

FAITH MATTERS



Eighteen St. Luke teens joined fellow pilgrims at Belmont Abbey on March 28 for the Bishop's Youth Pilgrimage for a day of faith and fellowship. Full story on page 4. Photo credit: Katy De'Ath

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A Message From the Finance Council

Status of our outstanding debt

After the decision to sell the Lawyers Road property in late 2023, the parish carried a remaining debt balance of \$3.00 million (excluding the \$2.95 million in debt that was retired through the sale of the Lawyers Road property in 2024). Since that time, \$969,000 in additional principal payments have been applied to the \$3.00 million loan, along with approximately \$615,000 through scheduled principal amortization. In total, the parish has reduced the debt by roughly \$1.59 million. As of March 1, 2026, the remaining balance stands at \$1.42 million.

This accelerated progress is being driven by the strong support of parishioners through the previous Cornerstone II Campaign and the current Forward with Christ Campaign. The consistency, generosity, and shared commitment continue to make substantial extra payments possible and keep a December 2027 payoff goal within reach.

To fully retire the debt by December 2027, monthly payments will need to average \$71,700 - approximately \$37,000 above the current minimum payment of \$34,700. Reaching this target would save the parish an estimated \$517,000 in interest over the life of the loan. Thank you to every parishioner whose stewardship, sacrifice, and faith-filled generosity have made this level of progress possible. Your support is directly shaping the future of our parish and strengthening our ability to serve our community for years to come.



@stlukesminthill

Hispanic Lenten Retreat

The Hispanic Ministry held their annual Lenten Retreat on Saturday, March 14. At the retreat, attendees celebrated Mass, spent time in prayer during Holy Hour, and participated in Stations of the Cross. The guest speakers were Deacon Juan Gonzalez Hernandez from Monroe, and our own Deacon Guillermo Anzola. Thank you to Luis Barron and the entire Volunteers Committee for coordinating the retreat!



Photo Credit: Rob Leugers

Order of the Christian Initiation of Teens (OCIT)

Teens celebrate their first reconciliation

Congratulations to our teens who received their first reconciliation during the OCIT Retreat on March 7. They will celebrate their first holy Communion in May.

Father Templeton enrolled the teens in the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The brown scapular is made of two small pieces of brown wool connected by cords and worn over one's shoulders. According to tradition, the Blessed Mother appeared to St. Simon Stock, a Carmelite friar, in July 1251. She promised that those who died wearing the scapular with devotion to her and faith in her Divine Son would not suffer eternal fire.

We are so proud of each of these young people! Please keep them in your prayers as they continue forward in their faith journey.



Pictured L - R: Dayanna Maldonado, Luke DeStefano, Krystal Vidal Nunez, Julissa Reyes, Ivan Teran, Lucas Herrera, Ashley Robles, Emmanuel Robles, Emma McEwen, Yelena Melchor, Valeria Betancourt Santibanez, and Zarah Pena. Behind Zarah is Fr. Templeton. Photo credit: Katy De'Ath

Learn more about the scapular at
<https://www.catholic.com/tract/the-brown-scapular-catholic-answers-guide>



Bishop's Youth Pilgrimage

The Bishop's Youth Pilgrimage is a one-day annual retreat for youth in middle and high school. It is a precursor to the Eucharistic Congress in September, but just customized for youth. On March 29, the pilgrimage took place at Belmont Abbey. Eighteen youth from St. Luke joined over 900 participants from across the Charlotte Diocese for a day filled with faith and fellowship.

Teens celebrated Mass with Bishop Martin, heard inspiring talks, and enjoyed amazing music. The day also included adoration, a Eucharistic procession, and fun hands-on activities. A huge thank you to our youth group coordinators, Katy De'Ath and Kristen Tarantino, and the many parents who helped and supported them throughout the day: Stephen Vullo, Renee Crainer, Tina Henrique, Sue Gordon, Erika Platnik, and Mary Gilson!



Photo Credit: Katy De'Ath

Bernadette of Lourdes

The apparitions that changed a town forever

The town of Lourdes, France, sits in the foothills of the Pyrenees. It was a place where few expected anything remarkable to happen. But on a February morning in 1858, a young girl gathering firewood by the river heard a rushing wind, looked up, and saw a dazzling light that would change the world. Her name was Bernadette Soubirous, and what she saw in that grotto would set off a chain of events that priests, police, doctors, and judges could not explain, silence, or stop.

Bernadette's Early Life

Born in 1844 in Lourdes, France, Bernadette was the eldest of nine children. Her father was a miller. For the first decade of her life, the family lived comfortably at the Boly Mill. But rising poverty in mid-nineteenth-century France steadily affected their income.

The family moved several times to ever-smaller quarters. By 1857, they had reached their lowest point: a single ten-by-ten-foot room in an old, abandoned prison called Le Cachot (The Dungeon). Bernadette was a sickly child, nearly dying of cholera and suffering from severe asthma. Her poor health and lack of nutrition likely limited her growth to just 4' 7".

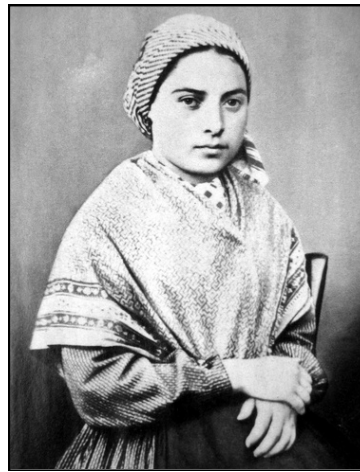
The First Apparition

On February 11, 1858, Bernadette gathered firewood with her sister and a friend near the Gave River. The river has a grotto, a small, natural cave. While removing her stockings to wade across, she heard the sound of rushing wind. Looking up at the grotto, she saw a dazzling light surrounding a figure in white.

"I saw a lady dressed in white. She wore a white dress and equally white veils, a blue belt, and a yellow rose on each foot."

- St. Bernadette

Unsure of what the vision meant, Bernadette made the sign of the cross and began to pray the rosary. The lady in white joined her in prayer. When the rosary ended, the figure vanished.



St. Bernadette Soubirous



Le Cachot (The Dungeon)

When Bernadette's mother found out, she beat her because she thought she was lying, and forbade her from returning. But Bernadette couldn't stay away; she felt an irresistible pull towards the grotto.

The lady would appear to 14-year old Bernadette a total of 18 times between February 11, 1858 and July 16, 1858.

Fifteen Days of Marian Apparitions

It was not until the third vision that the lady spoke. She said, "I do not promise to make you happy in this world, but in the next." She then asked Bernadette to return each day for 15 days.

Word spread quickly, and crowds grew, following her to the grotto. People were divided over whether Bernadette was telling the truth.

Bernadette was interrogated by the police commissioner. Her father assured the commissioner that the visits would stop. However, Bernadette couldn't stay away.

By February 25, the ninth appearance, 300 people followed Bernadette to the grotto. That day, the lady told Bernadette to wash and drink from a spring at the base of the grotto, but there wasn't one. Bernadette dug in the dirt with her hands repeatedly, at first finding only muddy water. The watching crowd, not understanding, believed she had lost her mind and began ridiculing her.

Bernadette of Lourdes

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Local priests and authorities were alarmed. Bernadette was brought before a judge, who threatened her with prison if she continued visiting the grotto. The next day, a spring flowed at the grotto.

The Lady Reveals Her Name

The lady asked Bernadette several times to tell the priests to build a chapel. They scoffed at the idea and told Bernadette to ask the lady for her name.

On March 25 (the Feast of the Annunciation), the lady revealed her name. She said, "I am the Immaculate Conception." Bernadette ran all the way to tell the parish priest, repeating the phrase so she wouldn't forget it.

Bernadette had no idea what the words meant; after all, the Immaculate Conception had been formally declared Catholic dogma only four years earlier—knowledge far beyond an uneducated 14-year-old from Lourdes. The priests finally believed her.

Throughout the 18 apparitions, which ended on July 16, 1858, Bernadette was examined by doctors, clergy, and police. She was ridiculed by townspeople, doubted by family, and threatened by officials. She never changed her account, enduring all with quiet resolve that surprised those who questioned her.



The grotto, present day. WikiCommons.

After the Apparitions

After a canonical investigation, Bernadette's reports were eventually declared "worthy of belief" on February 18, 1862, and the Marian apparition became known as Our Lady of Lourdes.

After the apparitions ended, Bernadette entered a convent, where she spent her remaining years in servitude, suffering, and prayer. She died at 35 from tuberculosis of the lung and bone.

When people urged her to go to Lourdes and bathe in the spring waters to heal herself, she simply declined without self-pity. She remembered the Blessed Mother's words and would say, "That is not for me. That is for other people."

The spring that Bernadette uncovered with her hands eventually became known as the miraculous spring of Lourdes. As a result, Lourdes is now one of the world's most visited Catholic pilgrimage sites. Each year, millions of people visit seeking healing, and thousands of cures have been reported. The Church thoroughly investigates each report and has only confirmed 67 cases as medically inexplicable.

Bernadette was canonized in 1933. She is patron of the sick, the poor, and those mocked for their faith. Her feast day falls on the day of her death, April 16, 1879.



St. Bernadette's incorrupt body is displayed in the main chapel of the Convent of Saint-Gildard in Nevers, France (Espace Soubrious Nevers). Photo by Father Andrew Templeton

If you are interested in reading more about St. Bernadette, here are a few suggestions: *Bernadette Speaks: A Life of St. Bernadette Soubrious in Her Own Words* by Fr. Rene Laurentin and *Saint Bernadette Soubrious: 1844-1879* by Abbe Francois Trochu.

Easter Egg Hunt

Thank you to the Family Life Committee for volunteering their time to our Easter Egg Hunt on Palm Sunday!



Photo Credit: Katelyn Linker

April

To see a full list of Mass times, ministry meetings, Faith Formation classes, please go to our website calendar at <https://www.stlukechurch.net/full-calendar>. For current volunteer opportunities, please go to <https://www.stlukechurch.net/volunteer>.

Thurs., April 2 Holy Thursday	Office Closed Mass of the Lord's Supper, 7:00 pm (incense) Adoration, 8:15 - 10:00 pm, Church
Fri., April 3 Good Friday	Office Closed Veneration of the Cross, 3:00 pm, Church Divine Mercy Novena, 4:00 pm, Pavilion Stations of the Cross, 6:00 pm, Church Stations of the Cross in Spanish, 7:00 pm, Church
Sat., April 4 Holy Saturday	Easter Vigil Mass, 8:00 - 10:00 pm (incense)
Sun., April 5 Easter Day	Mass Times: 7:00 am, 9:00 am, 11:00 am (incense), and 1:00 pm in Spanish (incense)
Mon., April 6 Easter Monday	Office Closed Regular Mass Schedule
Sun., April 12	Teens for Christ, 6:00 - 8:00 pm, Narthex
Fri., April 17	Annual Welcome Social, 6:30 - 8:00 pm, Family Life Center on Lawyers Road
Sat., April 18	Family Adoration, 2:30 - 3:30 pm, Church
Sun., April 19	Teens for Christ, 6:00 - 8:00 pm, Narthex
Sat., April 25	<u>Pathways to Healing's Hope is Alive Retreat</u> , 9:00 am - 3:00 pm, Family Life Center, Lawyers Rd. Ministry Fair after Mass, Narthex
Sun., April 26	Ministry Fair after all Masses, Narthex Holy Hour, 2:00 - 3:00 pm, Church Teens for Christ, 6:00 - 8:00 pm, Narthex

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