of the immaculate Virgin in a wonderful manner. In which wonderful profession of faith the Christian people have the priests as leaders, who lead their people thence. The holy Bishops themselves also frequently visit the holy place, lead pilgrimages, and take part in more solemn feasts. Nor indeed is it rare to observe these empurpled fathers of the Roman Church approaching humble in the manner of pilgrims. Even these Roman Pontiffs, for their piety towards the Immaculate of Lourdes, enhanced the sacred shrine with most noble gifts. Pius the ninth, with sacred indulgences, distinguished it with the privilege of an archconfraternity and title of a minor Basilica; and willed the image honoured there of the Godbearer, with solemn rite through his apostolic legate in France, to be adorned with a crown. And Leo the thirteenth also conferred innumerable benefits, granted indulgences in the manner of a jubilee in the twenty-fifth year of the Apparition occurring, promoted pilgrimages by his authority and word, and arranged to complete by his name the solemn dedication of the Church under the title of the Rosary. He accumulated the extent of which benefits, when, with the asking of many bishops, he kindly granted a solemn feast to be celebrated under the title of the Apparition of the blessed Virgin Mary immaculate with a proper Office and proper Mass. Finally supreme Pontiff Pius the tenth for his piety towards the Godbearer, and agreeing to the wishes of many holy Bishops, extended the same feast to the universal Church.