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“The Maid of Orleans” Part 2: Joan’s mission

Now begins the mission of Saint Joan of Arc at the head of the French troops. Her very presence showed the soldiers and officers that God would intervene concretely in the situation of France. Thus, the population and the combatants regained their courage and bravery, and believed in the mission of the Maiden. Her presence was so impressive that many people saw her as an angel of God.

Joan set out to turn the army of the French into an "army of God": She did not tolerate the soldiers' blasphemy; she led them to confession and the sacraments, and chased away the prostitutes who followed the troops. Priests accompanied the army and celebrated Holy Mass and led processions. The "Veni Creator Spiritus" was sung as a battle hymn.

In order not to give rise to false images, it must be made clear that Joan was in no way obsessed with war; nor was she vengeful or blood-thirsty. In fact, she bore no weapons, and never fought. Her wish was that the English would return to England peacefully. An example of this conciliatory attitude is the letter she wrote to the Duke of Burgundy:

"Prince of Burgundy, I pray, beg, and request as humbly as I can that you wage war no longer in the holy kingdom of France, and order your people who are in any towns and fortresses of the holy kingdom to withdraw promptly and without delay. Neither yourself, your troops nor subjects; and know beyond a doubt that despite whatever number of soldiers you bring against us they will never win. And there will be tremendous heartbreak from the great clash and from the blood that will be spilled of those who come against us..."

However, since the enemies did not accept her offers of peace, she led men into battle, with the strong conviction that "Men fight; but only God gives victory". From then on, the situation in France took a turn: now they would win battle after battle; while the English, initially sarcastic in front of the Maiden, would be more and more afraid. She, on the other hand, being a sensitive young girl, prayed in tears for the dying English during the fighting.

Her best known military action was the liberation of Orleans, which had already fallen under English rule. In this battle, just as her "voices" had foretold, she was wounded by an arrow; nevertheless, she remained on the battlefield, holding the banner, which contained the names of Jesus and Mary printed on it. After a fierce confrontation, she managed to reconquer the city; from which she is acclaimed with the immortal title of the "Maiden of Orleans".

Thanks to the audacious military interventions of Joan and her army, the heir Charles VII was finally able to be brought to Reims for his solemn coronation as the legitimate King of France:

Thus, Joan had reached the first of her goals in the mission she had been given. But she would not be satisfied until she had definitively expelled the English from the entire nation. However, the king began to withdraw his support for her and failed to send her the promised troops. Joan insisted to her king:

Joan: "Sire, now is the time to fight! If we do not seize the moment now, the war will go on for a long time and cost many lives. We must keep fighting, sire. I beg you: Do not hesitate! The soldiers are ready. Don't lose time holding counsels. We must move on now!"

But the king preferred to listen to the traitorous advisors, who proposed negotiations with the enemy; which, in the end, only gave them time to gain strength and organize themselves better for the coming battles.

Joan did not cease to implore him:

"Sire, God despises the tranquility of souls He has destined for war".

The next military project of the Maid of Orleans was the reconquest of the capital: Paris. The time was right: the army was in good spirits, the English and Burgundians were weak and afraid of Joan, knowing exactly why the war situation had been reversed.

Temporarily, the king allowed himself to be convinced to undertake the attack on Paris, but at the hardest moment of the confrontation, after Joan had been wounded, the king ordered the retreat against the maiden's will. She and her brave men felt betrayed, but they had no choice but to obey. The king disbanded the army, which had been so

successful up to that point, and all the momentum of the victorious struggles came to a halt. He did not dismiss Joan from his service. He entrusted her with insignificant military interventions, which in no way corresponded to her eagerness to liberate the entire nation. Joan resembled an eagle in a cage. And, in this situation, her "voices" conveyed a painful message to her:

St. Catherine: Beloved daughter of God, have no fear. But we must tell you today that you will be captured before the day feast of St. John the Baptist.

Joan: O, woe, into the hands of the English! Oh, no, if that happens, let me die right away, without the long agony of captivity.

St. Catherine: Jehanne, you have to accept everything as it comes. It has to be like this now. Trust your Lord, trust, beloved Jehanne, even if it is difficult!

Joan: Before the feast of St. John! So soon already! Katharina, tell me the hour when it will happen!

St. Catherine: Accept everything as the Lord allows it to happen and trust Him.

Joan: Oh, my God, how hard this is for me! I will fall into the hands of my enemies! Oh, no, must I, dear Lord? When will it be and how will it be?

Dear Jesus, what have you arranged for me? I would rather die than be captured by the English!

But if it is Your will then what must happen shall happen! (cries a little)

What Joan so feared in her life happened: she was betrayed. While she was engaged in a military action to help the inhabitants of Compiègne against the Burgundians, the captain of the city ordered the bridge to be raised, thus leaving Joan outside, at the mercy of the great number of enemies who surrounded her and who immediately took the opportunity to capture her. Thus, she fell into enemy hands... and began her painful year as a prisoner, being accused of witchcraft and heresy by her enemies.