

4. June 2024

## "The Maid of Orléans"

### Part 4: Epilogue

The last three meditations were dedicated to Saint Joan of Arc. We pray daily in the community that her mission may be better understood and that her honour may be fully restored.

Why do we do this? St Joan was often misunderstood. It was inconceivable that God would intervene in the course of history in such a way as to bring about such a turnaround in the war situation through a young girl. This misunderstanding persists to this day...

If we try to understand the Maid of Orleans in purely human terms, we soon run out of explanations, or we run the risk of resorting to theories that are incapable of comprehending the meaning of her mission. In the worst case, one might think that the saint was not entirely sane in having these visions. Or the influence she had in this historical context is simply denied.

The English, for example, wanted to explain the turn of events by the influence of the devil. Consequently, they wanted to see the Maid condemned as a witch, thus destroying her reputation and at the same time questioning the legitimacy of Charles VII, as we had heard in the account of the Last Days.

But if we look at it in the light of faith, we can discover the wisdom of God in the choice of Joan of Arc. Yes, the Lord delights in choosing what is weak before the world in order to glorify Himself. In her case, everyone could see that this girl from a village in Lorraine would not be able, humanly speaking, to carry out such an undertaking.

*"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide"* (Jn 15:16). So it is God who takes the initiative in choosing, and we do not know the criteria by which He does so. But one of His criteria should be obvious to us... God saw Joan's heart and knew that it burned for Him. The Lord desires the co-operation of the person He chooses for His service. His criteria are not natural talents, but faithfulness of heart, depth of love for God...

The most beautiful and profound thing that we can discover in Jeanne is that she loved God and corresponded to Him completely by giving her life. From this starting point,

the soul of the Maid of Orleans opens up to us and we can understand her... It was her love and trust that allowed God to do His work through her. This is how she was able to fulfil her mission and to suffer the death she had feared so much.

The spirit of fortitude lived in Joan. It is that gift of the Holy Spirit which enables God, with our consent, to take us beyond our human limits and to love Him more than ourselves.

In honouring Joan for her wonderful response to God's call, we honour first of all God Himself. We can apply to Jeanne the words that the Virgin Mary, full of joy and humility, confessed in the Magnificat: "*God has regarded the low estate of His handmaid*" (Lk 1:48). In a similar way, we can say that God looked upon the lowliness of His daughter Jeanne and gave her the great mission of liberating His people.

The glory of Jeanne is therefore the glory of God. That is why it is important that God's glory and wisdom shine in the stories and testimonies, so that this unusual mission is understood in this light. If we take away or diminish Jeanne's honour, we will diminish the glory that belongs to God for this mission.

The mission of the saints, like that of Joan of Arc, does not end when they reach their eternal home and are with God forever. We know a saying of St Therese of the Child Jesus, who was also a great devotee of Joan of Arc: "After my death I will let fall a shower of roses". St Therese had a great apostolic heart and was in fact proclaimed by the Church to be the patron saint of the missions.

In tomorrow's meditation we will see if the mission of St Jeanne d'Arc continues to this day.