



Saint Catherine Labouré (May 2, 1806 - December 31, 1876) was a sister of the Daughters of Charity and a Marian visionary who claimed to have relayed the request from the Blessed Virgin Mary to create the Miraculous Medal worn by millions of Catholics and even non-Catholics today. **Early life:**

She was born at Fain-lès-Moutiers, Burgundy, France, to the farmer Pierre Labouré, the ninth of 11 living children. On October 9, 1815 Catherine's mother died. Catherine was then, just nine years old. Pierre's sister suggested that she care for his two youngest children, Catherine and Tonine, and after he agreed, the sisters moved to their aunt's house at Saint-Rémy, a village nine kilometers from their home.

As a young woman she became a member of the Congregation of the Daughters of Charity, a nursing order founded by Saint Vincent de Paul. She was extremely devout, of a somewhat romantic nature, given to visions and intuitive insights (she'd chosen the Daughters of Charity after a dream about St. Vincent). Having lost her mother at an early age she was very fond of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Visionary:

Catherine stated that on the night of July 18, 1830 she woke up after hearing the voice of a child calling her to the chapel, where she heard the Virgin Mary say to her, "God wishes to charge you with a mission. You will be contradicted, but do not fear; you will have the grace to do what is necessary. Tell your spiritual director all that passes within you. Times are evil in France and in the world."

On November 27, 1830, Catherine reported that the Blessed Mother returned during evening meditations. She displayed herself inside an oval frame, standing upon a globe, wearing many rings of different colours, most of which shone rays of light over the globe. Around the margin of the frame appeared the words "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." As Catherine watched, the frame seemed to rotate, showing a circle of twelve stars, a large letter M surmounted by a cross, and the stylized Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary underneath. Asked why some of her rings did not shed light, Mary reportedly replied "Those are the graces for which people forget to ask." Catherine then heard Mary ask her to take these images to her father confessor, telling him that they should be put on medallions. "All who wear them will receive great graces."

Catherine did so, and after two years' worth of investigation and observation of Catherine's 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. They proved to be exceedingly popular. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception wasn't official yet, but the medal with its "conceived without sin" slogan was probably influential in popular approval of the idea. Pope John Paul II used a slight variation of the reverse image as his coat of arms, a plain cross with an M in the lower right quadrant of the shield.

Prophecies:

St. Catherine Labouré foretold many great events correctly, but failed on others. "The revelations of some holy women canonized by the Apostolic See whose saying and writings in rapture and derived from rapture are filled with errors." Benedict XIV (Heroic Virtue III. 14. p. 404). Although, it is argued by some that these false prophecies are simply errors in interpretation, or the victims of interpreters with ulterior motives.

Death:

Catherine lived her remaining years as an ordinary nursing sister. She was pleasant and well-liked by patients and her fellow nuns. Catherine never told anyone but her confessor about her visions. So, even at her death in 1876, no one knew that Catherine was the one who brought the Miraculous Medal to the world. Exhumed in 1933, her body was found incorrupt, and it now lies in a glass coffin at the side altar of 140 Rue du Bac, Paris, one of the spots where the Blessed Mother appeared to her. Many visitors comment on Catherine's lovely blue eyes. On July 27, 1947, she was canonized by Pope Pius XII.

Bibliography:

Saint Catherine Labouré of the Miraculous Medal, by Joseph I Dirvin, CM, TAN Books and Publishers, Inc, 1958/84. ISBN 0-89555-242-6