



"I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

February 10, 2026

Hello Everyone —

"For those who believe in God, no explanation is necessary. For those who do not believe in God, no explanation is possible."

If you are of a certain vintage, you may recall that the above-mentioned words open the 1943 movie entitled "The Song of Bernadette." Based on the popular novel by Franz Werfel, the movie focused on St. Bernadette Soubirous, a young French woman who experienced vivid visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. While many dismissed her claims, certain people, including the parish priest, slowly began to believe her. Eventually, St. Bernadette became a nun at a convent in Nevers, France, where she would have to face the jealousy of others who resented her revered status. Well, I think you know the rest of the story.

Now if you are a theater aficionado, you may be pleased to learn that later this month a new stage production entitled "Bernadette, The Musical" about the young girl whose Marian apparitions in Lourdes forever changed the spiritual landscape of the world will be making its U.S. debut in Chicago. Rooted in official accounts, historical documentation and firsthand testimonies, the musical is described as an emotional, soul-stirring exploration of faith, resilience and the extraordinary strength of a young girl who changed the world by simply telling her truth.

No, no, don't worry, I'm not becoming the next Roger Ebert. My purpose in mentioning these artistic attempts to portray the life of one of the great Marian saints is to call to mind that tomorrow (February 11) is not only the annual celebration of Our Lady of Lourdes, but it is also the World Day of the Sick. In designating the day as such, Pope St. John Paul II envisioned the World Day of the Sick as "a special time of prayers and sharing, of offering one's suffering for the good of the Church and of reminding us to see in our sick brothers and sisters the face of Christ who, by suffering, dying, and rising, achieved the salvation of humankind."

Speaking of sickness and human suffering, there is a legend told about St. Theresa of Avila. One day the great mystic was startled by an apparition of our Lord. After her initial shock, she peered intently at her visitor and then she demanded, "Go away! You are not Jesus. You are a fraud! You are the devil!"

After some minutes of argumentation, the dark visitor finally admitted that the saint was correct. He inquired, "How did you know?" With that, the saint replied, "I saw no sign of your wounds."

Recall the following scripture verses:

For it was fitting that he, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the leader to their salvation perfect through suffering. (Hebrews 2:10)

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. (John 15:1-2)

The story involving St. Theresa and the words from Scripture each in different ways speak to us about the dignity — even the value — in human suffering. It is something contrary to what is often reflected by society. There we find a mindset where no one should have to suffer. It is bad, even evil, and should be avoided at all costs. And those who are sick or suffering are to be tucked away from view — or have an end made to their struggles. The vast majority of advertising campaigns do not focus on the sick, the feeble, or the elderly. Rather, attention is fixed on the young, the fit and the healthy.

And let's face it, human suffering is not something that we would necessarily choose. Who would? But it is part and parcel of life — and it has its place when viewed through the eyes of faith.

How did St. Theresa distinguish between the real Christ and the phony? His wounds. They were the signs of what he suffered. How did Jesus bring to salvation all who come to believe in him? Through the sufferings he endured. How does the Father continue to purify and sanctify his children? As branches of the true vine, the Father prunes us through suffering to make us strong in order for us to bear more fruit.

St. Bernadette Soubirous, pray for us.

As I do for you, please pray for me,

Most Reverend Jeffrey S. Grob
Archbishop of Milwaukee

