

Laudato Si, On Care for Our Common Home



February 11

Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes

Each year, the Church remembers in a special way those who suffer from physical or emotional illness on February 11 as it celebrates the World Day of Prayer for the Sick. Why would the Church mark the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes for such a day?

Lourdes is a city in France and home to one of the most important Marian shrines. Bernadette Soubirous, a 14-year-old peasant girl, experienced 18 apparitions of the Virgin Mary in a grotto of Lourdes between February 11 and July 26, 1858. During the 9th vision, Our Lady revealed an underground spring with healing powers to Bernadette. The Church has recognized 67 miracles attributed to the water that still flows from this spring. Today, approximately 5 million pilgrims journey to the shrine at Lourdes. They pray to Mary for her intercession for a healing of heart, mind and soul. Many bathe in the healing waters of Lourdes in hope of a physical miracle. Thus, it is fitting that the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes also calls to mind those who suffer from sickness throughout the world.

Pope Francis also reminds us that a “serious problem” that causes much sickness, particularly with the poor, is the lack of “fresh drinking water.” He writes in his encyclical, *Laudato Si*, “Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of

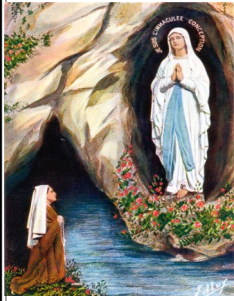
water-related diseases, including those caused by microorganisms and chemical substances. Dysentery and cholera, linked to inadequate hygiene and water supplies, are a significant cause of suffering and of infant mortality. Underground water sources in many places are threatened by the pollution..., especially in countries lacking adequate regulation or controls... industrial waste, detergents and chemical products... continue to pour into our rivers, lakes and seas.” (LS#29)

How can you help?

Pope Francis says that we need to become educated and more aware of the “water issues” of the world.

- A good source for information is Catholic Relief Services. This organization works in impoverished parts of the world to build communal wells for fresh water while educating the local population about water borne diseases.
- With the season of Lent quickly approaching, why not consider ways to save or not waste water in your daily life?
- Remember to pray always for the poor, the sick and the suffering through the intercession of Mary, most especially on her feast day under the title of Our Lady of Lourdes.

February 5 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time	Matthew 5: 13-15	<i>Jesus calls us to be the salt of the earth. Explain the meaning of this image and how you reflect its meaning in your life.</i>
February 12 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time	Sirach 15: 15-20	<i>How do you choose life as described in the Scriptures each day?</i>
February 19 Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time	Leviticus 19: 1-2;17-18	<i>How can you love your neighbor as yourself? Give examples.</i>
February 26 Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time	Matthew 6: 24-34	<i>How can you live more simply like the birds of the air?</i>



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BACKGROUND FOR THE RESOURCE

PICTURE ON LEFT SIDE: Picture of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Bernadette.

WHAT IS AN ENCYCLICAL?

An encyclical is a letter usually written by a Pope to a particular audience of Bishops. Pope Francis said this encyclical was not only written to the bishops of the world and not even just to Catholics but to all people of the world. He said the issue of care for creation is too important to write to only some people when all people are needed to do something about caring for creation today.

WHAT DOES “LAUDATO SI” MEAN IN ENGLISH?

Laudato Si are the first two words of the Canticle of Creation, a prayer written by Saint Francis of Assisi. The literal translation from the original Umbrian language is “praise be”. Umbrian is an ancient Italian dialect. In relationship to the encyclical, the official Vatican translation is “praise be to you, my Lord.”

- **For a complete copy of the encyclical go to:** http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
- **For additional lesson plans and parent/youth newsletters go to:** www.sophiainstituteforteachers.org
Click “FREE RESOURCES,” then “Curriculum Exchange.” Type *Laudato Si* in the search field.

“THE SONG OF BERNADETTE”

This classic film captures the story of Our Lady’s appearances to St. Bernadette at Lourdes. Segments of the movie are posted at You Tube.

For bulletin board ideas for February and Our Lady of Lourdes, check the IHM ABC Notes at: <http://ihmimmaculata.org/wp-content/uploads/12-Religion-Bulletin-Boards-1.pdf>

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES:

Is an organization of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops which works with organizations around the world to help poor and vulnerable people overcome emergencies, earn a living through agriculture and access affordable health care. Great resources are posted at their website— <http://www.crs.org/>