

Our faith in art: Please see *The Apparition of The Virgin in Lourdes* attributed to Franz Xavier Winterhalter (1805 – 1873). Empress Eugenie is said to have commissioned this painting in gratitude for the miraculous cure of her son, the prince imperial, after he drank water from the spring and ate a blade of grass from the grotto. Winterhalter has painted St. Bernadette Soubirous, a young child, on her knees in the grotto in prayer and paying rapt attention to the beautiful Virgin Mary, who here appears also as a young child. The youthful appearance of the Virgin corresponds very closely with Bernadette’s account, that “aquero” – “that one”, as Bernadette referred to the Virgin – was a “sweet little thing” – a young girl of her own age. Mary’s arms are opened wide in a welcoming gesture, and her veil is worn such that her hair is visible. Both of these details are faithful to Bernadette’s account and differ from most artists’ rendering of Our Lady. The twelve stars which crown Mary mark her as “the Virgin of the Apocalypse”.

