

St Mary's, Chorley – Friday 16 September

A visit to St Bernadette

Among the many schools visiting the relics was St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Shevington, Headteacher, Mrs Helen Crowder and School Governor, Mrs Chris Mason, write:

The St Bernadette Relic Tour this autumn has allowed the children, staff and parishioners from St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School in Wigan, the unique opportunity to put their faith into action and experience the special gifts of Lourdes. The beautiful church of St Mary's, Chorley was a perfect stopping place for the relics of St Bernadette and so on Friday 16 September, the school community from St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School in Shevington, Wigan, took the opportunity to make a pilgrimage, to visit the relics of their special school saint. The Key Stage 2 pupils together with staff, governors and parishioners travelled together, to pay witness, to reflect and to pray together.

It was a privilege and honour for the school to sit directly in front of St Bernadette's reliquary, at the very front of the church. Here, the children saw, the richly decorated reliquary, illuminated in the glow of candles. They observed, with quiet reverence, as members of the congregation made personal visits to the shrine. They watched, with respect as prayers were made and waited patiently for their turn.

Mass was celebrated by Father Peter Crowther, whose homily spoke directly to the children. They listened carefully, as he told the story of St Bernadette and the Immaculate Conception. Father Crowther helped everyone to understand the meaning and relevance of the relics. He explained that

a relic is, 'like a keep sake - we have kept St Bernadette close, because she was close to Our Lady'. To share in the Eucharist and to receive a blessing, with the sprinkling of holy water from Lourdes, were indeed great gifts to receive, in the presence of St Bernadette.

After the Mass, pupils processed, slowly past, each one touching the relic case with wide-eyes and amazement at the beauty of the gold reliquary. There was a shared appreciation of the importance of the moment and the enormity of the opportunity to be close to their school saint. It was a spiritual and moving experience, which will be remembered, re-lived and shared again as St Bernadette's school community follow their Mission to: 'Grow together in faith, love and learning'.

