

She was henceforth looked upon as the savior of Orleans and of her country. How could this be explained? First of all her unshakeable conviction that she was sent by God. Her faith was contagious and except for a few skeptical politicians, everyone shared her belief. She began by turning the expedition into a religious crusade. She put down swearing and made the men go to confession. She acted as one in authority and stories of her prophecies soon went around the camp; her sword was one miraculously found at Fierbois, buried behind the altar; she announced she would be wounded at Orleans; she raised a siege that had been going on for nearly 7 months. That was the sign she promised as a token that her mission was from God. On these and many other occasions she showed she possessed a foreknowledge of future events...After many victories the Royal Council thought the time was ripe for fresh negotiations with Burgundy, while the military party was in favor of prosecuting the war in Normandy. Alone the Maid of Orleans insisted that her Voices ordered her to lead the king to Rheims for his coronation. This was the last time they listened to her. From now on, the politicians became her enemies openly and the king ceased to pay attention to her warnings. The battle for Compiègne, the key to Paris from the north, was the turning point for Joan. Late in April, 1430, she received a warning from her Voices that she would be taken a prisoner before the feast of Saint John the Baptist. From that day on she left all decisions to the captains, accepting beforehand what-ever would befall her. She was captured under the walls of Compiègne on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. She was then just 18 years old.

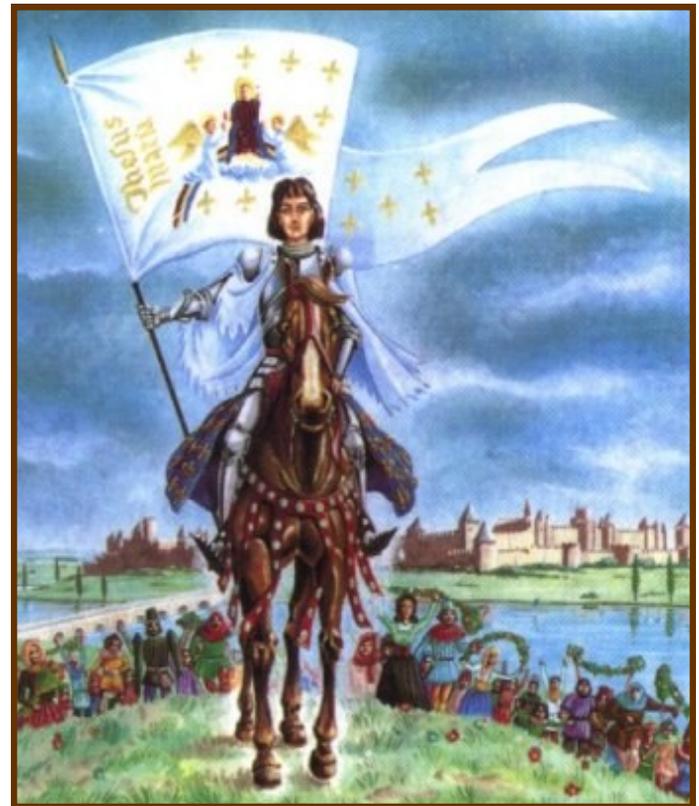
In November, 1430 she was sold to the English and was imprisoned in the castle at Rouen where she was placed in an iron cage until her trial began in January, 1431. Afterwards she was chained by the waist, wrist and ankles to a heavy beam. To add to "her martyrdom"-- as her Voices called it-- she was watched day and night by three common soldiers who shared her room and tormented her with insulting words and rejoiced over her misery. The judges decided that the visions and revelations of Joan were from evil spirits and that she should declare that she had been deceived by her Voices. She did not yield easily, and the trial became a battle of wits between a young girl deprived of all means of defense to which she was entitled and a tribunal whose only business was to find her guilty. Her condemnation was a foregone conclusion. With all the legal formalities concluded, Joan was led to her executioner. She asked for a cross and a soldier hastily made one for her. Then she was bound and was chained to the stake. To the end of her life she maintained and asserted that her Voices came from God and that she had done what had to be done by God's command. In giving up her ghost, bending her head, she uttered the name of Jesus in a voice that could be heard all over the market-place by all present, as a sign that was fervent in the faith of God. Her heart was unconsumed. Her ashes and all that remained of Saint Joan were put into a sack and thrown into the Seine "that the world might have no relic of her of whom the world was not worthy." She was burnt at the stake on May 31, 1431. She was canonized in 1920 by Pope Benedict XV. He said of her, "We find the memory of Joan of Arc so apt to enkindle love in the French people for their mother country, that we regret being French only in our heart!" Two years later, Pope Pius XI declared Saint Joan patroness of France with the Most Blessed Virgin, placing her second only to the Mother of God. In that same year, Monsignor Baudrillart, French historian, wrote that Saint Joan of Arc may be proposed as an example to all young children by her perfect piety; as a model of fidelity to the call of heaven, and to all young persons.

\*(excerpted from: [www.ewtn.com](http://www.ewtn.com); [www.magnificat.ca](http://www.magnificat.ca))

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## *Saint Joan of Arc*

**Feast Day: May 30<sup>th</sup>**



### PRAYER

In the face of your enemies, in the face of harassment, ridicule,  
and doubt, you held firm in your faith.

Even in your abandonment, alone and without friends,  
you held firm in your faith.

Even as you faced your own mortality, you held firm in your faith.

I pray that I may be as bold in my beliefs as you, St. Joan.

I ask that you ride alongside me in my own battles.

Help me be mindful that what is worthwhile can be won when I persist.

Help me hold firm in my faith.

Help me believe in my ability to act well and wisely.

Amen

## Saint Joan of Arc

\*Saint Joan stands alone in history. Many women have found sanctity in the cloister, some have shown bravery in battle, but no other ever trained herself to holiness in a soldier's camp, and surely no female saint ever died at the stake condemned by an ecclesiastical tribunal as a witch and a heretic. She was a peasant girl of no importance and before she was 18, her intervention had already changed the course of European history for centuries to come. When she died at 19, thanks to her the French had become conscious of being a nation, England had lost all hopes of ever being a Continental power, and Burgundy, the arbiter of the destinies of France, was soon again to be her vassal. These events cannot be explained by a mere recital of the diplomatic and military history of the times. The hand of God clearly appeared in these events. Joan of Arc was the tool He chose to accomplish His work; she is the explanation of the miraculous reversal of the fortunes of France which followed her appearance on the stage of history; she was a saint first. Were it not for her trust and faith in God, and for her inflexible resolve "<to serve God first>" she would in time have married some poor laborer and lived and died in some obscure hamlet of Lorraine.

Joan was born in January 1412 in the little village of Domremy on the borders of Lorraine...The house of her childhood, the church where she made her first holy communion still exist, not very much altered...Her father, Jacquot d'Arc, and Isabel his wife were described by neighbors at Joan's 2<sup>nd</sup> trial as "good Catholics", "true Catholics." Joan told the judges at Rouen that, "My mother taught me <Pater Noster, Ave Maria, Credo> and no one beside my mother taught me my beliefs." The religious teaching given by Isabel to her daughter seems to have been very thorough. The answers of Saint Joan to her judges on the subject of grace or the workings of God's Providence among men are astonishing, not in their wording and conciseness alone, but in the theological knowledge they imply. The judges asked her: "Are you in a state of grace, Joan?" "If I am not, God put me there", she replied; "if I am, please God so keep me." The judges also asked questions concerning her childhood and even her amusements. It was noted that Joan would go picnicking in the woods with the other little children of Domremy and while they were dancing and playing other games, she went aside "to talk to God." These young children would later describe Joan as being quite and reserved, almost to the point of shyness. They all insist that she was simple; by this they meant that she did not give herself airs, she was unaffected in speech and manners, sincere and transparent. The French simple conveys all these meanings. The Duke of Alencon, her hostess at Bourges and others repeat the same words when they speak of her: "Except in affairs of war, she was a very simple young girl." They agreed she was cheerful, but of a silent disposition and, commenting on this, add that when she spoke it was always with great sense. Her kindness, her charity towards the poor were also remarkable. One Simon Musnier declared: "She liked to take care of the sick. I know this for certain. When I was a child and I was ill it was she who nursed me." Another witness tells us that she had known Joan to give her own bed to some poor homeless woman and to spend the night herself by the hearth in the next room. This is what Christian charity meant to her.

Joan was about 13 when, for the first time, she heard the Voice which summoned her to the rescue of France. She tells her judges that on this occasion she was overcome with fear. The Voice came to her towards noon. It was summer time;

she was in her father's garden. She heard the Voice on her right, and afterwards she seldom heard it without light which came from the same side and was usually very brilliant. After she had heard the Voice three times, she understood it came from God and knew it was Michael the Archangel, the protector of France, who came to her and with him the hosts of heaven. The Voice warned her "to govern herself well and to go to church often", and from the beginning she was told that she must "go to France." As the years passed, the commands became more pressing. SS. Margaret and Catherine now appeared to her on a weekly basis urging her to leave her home and go and seek the king, and tell him of her mission: that God Himself was sending her to give help to the kingdom and lead the Dauphin to Rheims for his coronation. She told her judges, about these visions, "I saw them with the eyes of my body as plainly as I see you, and when they left me I cried, for I wanted them to take me with them." When she was 16, she knew that the time had come for a decision and that she must obey her heavenly counselors, for they were God's messengers and their command were His commands. When in October 1428, the news came that Salisbury with an English army was under the walls of Orleans, she could wait no longer: "time was pressing upon her as on a woman when her day is near."

France was in a desperate situation. For 90 years war between France and England had been dragging on. Famine, inflation, pestilence, and civil war added to the misery of their unfortunate country. The King had no money, no soldiers and no allies. His own mother had declared him illegitimate and his kingdom had shrunk to a few provinces south of the Loire. The English held Normandy, Picardy, Paris in the North, as well as Guyenne and Aquitaine in the south. Burgundy, their ally, stretched from Flanders to Savoy, from the Rhine to the Loire. When Orleans was threatened, the situation of the French king became dangerous, for its capture would have opened the roads to the south. French diplomacy was for appeasement from 1423 onwards, but Joan wanted to continue fighting saying, "Peace cannot be had but at the point of the lance." When she finally met the king, his 300 courtiers saw a small but sturdy young girl, about 5' 2" in height, of modest appearance, yet not without some dignity of bearing. The king took her apart and had a long conversation with her. It is said that "she confided to him a secret which was known to him alone and to God, which gave him a great confidence in her." What the secret was, no one knows and Saint Joan repeatedly refused to reveal it to her judges. After many weeks of scrutiny by the king, she was allowed to proceed to Orleans with the men-at-arms, that "to do otherwise would be resisting the Holy Spirit and making oneself unworthy of the help of God." In the middle of April, Joan was at Tours, and the army began its march towards Orleans. While the main body moved along the right bank of the Loire she remained on the left. This makes it clear she was not in command. At Orleans, the captains did not at first inform her of their intentions of planning an attack. How is it that within a few days these seasoned soldiers revised their opinion, consulted her and meekly bowed to her counsel? What was her position in the army? What was her share in the victories? How is it that within a month, not France alone but all Europe was ringing with the fame of her exploits?