

THE MIRACLE

In March, 1990, at the age of 12, Bernadette McKenzie, a student in our school, had been experiencing severe pain and underwent surgery for a tethered spinal cord. Two subsequent surgeries occurred in January and November of 1991. Her surgeon referred her to another physician, solely for pain therapy, since he felt her case was insolvable.

In March of 1992 our grade school was run by the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales, and Sr. Anne Elizabeth was its Principal at that time. On the 21st of that month Sr. Anne Elizabeth began a novena in the convent chapel to Venerable Mother Aviat, the founder of their Order praying for a cure for 15 year old Bernadette, who by now was unable to stand or walk and was almost completely immobile. The novena, attended by family, friends and parishioners quickly outgrew the chapel and was moved to the main church by Father Wright, our Pastor at the time so that more parishioners could participate. Sr. Anne Elizabeth had given young Bernadette a relic to wear around her neck and encouraged her to pray along with them to Venerable Mother Aviat and on March 24th, the third day of the novena, Bernadette began to feel a lessening of the pain and a return of strength. Before very long her doctor wrote on a prescription blank: *"I see no medical explanation for the cure of this patient"*. On December 18, 2000, Cardinal Bevilacqua announced that Pope John Paul II decreed that Bernadette's healing was attributed to the intercession of Mother Aviat. The Holy Father's decree was the last major step needed for the canonization.

Since the cure occurred in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the diocesan inquiry regarding the case was opened by Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua on September 8, 1994. It was submitted to Rome in November 1994. On February 17, 2000, a board of medical experts decided there were no scientific, natural or medical reasons for the cure. On June 23, 2000, a board of theologians decided that the healing was due to the intercession of Mother Aviat. On December 5, 2000, a board of cardinals and bishops, members from the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, recommended the healing to the Holy Father as miraculous. On December 18, 2000 the Pope decreed the healing miraculous.

On Sunday, November 25, 2001 Pope John Paul II canonized Saint Leonie Aviate in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Italy.

A statue of St. Leonie Aviat can be found in the front of the church next to the Blessed Mother's altar.