



Surrounding hills provide emerald setting for basilica of Lourdes.

Photos: Evans from Three Lions

ONE HUNDRED years ago the beautiful French town of Lourdes in the foothills of the Pyrenees was the scene of several miraculous visions of the Blessed Virgin that appeared to Bernadette Soubirous, a humble 14-year-old shepherdess. Since then, millions of ailing pilgrims have visited the Shrine of Saint Bernadette, and this year's centennial crowds are so huge that the town's railway station is probably the busiest in Europe. More than a dozen Masses are celebrated in the huge basilica each day, and the walls of the Grotto are covered with crutches—mute testimony of the curative power of religious faith.

Pilgrimage to Lourdes



Hundreds flock to the daily Masses offered in the Grotto. Collection of crutches were left by those cured by faith:



Girls lead each day's procession.



Ailing attend services at Grotto.