

# A Theotokan Reflects on Rue de Bac

by "Sister Anne" | Mar 1, 2017 | 02aa Mary Speaks to the World | 0 comments



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May Jesus and Mary be loved by all hearts!

I've tried hard to prepare this talk carefully. There are volumes of material on Mary's apparitions. If I talked off the cuff I'd end up going off on some tangent. I respect your time too much, and I respect Mary's messages even more to speak lightly. I just spent 33 years in a cloister so I can't even pretend to be a public speaker. But you didn't come here to be entertained. Your desire is to pick up insights so as to know ever better to how to respond to what Mary is asking of us in these days. It's going to sound like I'm reading a paper, and basically that's what I'll be doing. And I'm going to upload the transcript so if you want to review it later, you don't have to distract yourself now with taking notes. When I was in eighth grade in Blessed Sacrament school, we were trying to learn how to take notes during class as a preparation for high school. Old Father Goracy, a Polish immigrant from WW II was substitute teaching one day and noticed our efforts to take notes. He told us that when he was a university student in Europe some young men from India were in his class. They brought no paper. The European students warned them there would be tests and they needed to take notes. The Indians replied that in their culture they were taught to listen attentively rather than write attentively. The Europeans scoffed until the day of the test. The Indians passed brilliantly. After that Father Goracy saw the wisdom in learning to listen with all one's being. Why is it that so few Catholics today are not listening to Mary with all their heart and mind?

## ***Mary's Apparitions Form a Mosaic, not a Checkerboard***

I strongly contend that Mary's Apparitions form a mosaic and not a checkerboard. When some Catholics hear of a newly approved Marian apparition, they are often content with that soundbite: Mary appeared in Akita, Japan. Mary appeared in Rwanda. Mary appeared in Argentina. Period. End of news. They aren't interested in details because they assume that Mary is just saying the same "old" black and white message—pray and do penance—around the world. As if Mary is a piece of rubber that God just stamps in different places, dressing her up in local clothing and speaking the local language. In fact, one Dominican priest assured me that it's not really her because She's in heaven. For these people, if you've seen one, you've seen them all. They might have their favorite apparition: Lady of Lourdes, Lady of Fatima, but since it's all the same Lady, it's just a matter of taste.

This attitude is not only wrong, it's evil. To pass a judgment on another person on mere hearsay or on their appearance is a matter that needs to be taken to confession with repentance. But to pass judgment on someone coming from heaven? How could anyone assume that God or Mary are that superficial? Even a quick comparison between the messages of Lourdes and Fatima is enough to show that they are not the same. Complimentary yes, but definitely not repetitive.

When viewing the apparitions from a distance, taking into account their historical context, their positive or negative reception by the public, the number of times She appears, the specific messages, the symbols of her clothing, etc. the apparitions combine, as it were, into one larger apparition. I would compare it to the individual books of the Bible, finally combined into a single book. In hindsight one can see patterns, motifs, running through the books giving us a larger and larger picture about the Messiah. One book says He'll come from Bethlehem. Another affirms He'll be born of a Virgin. Multiple books affirm that He'll be a son of David. What if the Jews omitted the book of Isaiah as merely one more prophet calling for conversion? We would have lost a critical piece in our understanding of Jesus' identity!

So, it's particularly sad when devout people do try to invest time in learning about Mary's apparitions and even purchase books on one particular apparition by several authors to delve into it more deeply. And then they are cheated because they don't realize the author has skimmed over, or entirely omitted certain portions that the author didn't understand or know how to present, or the seer didn't understand, or the author feared it would just complicate his book and diminish sales for a common audience.

The layperson by the nature of his calling, doesn't usually have funds for a personal library or the time to read a lot of books. God's original plan in the Garden was for a lot of leisure for the family: an easy climate and free-at-hand food, therefore loads of time to walk with God and one another to learn and love and marvel. In the post-Eden situation, the layperson is obliged to rebuild the kingdom of God by developing certain skills in some particular expertise so as to earn a living and raise a family. In the original plan everybody was called to marriage, and married life would have been easy. In the present plan, when the lay state is so difficult, God has called some people to chastity so they could devote their time to walking with God by studying deeply, and then sharing that blessed knowledge with others. What is your first image when you think of a monk? Isn't it a hooded figure bent over a book, hand-copying the Word of God so that books could be shared with churches and communities? Many saints wrote down their insights in prayer so that others could benefit: Saint John of the Cross, Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Therese the Little Flower, and thousands of others.

As a Carmelite, I never expected to personally hand on my insights to others, but I labored for years to formulate my insights in writing, first of all so that I could express them more coherently to myself and compare them with the insights of others, and then to formulate the beauty, as it were, to leave a written legacy if only for my confessor who kept encouraging me to write. But have you ever tried to describe a beautiful painting or a mosaic? To make a sweeping generalization of some spiritual insight is utterly adequate, so you start describing the details, and then you notice more details, and it becomes a galaxy. When you get up close, you notice that the stars in the galaxy are other galaxies, so you go deeper and deeper. Likewise, when you try to describe an apparition, you soon discover an infinitely perfect work of art. When God called me out of the cloister I was taken by surprise. "God I'm not ready to share this!" I felt that I still needed more years to articulate things. But here I am today to share as much as I am able.

## ***Mary Appears for a Limited Block of Time***

For the Mother of God to appear again and again seems to signal something extremely important. In the Bible, repetition is a key for storytelling. In Genesis the creation story is told from different angles, as is the story of Noah's ark, and the fetching of a wife for Isaac, the son of the Promise. Not every story is repeated, only certain stories which are especially important, so the author wants the reader to "get it." Moreover, repetition signals urgency. When Pharaoh had two

dreams in one night, one about the lean ears of corn and one about the lean cows, Joseph told him that the repetition meant that the famine would begin right away. It wasn't a dream for the distant future, like the coming of the Messiah which would be centuries down the road.

So, when I began collecting Mary's messages, I started with the more recent apparitions, then kept going back in time. Suddenly everything stopped, or rather started, in 1830 in Paris. I searched and searched but any apparitions of Mary before that year concerned individual people or a locality, nothing intended for a world-audience. The only exception was Guadalupe, a very special case which I'll cover later on in this series, but just to explain its position in the mosaic, not to go into detail because in the United States it's easy for you to find loads of good documentation on Mary's apparition in Mexico.

When I saw that these world-audience messages only began in the last two centuries I couldn't help but notice a parallel with the prophetic messages of the Old Testament. I'm 57 now, so I was in grade school just after Vatican II. There was a lot of confusion in those years and each year the parents and faculty would review the religion books and every year they would throw out all the books and purchase a series from a different company. Each company devoted one year to Old Testament. As a result, my class was taught Old Testament in grades 3,4,5,6 and 8. I deeply loved Yahweh and was thinking of becoming a Jew, but I figured I'd get to know Jesus in the Catholic high schools. Freshman year turned out to be an intense course on the Old Testament, and when I went to a Jesuit College, we had a Rabbi for a professor. In Carmel, we read the Bible at meals cover to cover for thirteen years. I taught OT to the novices. I lived and breathed OT in my spiritual life.

Many people assume that Mary has always been delivering a call for the world to repent, and that there were always prophets in the Old Testament urging the people to repent. But that's not true at all. You can read the psalms, and the later books of the Old Testament when the people were begging for God to send them a prophet to guide them. Almost all of the twelve major and twelve minor prophets who are familiar to us in the liturgy, belonged to a 200-year block of time. Their prophecies focused on one event – that God would pull down the Temple if the Israelites didn't start offering pure worship. God was offended by the immoral lifestyle of the people who glibly came to church with sins on their souls, and God was offended by the easy syncretism that was going on in Israel, which allowed many altars to be erected to other Gods out of "tolerance" and "respect" for the foreigners that they allowed to live in the Holy Land. The close presence of all these religions led many Israelites to imagine that Yahweh wasn't the really only God. So, their worship had become impure and the Israelites, instead of converting the nations, were being converted by the nations.

Hmmm. All this sounds familiar in our own time. Could Mary be the prophet for our time and her apparitions focusing on the same theme, namely, that the Church will face the wrath of God if we don't repent of immorality and syncretism? This hunch might be explicitly confirmed in certain Marian apparitions which are still going on and not yet approved. She has announced that all her apparitions on earth will soon cease because her mission will be accomplished. So, the first world-appearance began in 1830. Add two hundred years and it brings us to 2030. Does that number ring a bell? Are you familiar with the United Nations program called Agenda 2030: Sustainable Development Transforming our World? You can google it. Hundreds of thousands of minds are actively working on this project. It's all about a happy world without poverty or war, united in a one-world government, a one-world currency and a one-world religion. A one-world religion would be very comfortable. We can reduce the creed to a few points that everyone can agree on. It's called syncretism. When Israel yielded to that temptation, Yahweh allowed foreigners to burn down his own temple and then He sent the survivors off to Babylon as the prophets had foretold.

### ***So, Let's Begin at the Beginning***

Just as the book of Genesis is foundational to the Bible, and the first five books foundational to the Old Testament, and the first four books of the Gospel foundational to the New Testament, we need to look carefully at the 1830 apparitions in Paris as foundational to all that Mary would be building upon. Yes, I used the plural. Many people assume that Saint Catherine Laboure had one apparition where Mary posed for the Miraculous Medal. Wrong. Her first Marian apparition occurred six months earlier and it lasted two hours. And let me note that her last name is similar to our word for labor, but specifically for plowing. Mary is cutting her soil with these first apparitions in Paris. I'm going to create a summary here for you by using excerpts from the book which is regarded as the classic expose: *Saint Catherine Laboure of the Miraculous Medal*. It was written by a priest of her own congregation Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M. so he had access to authentic documents and oral history that was handed down. TAN publishers did a reprint and you can find copies to buy online. It's in public domain now so I'll be uploading the whole book onto the website. I encourage you to copy it to your computer or tablet and spend time with this jewel.

In today's talk, I want to focus on Chapter Seven, the July Apparition, which is little known, but first let's get a quick synopsis of Sister Catherine, Mary's chosen instrument. She was born into the devout, middle-class French farming family of the Laboures and baptized Catherine but usually called Zoe after the saint on whose feast she was born. Her oldest sister became a nun and then Zoe watched the next six older siblings get married one by one. Zoe felt called to join the Daughters of Charity, but she was patient because her mother had died, and she was needed to manage the poultry house and cook for the hired hands. Her other siblings had been sent to school, but Zoe was an expert manager and was kept to run the household. She was able to learn the only rudiments of reading and writing, but this would be sufficient for one who aspired to join a congregation that serves the poor. When Zoe's younger sister said she was ready to take over, their father would not let Zoe go. He had once been a seminarian, a devout Catholic, so his opposition to her vocation was very painful but Zoe was tough and gradually got around him. Her older siblings called her to Paris, on the pretext to help in their restaurant. They paid the convent dowry since her embittered father would not give her a penny, despite all her years of hard work. And so at last, nearly twenty-four years of age, Zoe slipped away to the Paris novitiate to become Sister Catherine Laboure. She was older than her peers, less educated, but obviously experienced in management. She was always quiet, but she had a strong personality. She had resisted suitors. For years she had walked quite a distance from the farm to pray daily at an abandoned church which had been without priests since the first French Revolution of 1792. The family traveled to the next town for Sunday Mass and Vespers. After a brief novitiate Sister Laboure was assigned to care for the old men in a nursing home, and this included caring for the dairy cows and poultry. She would do this humble work for the next fifty years. She quickly gained the complete respect of the old men. And despite her low education, there would be periodic talk among the Sisters of making her a superior, but she never felt worthy and always turned it down. But we want to go back to July 1830, when she had only been in convent life a few months. The postulants retired that night of July 18th/19th looking forward to the festivities in the morning because it would be the feast day of their founder, Saint Vincent de Paul. (After Vatican II they rearranged the calendar and tried to match the feast days to the death days, the day the saint entered heaven, so now we celebrate his feast in September.) Quoting now from Father Dirvin's classic:

Sister Catherine's heart was bursting with the certainty that something was about to happen. In her mind was a single, confident thought: Tonight, I shall see the Blessed Virgin. She had been sleeping some two hours when a sudden light flickered in the dormitory. The light came from a candle carried by a little child of four or five, a child of extraordinary beauty and so surrounded with radiance that the whiteness of his little gown was dazzling. He approached the bed where Sister Catherine lay. He called her softly:

"Sister Laboure! Come to the chapel. The Blessed Virgin awaits you." Sister Catherine was not frightened. The child had come to take her to Our Lady. "It is half past eleven; everyone is asleep. Come, I am waiting for you." Sister Catherine jumped out of bed and threw on her clothes, a complicated costume.

The child led the way to the door, and they passed into the hallway. She was amazed to find the hall lights burning. everywhere the lamps were lit, and yet they met no one. The chapel was ablaze with light! The chandeliers, the candles on the altar, all burned brightly. Why, she thought, it is like a midnight Mass!

The child moved on into the sanctuary. Obediently, Sister Catherine followed. He stopped by the chair that the Director used when he gave conferences to the Sisters. Instinctively, Sister Catherine knelt. Nothing happened. The Virgin was not there. The child stood calmly waiting. But there was no one. Suddenly the child spoke: "Behold the Blessed Virgin!"

In the same instant Sister Catherine heard a sound like the rustling of a silk dress, and, looking toward the direction of the sound, saw a lady descending the altar steps. The lady seated herself in the Director's chair. As she sat there, she reminded Sister Catherine of Saint Anne in the picture over the sacristy door. Was this really the Mother of God? The child reassured her: "Behold the Blessed Virgin!"

The Lady was looking at her, waiting. Sister Catherine threw herself at Our Lady's knee and rested her hands in Our Lady's lap. Then she lifted her head and looked up, up, into her Mother's eyes. Many years later she was to write with ecstatic remembrance of this moment, that it was the sweetest of her life.

*"Saint Catherine Laboure of the Miraculous Medal" by Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M. (1958) Ch. 7*

Father Dirvin will go on to provide only a short summary of a two-hour apparition. He seems to be piecing it together from scattered references. Did Sister Catherine ever sit down and try to write a detailed account? If we look at subsequent "messages for the world" the seers typically feel called to dictate them or write them down in detail. Sister Catherine would do that repeatedly for the Medal vision, but this midnight vision seems to be an introduction to the messages. Mary is giving her advice about how to conduct herself later on. We don't know if the young postulant felt at first that this was something personal, or if she perhaps did mention it right away to her confessor, or if years later in hindsight she made references to it. We can be sure that she was not asked for a detailed account right away by her confessor because for a long time he dismissed the vision of the medal. He wasn't open to revelations to postulants. If she was asked decades later to write down all that transpired in this July vision, she may have been left to her natural memory and was unable to remember every detail. But certainly, we have much. There are three clear themes.

### **1) Mary Guides Sister Catherine personally**

"My child," said Our Lady, "the good God wishes to charge you with a mission." Mary went on to tell her of God's plans for her, to warn her of the trials that would come upon her, and to show her how she should bear them. She would meet with many difficulties in carrying it out, but she would overcome the difficulties by thinking upon the glory of God as her reason for doing what He wanted. "You will be tormented," Our Lady continued, "until you have told him who is charged with directing you. You will be contradicted, but do not fear, you will have grace. Tell with confidence all that passes within you; tell it with simplicity. Have confidence. Do not be afraid. You will see certain things: give an account of what you see and hear. You will be inspired in your prayers: give an account of what I tell you and of what you will understand in your prayers. The times are very evil. Sorrows will come upon France; the throne will be overturned. The whole world will be upset by miseries of every kind."

Pain crossed the Virgin's face. There was a remedy: "Come to the foot of the altar." She indicated the spot. "There graces will be shed upon all, great and little, who ask for them. Graces will be especially shed upon those who ask for them."

### **2) Religious Life**

Then the Mother of God turned her attention to the Vincentian Fathers and the Sisters of Charity. "My child, I particularly love to shed graces upon your Community; I love it very much," she said. "It pains me that there are great abuses in regularity, that the rules are not observed, that there is much relaxation in the two Communities. Tell that to him who has charge of you, even though he is not the superior. He will be given charge of the Community in a special way; he must do everything he can to restore the rule in vigor. Tell him for me to guard against useless reading, loss of time, and visits."

When the rule should be fully observed once more, Mary promised another community of Sisters would ask to join the Community of Rue du Bac. The prediction was fulfilled in 1849, when Father Etienne received Mother Elizabeth Seton's Sisters of Emmitsburg, Maryland, into the Paris Community. These Sisters were the foundation stone of the Sisters of Charity in the United States. [Mary predicted:] "The Community will enjoy a great peace; it will become large."

### **3) The World**

Then Our Lady began to speak of the miseries to come upon France and the whole world. "There will be an abundance of sorrows; and the danger will be great. Yet do not be afraid; tell them not to be afraid. The protection of God shall be ever present in a special way—and St Vincent will protect you. I shall be with you myself. Always, I have my eye upon you. I will grant you many graces."

Then the worst, Mary began to specify the sorrows and dangers. She spoke in broken sentences, in halting phrases, fighting back the tears that stood in her eyes. "It will not be the same for other communities. There will be victims. There will be victims among the clergy of Paris, the Archbishop." She could not finish for weeping. "My child, the Cross will be treated with contempt; they will hurl it to the ground. Blood will flow; they will open up again the side of Our Lord. The streets will stream with blood. The Archbishop will be stripped of his garments."

*"Saint Catherine Laboure of the Miraculous Medal" by Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M. (1958) Ch. 7*

She could not go on. Tears choked her voice, and her lovely face twisted in pain. She could only conclude:

"My child, the whole world will be in sadness."

When will all this be? Sister Catherine wondered, and immediately she understood: forty years.

The conversation was not one-sided. Sister Catherine spoke freely, unfolding the secrets of her soul, asking questions which Mary graciously answered. When the Virgin departed,

"she faded away and became but a shadow, which moved toward the tribune, the way she had come."

When Sister Catherine and the child, her guardian angel, got back to the side of her bed, the child, too, faded from sight. The clock struck two. She slept no more that night.

On July 27, 1830, just one week later, the [second French] revolution erupted in fury. Barricades were thrown up across the narrow, winding streets of the ancient capital. The dead lay where they fell, and the stink of unburied corpses made the summer air nauseating and disease-ridden.

### **1) Mary Guides Sister Catherine Personally**

## ***The Time of Day***

First of all, I want to note the time of day. Sister Catherine is at the very beginning of her religious life, and the apparition is at the very beginning of the day. The angel wakes the postulant about 11:30. She later recounts being called several times and it took her awhile to come out of sleep. Then the angel leaves the room to let her get dressed. I can tell you from religious life, that putting on a habit quickly never gets mastered. Instead of doing one's hair, one has to do one's veil. In Sister Catherine's day, even the postulants wore a complicated garb. Then, they had to make their way to the chapel. This was a large house. It was a complex of multiple buildings. Then when they arrived, the Blessed Mother hadn't arrived. They had to wait for her. It seems to me that Mary was waiting for the exact stroke of midnight. In hindsight, we realize now that this is the first of her major apparitions to the world and it will be delivered appropriately at the first moment of the day. A few months later, the Miraculous Medal vision will occur soon after Vespers on the eve of the first Sunday of Advent, the first day of the Liturgical Year. The Woman from heaven clothed in light; is announcing the new and beautiful "great day" of the Apocalypse will be the reign of Christ and her Immaculate Heart. Her apparitions will prepare the world and they will have their "day." The next major apparition will be at daybreak. At Lourdes, for two weeks Bernadette will feel called to get out of bed to hurry down to the grotto. Then at Fatima the lady comes at high noon for six months. Some propose that Medjugorje marks the finale because Mary comes at sunset and She herself said that these will be her final appearing, but this one is not yet approved so I refrain from commenting.

Think of it, Mary's first manner of coming to us is as a mother. She was not on a cloud in dazzling light or high up in a mysterious grotto or perched on a holm oak tree. Mary appeared so natural and homelike, sitting on a chair, that Sister Catherine thought she was Saint Anne, the grandmother saint. And the young Catherine, who hadn't had a mother since she was nine years old, felt invited to approach very near and rest her hands in Mary's lap, and in that intimate mother-daughter posture they conversed for two solid hours. This is lesson 101 for us. Yes, She has messages for the world, for our times, but the messages are not directed for books or billboards or the internet. Yes, they'll be recorded, but the messages are for people. She is talking to people, not to the air. In our rosaries are we merely reciting words, or are we looking at Mary and speaking to her and trusting her to respond with inspirations? We've got to work on fostering a relationship with her. She initiated this. Saint John affirms that "we love, because He first loved us" [1Jo 4:19]. And we can also say that Mary loved us first before we loved her. She has the right to remain in heaven, with all its joys. She doesn't have to be concerned for our sorrows, the dangers to our salvation that we face down here from Satan, our common enemy. But she is like a mother bear or lioness on the lookout for her young. If we stay near her, we'll be protected, and if we stay near her, she'll teach us how to protect and save other souls. And that leads us to the next lesson.

## ***We are in a Battle and We Must be Confident.***

Mary tells Catherine over and over that she is going to be opposed. She would meet with many difficulties, but she would overcome the difficulties by thinking upon the glory of God as her reason for doing what He wanted. We have to keep our ideals up front in our minds. We don't overcome problems by putting our head in the sand, by finding distractions from our problems, avoiding the news because "it's depressing", by getting immersed in movies, music, crafts and sports, sports, sports. No! Mary wants us to live in reality, and meditate on the truths of Faith, cultivate a great love of God so that we become passionate about his honor and glory and become ready to do his will no matter what the cost. Spiritual exercises are called "exercise" because it takes diligence to build up spiritual strength. Are we spending as much time cultivating our spirit as we do our bodies? Are we blocking out time for our children to do the same, or do we keep them endlessly busy by enrolling them in sports? Next lesson.

## ***Mary is Very Sad***

Catherine doesn't walk away. The common reaction to suffering is to move away. When you see a commercial to help the starving in Africa, do you flick the channel, or do you stop and pray? When you see a problem in the parking lot or the grocery store, do you stop to offer help, or do you hurry off on the pretext that you've got to be somewhere or you're not a trained in the medical field? The temptation to move away from suffering is a legitimate natural response, an animal response. When there is danger or trouble we don't want to be caught too. Flight is the first response. But the animal has only his natural life to care about. Human beings need to put moral and spiritual values above our earthly interests. The Pietá is world famous because many hearts allow themselves to be moved by Mary's sorrow for her Son. At that midnight apparition, Mary's tears were not flowing over Jesus, but over Catherine whose hands rested in her lap. Catherine represented all of humanity in modern times. Catherine did not rebel and say: "Weeping is needless drama; everything's fine if you'd just think positive; don't focus on the negative; let me wipe away your tears; let's put on some music or find some entertainment." A lot of people do that. They don't want to know what's causing the pain, they just want to drown it out in alcohol or sedatives. This is disaster because tears are an important symptom to alert us that something needs to be fixed. People are often saved from cancer because they heeded a small warning sign. If they had waited longer it would have been too late. The tears of Mary are a symptom of grave societal illness. Her images have been shedding tears all over the world for decades. Do we care enough to do something to heal the Mystical Body and the body of humanity?

## ***Hiddenness, for the Moment***

It's clear from Sister Catherine's subsequent behavior that she was instructed to remain in the background. When the Archbishop wanted to interview her about the vision of the Medal, Catherine begged her confessor to represent her. Sister Catherine lived in that convent for almost fifty years after the apparitions. Millions of medals were distributed, and everybody talked about the miracles and it was public knowledge that the medal came from a vision to a Sister of Charity but there were hundreds of Sisters of Charity and nobody knew which one it was except one or two superiors. Sister Catherine clung to a regime of penitential and humble tasks all her life, speaking little, praying much. Subsequent seers will be more open about their testimony, but for another century Mary asks prayer and penance as the primary weapons, particularly rosary. Only later will she announce that it's time for her children to show themselves and fight.

### **2) Religious Life**

According to Father Dirvin's notes, Mary first gave her attention to Catherine personal spiritual formation. Then she turned to the reformation of religious and clergy. "The rules are not observed, there is much relaxation, guard against useless reading, loss of time, and visits." She doesn't seem to care that this is not a monastery, but an active congregation. Don't they have a right to be more active? No! She demands more prayer, more penance! This will be a running theme in apparitions and messages to come, right up to Akita, Japan where the new community was uncertain whether to become active or contemplative. Mary didn't like those distinctions. All religious must pray much!

And it is a strong message to religious that Mary chose her first three "world messages" to be given to members of the Daughters of Charity, the first and most active of all active religious communities. Saint Vincent wanted them to minister to the people:

Her convent is the house of the sick, her cell the chamber of suffering, her chapel the parish church, her cloister the streets of the city or the wards of the hospital; obedience is her enclosure, the fear of God her grate, and modesty her veil.

*"Saint Catherine Laboure of the Miraculous Medal" by Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M. (1958) Ch. 4*

So, Saint Vincent had ordained in 1633. There was so much resistance to this novel idea of women working in the world, that for a long time the Church wouldn't recognize them as full religious, so they could only make annual promises instead of lifelong vows.

## ***The Green Scapular and Sister Justine***

But Saint Vincent prophetically understood that the world was changing, and it needed new types of congregations. Mary triply blessed and confirmed active religious by appearing three times to Daughters of Charity with messages for the world:

In 1840, Our Lady came again to the house on the Rue du Bac, to reveal her Immaculate Heart to a novice named Justine Bisqueyburu. Sister Justine . was a novice. Toward the end of January, she entered upon her retreat in a prayer hall, behind the Chapel of the Apparitions. The Blessed Virgin appeared suddenly to Sister Justine, on January 28, 1840. She wore a long white dress and a blue mantle. She was barefooted and bareheaded, her hair falling free to the shoulders. In her hand she held her Immaculate Heart, pierced with a sword, and surrounded with flames. This vision was repeated several times as the retreat continued, and later on the principal feasts of the Blessed Virgin. On September 8, 1840, the feast of Our Lady's Nativity, the vision took on an added detail. The Virgin carried the Immaculate Heart in her right hand, and, suspended from her left hand, a kind of scapular of green cloth. On the face of the scapular was a representation of Mary as she had appeared in the preceding apparitions, and on the back "a heart all burning with rays more brilliant than the sun, and as transparent as crystal; this heart, surmounted by a cross, was pierced with a sword, and around it were the words: "Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us now and at the hour of our death." The Green Scapular, as this sacramental is popularly called, is not really a scapular, but rather a "cloth medal," for it consists of only one piece of material and is worn about the neck as a medal would be worn. Sister Justine confided her vision to Father Aladel, as Catherine Laboure had done, and she found the same difficulty in having the scapular made as Catherine had encountered with the Medal. It was not until 1846 [the year of LaSalette], after Our Lady had complained several times that her gift to the Community was not appreciated, that the approbation of Archbishop Affre, of Paris, was finally sought and obtained for the distribution of the scapular.

*"Saint Catherine Laboure of the Miraculous Medal" by Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M. (1958) Ch. 14*

### **The Red Scapular and Sister Appolline**

In spite of the slowness of the authorities to act, heaven continued to lavish its treasures on the Community of Saint Vincent. Throughout the year 1845, another Sister of Charity, Sister Appolline Andreveux, stationed in Troyes [about 90 miles from the Paris convent], received several visions of Our Lord in his Passion. On July 26, 1846, [the feast of Saint Anne, and two months before the apparition of LaSalette] Christ appeared to Sister Appolline, holding in his hand a red scapular. One piece of the scapular bore the image of Christ on the Cross, surrounded by the instruments of the Passion, and the words: "Holy Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, save us." The other piece bore representations of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, surmounted by a cross, and the words: "Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, protect us." Sister Appolline was to meet with prompter action than Sister Catherine or Sister Justine. Sister Appolline had confided her visions, in writing, to [a different priest] Father Etienne, and the Superior General sought and obtained approbation for the making of the scapular from [Blessed] Pius IX in 1847, during the same audience in which the Pontiff approved the Children of Mary. [This will be the same Pope who approves LaSalette.]

*"Saint Catherine Laboure of the Miraculous Medal" by Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M. (1958) Ch. 14*

This particular active congregation stands on the border between the religious and lay state. There are several connections in these initial apparitions of Mary with Saint Anne, the great laywoman, mother of the Mother God and grandmother of God. Mary resembled so much the portrait of Saint Anne that hung in the chapel that Catherine was initially confused as to whether this was really the Blessed Virgin, as the angel announced, or Saint Anne. In fact, this Vincentian congregation was so determined to be ordinary that it was in their customs not to present any member for canonization. Pope Leo had to step in and actually order that the process go forward with Saint Catherine Laboure. This may seem surprising to us considering their "flying nun" habit. But in reality, this costume was the standard attire of country women in the locality of France where it began in the 1600s. When Saint Catherine entered as a postulant, they weren't even all wearing the same color of garb, but whatever dark cloth they could purchase. The medal was for the world, the messages were for all the world. From the beginning Mary is talking to the laity, and soon her apparitions will be directly to lay persons. Pope Saint John Paul II strongly affirmed the importance of the lay vocation.

A new state of affairs today both in the Church and in social, economic, political and cultural life, calls with a particular urgency for the action of the lay faithful. It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle. . . [#3] The lay faithful are called to restore to creation all its original value. they share in the exercise of the power with which the Risen Christ draws all things to himself [#14] The "world" .is the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation and mission of proclaiming the Gospel. [#15]

*Christifideles Laici, John Paul II 1988*

### **Beauty, but Modesty**

Let's take a look at the habit of the Daughters of Charity. A large loose dress, long sleeves, high neck, hair tucked up, but the face fully visible. Modesty, but womanly. A woman's face is one of the beauties of creation. It gives joy to the child and to the husband, and to the passerby, whether it's lit up with a smile or glistening with tears. Certainly not all of us women, are movie stars, but we are all stars in God's galaxy. Not every landscape is outstanding, but we all love landscapes. God is an artist and it is right to enjoy a sunrise, a night sky, a flower, a field ripe for harvest, the music of children's laughter, a horse on a country road, and a dog in pursuit of something. During her meals Saint Therese used to praise God for the different flavors of food. Beauty in its many forms lifts us up to the creator. This is why religious women have never put a bag over their face. A woman's face is not naturally a distraction to men, but a joy. Now her shapely figure is another story. Tight clothing, flesh-colored clothing, or exposed flesh is not just a distraction, but arouses temptation. When I was a young girl in 8th grade short shorts became the style. In the 1970s, they were called "hot pants" but I was too innocent to understand why they were "hot." Fortunately, the Legion of Mary stocked the pamphlet rack in the back of church, and I read a testimony of a young mother who said she enjoyed dressing fashionably, which meant "immodestly." She was crossing the street one day holding her little daughter by the hand. The light changed and they stepped out. A car was approaching but slowing down, but then it jerked forward and struck her daughter who was injured so badly that she died. The man confessed to the policeman that he was starting to slow for the light but when he saw that "hot babe" step out in front of him he reflexively accelerated. The mother urged all women to dress responsibly, to heed the pleas of Our Lady of Fatima who told Jacinta that the fashions (in the 1920s!) greatly offend the Lord, and most souls go to hell for sins of the flesh. Study different cultures and you will see that in times past low-cut, tight dresses were something only the godless rich women wore. A common sense of decency prevailed until the late 1700s when philosophies of "humanism" and "atheism" began to appear on the scene. Immodesty today is a snowball accelerating downhill. When I came out of the cloister after thirty years, I was totally shocked at how Christian women were dressing, even in Church, even to approach a priest to receive Communion. When I was in grade-school everybody knew that only prostitutes and ballet dancers wore tights. But today women wear them brazenly as if the shape of their legs was not a grave distraction to even the most saintly and self-disciplined of men. And what about the push-up bras and low cut blouses?

Please ladies and girls, look in the mirror before you leave your house and ask Mary if she is pleased! I am not blaming women. We all naturally follow fashions because we don't think we're anybody special to start a new fashion. It's actually a sign of humility that we tend to dress like everybody else. And, like myself as a young girl, I didn't even imagine that anybody might be noticing me, let alone becoming an object of temptation to anyone. I didn't think I was pretty. Who

would look at me? Many women think like that. That's why I never pass judgment on the souls and hearts of even the women who are the worst dressed. But Mary is calling us out on it. We have to dare to be different. We might have to find a seamstress to add fabric at the neck area. We might have to shop online because the local stores don't carry clothes that Mary would approve of. There are websites where women run small businesses from their homes, making modest clothes. Visit those sites. Shop there. And while we're at it, how much time and money are you spending on your hair? It is over the top? Pardon the pun.

3. The Church and the World

Let's continue now with the midnight apparition. It becomes very political. And when I use that word, I mean church and state. The church is leaven in the world. God's naturally revealed moral laws are supposed to guide and form what we do as a nation. The Church is also formed with supernaturally revealed laws. We don't impose Christianity on the state, but we must impose natural laws on the state, and we do that by giving a supernatural witness, and taking a super-active role in running our governments. Jesus is the new Adam. Mary is the new Eve. They are king and queen of all creation. They care about every nation, every person. They want the world to glorify God and for every person to find the path to eternal salvation. The Church (priest, religious, and lay members) are supposed to be involved in that. We can't pretend that it's only the business of elected leaders or the wealthy to run the world. Who elects the leaders? Who runs the press? Who buys products from other countries? We are all involved. We are all held accountable by the Almighty.

So now Mary talks to Catherine about a change in government. She begins to cry. The monarchy will fall. Who cares? Good riddance, right? It's something deeper. France had the first Christian emperor. Charlemagne, Charles the Great was anointed by the pope in the eighth century. Charlemagne wasn't just a local king of one country, he was acknowledged as Holy Roman Emperor by all Christian Europe. The values and morals of Christianity were deeply imprinted on subsequent laws. It didn't mean the countries were full of saints. Scandalously, they would go to war against one another, but the primacy of God and natural law were always recognized. Mary is weeping because something new is on the scene: Communism.

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1830 | Karl Marx, age 12, happens to be in Paris.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | He gains first-hand knowledge of a society on the brink of revolution                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 1830 | The Second French Revolution, dubbed the "Glorious Three Days of July." Charles X is deposed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | This marks the end of the Bourbon dynasty that traces back to Charlemagne. His cousin Louis Philippe will be crowned king and then exiled also                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 1848 | A <i>Manifesto</i> is published in London by Karl Marx (aged 30) and Friedrich Engels. After the events in Paris, later the same year, it will be called the <i>Communist Manifesto</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                                             | The founders of modern Communism will enlarge this into a series of books, most notably <i>Das Kapital</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1848 | The Third French Revolution breaks out at the "Paris Commune." Historians will refer to the revolutionaries as Communists, and the events as the "Days of February" Three elements prepared these events: The Masonic Lodges, the Socialists (known as Positivists), and the International (a secret society). The Communist revolutionists were popularly known as "Reds" because of their red sash. | The protest was deliberately sparked by a request for a "banquet" that is, a public demonstration of protest against the government to which King Louis-Philippe refused. The revolutionaries of the Paris Commune had been gathered from Italy, Germany, Russia, and America and were influenced by Karl Marx (who may have been actually present), Pierre Proudhon, and other anarchists. Some of these men were direct descendants of the radicals who initiated the 1793 French Revolution. |

Archbishop Affre of Paris, Dies by an Assassin's Bullet

After the February uprising, the French government had opened National Workshops to provide work to the poor. But six months later there was talk of closing them. A large segment of the citizenry began rioting, setting up barricades in the streets of Paris. Blessed Frederic Ozanam, the founder of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, begged Archbishop Affre to intervene to stop the bloodshed.

Accordingly, on June 25, in spite of warnings for his safety, Affre mounted the barricade at the entrance to the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, bearing a green branch as sign of peace to address both sides. He had spoken only a few words, however, when the insurgents, hearing some shots and feeling that they had been betrayed, opened fire upon the National Guard. Affre fell, struck by a stray bullet. He died two days later. A bloody, three days' battle was fought, June 24-26, 1848. (source lost)

France will be in turmoil with one war after another until WWII when it lost one million men. And it's really not much larger than the state of Minnesota. Today it's plagued with generations of Moslems because it imported hired help for lack of manpower.

We won't attempt any discussion of the French monarchy, which even today some want to revive. The real discussion is the battle between the King of Kings and the Lord of the Underworld, under the guise of bloody atheistic regimes, namely all forms of Communism, which began in France at the time of Mary's first apparitions for the world.

The Commune of Paris

The men of the Paris Commune were the dregs, not only of France, but of Italy, Germany, Russia, and America. Paris had become the rendezvous of all wickedness. While many historians hold that these men were not Communists, as we know the word today—pointing out that communes were the names given to the districts of Paris—there can be little doubt that Karl Marx, Pierre Proudhon, and other anarchists had tremendous influence over this mob. Carleton Hayes, the eminent historian, has testified that half the mob were direct descendants of the bourgeois Radicals of 1793, while the other was divided equally among the followers of Marx and the Anarchist disciples of Proudhon. M. Bourgoin, in an official finding of the Third French Republic commission, instituted after the uprising had been put down, stated: "It appears to me that three elements impeded the national defense from the very beginning and finally prepared the events of March 18. These three elements were the Masonic Lodges of Paris, the Socialists, known as Positivists, and the International."

It is also significant that Marx had been in France during the Revolution of 1830 and 1848, to study these uprisings at first hand. As a matter of fact, the revolutionists were popularly known as "Reds" (Les Rouges), from the red sash they wore as a badge, and it is stated in the Annales de la Congregation de la Mission for 1871 that Paris was "in the grip of a secret society known as the International." Whatever the differences of ideology among the parties that united in this violent and lawless Commune of 1871, there can be no doubt that the spirit of communism permeated the union. Catherine Laboure was thus the first saint in modern times to be caught up in a Communist rebellion. The sympathies of the French people were not anti-Catholic in 1871 any more than they had been in 1848, but the ideologies of the group behind the Commune included hatred of

religion. Before the terrible weeks were over, the churches of Paris would be desecrated, profanation of things sacred would be a commonplace, the clergy would be arrested by the dozen, and thirty priests, including the Archbishop would die.

On May 21, the Republican troops, under the command of Marshal MacMahon, broke through and penetrated into the city. The days of the Commune were numbered. The Communists did not give up easily, however. In bitter retaliation for the break-through, they executed the hostages held in the prison of La Rouquette: two secular priests, two Jesuits, one layman, and Monseigneur Darboy himself. The martyred Archbishop has been accused of being too subservient to the wishes of Louis Napoleon, and it must be admitted that there are grounds for the accusation. Whatever went before, in these days of stress he showed himself a hero. Refusing to flee when his people were in agony, he suffered a cruel imprisonment, during which every indignity was heaped upon his person, and he met his death with a calm and holy courage.

*"Saint Catherine Laboure of the Miraculous Medal" by Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M. (1958) Ch. 14*

Father Dirvin has a long chapter relating the harrowing predicament of Sister Catherine's convent during those days of the revolt in Paris. The Sisters were in real danger, but Mary kept her promises of protection made forty years earlier

### **A Mysterious Vision: The Cross of Victory**

Father Aladel received an urgent note. It had to do with a new vision, a vision of a mysterious cross which Catherine had seen earlier in 1848, or perhaps even in 1847. A cross, covered with a black veil or crepe, appeared in the air, passing over a section of Paris and casting terror into hearts [she wrote]. It was carried by men of angry visage, who, stopping suddenly in front of Notre Dame, let the cross fall into the mire, and, seized with fright themselves, ran off at full speed. At the same instant, an outstretched arm appeared which pointed to blood, and a voice was heard, saying: "Blood flows, the innocent dies, the pastor gives his life for his sheep." She went on to recount how the cross was lifted up anew with respect and placed upon a base some ten or twelve feet square, where it stood to a height of fifteen or twenty feet.

Around it were carried some of the dead and wounded who had suffered "in the grave events which transpired." The cross was then held in great reverence and was called the "Cross of Victory." People came to see it from all parts of France and even from foreign lands, led both by devotion, since many miracles of protection were attributed to this cross, and by curiosity, because it was also a great work of art. Catherine described this mysterious cross as made of some precious, exotic wood, and ornamented with golden bands, a thing of marvelous beauty. Upon it hung the figure of Christ, and with her usual precision Catherine described this figure "with the crown of thorns on His head, the hair entangled among the thorns of the Crown, the head drooping upon the side of the heart; the wound in His side, about three fingers in breadth, open and blood flowing from it drop by drop." Catherine concluded the letter thus:

*"Father, this is the third time I have spoken to you of this cross, after having consulted the good God, the Blessed Virgin, and our good father Saint Vincent, on his feast day and every day of the octave. I abandoned myself entirely to him, and asked him to take away from me every extraordinary thought either on this subject or any other. Instead of finding peace after this prayer, I found myself the more pressed to give you the whole thing in writing. I do it by obedience and I hope afterward to be no longer disturbed. I am with the most profound respect, your entirely devoted daughter in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. July 30, 1848."*

The conclusion of this letter gives us some hint of the agony of soul this mysterious vision of the cross caused Catherine. So great was her agitation that she was driven to ask Saint Vincent to wipe out of her mind all memory of this singular vision "and any other extraordinary thought." Certainly, all the visions of Catherine Laboure caused her great pain and harassment of soul, and, at this point, she seemed to want no further part of that miraculous supernatural world in which she constantly lived.

After Catherine's death, another note concerning this "Cross of Victory" was found among her effects, but this note throws no more light on the vision than did the first:

The enemies of religion carry a cross, covered with a black veil, which casts terror into souls; the cross triumphs. It is called the Cross of Victory and wears the livery of the nation. It is set up alongside Notre Dame, in the place of Victories. It is made of a strange precious wood, magnificently ornamented, with golden apples at its extremities; the great Christ nailed to it leans His head to the right side [sic] and there streams from the wound on his right side a great deal of blood. The badge of the nation is fixed at the height of the great beam of the cross; white, symbol of innocence, "flickers" upon the crown of thorns, the red symbolizes blood, the blue is the livery of the Blessed Virgin.

Heaven—and Catherine—were still preoccupied with France. What nation has been given to see its colors part of a miraculous vision or explained in such mystic symbolism. This strange vision of Catherine's has been all but forgotten. Of her biographers, only Lucien Misermont so much as mentions it. Neither she, nor Father Aladel, ever referred to it again. No doubt the obscurity of its meaning has discouraged anyone who stumbled upon it.

*"Saint Catherine Laboure of the Miraculous Medal" by Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M. (1958) Ch. 15*

### **Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception—The Miraculous Medal Vision**

On November 27, 1830, which fell upon the Saturday before the first Sunday of Advent, at five-thirty in the evening, in the deep silence after the point of the meditation had been read—that is, several minutes after the point of the meditation—I heard a sound like the rustling of a silken gown, from the tribune near the picture of Saint Joseph.

And there was the Queen of Heaven, in the sanctuary standing upon a globe. She shone as the morning rising, a radiant vision, "in all her perfect beauty," as Catherine said later. Catherine's eyes widened with bliss at the sight. her robe was of silk, "the whiteness of the dawn," the neck and the sleeves plain, she wore a white veil which fell to her feet, and beneath the veil a lace fillet binding her hair. The Virgin held in her hands a golden ball which she seemed to offer to God, for her eyes were raised to heaven. Suddenly, her hands were resplendent with rings set with precious stones that glittered and flashed in a brilliant cascade of light. So bright was the flood of glory cast upon the glory below that Catherine could no longer see Our Lady's feet. Mary lowered her eyes and looked full at Sister Labore. Her lips did not move, but Catherine heard a voice. *"The ball which you see represents the whole world, especially France, and each person in particular."* These words stirred the heart of the Sister with fresh transports of joy, and the dazzling rays seemed to her to increase to blinding brilliance. *"These rays symbolize the graces I shed upon those who ask for them."*

*The gems from which rays do not fall are the graces for which souls forget to ask.” At this moment, Catherine was so lost in delight that she scarcely knew where she was, whether she lived or died.*

and:

Our Lady wore “three rings on each of her fingers.” She tells us, further, that the rings were graduated in size, “the largest one near the base of the finger, one of medium size in the middle, the smallest one at the tip.” She even noticed that the rings themselves were set with stones “of proportionate size, some larger and others smaller.” “A white veil covered her head,” Catherine wrote, “falling on either side to her feet. Under the veil her hair, in coils, was bound with a fillet ornamented with lace, about three centimeters in height or of two fingers’ breadth, without pleats, and resting lightly on the hair.” This supreme accuracy carries over into the recording of the time and place of her visions.

*“Saint Catherine Labouré of the Miraculous Medal” by Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M. (1958) Ch. 8*

### ***The Statue of the Lady of the Globe***

From 1839, Catherine began to agitate for the setting up of an altar and a commemorative statue on the spot where the first medal apparition had taken place and this statue should have a globe in its hands. Again, Catherine approached her confessor in fear and trembling—the discussion was heated, and Father Aladel expressed his displeasure shouting, “You’re worse than a blasted wasp.” Understandably Aladel was against the globe being introduced—a different image would be most confusing. But Catherine was tormented by her need to fulfil this second part of the mission given her by the Blessed Virgin and could not rest till it was accomplished.

By May 1876, Catherine was desperate. She knew she would die before the end of the year. Something had to be done. For forty-six years Catherine had managed to keep her identity secret from her community, though some of those in authority knew and others guessed. She decided to reveal her identity to her Superior and ask her help. After seeking permission from the Blessed Virgin in prayer, she told Sister Dufès the whole story.

After much heart searching, Sister Dufès was won round and set about ordering a statue of Our Lady of the Globe to Catherine’s specification. Catherine was somewhat disappointed with the result but then no human creation could compare with the beauty of the apparition. The statue portrayed the Blessed Virgin holding the globe, but it lacked the rays of light. Permission to place the new statue in the Chapel was not given until four years after Catherine’s death. That statue was replaced by another sculpted in 1930. On 31 December 1876 the last day of the year, Catherine died and was buried at Reuilly. Her body was exhumed after 57 years and found in perfect condition, even her blue eyes which gazed on the Immaculate Virgin. She was beatified in 1933 and canonized by Pius XII in 1947.

*“The Miraculous Medal: Icon of Mary’s Maternal Mediation” by John Desmond Miller (2005)*

In May 1992, Mary Kathryn Johnson, a 47-year-old widow living in the United States, allegedly had a private revelation that the Blessed Virgin wanted a medal depicting The Virgin of the Globe as first seen by Catherine Labouré. I’ve gone down all the rabbit holes that I could find, and the whole thing seems to have gone nowhere.

Globe in her hands, globe under her feet

Same symbol. “The ball which you see represents the whole world, especially France, and each person in particular.”

God bless you!