



DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH
Plymouth Cathedral
Cathedral of Saint Mary & Saint Boniface



The Cathedral Administrator: Canon Mark O’Keeffe.
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PRESS INFORMATION

(For immediate release)

10th August, 2022

A SAINT’S VISIT

*Relic of St Bernadette of Lourdes to visit Plymouth Cathedral in September.
The Sanctuary at Lourdes has witnessed 70 miraculous cures...*

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC Cathedral in Plymouth will be the venue for a once-in-a-lifetime visit early in September. It is here that the relic of St Bernadette of Lourdes will reside for the two days of the 9th & 10th. As a young girl, living in the Pyrénées in France, miller’s daughter Bernadette Soubirous encountered a ‘young lady’ – later confirmed to be a vision of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Bernadette met Our Lady on sixteen occasions between 11th February and 16th July 1858 and it was on 25th March 1858 that she had the courage to ask the lady her name. Our Lady replied: “I am the Immaculate Conception” – thus identifying herself as the virgin-mother of Christ.

In fact, the 25th March 1858 has extra-special importance for Catholics here in the South-west for it was on that actual day that Plymouth Cathedral opened its doors for worship; as the building was very nearly completed.

This historic visit of the relic of St Bernadette to Plymouth is part of a tour of the Catholic Dioceses of England and Wales as well as the Carfin Grotto – Scotland’s National Shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes.

On Friday, 9th September the holy relic, in its beautiful Shrine, will arrive at Plymouth Cathedral from Portsmouth at 1pm to be greeted by the singing of pupils from Catholic schools in the vicinity. Thereafter, visitors and pilgrims from all over Devon, Cornwall and Dorset will be able to process past the shrine and spend time in private prayer.

The story of Saint Bernadette, in animation, will be shown every ten minutes or so in the adjacent Cathedral Centre and there will be a special service in the Cathedral – with a candlelit procession – starting at 6pm. The cathedral will close at 10 pm after Night Prayer (Compline).

The next morning the Cathedral will open at 6am for public access to the Shrine. At 10.30am there will be Mass with the Anointing of the Sick after which the Shrine with its precious relic will depart for Bristol.

Pilgrims will be in the care of the Plymouth Cathedral Administrator, Canon Mark O’Keeffe. He said: “Our unique and special link with the apparitions at Lourdes more than 160 years ago means that the visit of the Saint’s relic has even greater significance for us and for the City of Plymouth.

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“We look forward not only to welcoming Catholic pilgrims from all over the South-west but also our many friends from different Christian traditions and those of other faiths or none. We hope that they will be inspired by the story of St Bernadette and the amazing apparitions she witnessed at Lourdes.”

Canon Mark explained that the Catholic Church has now recognised some 70 cures of the sick attributable to visits to the Sanctuary at Lourdes. Our Lady had specifically asked Bernadette for a chapel to be built at the nearby cave-grotto at Massabielle and the site can now take in some five million pilgrims and tourists every season.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster, announced this historic visit of the relic a few weeks ago. “As we welcome the relic of St Bernadette to the United Kingdom,” he said, “we are reminded of the special significance of Lourdes as a place of pilgrimage and love, where people of all ages serve and care for the sick and the most vulnerable in our society.”

The Cardinal encourages those visiting the Shrine of the relic to consider continuing their journey to Lourdes itself in the weeks and months ahead. He added, “We thank God for the faith of Saint Bernadette and for the many gifts and graces the relic tour will bring.”

(ENDS – 619 words – plus photos and captions)

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

1. Plymouth Cathedral.



2. Canon Mark O’Keeffe.



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3. Saint Bernadette of Lourdes.

4. The beautiful Reliquary (Shrine)



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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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Visit the Relic Tour website at [St Bernadette Relic Tour 2022](#)