

## The Lourdes Placebo

Lourdes is in France. It nestles among the Pyrenees. In 1858, a destitute asthmatic child of thirteen, Bernadette Soubirous, claimed she saw the Virgin Mary in a cave at the dump of Massabielle eighteen times between the 11th of February and July 18th. Today Lourdes is renowned for its claimed miraculous healings.

Placebo and wrong diagnoses account for many a healing.

The placebo is faith in faith and that is dangerous and that stunts one's intellectual and emotional growth. Spiritual people who dish out placebos package them as being about more than just physical or emotional healing - they tend to say there is a spiritual or religious element too. They offer holistic placebos - mind and body and spirit. If faith in faith is even slightly encouraged and as a placebo then surely any faith will do?

Catholic teaching insists that Jesus said that if he will do a miracle you must have strong faith first. What about Catholic devotees and priests encouraging sick people to believe they can and will be cured so that the door to a miracle can be opened? It is sick! No longer must they be able to say, "We promise Lourdes will heal the heart and that is the real miracle." No longer must they be able to say, "Real healings are rare but Lourdes heals through a placebo and it does not matter how somebody gets better as long as they do". Both of these are still giving false hope and putting people in emotional danger. To promise a placebo is quite cruel and even worse than promising that a real miracle might happen. The good at Lourdes is what we hear about. That is dishonest. There is another side. It is a dark side that makes promoting it totally unjustifiable.

It actually crueler to promise a definite or possible miracle cure in the sense of finding peace than a physical one. The Church certainly does that when it invites people to Lourdes.

An improvement in spiritual health is sooo easy to imagine when you are a vulnerable person that it gets your healer off the hook even if she is a total fake.

Pretending that you are healing the soul when you are not doing anything for the body or mind is a new scam.

St Bernadette of Lourdes said that those who said that holy water from Lourdes cured them were in fact cured by their faith and prayers. The placebo effect can be triggered by faith and prayer but the problem is that the "cure" or the new feeling of wellbeing will be attributed not to the placebo effect but to faith and prayer. What is wrong with that? It means that you ascribe the healing to the wrong thing and that is dangerous. You cannot get proper solutions unless you know what really works. If you think prayer cured you, you will not be looking for medicine anymore. You can say, "Okay I will not bother taking the cancer treatment as I am treating myself with prayer. If it does not seem to work, it only shows that in God's plan it was not meant to. Prayer cannot fail." Believers say that God cures through medicine which means that medicine in itself is no good - it is God empowering it to work that matters.

Medicine is no good in itself no matter what science says. That is a terrible view and means that it is luck not design we have to thank if religious people use doctors. At least if you suspect the cure or feeling better is the result of a placebo, you can continue with medical treatment for placebos have their place in medical theory.

