

Bernadette's Testimony

I was born into a Catholic family in Cork during the late 50's. I was one of six children, and I was educated in a Catholic School. There, along with all my class, I received my first communion, and was also confirmed. My Secondary education was at Mount Mercy College.

As a young adult I left school. I had no interest in religion, Mass, or anything to do with God.

In November of 1983 my family suffered the great loss of our mother. No preparation can be made for the emptiness and void of losing someone so close and dear. I then began to think seriously of death, and of where my mother had gone. Would I ever see her again? What is life and death all about?

I really wanted to go to Heaven, so I started to return to Mass. I thought that I must go to confession because of all the years I had missed. I was really burdened about where I would be for all eternity. Eternity is forever, without end.

Sometime later I sustained a minor accident that necessitated treatment at the accident and emergency at Cork University Hospital. As I lay there, I was frightened to think that my life could all be over, and that I have no control over this. I knew that I must die sometime. Young or old, we must all die. Although I did not know this at the time, the Bible says that very thing in Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

During my recovery period at home, Pastor Smith, a Baptist Preacher, unexpectedly called to my door and gave me a Gospel leaflet. This leaflet gave me some Bible passages about how I could know for certain that I could go to Heaven.

Having introduced himself, Pastor Smith's first question was, "Where do you think you will spend eternity if you were to die today?" This question came as a shock, since I had, in recent weeks, been contemplating this same question. Having been educated a Catholic, I believed that I would spend some time in purgatory; but I did not know for how long. I was informed by Pastor Smith that in the Bible only two places, Heaven and Hell, are mentioned. I was amazed at this. I knew I had no right to Heaven. I knew in my heart that I was a sinner, and that I had broken God's Law many times. I realised that if I were to die I would go to Hell.

I received a Bible from Pastor Smith and read passages in it. It became clear to me that I deserved to go to Hell because of my sins. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." I also read that I could not earn the right to Heaven by any things that I might do: Masses, good works, Novenas, etc. I read Ephesians chapter two, verses eight and nine, which state, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

These verses made it clear that I could not earn Heaven because it is a gift from God. I was now even more concerned about eternity. I wanted to know how I could get to Heaven God's way instead of my way, or by any other man's way. Jesus states, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

In July 1987, from my heart I called on God to forgive me and save me. I trusted only in Jesus Christ, and in His finished work at Calvary. The Bible tells us in Romans 10, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Years have passed since I became a Christian; and it has not all been rosy or “up in the clouds.” My life still has its ups and downs, as everyone else’s does. It is different, though, because I know that I belong to Christ. He loves me, and He is always there. He will never leave me or forsake me! The peace I have had since then is most precious. I know for certain that there is place in Heaven for me. God tells me in 1 John 5:13, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."