

A Place of Miracles, Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine, Wyoming, MI

Did you know there is "A Place of Miracles" at St. John Vianney Catholic Church, 4101 Clyde Park SW, Wyoming MI 49509, a close suburb of Grand Rapids, MI.



When Pat and I returned from the St. Andrew Pilgrimage to Fatima and Lourdes in June 2025, our dear friend, Cullen Larson, told us about his hometown boyhood experience at St. John Vianney Catholic Church. His God Mother, Dora Witheral, had terminal cancer...she visited Our Lady of Lourdes in France not able to even comb her hair by herself...and returned healed! Cullen's father helped design and build the Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine, at their parish, St. John Vianney.

Cullen told me that of all the various Marian apparition sites in the world, he found Guadalupe and Lourdes to have the most meaning for him. He shared, "I don't recall if I told you about the Lourdes shrine that my godparents built in the woods behind our parish church where I grew up. The short version is that my godmother went to Lourdes with cancer and came back without it. My dad worked as a volunteer builder here, and the spring of my First Communion they lined us up in our little suits and white dresses to be part of the dedication procession. Later I served for some outdoor Masses here."

Below is the story of this place of miracles and visitations by Mary for several people....I copied from their website. Quite a story to make you think.

Deacon Roger Fraser

The Story of Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine Began with the Dora Witheril Miracle 1956

"The shrine is located on the grounds of St. John Vianney parish in Wyoming, Michigan. My husband Edward Brokus and I, Pauline Brokus, have been the caretakers of the shrine for the past 40 years. It has been my desire to finally record this story so that it can be preserved for years to come.

The story begins in 1956. Our friend and neighbor, Dora Witheral and her family also were members of St. John Vianney parish. Dora was a person of very strong faith and when she was diagnosed with incurable lung cancer; her faith would be tested again and again. She was 45 years old at the time of her diagnosis and had difficulty with such a devastating prognosis.

It became known through others that miracles were occurring in a small town in southwestern France known as Lourdes. It was here in 1858, the Virgin Mary appeared to a peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous. A church was built there and a statue of the Virgin stands at the grotto where the vision occurred. To this day, many bath in the sacred waters of the grotto spring, in hope that a miracle would restore them to health. Miracles are happening there.

Dora knew she had to go and so did the parish. Through individual donations, enough money was raised to send Dora to France. As she was being wheeled aboard the plane, she made a sacred vow that if a miracle was to happen to her, she would build a shrine to Our Lady here at home. Having undergone invasive procedures prior to leaving, her condition was tentative at best. Chest bandages remained in place requiring frequent changing. It was during her immersion in the bath that the bandages fell off never to be replaced again. When Dora returned from Lourdes, she did not need the assistance of a wheelchair. She walked. Her miracle was apparent and it was then that the work began to fulfill the promise she had

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made to Our Lady. Dora began constructing a grotto in her backyard, but she was not prepared for the turn her journey was about to take. A turn that SHE was not in charge of... God was.

In a wooded area on the northwest corner of St. John Vianney parish property, 2 young children played as many children did at that time. Suddenly, they were startled by the appearance of a woman they had not seen before. Frightened, they returned home in tears, explaining to their mother what they had seen. Their mother, not knowing what to make of this story, took the children to the pastor, Fr. John Klonowski. He knew immediately what had occurred. The Lady was trying to tell them something. The shrine needed to be built there. And so it began.

A small group of parishioners and friends of the Witheril family volunteered to help in any way they could (driven by the power of faith). Dora began to raise money by going to any church or organization that would listen. She told her story and showed films of the miracles at Lourdes. Her supporters came from Allegan, Byron Center, Dorr as well as Grand Rapids and began to clear the woods, cutting trees and digging roots. Others cooked meals for the workers. They worked feverishly for they knew they were doing exactly what the Lady wanted them to do. I know because I was one of them. A design model was made of the grotto by a parishioner's brother and the materials were ordered.

The marble statues of Mary and Bernadette, the marble railings and altar came from Italy. Feather rock was dug from the ocean bottom in California. This rock would be used for the grotto itself and for each station of the cross. The entire area including the stations was lit and paths connected the grotto and the stations in a circular fashion. All areas led to and ended at the feet of the Lady. Individual benefactors chose and designed each station of the cross. Dedication plaques were fashioned and placed fulfilling the uniqueness of each station.

It took numerous years for the initial phase of completion to occur and in 1959 the first dedication was celebrated. Hundreds of people were there. Everyone could feel how holy this place was. Over the years, this place comforted and healed many (and continues to do so). However, complete recovery was not meant for Dora who in 1964 was again stricken with cancer and passed away at age 53, knowing that she had fulfilled her promise to her Lady.

As with all structures, eventually the shrine too needed repair from age and wear and sometimes vandalism. And so in 1993, I began a personal crusade to raise money to refurbish the shrine. With the help of many of the original workers and some new, donations and help were solicited. The parish festival committee, the Knights of Columbus and private donations allowed for a face-lift to occur. The shrine was rededicated in 1996. A Public Television interview with myself and my husband was aired to inspire others to be involved and utilize the shrine as it was intended... to heal and comfort. Ironically, I too have been stricken with lung cancer. At 80 years of age I feel that I have already been blessed by being chosen to oversee this sacred place. It has been an honor to serve my God, my faith and especially My Lady."

By Pauline Brokus

Michael D. Simon Miracle 1960

"...a miracle occurred on April 7, 1960 through the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Albert. Written by Dorothy M. Simon-Tibbe, mother of Michael D. Simon. You have my permission to use this in any manner you feel will be an honor to God and Our Blessed Mother Mary.

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Baby Michael D. Simon was born October 31, 1959, and appeared healthy at birth, but within a few weeks was hospitalized with what appeared to be a severe respiratory infection or pneumonia. He could not keep any food down, and had projectile vomiting. Dr. Emma L. MacAdams D.O., consulted a Dr. Wilson, John I believe, an M.D. from St. Marys who diagnosed Michael as having cystic fibrosis. Several other doctors were also consulted during the time frame he was in and out of the hospital, from birth until April 18th of 1960.

My husband Bob and I and all of the older children had helped in building the shrine on the grounds of St. John Vianney parish, (I was pregnant for Michael at the time), and developed a loving relationship with Dora and Tag Witheril and their family.

By April of 1960 Michael was dying. It seemed nothing more could be done for him, so Dora gave me Lourdes Water & water blessed through the intercession of St. Albert, a patron for those with high fevers.

Michael was not allowed to have anything by mouth, and was only sustained by I.V.s. He weighed 9 pounds at 5 months of age, and could not hold his head up, but was like a new born babe. He had a “comfy-babe” seat in his crib so that he was held in a soft slightly raised position, and if he kicked or cried it would bounce a bit as it was a wire frame with cloth seat and back. The hospital kept several in his room as he would soil them so quickly with vomit.

I gave Michael Lourdes water and water blessed through the intercession of St. Albert in a bottle I brought up to the hospital, and he drank perhaps one ounce of both waters mixed together. A nurse came in while I was giving him this bottle and read me the riot act as little Michael was to have nothing by mouth, and WHAT was I doing giving him a bottle? I cried as I told her what it was, and that I was praying for a cure for him, and she stormed out and called Dr. Mac, who came up to the hospital within a couple hours. Dr. Mac put her arms around me and said; “Mother, that baby is dying. It’s great that you have such faith as you’re going to need it. There is nothing more we can do for him.” She also told me that the water I gave him was probably not at all sterile, and they had been giving him nothing but IV’s and he was in very sterile conditions.

I cried a lot but also went to church often as this was Holy Week, and I was a member of the choir so we had some last minute practices before Holy Thursday.

Father John Klonowski was our pastor at the time, and Father Denis Nash was one of the assistants, and a very young priest at the time. (so was I young then! 28 years old) Father Nash happened to come up to the choir loft and I cried and told him that I had given Michael Lourdes Water etc., and he asked if the baby had been confirmed. I replied: “Of course he has been baptized.” as I thought he mis-spoke himself as I had never heard of a tiny baby receiving confirmation. Father Nash then told me that in danger of death, babies and small children are confirmed which gives them the same grace and strength that extreme unction gives those adults on their death bed. He told me he would take care of it, gave me a hug, and said I should just put it in God’s hands.

We went to all the Holy Week services, and on Easter Sunday noon we took the children to see Michael. They were ages 9,7,6 and 2 at the time and children were never allowed in hospital rooms, but they were allowed to go into Michael’s room, and all of us took turns holding him and telling him “Goodbye” as he was dying, and we were accepting that fact. (I’m crying here and can hardly see to type!.... and this is nearly 40 years later!)

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We came home and had a rather somber Easter afternoon. Monday morning I was doing laundry and the phone rang. Dr. MacAdams was on the phone, crying. I said; "Michael's dead, right?" She said; "Dorothy, Michael is sitting up in his bed! Come down here as quick as you can, I'll stay here and wait for you." I shook. I cried. I prayed. I drove to Grand Rapids Osteopathic Hospital at 1919 Boston S.E., which then was a very small hospital, only opened about two years previously. When I got to the hospital the receptionist cried and hugged me. Down the hall other people grabbed me and hugged me, all crying. I got to Michael's room, and Dr. Mac and all the nurses were crying with joy. Michael was indeed sitting up in his bed, like he was a normal five month old child.....however, he had never even held his head before this, much less sit up!

We then learned that Father O'Leary from Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish had confirmed Michael about 3 PM on Easter Sunday, April 17th, 1960, and Dr. Giardo was his sponsor. (

Dr. Mac wanted to re-consult all of the specialists who had been called in before she discharged him, and run all the tests over again, but we wanted to take him home immediately. We didn't want any tests as both Bob and I felt that would be a slap in the face of God who cured him, and that we should not question that cure. Michael was home with us shortly thereafter. We were warned that this "cure" was just temporary, and probably he would be back in the hospital very soon, but we believed he was cured.

I talked with Father Klonowski and wanted to make a statement about a miracle, and he said we could not do that. A miracle is a long drawn-out process. So we just rejoiced in the fact that Michael was normal & well. And never even checked the hospital records at that time.

The following year on April 17th, Michael said; "Shrine-shrine" and when I realized what he had said, we all went over to Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine to give thanks and pray. We were regulars at the Shrine, and daughter Barbara had the honor of crowning Our Blessed Lady when she was in the 8th grade at St. John Vianney.

The day Michael's Dad was dying at that same hospital June 27th, 1987, All of our family were gathered in Bob's room for his final days, and Michael said he would like to get copies of his medical records so I gave him the necessary \$3.00 per page, and he began his research. He brought up many pages, and after many trips back, finally got the page with his discharge, which states: "Unexplainable cure. Baby Michael Simon is discharged. No further information available."

Bob and I both knew Michael was a miracle, and Bob realized that morning that Michael had gotten his records. My dear husband died that afternoon, June 27, 1987 at 6:23 PM.

Michael will be 40 this October 31, 1999. He is our youngest son, and a very special person. He has two beautiful children, aged 19 and 18, and is in good health He hopefully will be in even better health as he has now quit smoking for about 6 weeks. Praise God!

We thank God each and every day for all his many favors, but for our family especially!"

Submitted with tears..... Michael's Mom Dorothy

Jerry Marshall Miracle 1999

“...here is a little note regarding Jerry Marshall recovering from esophagus cancer. On Sept. 5, 1998 Jerry was diagnosed with esophagus cancer. This is a very difficult cancer to treat. He started chemo & radiation. We had treatments daily for 6 weeks. He became very ill & started to lose weight.

From the beginning of his illness, we prayed daily. We set up an altar in our home in honor of Our Lady of Lourdes, we also have a grotto in our backyard but the greatest effect was visiting Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine (St. John Vianney, Wyoming, MI). There is a great serenity & strengthen faith when we went there. Our dear friend Bernie Despres brought us some holy water from Lourdes, France, which we blessed ourselves with daily. We both shared inner feelings that one day he would be cured. It is very difficult to explain but it was there.

We are grateful to so many people who prayed for Jerry. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes that we were granted the miracle of his complete cure.

On January 7, 1999 Jerry had a CAT scan. On January 12, 1999 we met with Dr. Alan Campbell. He gave us the results of the CAT scan – the malignant tumor was gone & all the cancer cells in his body were gone. He was clean from all cancer. We started to cry (rest of the day) with deepest gratitude to Almighty God & to Our Lady of Lourdes.”