
La Méthode Bernadette

A CATHECHISM METHOD FOR OUR TIMES



Conception And Apogee

The Méthode Bernadette was the masterpiece of l'abbé Bogard, the Curé de Thaon-Les-Vosges, in eastern France, and his artist, Sister Marie de Jésus of the Bernadette Sisters which he founded. With a profound understanding of



the evils of his time—modernism and atheistic materialism—in the years after the First World War, he devised a catechism based upon silhouette images which were both innocent and yet dramatic, conceived for children and yet captivating for adults, simple in composition and yet overflowing with information about Catholic doctrine, Bible history, the life of Jesus and history of the Church. The images by themselves are a monument to art, but, supported by a clearly enunciated, sensorial and mnemonic pedagogy which was effective in building a memorable synthesis of the faith in the minds of children of all ages and of all conditions, the Méthode Bernadette changed the sleepy parish of Thaon-Les-Vosges into a centre for printing and distribution of its catechism. The catechism course was eventually translated into 12 languages and shipped to 58 countries around the world. For 30 years, from 1934 to 1964 it formed millions of souls from French Indo-China to Quebec...

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Passion

...and then came the Second Vatican Council. Shortly after the death of the then Canon Bogard in 1965; Sister Marie de Jésus was compelled to modify her images to reflect the doctrinal changes inspired by the Council (e.g. removing all depictions of Satan); and then, two years later, the local bishop commanded that the Bernadette Sisters stop their apostolic work altogether. Sister Marie de Jésus died with a heavy heart in 1969 and, with her, died a truly great work of Christian education....

Resurrection

... or so it seemed. The Méthode Bernadette lingered on in a few bookshops of the rebellious “traditionalists,” and time-served copies are still to be seen at their catechism classes, but, as the missions of the Society of St. Pius X develop throughout the world, the need for a coherent, compelling, comprehensive and easy to implement catechism course is leading to a more comprehensive renaissance in French, English and, hopefully one day, in Tamil. In short, La Méthode Bernadette is being brought to life again; its silhouettes are making the faith black-and-white for a new generation of children—enabling them to see clearly in a world of grey. May this work be blessed as before and bring an even greater eternal glory to God, to Canon Bogard and to his able artist, Sister Marie de Jésus. Ω

Note

•A moving history of the Méthode Bernadette by Laurent Bruel (in French) was published by Editions Matière in 2008 with the title, *La Méthode Bernadette*.

