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IN HONOR OF ST. JOAN OF ARC

“A diabolical plan: Joan is being taken to Rouen!” (Part 8)

After her capture, it became clear what the English intended to do with her. Joan was not merely a prominent prisoner; with her, English military dominance in France had come to an end. They therefore believed they knew what had caused their defeats. In their view, a witch—and thus a woman influenced by the devil—had brought about this turn of events to their disadvantage.

With Joan’s setback in Paris, as it was widely interpreted, the aura of invincibility surrounding the Virgin was lost in the eyes of her opponents. Her capture before Compiègne confirmed this further. The Burgundians handed Joan over to the English king in exchange for a substantial sum of money. What Joan had feared came to pass. She was now in the hands of her enemies.

It quickly became clear how the English intended to proceed. Treating her as a prisoner of war was not enough for them; she was to be tried as a witch by an ecclesiastical court. Their aim was to undermine the authority of the French king. If the Church condemned the Maid as a witch and heretic, all her deeds, including the king’s coronation and the French victories, would be seen as having been accomplished with the devil’s help. They worked toward this goal.

However, to carry it out, they needed the cooperation of the Church because only an ecclesiastical court could condemn Joan as a heretic and a witch.

They found willing clergymen who were either aligned with them or who viewed the supernatural events surrounding the Maid of Orléans with disdain. One ecclesiastical figure stands out in particular: the Bishop of Beauvais. He had maintained contact with the English for a long time. When Beauvais sided with the French king, he fled to Rouen.

Bishop Cauchon now became the chief instigator in advancing and carrying out the ecclesiastical trial against Joan. Whether he believed he was doing the right thing, acted out of ambition—perhaps hoping to become Archbishop of Rouen—or out of political conviction, we leave to God’s judgment.

However, serious legal violations soon became apparent in the trial against Joan,

including threats of violence against tribunal members who spoke favorably of her, and much more. Cauchon served the King of England, who financed the trial against Joan of Arc. He justified his role as prosecutor by claiming that she had been captured in his former diocese of Beauvais and that he had received approval from the ecclesiastical authorities in Rouen.

Turning our attention to the trial in Rouen, we are horrified to see how the ecclesiastical hierarchy was drawn into the Englishmen's political plans through a preconceived scheme. This reminds us of the trial of Jesus. There, too, an unholy collaboration existed between religious authority and state power, although in Jesus's case, his death was driven by the religious leaders.

What motivated the judges selected by Bishop Cauchon to proceed against Joan in the manner we shall soon hear described in greater detail? They participated in delivering an innocent, holy person to a shameful death by fire, stripping her of her honor and denouncing her as an apostate from the Church and a witch. This was also intended to cast a shadow over the great work of God accomplished through the Virgin of Orléans. In this respect, the unjust trial was also a grave attack on the honor of the Church and God. Those who were regarded as honorable men of the Church became accomplices of evil.

One might object that those involved in the trial were unaware of this, that most of them perhaps even acted in good faith. That is possible, for even at the crucifixion of the Son of God, Jesus cried out, "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*" (Lc 23:34), and St. Peter spoke similarly in his Pentecost sermon. However, it is important to view the matter spiritually and objectively.

With this trial, the English carried out a diabolical plan and found clerical accomplices. To grasp the gravity and darkness of what was to happen, one must recognize that Joan of Arc acted on God's behalf and that the Archangel Michael and her saints specifically guided her in her actions. Furthermore, her personal witness to holiness, attested to by many, was beyond any reproach. Thus, the judges were dealing with a saint who did nothing other than fulfill God's will. Seeking to condemn her as a witch and clear the way for her to be burned at the stake in the Rouen marketplace through their verdict is clearly the work of the devil in collaboration with mostly deluded and misguided people.

Objectively speaking, the trial of the Maid of Orléans and her dishonorable death constitute a terrible and cruel crime, just as Jesus's death on the cross in Jerusalem did. Only the goodness and mercy of God can incorporate such terrible acts into his plan of

salvation.

The Maid is now on her way to this shameful trial. After being treated relatively leniently during her Burgundian captivity, everything changed when the English brought her to Rouen, which seemed the safest place to them because it was where the English king had his main residence in France.