

1. June 2024

“The Maid of Orleans”

Part 1: The Call

Starting today, we will depart for a few days from the usual framework of our daily meditations on the Word of God. Since this year the Solemnity of Corpus Christi fell on 30 May, the day on which the feast of St Joan of Arc is usually celebrated, we would like to dedicate the meditations of the next few days to the story of this extraordinary saint. The "Maid of Orleans" is the patron saint of our spiritual family and has accompanied us on our journey with the Lord for many years. We like to call her our "dearest sister".

We have recorded a radio play in Spanish, German and English which we will be sharing with you in three parts over the next few days. For our Portuguese and French-speaking listeners, we are going to record her story as an audio book, in the hope that in the coming years we will find enough speakers to make it into a radio play, with the different roles that this entails. Let's begin with the first part:

We are in the Hundred Years' War between France and England. The rightful French heir was fighting for the Throne of France with Henry VI of England. Much of the French territory was already occupied by English and Burgundian troops; the latter were those French who had allied themselves with England.

In the midst of this situation, in which French troops lost battle after battle and hope was fading, on January 6, 1412, in the small village of Domrémy, Joan of Arc, daughter of Jacques and Isabelle, was born into a wealthy peasant family.

As usual in such circumstances, Jeanne grew up as a shepherdess; she neither learned to read nor write, but she was taught the Catholic faith from an early age.

When she was thirteen years old, the archangel Michael, the patron saint of France, appeared to her in her father's garden and sent her two saints as heavenly advisers: Catherine of Alexandria and Margaret of Antioch. Between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, the voices of these two saints prepared Joan for a very special mission that God would entrust to her:

St. Catherine: Jehanne!

Jehanne: Yes, my friend Catherine!

St. Catherine: You know that our Lord is preparing you for a task which you are to carry out on His behalf.

Jehanne: Yes, but I would like to know it more exactly. I only know that it concerns our beloved country and our king. How gladly I would like to help relieve this terrible misery. But how? What exactly do you think the Lord has in mind?

St. Catherine: You will know it when the time is ripe. But I tell you, it is about to happen and you can thank our God on your knees that He wants to have mercy on France.

Jehanne: Yes, our Lord shall be glorified in everything.

Dear Catherine, tell me what I can do! I feel the urge to do something for our poor country and for the king, and I am becoming more and more restless! Every day it is getting worse and worse and one hears about so much misery. France is lying on the ground and soon the English have taken over the rest of the country! May the Lord intervene soon!

St. Catherine: That will happen! Have patience, my daughter, have patience and trust. Everything is about to happen. This much I can tell you.

Finally the moment has come when she is sent to fulfil the mission entrusted to her from heaven for her beloved fatherland:

St. Catherine: Jehanne, it's time. God has had mercy on your prayers. He will now intervene in France and save your country. He will do it through you, daughter of God. For this He has prepared you through these years and now you will be sent. You must leave your village! Go now, beloved daughter of God. Go to the dauphin Charles in

Chinon, who is to be anointed king at Rheims. Go, Jehanne, the time has come. Trust the Lord in everything!

Thus, the young 17 year-old maid leaves with a small escort of soldiers and knights to reach the heir of the throne and convince him that God was sending her to liberate France from the English occupation. From that moment on, she would dress in male military clothing, to protect her purity, being the only woman in the midst of soldiers. In this sense, we hear a real testimony from one of her companions, the Chevalier De Metz:

Every night, Bertrand and I slept next to her. She lay beside me in doublet and trousers. She instilled me with such respect that I never dared to desire her.

I believed the maid's words. I was moved by her words and her love for God. She believed she had been sent by God, she never cursed, she liked to go to mass, and when she swore, she made the sign of the cross.

In the French people, there was a prophecy that said that France would be lost through a woman; to be revived later through a maiden. Thus, the hopeful news that a maiden, apparently sent by God, had emerged, quickly spread by word of mouth. Charles VII decided to grant Joan an audience, but not without first verifying the authenticity of her mission. It is said that, at the moment of receiving her at court, he placed another man on the throne, while he disguised himself as one of his courtiers and mingled among them. But Joan did not let herself be deceived: she immediately knew that the man sitting on the throne was not the heir, and without hesitation she went to Charles VII and knelt down before him:

Dauphin Charles: What is your name?

Jehanne: Noble dauphin, I am Jehanne, called the Maiden. The King of Heaven tells you through me that you will be anointed and crowned at Rheims. You will be the vicar of the King of Heaven, who is the Lord of France!

Dauphin: Perhaps you know the situation of our country. It will not be long before the English have defeated us together with the Burgundians and the whole land will belong to our enemies.

Jehanne: By Saint Michael the Archangel: That shall never happen, my dauphin. It is our holy France and the English should return to their country! If they do not do it voluntarily, par mon Martin, then it must be done by force!

Charles (laughs a little): You are very fervent Jehanne, but our enemies will not leave voluntarily and we cannot drive them away by force. We've already tried that and lost most battles. The soldiers are tired and have no more courage! What should change? Even you won't be able to change it!

Jehanne: My dauphin, it is not me who can change it, but it is God's will and He has sent me here to make it happen. It is God's will that you rule France and are anointed king in Rheims. Believe me and it will happen!

Dauphin: How can I believe you? I see you have honest eyes, and I see in them a fire. I also hear that some think you are the promised maiden of Lorraine who is to liberate France. But is that enough?

I want to believe that God will intervene. Of course, many prayers have been sent to heaven, but that it should be through you, a simple girl like you! Who can believe that?

Jehanne: Yes, but God wants to do it through a simple girl, so that all the glory belongs to Him and everyone knows that God has saved our country!

Dauphin: That's a very wise answer, Jehanne!

Jehanne (urging): Sire, surrender your kingdom to our true Lord Jesus and He will give it to you as a fiefdom!

After the court hearing, the "dauphin", who began to believe in the maiden, decided to submit her to the ecclesiastical tribunal of Poitiers to prove the divine origin of her mission. After the positive judgment of the clergymen, the "dauphin" entrusted Joan, a young peasant girl who could neither read nor write, let alone the arts of war, with the command of his troops...

Carrying out this mission would only be possible thanks to her heavenly advisors!