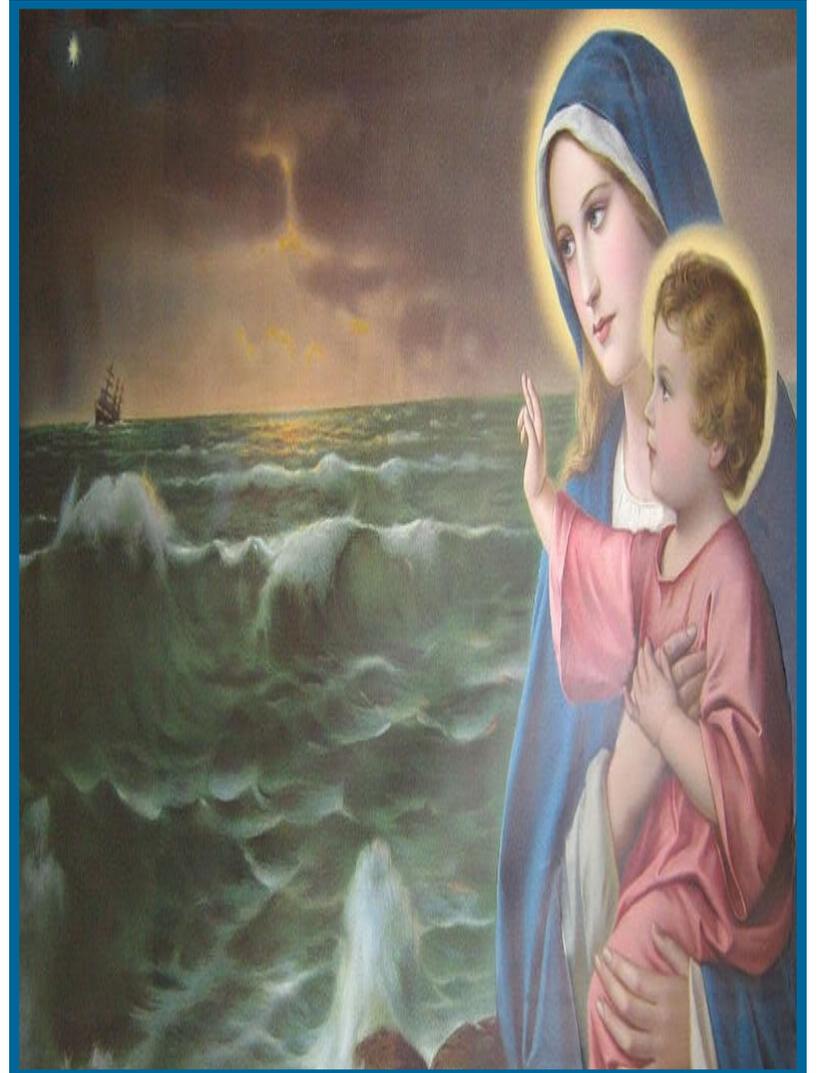


THIS YOUNG BOY WHO WAS PROTECTED BY THE BLESSED VIRGIN, IS NOW A FERVENT CATHOLIC.

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CONVERSION OF OUR LADY'S MIDSHIPMAN

A True Story



*"Mary, Blessed Virgin,
Save me and soon, I promise you,
I will be your child."*

Our Lady's Midshipman

A young boy, whose parents were Jews, was one day taken by some playmates of his own age to a Catholic church in Paris. It was the occasion of First Communion. What passed in the heart of the young Israelite during that solemn hour? All we know is that this glimpse of the light was never quenched from his memory. He even expressed his desire of sharing in the happiness of those privileged children whom he had seen communicating for the first time. But, doubtless, his time had not yet come; for his mother some days after placed him as a midshipman on board a vessel. This hasty determination was intended to bring to naught the new desire of the child. At least, the mother thought so, not knowing that the Spirit of God breathes where so ever it will.

The ship which had the young boy on board was assailed by a violent storm, and soon became a total wreck. Some of the sailors found safety in one of the boats. They picked up the midshipman, and all together were taken on board a ship they were lucky enough to meet with. But their safety was not of long duration. A new storm arose, more furious than the first, and their ship was again swallowed up. Believing that all was over for him, the poor child closed his eyes and became unconscious. He was again saved in one of the boats and taken on board a third ship. This last was also destined to perish with its crew and cargo. In the midst of the tempest the sailors began to invoke Mary, Star of the Sea. Their prayer to the Blessed Virgin during the frightful hurricane made such an impression on the poor little fellow that he mingled his voice with that of the servants of Mary.

While they were praying, a wave swept him overboard into the raging billows of the ocean. He never knew what became of the sailors. However, stunned by the shock, he soon regained his senses and swam with the energy of despair. At last, overcome with fatigue, he felt that he was lost beyond help, when he perceived at a few yards' distance a barrel tossed about by the waves. Summoning his remaining strength, he reached it and clung to it with all his might. It was his plank of safety.

Once installed on his barrel in mid-ocean, the boy began to reflect seriously. He recalled the scene of the tempest and the touching prayer of the sailors. He had learned the prayer and it rose ardently from his heart to his lips. The little Israelite said to the Mother of Christians: "Mary, Blessed Virgin, save me and soon, I promise you, I will be your child."

A ship on its way back to France caught sight of this strange buoy and rescued the midshipman. They landed at Rouen. Our young hero, who had passed through so many dangers, hastened to visit his family. He reached Paris on foot and came joyously to knock at his mother's door, but for him it remained closed. Wounded with sorrow and dying of hunger, he was found two days later, by a Christian child, on a bench in one of the squares. A charitable and pious family received him for a week, and then brought him to us. The dear boy wished to receive holy Baptism and make his First Communion. "Oh, you will see Father," he said, "that you will no longer recognize me once I am a Christian!" Indeed, this lad, who was protected by the Blessed Virgin, is now a fervent Catholic. Who knows if the Providence that guided him by the hand has not also other designs upon him, and is reserving for him a post in the Bark of St. Peter? At least such is his desire and such seems to be his vocation.