



9 June 2026
IN HONOR OF ST. JOAN OF ARC
“Joan's greatest victory!” (Part 11)

What had happened to the heroic Joan of Arc, who had endured so many trials and never doubted her mission?

Let us think of Saint Peter. Did he not repeatedly show Jesus his love? Did he not leave everything to follow Jesus? Did he not say that he was willing to die for Jesus? What happened then? We know the answer. In the hour of danger, he denied Jesus and bitterly regretted it afterward.

What about Joan of Arc?

A few days after her recantation, Bishop Cauchon came to Joan's prison with a few companions. He asked her if she had heard the voices since Thursday, the day she recanted.

Joan answered in the affirmative and said:

"Through Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret, God has made me aware of the great sorrow of my betrayal, to which I consented through my recantation. From that Thursday onward, my voices had foretold what I would do, and that is what I did that day. They told me on the scaffold where I stood that I should answer the preacher fearlessly. But I call this preacher a false preacher because he said I had committed crimes I did not commit. If I were to say that God had not sent me, I would condemn myself. The truth is that God sent me. Since then, my voices have told me that I committed a great evil by confessing that I had not acted rightly. It was out of fear of the fire that I said that."

Here we find Joan of Arc again. Through her saints, she gains a true understanding of her actions and repents. Like St. Peter, she acted out of fear.

The bishop wanted to remind her that she had confessed on the scaffold to falsely claiming that the saints had appeared to her. However, with the help of her voices, Joan was determined to reaffirm her commitment to her mission and replied to the bishop:

"I did not understand it that way. I did not intend to renounce my apparitions—that is, St. Catherine and St. Margaret. Everything I did was out of fear of the fire. What I recanted

was contrary to the truth. I would rather do my penance all at once and die than endure the sufferings of prison any longer. Even though you forced me to recant, I have never done anything against God or the faith. I understood nothing of what was in the act of recantation. I had no intention of recanting anything unless it pleased God.”

With that, Joan had pronounced her own death sentence. The following day, the tribunal convened, and Bishop Cauchon reported on the events, seeking the opinions of those present. They branded Joan a relapsed heretic who deserved death.

On May 30, in the market square of Rouen, Joan of Arc was handed over by the ecclesiastical authorities to the secular authorities, who carried out the death sentence. The Maid of Orléans was burned as a witch and heretic. The English had achieved their goal, and the Tribunal of Rouen had paved the way for it.

And Joan of Arc?

She had achieved her greatest victory. Although she could not physically complete her mission to liberate France, she did so through holy martyrdom. Her temporary recantation casts no shadow on her, for she both repented and once again confessed the truth before her accusers, thereby nullifying her recantation.

She now bore witness to the truth, fully aware of her impending martyrdom by burning at the stake, a fate she had always feared. There are indications that she may have hoped, at least for a time, that she would be set free. She had also interpreted the martyrdom foretold by her saints as being related to her suffering in prison. But now, she knew exactly what lay ahead. This makes her confession to the truth of her mission all the more valuable. Her experience with weakness and confusion in the face of impending death must have kept her humble and enabled her to cling more closely to God.

And so it came to pass.

The saints had told her that she would be freed through a great victory. This victory now lay before her, leading her through the fire.

Let us bow before a saint who was instrumental in changing the fate of her beloved France and who was willing to give her life for it. God was glorified through her life and death. It is to the honor of God and the saint to strive, as far as grace permits, to shed light on her mission in the proper light. That was the intent of my remarks. When we honor the saints, we honor God, who enabled them to fulfill their missions on earth.

On July 7, 1456, the Church declared invalid the shameful trial that had led to the condemnation of Joan of Arc.

On May 16, 1920, she was canonized by Pope Benedict XV.

After the French captured Bordeaux in 1453, the Hundred Years' War effectively came to an end. It is undisputed that the saints' intervention brought about the turning point that led to France's eventual victory.

Tomorrow, I will conclude the series "In Honor of Joan of Arc" with a final reflection.