

The Miracles of this Medal

Our Lady asked St. Catherine to have a medal struck according to the design she had showed her. At first it was known as the “Medal of the Immaculate Conception,” but so many miracles of conversion and healing had resulted from the wearing of it that it became known as “The Miraculous Medal.” My own mother put one on me when I was seven years old, and I have never been without it for 53 years now. The miracle is that I am still Catholic, and still a priest, when



most of the people I grew up with, and went to seminary with, have left the faith. Of course, the medal is not a magic charm, and I have to work at my faith, but I will never take it off, because wearing the medal is one of my simple tasks to guard my faith in Christ. You can read the inspiring story of Alphonse Ratisbonne for yourself, and others who have come to a blessed life in Christ Jesus by wearing this medal.

The Front of the Miraculous Medal

On the front of the medal Our Lady stands barefoot, eyes downcast, serene and humble, atop the world. One of her feet pins the proud head of a serpent to the ground, protecting the world from his malice. A crown rests upon her head. Her hands, heavy with graces, shower graces as beams of light upon the earth. She is also called “Our Lady of Grace” because, in her simple tranquility, she shows us how God continually provides graces for His beloved children. On the

globe is the date of the apparition, 1830, and around the rim of the medal these words: “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.”

The Back of the Miraculous Medal

On the reverse of the medal, twelve stars—the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles—encircle Jesus and Mary. Mother and Son are portrayed in two ways within these stars. First, we see a Cross resting on a bar that intertwines with a large M. The Cross is Christ, and the bar is the earth into which He was born and on which He dies. The M is for Mary, through whom He came to earth, as Son of a real mother. Below the Cross and the M are two hearts, one crowned with thorns (Christ’s Sacred Heart) and one pierced by a sword (Mary’s Immaculate Heart).

The Message of Rue du Bac

The convent in which Our Lady appeared to St. Catherine Laboure is on a street called “Rue du Bac” in Paris, and so folks often refer to it by that name. The essential message is confidence in God’s divine providence. In 1830 France was in the midst of a very difficult century, beginning with the Revolution of 1789 which destroyed so much of French and Christian culture. Successive revolutions kept society in fear and chaos for the next hundred years, but Our Lady visited the people of France through St. Catherine to reassure them. “Have a medal struck after this model,” she was told. “They should wear it around the neck. Graces will abound for persons who wear it with confidence.” Wear it always!

Recommended reading

A good start is *St. Catherine Laboure and the Miraculous Medal* by Alma Power-Waters, published by Ignatius Press.

Our Lady of The Miraculous Medal Historical Facts and Essential Messages of Our Lady in 1830



Welcome to Our Lady’s Shrine here in San Francisco. In this pamphlet, prepared by our pastor, Fr. Joseph Illo, you will learn the basic facts and message of this apparition. You are encouraged to spend some time in quiet prayer and perhaps go to confession. Please keep a reverent silence in the Church, especially when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

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What: Two appearances of Our Lady

Where: Sisters of Charity convent, Paris

When: 1830

To Whom: St. Catherine Labouré

On July 13, 1830, a young novice at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity in Paris was in her curtained bed in the convent dormitory. She was awakened by a lovely child about five years old who had been calling her name softly several times. “Come to chapel; the Blessed Virgin is waiting for you,” he whispered, and she followed him down. To her surprise, the chapel was lit up as if for Midnight Mass, with every candle burning. The little boy (Catherine’s guardian angel) led her to the large chair used by the mother superior for formal instruction to the sisters. Catherine heard the rustle of silk and saw a beautiful lady coming toward her wearing a cream-colored dress with blue mantel and white veil. The Lady sat down in the chair, beside which Catherine was already kneeling.



The painting of Our Lady speaking to St. Catherine, from her convent chapel in Paris

“This is the Blessed Virgin Mary,” the little boy told her. Catherine placed her hands in the Lady’s lap and looked up into her eyes.

The Lady told Catherine that she wanted to entrust a mission to her. “I love the Vincentian Order” she told her (Catherine’s Sisters of Charity were founded by St. Vincent de Paul), but Our Lady was sad that the Vincentians had become worldly, unfaithful to their rule, and careless in prayer, especially the rosary. “I will protect the Vincentians,” she said, but urged Catherine to help reform her Order. “The times are evil,” Our Lady continued haltingly. “Sorrows will come upon France; the throne will be overthrown. The Cross will be thrown down and trampled. The Archbishop will be stripped of his clothes. Blood will flow in the streets. The side of Our Lord will be pierced anew. The whole world will be afflicted with tribulations.” She then pointed toward the foot of the altar and said, “Come to the foot of the altar. Here graces will be shed on all who ask for them. Graces will be shed especially on those who ask for them.” Many priests and religious would be killed, among them the Archbishop of Paris. Some of these things would happen soon, and others would take place in 40 years.

A week later riots broke out in Paris. King Charles X was dethroned, churches were sacked, and clergy beaten and killed. Forty years later another revolution broke out, leading to the desecration of more churches and sacred objects. Thirty priests, including the Archbishop of Paris, were executed. The Vincentian Order and Sisters of Charity were saved, however, and went on to establish seminaries, orphanages, hospitals, soup kitchens, and Catholic schools all over the world.

Our Lady finished speaking, and Catherine went back to bed. It was 2am. Four months later Our Lady would appear again to Catherine, showing her the “miraculous medal.”

The Miraculous Medal

On November 27, Our Lady appeared to Catherine again at 5:30pm, while all the sisters were in the chapel for evening prayers. She appeared in white, standing on a globe and offering a golden ball upwards, with eyes to heaven. On her fingers were rings of precious stones, from which rays shone down. She looked at Catherine and said: “The ball which you see represents the world, especially France, and each person in particular. These rays symbolize the graces I shed upon those who ask for them. The jewels which give no rays symbolize the graces that are not given because they are not asked for.” Then the vision changed. Mary still stood on the globe dressed in white, but now with a blue mantle, hands extended down to the earth and eyes looking down as well. Now her feet stood on a serpent, one foot crushing its head. “1830” was written on the globe, and the words “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.” It was the front side of what came to be known as the “Miraculous Medal.” The medal rotated and Catherine saw the reverse side: a Cross resting on a bar intertwining an “M,” the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and twelve stars around the oval frame.

