

Vinspiration

ST CATHERINE LABOURE

Zoe (Catherine) Laboure was born, the ninth child of 11 children, on May 2, 1806, in a farming family at Fain-les-Moutiers, Burgundy, France. At the age of nine Catherine's mother dies. It was at this moment that Catherine embraced a statue of Mary and said, "It is you that I choose as my mother."

Catherine's sister Marie Louise joined the Daughters of Charity and they keep intact with each other. At the age of 21 Catherine decided to join the Daughters of Charity but her father refused permission to do so. It is not until the age of 23 that Catherine is given permission to do so.

On April 21, 1830, Catherine began her seminary at the present day Mother House at 140 Rue du Bac, Paris. During that year Catherine received messages from Our Lady on three separate occasions. Our Lady asked Catherine to have a medal struck with her image on one side, and on the other side an image of the two hearts. Catherine did so, and after 2 years investigation and observation of her normal daily behavior, the priest took the information to his archbishop without revealing Catherine's identity. The request was approved and medallions began to be produced. The medallion is called the "Medal of the Immaculate Conception". To the people who wore the medal it was re-named the "Miraculous Medal".

On 5 February, 1831, Catherine left the seminary and arrived at her first mission. Catherine spent 46 years at Reuilly where she worked in a hospice caring for convalescing patients, and poor women. Catherine's work also included the kitchen, the henhouse, tending the garden, establishing a cowshed, tending pigs, rabbits, and breeding pigeons. Catherine died here on 31 December, 1876.

The Church observes every year the commemorative feast of the Apparition under the title of "Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal" on November 27, and Catherine's memorial the next day on the November 28.



Catherine Laboure

FEAST DAY
28 November

BEATIFICATION
28 May 1933

CANONISATION
27 July 1947

Writings ...

"...I go to the chapel and talk to God. He answers me. He knows that I am there...I wait for whatever I have to wait for, whatever he wants to me; and, whatever it is, it always makes me happy. Listen to God, talk to him, sort yourself out. It's all there – that is prayer. Go and do the same and you'll see!"

"Do not be afraid, pray, and place yourself under the Blessed Virgin's protection."

"We should wait in silence for the gifts of the Spirit. Mary was in the upper room with the Apostles. She kept silence whilst awaiting the descent of the Spirit. What a lesson for us! Mary is our example. O Mary, make me love thee, and it will not be difficult to imitate thee."

"I was chosen because I was nothing; no one can doubt that such great things are God's work."



THE SAINT OF SILENCE

Only her confessor and herself knew she was the recipient of the vision, while the world around buzzed with miraculous effects of the medal.

Catherine did not reveal this until the year of her death.

She was buried in a vault under the house at Reuilly. She was then exhumed and the examiners found her body was not corrupted.

Catherine was then encased in a glass case and lies beneath the side altar in the Chapel of the Apparition, Paris.

APPARITIONS

From the time of Adam and Eve, God has spoken to saints and prophets through visions, dreams, and inner voices. Miraculous events are common in the Old and New Testaments, and the lives of saints are marked by supernatural intervention.

There have been numerous accounts of appearances of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Jesus, himself, is said to speak to a few of the seers. Some of the apparitions received official approval by the Roman Catholic Church. Common threads through all the messages are: Jesus has been offended, Mary exhorts humanity to prayer and repentance and an increased devotion to the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Confession. The alternative, we are warned, is a great chastisement.

CHAPEL OF THE APPARITION

The chapel was called Hotel de Chatillon before construction began. The chapel is part of the Mother House of the Daughters of Charity and can be found at 140 Rue du Bac, Paris.

It was opened and dedicated on 6 August, 1815. Each year the chapel welcomes up to 2 million pilgrims. They are of all ages, circumstances, and races who stop each day in this place for a period of peaceful contemplation, to participate in a Mass, or simply to pray in silence.

Like Catherine the pilgrim lays down at the foot of the altar the burden too heavy to bear: loneliness, sufferings, problems.

They are certain that Mary takes an interest in their life as she had been concerned about the life of Catherine. Here pilgrims find again the pathway composed of prayer, the Holy Eucharist, and reconciliation by discovering the gentleness, the patience of God, and God's maternal affection.

Tenderness The chapel has become a place of prayer, pilgrimage, and a pastoral centre which is concerned to place the specific message of Mary within biblical and ecclesial traditions.

Something to think about ...

Reflect on the questions below ... share your thoughts with others ... or take some time to write down your thoughts and offer them to God.

Do I turn to Mary as an intercessor of grace in my life?

How do I relate to Mary?

What does she model for me?

How do I respond to moments of divine inspiration?

What difference does that make in my personal relationship to God? To my neighbour? To myself?

How is Mary's "yes" to the angel Gabriel a model for my growth in the spiritual life?

How does God ask me to say "yes" in my life?

What are some of the opportunities I have now to grow in God's love?

What do I believe is the role of Mary in the Church?



Let us pray...

Loving God, you have gifted us with the example of Catherine Laboure a simple servant of the poor. May her witness of humble service to the most abandoned and her unwavering confidence in Our Lady, inspire us to be more faithful servants of your Word, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Bibliography

The Life of Catherine Laboure Rene Laurentin, Collins, 183 London.



Web Resources

www.famvin.org
www.filles-de-la-charite.org
www.secretariadojmv.org