

About the Miraculous Medal

What is an Apparition?

An apparition that is approved by the Catholic Church refers to the appearance of Jesus, Mary, an angel, or a particular saint.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, apparitions occur in order to lead people closer to God. They do not tell us anything new about the Faith, but may highlight certain aspects of our Faith to help us more fully understand certain Church teachings (CCC #66-7). For example, Mary appeared to St. Catherine Labouré in 1830 and told her that the words “O Mary, conceived without sin” should be printed on the Medal of the Immaculate Conception, popularly known as the Miraculous Medal.

These words helped people understand that Mary was conceived without Original Sin, but the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was not declared until 24 years later in 1854. Mary appeared to St. Bernadette in Lourdes, France, four years later, in 1858, to further emphasize her Immaculate Conception.

Apparitions occur to visionaries who are usually young, quite normal, and not particularly well-educated. They wouldn't stand out as being especially holy or spiritual prior to the vision. Apparitions tend to happen in isolated and quiet places, usually when religious beliefs are under attack.

This demonstrates the Supernatural origin of apparitions; they are not a reward for deep prayer or great intelligence, but are rather a gift of grace from God to the Church – they are a gift to everyone. The Church approves apparitions after long periods of careful research, prayer, and observation of the good fruits that result from the apparition.

For example, people received healings and conversions through the Miraculous Medal even before it was approved on July 23, 1894, by Pope Leo XIII. That year, Pope Leo XIII instituted the Feast of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal to be celebrated yearly on November 27. Now, there are countless miracles; and Catherine Labouré is a saint.

How Does Mary Intercede for Us?

Mary's primary prayer is one of praise and thanksgiving. For example, in the *Magnificat* in Luke's Gospel, Mary says, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Lk. 1:46-7). Her whole being is oriented to God to give birth to His Son for the salvation of all mankind. Mary sees everything as a gift from God and is ready to give herself to God to be used to spread His love to everyone she meets.

Mary is also the most powerful intercessor in heaven. She can ask her Son to help people on earth. And, because she is so faithful, her Son will refuse her nothing. However, we have to be humble and faithful to ask for Mary's intercession. When Mary appeared to Catherine, there were rays shooting from the rings on Mary's fingers. Each ring had beautiful gems with rays of light bursting from them so brightly

that Catherine could no longer see Mary's feet. The rays represent the graces that Mary gives to people who ask for them. The gems that had no rays represent the graces for which people forget to ask.

The *Memorare*, which is prayed at every Novena service at the Miraculous Medal Shrine, reminds us of Mary's powerful intercession: "Never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your assistance, or sought your intercession was left unaided."

When we place our confidence in Mary, we do so because she is totally united with Christ. God gave her the special titles "Mother of the Church" and "Mediatrice of All Graces" because she is the vessel through which God gives graces to His people. Her "Yes" allowed Christmas and Easter to happen — for Christ to be born and die to open the gates of heaven for our salvation. Devotion to Mary recognizes Mary's union with Jesus for the salvation of the world.

God honors the weight of Mary's humble "Yes" by listening attentively to her petitions for those who pray through her. Our prayers go straight to God when we ask for Mary's help, because she is our Mother.

Mary's Apparitions to St. Catherine Labouré

Apparition One

On the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, July 18, 1830, at 11:30pm, Catherine heard someone calling her name, "Sister, Sister, Sister!" Right next to her bed, she saw a little five-year-old child dressed in white. The child said, "Come to the chapel; get up quickly and come to the chapel: the Blessed Virgin is waiting for you there!"

Catherine thought, "Someone will hear me." She knew it was against the rules to get out of bed in the middle of the night. The child, whom Catherine thought was her guardian angel, said, "Do not be afraid. Everyone is asleep. Come, I am waiting for you."

Catherine followed the child, and, when she got to the chapel, the door opened by itself, and all the candles inside were lit like Midnight Mass at Christmas. But Mary wasn't there. Catherine waited by the chair, and, finally, the child said, "Here is the Blessed Mother; here she is!"

Catherine heard a noise like the rustling of a silk dress coming from the other side of the chapel and saw the Blessed Mother seating herself in the chair. She wasn't sure if it was Mary, but she heard the child say again, "This is the Blessed Virgin."

Catherine ran to Mary and knelt before her, putting her hands on Mary's lap. She had never experienced so much beauty, joy, and peace in her life.

Mary met with Catherine for two hours, telling Catherine that she would always be with her to comfort her. She also said that Catherine had a mission, and things would happen that would cause Catherine to suffer. She told Catherine that there would be a time of great sorrow in France (during the French Revolution) when many people would die during battles. She told Catherine that some people would mock the Church and even kill Catholics. Some religious communities would be afraid and decide to stop practicing all the rules of the Faith, and other religious communities would want to join together. Mary told Catherine that she would be with her through it all.

Apparition Two

Four months later, on November 27, 1830, the Saturday before the First Sunday of Advent, Mary appeared to Catherine again. It was 5:30 in the evening, and Catherine was praying with the other sisters in the chapel when she heard that sound again like a silk dress rustling. This time, Mary appeared standing near the picture of St. Joseph in the chapel. She was wearing a white dress, with a white veil on her head. Catherine had never seen anyone more beautiful.

Under Mary's feet were a half globe and a green snake with yellow spots. She held a gold ball, which represented the world, with a little cross above it. Her eyes looked up to heaven. This image of Mary is called *Virgo Potens*, Virgin Most Powerful. By her Immaculate Conception, Mary is free from original sin and thus has dominion over all created things; she can conquer demons, temptations, and sinful habits.

Apparition Three

Mary's third apparition to Catherine flows from the second. Suddenly, there appeared three rings on each of Mary's fingers; each ring had beautiful gems with rays of light bursting from them so brightly that Catherine could no longer see Mary's feet. Mary said the ball represented the world, especially France, and each person in the world. The rays represented the graces that Mary gives to people who ask for them. The gems that had no rays represented the graces for which people forget to ask.

Arranged in a semi-circle above Mary appeared the words, "O, Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." To be conceived without sin means that Mary was born without original sin; today this is known as the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, but, at that point, it had not yet been formally declared a dogma of the Church. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed in 1854 by Pope Pius IX, 24 years after the Miraculous Medal apparition. Then, four years later, in 1858, Mary appeared to St. Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, France, telling her, "I am the Immaculate Conception," which served as a confirmation of this dogma.

At this point in the apparition, the ball disappeared, and Mary was surrounded by light as her hands poured out graces. She said, "Have a medal struck after this model. All who wear it will receive great graces; they should wear it around the neck. Graces will abound for those who wear it in confidence."

Then, the image turned, and Catherine saw the back of the medal: a large M with a bar and a cross and the hearts of Jesus (crowned with thorns) and Mary (pierced with a sword). Then, the image disappeared.

What Happened After the Apparitions?

It is hard to imagine that Catherine did not tell anyone about the Apparitions for 46 years, only telling her confessor, Fr. Jean-Marie Aladel, about the image, as Our Lady instructed. The first Miraculous Medals were finally made two years later on June 30, 1832, and the first order of 20,000 Medals was distributed throughout Paris. Four years later, Medals were distributed in the millions, and, by Catherine's death in 1876, billions of Medals were in circulation worldwide.

Some people who wore the medals had miracles happen to them. Catherine did not tell anyone else about Mary appearing to her until right before she died when she told her Mother Superior. She decided to tell Mother Superior because Mary had asked Catherine to have a statue made of her with the globe

in her hands, but the statue was still not yet made. The statue of Our Lady of the Globe was made after Catherine told Mother Superior.

Catherine explained to Mother Superior that the picture of Mary on the Medal is to help people understand that, in God's plan, all graces and blessings are distributed through her; Mary is the Mediatrix of all Graces.

The statue of Our Lady of the Globe (in the Miraculous Medal Shrine's Lower Shrine area) is to show Mary as constantly pleading for the world and begging God's mercy on every sinner in it.

After Mary appeared to her, Catherine spent the next 46 years caring for sick elderly men. Most of her life was spent doing very simple tasks for God, and she became known as a "Saint of Ordinary People" and the patroness of the elderly. Some of the men that Catherine cared for were angry or sad that they were sick, but Catherine treated them all like Christ.

Why is the Medal Miraculous? What is a Miracle?

"Miracle" comes from the Latin word "miraculum," meaning "to wonder." Miracles are wonders performed by God as signs of some special mission or gift.

There are many miracles that have happened through the intercession of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. People still write the prayers that Mary answers for them today on slips of paper in our Shrine. You can write your prayers to Mary, too, and tell us about how Mary answers your prayers.

[Click Here to Share Your Miraculous Medal Story!](#)

Miracle Stories

One man under Catherine's care was very sick and about to die, but he had never been baptized. Catherine asked if he would like to be baptized, but he said, "No." He hated the Catholic Church. Catherine slipped a Miraculous Medal under his pillow when he was sleeping and asked Mary to help open the man's heart to ask to be baptized before he died. Later that day, the man found the Miraculous Medal and asked Catherine if he could be baptized that evening. The man was baptized in the morning and died that same day.

Other miracles happened when Catherine was alive, but miracles are still happening today. A boy was playing by train tracks in the Philadelphia area with a metal tape measure. The tape measure touched the wrong part of the tracks and became filled with electricity. It sent a jolt through his whole body that should have killed him, but, instead, the electricity broke the chain around his neck and went straight out of his Miraculous Medal.

Do these stories mean that the Miraculous Medal is magic? No. People had miracles happen to them because they received the grace for which they or someone else prayed. The miracles happened because the people first made an act of Faith.

Mary told Catherine, "All who wear [the Medal] will receive great graces; they should wear it around the neck. Graces will abound for persons who wear it with confidence."

About the Miraculous Medal

The Miraculous Medal was originally called the Medal of the Immaculate Conception, but, because of the numerous accounts of miracles by those who wore it, people began to call it the Miraculous Medal, and the name stuck. The Medal is a visual reminder of our salvation through Jesus Christ.

Symbolism of the Miraculous Medal:

FRONT SIDE:

The front side of the Miraculous Medal depicts Mary Immaculate, her hands open, full of light; she is the messenger of God, who loves us and who never ceases to come to our aid.

St. Catherine Labouré saw Our Lady appear like this and heard her say, “Have a medal made according to this model. Everyone who wears it around their neck will receive great graces.”

Mary stands upon the globe as the Queen of Heaven and Earth. Her feet crush the serpent to proclaim that Satan and all his followers are helpless before her (Gn. 3:15).

The year 1830 on the Miraculous Medal is the year the Blessed Mother gave the design of the Miraculous Medal to St. Catherine. The reference to “Mary conceived without sin” supports the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary — referring to Mary being sinless, “full of grace,” and “blessed among women” (Lk. 1:28). The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed 24 years later in 1854, and then confirmed when Mary appeared to St. Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, France, in 1958.

REVERSE SIDE:

Cross and the Letter M

On the reverse side, the Cross and the letter M symbolize the close relationship of Mary to the suffering, passion, and death of her Son. The cross can symbolize Christ and our redemption, with the bar under the cross a sign of the earth and the Altar, for it is on the Altar at Mass that the Sacrifice of Calvary continues to be present in the world today. The M signifies “Mary” and “Mother.” Jesus gave us Mary to become our Mother. The interweaving of Mary’s initial and the cross shows Mary’s close involvement with Jesus and our world. In this, we see Mary’s part in our salvation and her role as Mother of the Church.

Two Hearts Side-By-Side

Beneath the cross, bar, and the M are two hearts side-by-side: the Sacred Heart of Jesus crowned with thorns and the Immaculate Heart of Mary pierced by a sword. The two hearts represent the love of Jesus and Mary for us. (See also Lk. 2:35).

Twelve Stars

The twelve stars signify the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles, who represent the entire Church as it surrounds Mary. They also recall the vision of Saint John, writer of the Book of Revelation (12:1), in which “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.”

Resources

Books

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Grades: K-3

- *The Miraculous Medal: The Story of Our Lady's Appearances to St. Catherine Labouré*
By: Mary Fabyan Windeatt
- *Mary's Miraculous Medal*
Published by: The Slave of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Grades: 6-8

- *St. Catherine Labouré of the Miraculous Medal*
By: Joseph I. Dirvin, CM
- *St. Vincent De Paul*
By: F.A. Forbes
- *Saint Louise de Marillac: Servant of the Poor*
By: Sister Vincent Regnault, DC

Websites

www.MiraculousMedal.org

www.Vatican.va

www.EWTN.com