

St. Catherine Laboure



St. Catherine Laboure was born in France on May 2, 1806 as the ninth of 11 children to Pierre and Madeleine Laboure. In 1815, Catherine's mother passed away, leaving her 9-year-old daughter with the responsibility of caring for the household. After her mother's funeral, Catherine returned home and picked up a statue of the Blessed Virgin. Holding it close, she said, "Now you will be my mother."

Growing up, Catherine was known for being a quiet and practical child, though she was extremely devout. A couple of years after her mother's death, Catherine experienced a dream of an old priest motioning her to a room of sick people. "It is a good deed to look after the sick. God has designs on you. Do not forget it."

Years later, during a visit to the Daughters of Charity hospital, Catherine saw a picture of the old priest on the wall. She discovered it was of their founder, St. Vincent de Paul. Catherine immediately knew she would become a member of St. Vincent's order. In January 1830, Catherine Laboure entered the novitiate of the Daughters of Charity.

Months later, on July 19, 1830, Catherine woke from her sleep after hearing a child's voice calling her to the chapel as the Blessed Virgin Mary was waiting for her. As Catherine approached the chapel, the door swung open revealing a brilliant light. The Blessed Virgin told Catherine she would be given a mission with all the graces necessary to complete it.

Our Lady said, "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." In November 1830, the Blessed Mother visited Catherine a second time during evening meditations. She showed herself inside an oval frame, standing upon a globe with rays of light coming from her hands toward the globe. Around the frame were the words, "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

Mary asked Catherine to take these images to her father confessor, Father Jean Marie Aladel, telling him they should be placed on medallions. "All who wear them will receive great graces."

At first, the priest did not believe Catherine, but after two years, he brought her story to the Archbishop. The Archbishop ordered 2,000 medals struck. The medals were dispersed so rapidly and effectively it was said to be miraculous.