



8 June 2026  
IN HONOR OF ST. JOAN OF ARC  
“Jeanne's Recantation” (Part 10)

Joan withstood the terrible ordeal of interrogation, the harassment she endured at the hands of the English guards, the harsh conditions of her imprisonment, and the judges' attempts to convict her of heresy. Not even the threat of torture caused her to falter. Supported by her saints, she remained unyielding. She told those who threatened her with torture: *“Truly, even if you were to break my limbs and sever my soul from my body, I could say nothing else to you. If you force me to speak, I will say that you made me speak by force.”*

As the pressure mounted, she heard all the charges brought against her and was repeatedly ordered to submit to the judgment of the Church. She appealed to God and said she should be taken to the Pope.

Joan testified: *“I asked my voices for advice on whether I should submit to the Church because the clergy were pressing me fiercely. They answered that if I wanted our Lord to help me, I should entrust myself to Him in everything.”*

It was becoming increasingly clear to her that they intended to burn her, for this was now also being said to induce her to recant. She had also consulted her voices on this matter:

*“I asked my voices if I would be burned, and they told me, ‘Trust in Our Lord. He will help you.’”*

On May 23, 1431, Joan received a final warning.

The twelve articles of accusation, which were read to her as part of this warning by Canon Pierre Maurice, described her in summary as a renegade, a heretic, obstinately stubborn, a liar, an idolater, a conjurer of evil spirits, a seducer, one who insults the honor of angels and saints, a superstitious person, a traitor, cruel, vain, a rebel, one who incites tyranny, and one who blasphemes God in His commands and revelations, among other accusations.

When the canon delivered his admonitory speech and said she should return to the path of truth by obeying the Church and submitting to its judgment, she replied with death-defying courage:

*“What I have always said and maintained throughout the trial, I will maintain now as well. Even if I were facing the sentence and saw the fire glowing, the bundles of brushwood lit, and the executioner ready to stoke the fire, if I were in the fire myself... I would say nothing else; I would uphold what I said in the trial until death.”*

Joan seemed prepared for death, which was now very near. She was evidently in constant communication with her saints, and all attempts to lead her to recant failed. The judges, led by the bishop, presented themselves as representatives of the Mother Church, concerned for her salvation and seeking to prevent her excommunication.

This was certainly a severe trial for Joan. Even though she knew she was fulfilling her mission in accordance with God’s will and surely perceived some underhandedness in the trial, it was still men of the Church who were judging her. For example, it was not pagan rulers who persecuted Christians because they did not offer sacrifices to the gods, as was the case with St. Catherine, her heavenly companion. No, it was shepherds of the Catholic Church who accused her of violating the purity of the faith.

It came to the extreme.

On May 24, Joan was led to the square in the cemetery of the Abbey of Saint-Quentin in Rouen. The entire tribunal, along with all its presiding judges and a large crowd, had gathered. After three warnings, Bishop Cauchon began reading the verdict.

After reading a portion of it, something unexpected happened. Joan interrupted him and exclaimed:

*“I will follow everything the judges of the Church say and decree. I will obey their command and will. Since the clergy say that my apparitions and revelations are neither to be upheld nor believed, I will not uphold them. I submit myself entirely to the judgment of the judges and our Holy Mother, the Church.”*

She then recited her retraction according to a French document handed to her. She repeated the prescribed text and signed it with her own hand.

This text summarized the charges against her, which she confirmed before the assembled tribunal and the many people present.

After the recantation, Bishop Cauchon lifted the excommunication from her. Yet he sentenced her, because she had blasphemously sinned against God and the Church, to

perform salutary penance and to remain in prison for life....

Joan was led back to her prison and remained under the English guards.

What happened? Why did Jeanne recant after holding out for so long? Many authors have been puzzled by this question, and all sorts of speculation has emerged.

We'll hear it from Joan herself tomorrow!