

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal



Our Lady of The Miraculous Medal

St Catherine Laboure

When Catherine was 22, having turned down several marriage proposals, she asked her father for permission to enter the religious life. At first her father refused, even sending her to Paris to work in her brother's cafe to dissuade her, but two years later he relented.

When she had entered the Order as a



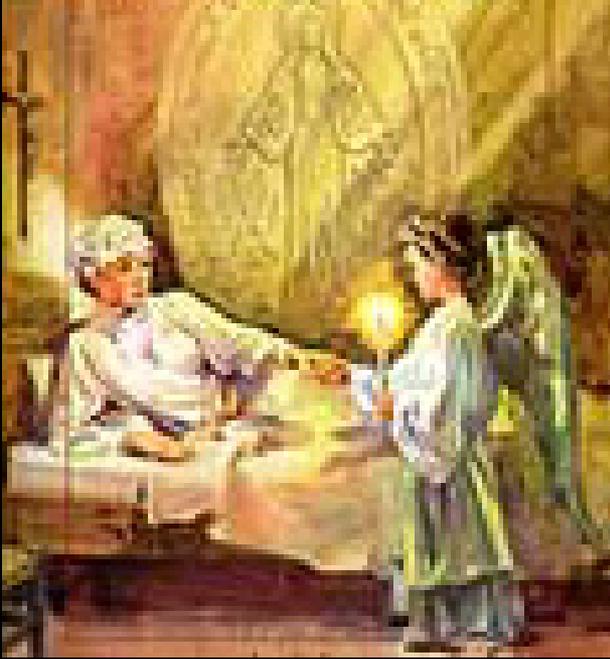
postulant there seemed to be nothing remarkable about her, she could barely read and it was only because a sympathetic sister undertook to tutor her that she became literate. In the novitiate Catherine began to have a number of extraordinary experiences - visions of the heart of St. Vincent de Paul and of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. She reported these mystical experiences to the confessor, who advised her to keep silent about them.



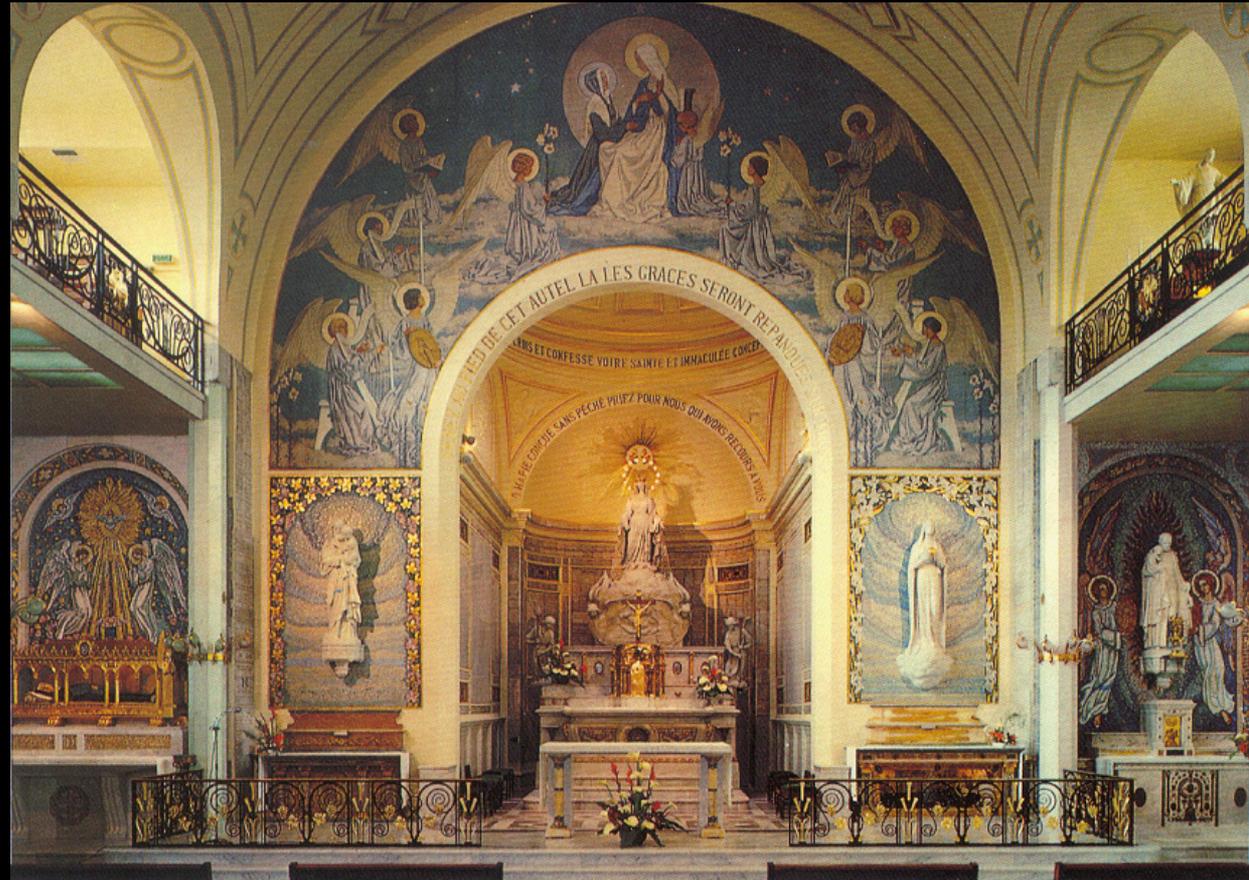
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First Apparition

July 18, 1830, the eve of the feast of St. Vincent, Catherine saw the Blessed Mother for the first time. At the time Catherine was 24 and was a novitiate of the Daughters of Charity in Paris for only three months.



Just before midnight Catherine was awakened by an angel resplendent with light, who appeared as a young child. She followed him to the chapel, where all the torches and tapers were burning brightly.



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The angel led her to the sanctuary and announced, "Here is the Blessed Virgin; here she is!" There was a rustle of silk and suddenly Catherine saw a beautiful lady seating herself in the blue velvet chair reserved for the director of the sisters.



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First Apparition

When the angel said again in a loud voice, "Here is the Blessed Virgin," Catherine immediately fell to her knees on the altar steps, and resting her hands on the Virgin's lap, looked up into her eyes. For the next two hours, the sweetest moments of her life she later wrote, Catherine and the Blessed Mother had an intimate conversation. Catherine was told about her mission and about future events, some to take place very soon, some many years off. The times were evil, she was told, and great sorrows would befall France and the whole world. The French throne would be overturned; there would be religious persecution. "But come to the foot of the altar," she was encouraged. "There graces will be shed upon all, great and small, who ask for them."





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A week after this apparition Charles X, the King of France, was deposed, the palace of the Archbishop of Paris sacked, and priests and bishops beaten and killed.

Second Apparition

November 27, 1830, four months later, Catherine was praying in the chapel with the community when the Blessed Virgin appeared for the second time. Clothed all in white, she stood in the sanctuary near a painting of St. Joseph, holding a small golden globe surmounted by a cross. Her feet rested on a white globe, around which was coiled a serpent, green in color with yellow spots. Brilliant rays radiated from gemstone rings on her fingers. Her face was of indescribable beauty.



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Catherine had an inner locution, an explanation of the vision. The globe represented the entire world, especially France, and it also represented each person in particular. The rays of light streaming from her hands represented the graces Our Lady sheds on those who ask for them. Some of the rings gave no light, however, representing graces that people neglected to ask for.





Our Lady of The Miraculous Medal Medal of the Immaculate Conception - The Miraculous Medal

Suddenly the globe in the Virgin's hands disappeared and she lowered her hands, brilliant rays still streaming from them. An oval frame formed around her, within which was written in letters of gold: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

Catherine heard a voice interiorly: 'Have a medal struck after this model. All who wear it will receive great graces; they should wear it around the neck.'



Our Lady of The Miraculous Medal Medal of the Immaculate Conception - The Miraculous Medal

At this instant the tableau seemed to turn, and Catherine beheld the reverse of the Medal: a large 'M' surmounted by a bar and a cross; beneath the 'M' were the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the one crowned with thorns, the other pierced with a sword. Suddenly the vision disappeared from Catherine's sight, "like a candle blown out," she later wrote.



Then began Catherine's lifelong task of fulfilling her mission while guarding her identity, for she understood that in giving the medal to the world, she herself was to remain unknown.



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The Symbols on the
Miraculous Medal

The Meaning of the Front

Mary is standing upon a globe, crushing the head of a serpent beneath her foot. She stands upon the globe, as the Queen of Heaven and Earth. Her feet crush the serpent to proclaim Satan and all his followers are helpless before her (Gn 3:15).

The year of 1830 on the Miraculous Medal is the year the Blessed Mother gave the design of the Miraculous Medal to Saint Catherine Labouré.

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The Symbols on the Miraculous Medal

The Meaning of the Front



The reference to Mary conceived without sin supports the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary that was proclaimed 24 years later in 1854. This is not to be confused with the virgin birth of Jesus, and referring to Mary's sinlessness, “full of grace” and “blessed among women” (Luke 1:28).

The blessings that Mary had promised began to shower down on those who wore her Medal. The devotion spread like wildfire. Before long people were calling it the “Miraculous” Medal.



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The Symbols on the Miraculous Medal The Meaning of the Back

The twelve stars can refer to the Apostles, who represent the entire Church as it surrounds Mary. They also recall the vision of Saint John, writer of the Book of Revelation (12:1), in which:

“a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of 12 stars.”



O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.

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The Symbols on the Miraculous Medal

The Meaning of the Back



The cross can symbolise Christ and our redemption, with the bar under the cross a sign of the earth. The “M” stands for Mary, and the interleaving of her initial and the cross shows Mary’s close involvement with Jesus and our world. In this we see Mary’s part in our salvation and her role as mother of the Church. The two hearts represent the love of Jesus and Mary for us. (See also Lk 2:35).

When our Blessed Mother gave the design of the medal to Saint Catherine Labouré she said:

“Now it must be given to the whole world and to every person.”

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Church Approval of St Catherine Laboure and the Miraculous Medal

For over forty years St Catherine spent her every effort in caring for the aged and infirm, not revealing to those about her that she had been the recipient of our Lady's medal. The Sisters with whom she lived held her in the highest esteem, and each one longed to be her companion. In 1876, Catherine felt a spiritual conviction that she would die before the end of the year. To her Sister Superior, Catherine revealed the fact that she was the sister to whom the Blessed Mother appeared. On **December 31st, 1876, Saint Catherine passed away.** When her body was exhumed in 1933 it was found as fresh as the day it was buried. Though she had lived seventy years and was in the grave for fifty-seven years, her eyes remained very blue and beautiful; and in death her arms and legs were as supple as if she were asleep.



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Her incorrupt body is encased in glass beneath the side altar at [140 Rue du Bac, Paris](#), beneath one of the spots where our Lady appeared to her. In the Chapel of the Apparition you can gaze upon the face and the lips that for forty-six years kept a secret which has since shaken the world. ['Catherine Laboure was canonized on July 27, 1947](#), by Pope Pius XII, who declared her the "saint of silence and the duties of her state."



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Her feast day is November 28. The preceding day, November 27, is the feast of the Miraculous Medal, which received liturgical approbation when a Mass and Office were assigned in its honor in 1895, one of only three sacramentals in the history of the Church to be thus liturgically honored. The others are the Rosary and Brown Scapular.

