

St. Catherine Labouré
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1806–1876 • France

Nine-year-old Catherine Labouré was crying alone in her room before a statue of Mary. Her mother had just passed away. The young girl wiped her tears away, stood on her chair, and tenderly lifted the statue of Mary from the wall. She kissed it and whispered, "Now, dear lady, you are to be my mother." Little did she know the special care her Mother in heaven would give her.

When she grew up, Catherine joined the Daughters of Charity in Paris. One night, she awakened to a child's voice calling, "Sister Labouré, come to the chapel; the Blessed Virgin awaits you." The child was an angel, and he led her to the chapel, ablaze with candlelight. The Blessed Virgin Mary appeared with a rustle of silk and sat nearby. Under the angel's direction, Catherine knelt and rested her hands on Mary's lap. The Virgin Mary told Catherine that God wished to give her a mission, and they spoke for three hours before the Virgin Mary disappeared.

The next time Mary appeared to Catherine, she was inside a large oval frame, around which were these words: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." Within the frame, the Blessed Virgin stood on a large globe that represented the entire world, and with her feet, she crushed a serpent. On her fingers were many rings set with precious stones. Dazzling rays of light streamed forth from her rings.

Catherine noticed that some of the precious stones on the Virgin Mary's rings did not shine, so she asked why. The Blessed Virgin responded that the rays shining forth from her rings were precious graces. Those rings that did not shine represented graces for which people forgot to ask. As Catherine watched, the oval frame rotated. On the other side was a circle with twelve stars, within which was a large "M" crowned by a cross. Underneath were two hearts: the Sacred Heart of Jesus, crowned with thorns, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, pierced by a sword.

Mary commanded Catherine to have a medal made bearing the images she had just shown her on the front and back. She promised many graces to those who wore her medal. According to the Virgin Mary's instruction, Catherine told the priest who heard her confessions, and through his help, the local archbishop ordered the medals made. Mary showered so many blessings on those who wore her medal that people soon began calling it the "Miraculous Medal." Catherine remained under the care of the Blessed Virgin until she died a holy death.

St. Catherine Labouré, help me never to forget to ask Mary for God's graces!