

Why the Oscar-Winning Classic 'The Song of Bernadette' Still Stirs the Soul: 5 Memorable Quotes.

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In honour of the April 15 feast of St. Bernadette, let's revisit the inspiring, Oscar-winning "The Song of Bernadette." Here are five memorable quotes from this beautiful, classic film.

By Fr. Edward Looney. April 15, 2026 . The Song of Bernadette / 20th Century Fox - Fair Use

There are timeless classics in literature and film that all people must read or see. In the Catholic world, I would label The Song of Bernadette such a film. Produced in 1943 and starring Jennifer Jones, the film won many Academy Awards. Based on the novel of the same title by Franz Werfel, the film tells the story of Saint Bernadette, who, in 1858, received 18 apparitions of the Blessed Mother, who identified herself as the Immaculate Conception.

Here are five inspiring quotes from The Song of Bernadette:

1) “For those who believe in God, no explanation is necessary. For those who do not believe, no explanation is sufficient.”

This is one of the most memorable quotes from the film, and perhaps the most cited. The movie begins with this quote, and near the end, Abbé Dominique Peyramale, the priest of Lourdes, says it to a few sceptics. The quote sets the scene for the story of Lourdes' miraculous phenomena. One cannot explain what happened or still happens in Lourdes. For over 150 years, it has drawn pilgrims from all over the world, who have bathed in the spring waters and experienced a variety of healings. Those who have been to Lourdes cannot describe their experience because it is beyond words. Faith must be enough. No explanation is necessary, nor can an explanation be given as to what a person experiences at that Sanctuary of grace.

2) “What would a beautiful lady be doing in a filthy place like that?” / “Heavenly creatures would not come to a dump.”

Bernadette continually called her heavenly visitor a beautiful lady. This garnered quite the response since Massabielle was a dump for medical waste. Would a heavenly creature come to such a despicable place? All we must do is remember that Jesus was born in a stable and placed in a feeding trough. Mary’s appearance at Massabielle shows the transforming power of God to turn something ugly into a beautiful place. God wants to do that for each pilgrim, transforming their hearts of stone into natural, loving hearts. The Grotto of Massabielle commemorates the apparitions of the all beautiful one, Mary, who beckons those who are sick to come and experience healing and receive many graces. Through the intercession of Mary, God wants to transform each person who comes to Lourdes into a better disciple and follower of Jesus.

3) “I cannot promise you happiness in this world, only in the next.”

Saint Bernadette repeats these words of the Blessed Virgin several times throughout the film. At one time, she even declared she was happy and couldn’t understand it, considering what Mary had said. Towards the end of the film, the suffering of Saint Bernadette becomes apparent, especially as she approaches death. One of the sisters attending to Saint Bernadette reminds the viewer that suffering is the way to Heaven. For Bernadette, the suffering of this present life would be relieved, and true happiness would come to her when she received her eternal reward, where she would be united with her Lord and reunited with Mary, who made herself known to her in 1858.

4) “We must have the humility to thank God for the grace he has accorded to us.”

The specific grace this quote refers to is the grace of Mary’s apparition in Lourdes. Abbé Dominique Peyramale makes this remark to the Bishop of Tarbes, and his reluctance to acknowledge the possibility of the supernatural. This quote, even though referencing Lourdes, is a good reminder to us to be humble and thank God for what He has given us throughout life. It takes humility to acknowledge that it is not we who have accomplished so much in our lives, but rather us cooperating with God’s graces.

5) “Heaven chose you; there is nothing left but for you to choose Heaven.”

Abbé Dominique Peyramale tells Bernadette this when he proposes the idea of religious life. His point is that Bernadette was a chosen soul by Heaven to receive a visit from the Blessed Virgin, and so, in return, he invites her to choose the consecrated life. Saint Bernadette entered the Sisters of Nevers, a congregation with which she was familiar because they had a convent in Lourdes. In our own lives, this quote reminds us of John’s gospel (15.16) where Jesus says, “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you.”

Because God has chosen us, we must choose to live our lives each day as worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. Heaven must be the motivation of our every choice. Before everything we do, we should ask,

“If I do this, will it lead me to Heaven, or have me walking away from the pearly gates?”

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