



The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: Miracles and Faith
Part VI: Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal



*Miraculous Medal
Public Domain*

Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Helen is a lay-Dominican, which is also known as the Order of Preachers, and she, along with her husband Dan, are engaged in youth catechesis and music ministry at Saint Philip Benizi Catholic Mission in Cedaredge, Colorado. Sharon is our token cradle Catholic, and, as everyone by now knows, I am simply here to ask questions, which is the easiest way of getting out of actually having to answer them. That burden goes to our panelists, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray.

Discussion:

As we continue our discussion of miracles, we now turn to a period 300 years after the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Sister Catherine Laboure was a novice of the Daughters of Charity in Paris. During the night of July 18-19, 1830, Sister Catherine was awoken by the voice of a child, which said, “Sister Labouré, come to the Chapel; the Blessed Virgin awaits

you.” Sister Catherine saw a handsome child which she believed to be 4 or 5 years old. She followed him to the chapel which she found ablaze with lights. She knelt and waited.

At approximately mid-night, the celestial child remarks, “Behold the Blessed Virgin, behold her.”

Sister Catherine observed as a beautiful woman entered who was wearing a white robe, with a golden tinge, and a blue veil. She sat in the chair ordinarily reserved for the Director of the Community. Sister Catherine approaches the Blessed Mother and kneels at her feet, like a child before her mother. The Blessed Mother speaks to her and tells her, “MY child, I am going to charge you with a mission ; you will suffer many trials on account of it, but you will surmount them, knowing that you endure them for the glory of the good God. You will be contradicted, but you will be sustained by grace, do not fear; with simplicity and confidence, tell all that passes within you to him who is charged with the care of your soul. You will see certain things, you will be inspired in your prayers, give an account to him.” (Aladel, pg 55)

(Question 1: So, let's put ourselves in Sister Catherine's shoes. We are awakened by a child who takes us to the chapel where the Blessed Mother comes to speak to us. We are told what to do. What might we think happened? Would we recognize this as a vision or a dream? Would we act upon it?)

(Matthew 1:18-21)

18 Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. 19 Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. 20 Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. 21 She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

(Matthew 2:13-15)

13 When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.” 14 Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. 15 He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

Then, there is a second apparition. Sister Catherine relates that on November 27, 1830, she saw the Blessed Mother standing on a globe with golden letters surrounding her, which read, “Mary! conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee!”

The Blessed Mother then instructed Sister Catherine, “Have a medal struck upon this model [meaning what Sister Catherine was seeing], persons who wear it indulged, will receive great graces, especially if they wear it around the neck; graces will be abundantly bestowed upon those who have confidence.” (Aladel, pg 60)

(Question 2: Ok, we are still in the shoes of Sister Catherine. We hear this instruction. What do we do now?)

Sister Catherine relates the instruction she received to her Spiritual Director. His first responses are that she is just having dreams and she should give them no mind. Indeed, she followed his instructions and only confided in him. (Aladel, pg 13, 63)

(Question 3: Now we are in the shoes of the Spiritual Director. If a young woman came to us and related that the Blessed Mother had appeared to them, how might we respond?)

Those who later examine the notes of Sister Catherine and those of her Spiritual Director, observe some differences between the two, causing some concern. (Aladel, pg 60) It was also noted that Sister Catherine's notes do not reflect the 12 stars on the medal, yet, the medal was struck with them. (Aladel, pg 60)

(Question 4: Critics are quick to point to discrepancies in details as evidence of fabrication. Do these differences in notes and accounts mean the apparitions could not have transpired as related?)

While her Spiritual Director initially distrusted what was related to him, he did not totally dismiss her. He kept notes of their conversations and after some reflection and consultation, he decided to move forward to gain permission for the production and dissemination of the medal. His action came approximately two years after Sister Catherine related the instructions of the Blessed Mother. (Aladel, pg 67)

(Question 5: It was noted that Sister Catherine followed her Spiritual Director's instruction and did not speak about the apparitions with anyone, and for the most part, avoided speaking about it further with him except on occasions under which she was particularly tormented. Placing ourselves back in Sister Catherine's shoes, was her reluctant persistence disrespectful to the priest? What position did she find herself in?)

Let's revisit the instruction by the Blessed Mother. She said, "Have a medal struck upon this model [meaning what Sister Catherine was observing], persons who wear it indulged, will receive great graces, especially if they wear it around the neck; graces will be abundantly bestowed upon those who have confidence."

(Question 6: "...persons who wear it indulged, will receive great graces..." Many who received and wear the medal have often related miracles and healing within their life. Does this mean the medal is a good luck charm of sorts? Will it bring us good fortune? Will it help us win the lottery for example? What is grace and what are the graces of which our Blessed Mother speaks?)

(CCC: 1996) Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.

(CCC: 1997) **Grace is a participation in the life of God.** It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an “adopted son” he can henceforth call God “Father,” in union with the only Son. **He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church.**

(CCC: 1999) **The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it.** It is the sanctifying or deifying grace received in Baptism. It is in us the source of the work of sanctification:

Therefore if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself.

(CCC: 2000) **Sanctifying grace is an habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love.** Habitual grace, the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God’s call, **is distinguished from actual graces which refer to God’s interventions,** whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification.

(CCC: 2003) **Grace is first and foremost the gift of the Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us. But grace also includes the gifts that the Spirit grants us to associate us with his work, to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church.** There are sacramental graces, gifts proper to the different sacraments. There are further more special graces, also called charisms after the Greek term used by St. Paul and meaning “favor,” “gratuitous gift,” “benefit.” Whatever their character—sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues — **charisms are oriented toward sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church.** They are at the service of charity which builds up the Church.

(Ephesians 2:1-10)

1 You were dead in your transgressions and sins 2 in which you once lived following the age of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the disobedient. 3 All of us once lived among them in the desires of our flesh, following the wishes of the flesh and the impulses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; 9 it is not from works, so no one may boast. 10 For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them.

(Question 7: Now that we have visited the definition of grace in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the meaning related in Ephesians 2:1-10, let's take a moment to reflect upon our

understanding of grace. How would we summarize this as to what the meaning of the medal is to our lives? How does this reconcile with the thousands of reports of healings and blessings attributed to the medal? How might we relate this to a friend to which we might give it as a gift?)

“On the front of the Miraculous Medal, Mary stands on a globe, representing the earth, with a crushed snake under her feet. This image represents Mary's role as "Queen of Heaven and Earth." The snake represents Satan, who was defeated by Mary's obedience to God. The rays coming from her hands symbolize the graces Mary gives to those who ask her. The year 1830 commemorates the year that the Blessed Mother appeared to St. Catherine Laboure.” (*“The Meaning of the Miraculous Medal,”* pg 1)

“On the reverse side of the Miraculous Medal is a cross and the letter "M". The cross represents Christ's sacrifice for our salvation, while the bar under the cross stands for the Earth. The "M" stands for "Mary" and her true devotion both to Jesus and to her children on Earth. The two hearts are the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Sorrowful Heart of Mary. The entire image is surrounded by twelve stars. The stars can represent both the twelve Apostles and the verse from the Book of Revelation, "a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of 12 stars" (Revelation 12:1).” (*“The Meaning of the Miraculous Medal,”* pg 1)

(Question 8: Let's take a moment to reflect upon the symbolism which the Miraculous Medal presents. In what ways does this reflect the grace of God and the graces we may receive?)

(Question 9: At this point, I would be remiss if I did not bring up the scripture about not creating graven images. Is the wearing of the Miraculous Medal a form of idolatry?)

(Exodus 20:2-6)

2 *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.* 3 *You shall not have other gods beside me.* 4 *You shall not make for yourself an idol or a likeness of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth;* 5 *you shall not bow down before them or serve them.* For I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their ancestors' wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation[d]; 6 but showing love down to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

(Exodus 21:7-9)

7 *Then the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned in complaining against the LORD and you. Pray to the LORD to take the serpents from us.”* So Moses prayed for the people, 8 *and the LORD said to Moses: Make a seraph and mount it on a pole, and everyone who has been bitten will look at it and recover.* 9 *Accordingly Moses made a bronze serpent and mounted it on a pole, and whenever the serpent bit someone, the person looked at the bronze serpent and recovered.*

Quotes:

Mary! conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee!
– *Inscription on the Miraculous Medal*

My child, the times are very disastrous, great trials are about to come upon France, the throne will be overturned, the entire world will be in confusion by reason of miseries of every kind. (The Blessed Virgin looked very sad in saying this.) But come to the foot of this altar, here graces will be shed upon all, upon all who ask for them with confidence and fervor.
– *Blessed Mother to Saint Catherine during the 1st Apparition*

Final Thoughts:

As we examine the miracles such as the apparition of Our Blessed Mother to Saint Catherine, we have no tangible evidence to examine in the same fashion as the *tilma* of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Even the most faithful of priests much take care in the consideration of reports of visions, but that does not mean such miracles do not happen.

As we experience God, it should not surprise us that we may also experience the supernatural, for God is not of this world, but the Creator of this world. At the same time, we must also consider that miracles are not our cause for faith, but it is our faith which allows us to recognize and accept His miracles.

Catholics are criticized as idolaters, and indeed, if we worshiped the Miraculous Medal, we would be. If we understand, however, its purpose to enable us to reflect upon the grace of God, then, we see it is no different than the bronze seraph which Moses placed on the pole at the instruction of God.

Some may misunderstand that the Miraculous Medal is something which it is not. It is not a charm to bring us wealth, riches and material good fortune. It is a reminder of the graces we receive from God. Grace is truly wealth and riches, but not the wealth and riches of the material world, for the substance of such things shall wither and decay. Grace is the wealth and riches of a relationship with God. Grace is the gift of God; His favor and His help to respond to His call. No wonder the faithful poor find happiness despite their poverty of the world while happiness eludes the unfaithful who have all manner of worldly wealth, but who lack a relationship with God.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we pick up our discussion with

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: Miracles and Faith – Part VII: Our Lady of Lourdes

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