

WHEN MARY APPEARS

The supernatural world is all around us, but our five senses cannot capture it. God, in his mercy, makes up for our weakness. He created us! He knows, therefore, that we need visible signs to turn towards the invisible. The medal is one of these signs.

The Incarnation was the first miracle through which God came amongst us. Jesus performed many miracles during His time on earth, which testified to the fact that He was the awaited Messiah and made us believe in Him; to those who speak to Him with faith, He will give them what they ask for.

Through His Son, God has told us everything, but He continues to lavish us with signs of His affection. He sends His Mother all over our world: through the apparitions.

To believe in the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin, that are approved of and allowed by the Church, and that rely on the most rigorous critical foundations, does not belong to the ranks of superstition. It is but a humble submission to the facts of history that cannot be done away with, nor their interpretation altered, to suit the changing mentality of the world. They are a challenge to increase our faith and at the same time lead to a more authentic faith.

“Blessed is she who believed!”. Unbelievers that we are, let us all share in Elisabeth’s cry of admiration, and follow the Virgin Mary, to become true believers!

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The miraculous medal has four distinct qualities. First of all, it was “**designed**” by the Virgin Mary herself! She showed that it should be an oval shape, which inscription should be engraved, that her image be on one side and on the other side, symbolic motifs. Therefore, the Virgin Mary stipulated the **contents**, the message, explicit and implicit, her identity, her immaculate Conception, and her co-operation in the salvation given by her divine Son, and of her universal Motherhood. The Blessed Virgin then gave **instructions for its use**: “Those who wear it with confidence” these words echo those of Jesus to the woman he healed after she touched his robes: “go, your faith has saved you”. Finally, the Virgin Mary explains the **purpose** of the medal: to receive great graces, reminding us of God’s mercy and the importance of a spiritual life. The Blessed Virgin attaches a particular efficiency to the medal. The Church has in fact always accepted that relics, statues, medals and scapulars produce miracles. We remember that St Jeanne de Chantal was miraculously healed in 1618, by the imposition of the relics of Charles Borromée by Saint Francois de Sales. Also, St Maximilien Kolbe, had his right thumb saved from amputation in 1912 after holy water from Lourdes was poured on to it. Of course, it is God who performs miracles, but He sometimes wants to perform them through pious objects, through the intercession of His faithful servants, the Saints and foremost His Mother. The message of the medal is a call to us to have confidence in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. Let us humbly ask to receive graces through her.

...medal



The
Chapel
Pamphlets

English

HISTORY OF THE MEDAL



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We the faithful love to wear, usually around our neck, medals that bear the image of the Virgin Mary. This gesture of devotion represents for us an act of faith, a sign of reverence towards the Mother of God, and the expression of our confidence in Mary’s maternal protection. Therefore, to wear a medal does not belong to the ranks of superstition. At the **Council of Trent in 1563**, the Church laid down the rules for the correct use of images, statues, medals and scapulars, reminding Christians that, of course, when we venerate images of Christ, the Virgin and the Saints, we are not putting our trust in the images. Rather, the honour we bestow on them has to do with the person themselves. This is very different to superstition, which attaches something of the occult to an object, automatic but pointless. The medal, shown to Sister Catherine Labouré by the Blessed Virgin in this Chapel, is only a piece of metal. We must not consider it to be a talisman or an amulet with magical powers, this would be futile gullibility on our behalf. A small memorial of the Virgin Mary’s love, the medal helps keep this love alive in our heart and spirit, because we have a short memory and not much willpower! The medal is a reminder of the faith that we are given, and encourages us to show our gratitude, through conduct worthy of a child of the Virgin Mary. In fact, the Church blesses these devotional objects, while reminding us that their role is to remind us of the love of Jesus Christ and increase our confidence in Mary’s help, who is also our Mother.

The correct use of a miraculous...

The rapid spread of the medal

After the apparitions, Catherine is certain of her mission: to have the medal struck. She confides in **Father Aladel**, a Lazarist priest. But without success. She was sent to Reully, a poor area of Paris, where she served the poor at the hospice d'Enghien. As the interior voice continued insistently, Catherine one day plucked up the courage to say to Father Aladel: "The Blessed Virgin is cross, because you won't listen to her". Stunned by this rebuke, he decided to act and with the approval of his Superior, went to a higher authority. Surprise! The archbishop of Paris, **Mgr de Quélen**, saw no reason not to have the medal struck. He also expressed the desire to receive one of the first.

A terrible **epidemic of cholera** broke out in Paris in **1832**, causing 20000 deaths. In June, the first medals, made by the goldsmith Vachette were distributed by the Daughters of Charity. Healings, conversions, and protection were immediate and multiplied. It was a tidal wave. **The people of Paris** called the medal of the Immaculate Conception the "**miraculous medal**".

The miracles provoked questions on the origins of the medal. A first brochure was published at the beginning of 1834 by the abbot Le Guillou, counsellor to the archbishop of Paris. Finally, M. Aladel also decided to write: **The Notice** was published in August **1834**. With a print run of 10000, it ran out in 2 months, the second edition in October disappeared even quicker, and the third...

At the same time, accounts of miracles became widespread, with paintings, engravings and pictures illustrating the events. But Saint Catherine stayed in the background and continued working incognito. At her death in **1876**, there were **more than one billion medals in circulation**.

The witnesses and...

Amongst those who were the first to experience the effectiveness of faith through the medal given by the Virgin Mary, we can name **Mgr de Quélen**, who became a great propagator after a meticulous inquiry into the facts. He personally obtained un hoped-for healings.

Pope Gregory XVI kept the medal at the head of his bed.

In 1833, **P. Perboyre**, a Lazarist priest told of a miraculous healing of a colleague attributed to the medal. When he arrived in China, he distributed many medals and related many miracles in his letters. He died a martyr there in 1839.

In 1833, **Frédéric Ozanam** wore the medal and went on to found the Conferences of St Vincent de Paul in Paris.

The most enthusiastic witness perhaps was the **Curé d'Ars**. As early as 1834, he acquired a statue of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal and placed it on a tabernacle, the door of which was adorned with the design of the reverse of the medal. On the 1st May 1836, he consecrated his church to "Mary, conceived without sin". He became a zealous apostle of the Medal.

In 1835, in **Einsiedeln**, in Switzerland, the Blessed Virgin appeared holding a miraculous medal to a Benedictine nun, which she turned to show the reverse and said: "Wear this medal and you will have my special protection".

In 1843, **M. Etienne**, Superior of the Lazarists and the Daughters of Charity, credited the apparitions of being the source of a renewal of vocations, and of the new fervour which took hold of the two families.

In 1845, **John Newman**, an Anglican pastor, was converted on the 9th October. He had been wearing the medal since the 22nd August. He became a priest and cardinal.

The pontifical bulls

Faced with the "success" of the medal, **Mgr de Quélen** decided to open a **canonical trial**, which he entrusted to the Canon Quentin, General Vicar.

Indeed, the official recognition of an apparition is usually made by the local Bishop, who must personally meet the visionary. If he judges it appropriate, he pursues the investigation and sends it to the Holy See via the nunciature.

But this procedure proved impossible in Catherine's case, because Mgr Quentin came up against her decision to remain anonymous and keep silent. The process thus remained unfinished. In **1842**, in Rome, **Alphonse Ratisbonne**, a young Jewish banker from Alsace, allowed himself to be convinced to keep the Medal in his pocket. The next day, in the St Andrea della Fratte church, the Virgin of the Miraculous Medal appeared to him. His sudden conversion had a huge impact. It resulted in a canonical trial, which would be the most formal act in this matter. The official recognition of the Apparitions of the Virgin Mary to Catherine happened ... thanks to the medal itself!

In 1854, Pius IX in the "Ineffabilis Deus" bull, defined the dogma of the **Immaculate Conception**. He seemed to be referring to the Miraculous Medal when saying that "through her Immaculate Conception, Mary came into the world like a splendid dawn that spreads its rays everywhere". In **1894**, Leon XIII approved **the mass** composed by the Lazarists for the feast of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. In **1897**, Leon XIII agreed to **the crowning** of the "statue of the Immaculate Conception of the Miraculous Medal". In **1947**, after a trial that included an inquiry into the apparitions, Pius XII declared **Catherine a Saint**.

...the apostles of the medal

Saint Bernadette, was wearing the medal in Lourdes before the apparitions of the Virgin Mary. When recounting the apparitions to Catherine, she claimed: "It's the same".

Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus wore the miraculous medal when she was at the Carmel.

In 1915 in Philadelphia (USA), at the initiative of Father Joseph Skelly, the Marian Apostolate was created with the prayer of the **Perpetual Novena** of the Miraculous Medal.

Thanks to **Father Kolbe**, new impetus was given to the distribution of the miraculous medal. A Franciscan born in Poland, he was ordained a priest in Rome in 1919. He wanted to celebrate his first mass at San Andrea delle Fratte where the Immaculate Conception converted Ratisbonne.

In 1917, he founded the Militia of the Immaculate Conception, placed under the patronage of the Virgin of the Miraculous Medal. He started a Marian newspaper entitled "The Knight of the Immaculate Conception" which was a resounding success. Before going to Japan in 1930, he travelled through France to rue du Bac, Lourdes and Lisieux. He generously distributed medals: "These are my ammunition", he said.

Taken prisoner in a concentration camp in Auschwitz, he died a martyr on the 14th August 1941 giving his life in exchange for that of a father with a family.

Today, 2 million pilgrims come to rue du Bac every year. The anonymous multitude of apostles of the Miraculous Medal is spread throughout the world. The affiliated members of the **Association of the Miraculous Medal** (approved by Pope Pius X) are linked together through prayer and a periodical.

Finally, the **Internet** site takes the Chapel into homes all over the world!