

OUR LADY OF THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL
OPENING DOORS WHEREVER SHE GOES
Reflection for the General Assembly of the Association of the
Miraculous Medal
14 October 2022 via Zoom

Dear Father Carl, Sister Carolina, Sister Ana Amélia, elected members of the General Council, and members of this General Assembly of the Association of the Miraculous Medal, I am delighted to be with you today and to share with you some reflections on Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

As we know well, millions of people around the world turn to Mary on a daily basis, asking her to intercede for them, those dear to them, and even their afflicted brothers and sisters whom they do not know. These people do not do so of their own initiative. It is not some human invention. Jesus takes the initiative in sending Mary to intervene in the world to help every human being. He wants His Mother to touch the lives of the suffering and needy everywhere. It was, after all, He who gave her to us to be our Mother (cf. John 19:27).

Among all those created in heaven and on earth, there is no one better known, more venerated, more often set before us as a role model. There is no other person in whom God, through Jesus, placed more trust. Mary does not think, even for a single moment, that this is to her merit, but considers all she is and all she has as grace, as gift, as a sign of mercy coming from Jesus.

In some cultures, it is not the wife of a king who is queen, but his mother. While he has the ultimate power, his mother exercises considerable influence over him. We see this with Mary and Jesus at Cana, when He accepted her indirect request, even though his time had

not yet come, to avoid embarrassment for a young couple at their wedding banquet (cf. John 2:1-11).

Although Saint Vincent and Saint Louise lived some 200 years before the Miraculous Medal was struck, they both had profound devotion to Our Lady. Vincent expresses his deep belief in her protection:

*God always kept alive in me the conviction that I would be freed because of my unceasing prayers to Him and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, through whose sole intercession I firmly believe I was delivered.*¹

*Everyone is well in the four places where missions are being given and here also, so it seems that Our Lord will take pity on this Little Company through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. With that end in view, we have sent M. Boudet to pay a visit to her at Chartres.*²

Saint Louise, for her part, frequently referred to Mary as “our Only Mother.”³ She asked the Blessed Virgin personally to assist her in fulfilling God’s designs on her, “I am entirely yours, most Holy Virgin, that I may more perfectly belong to God. Teach me, therefore, to imitate your holy life by fulfilling the designs of God in my life. I very humbly beg you to assist me.”⁴

In particular, under her title of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Mary is invoked for every type of distress. In response, she opens any

¹ CCD I, 6; letter 1 to Monsieur de Comet in Dax. CCD refers to the series, *Vincent de Paul, Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, translated and edited by Jacqueline Kilar, DC; and Marie Poole, DC; et al; annotated by John W. Carven, CM; New City Press, Brooklyn, and Hyde Park, New York, 1985-2014; henceforth, *CCD*, followed by the volume and page numbers.

² CCD I, 350; letter 249, to Robert de Sergis in Amiens, November 1636.

³ *Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac*, edited and translated from the original French edition *Sainte Louise de Marillac: Écrits Spirituels* by Louise Sullivan, DC; New City Press, Brooklyn, New York, 1991, pages 281, 621, 735, 835; henceforth, *SW*.

⁴ *SW* 695.

closed door, gets into the most impossible places, and changes lives and hearts. This change of heart happens through the graces that are received and the miracles that take place in people's lives.

After the cross, the Miraculous Medal is the most widespread Christian symbol throughout the world. However, many still have not had the opportunity to hear about it, to learn Mary's message, to receive and wear the Miraculous Medal. They do not obtain graces from Jesus by asking for them as Mary instructed Saint Catherine Labouré, a humble Daughter of Charity, during the 1830 apparitions in their Motherhouse chapel in Paris.

As Pope Francis reminded us:

With the Holy Spirit, Mary is always present in the midst of the people. She joined the disciples in praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14) and thus made possible the missionary outburst which took place at Pentecost. She is the Mother of the Church which evangelizes, and without her, we could never truly understand the spirit of the new evangelization.⁵

The Association of the Miraculous Medal has tremendous potential for evangelization. Much is being done already in many countries around the world, but we need to use this grace-filled moment of the General Assembly to revitalize the fire within every single member. We must think as Saint Vincent de Paul did when he responded to the question the Queen of Austria posed, "What else could you do?" He replied, "More"!

⁵ Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Rome, 24 November 2013, no. 284; henceforth, *EG*.

Saint Vincent described Jesus's love for humanity as being "inventive to infinity" when He gave us the sacrament of the Eucharist. Members of the Association of the Miraculous Medal also must be "inventive to infinity" in their efforts to evangelize. You must go to evangelize with the Miraculous Medal across the countries where you live, into the schools, parishes, hospitals, workplaces, jails, universities, and governmental offices. With it, you must reach the existential and physical peripheries: the abandoned, the sick, the elderly, and persons submerged in various addictions: alcohol, drugs, games, sex, etc. You must use it to touch the lives of people lacking a suitable place to live, the homeless, and those needing the essentials of life: food, medicine, education, decent jobs, etc. In so doing, by word and deed, you will bring a message of hope to all such persons. When you distribute the medal, give with it the leaflet containing the explanation of its origin and prayers that might be said with it.

In bringing the Miraculous Medal to these people and telling them of its history, they will understand the power of grace that Our Lady works through it. Instruct them about the apparitions of Mary to Saint Catherine. Let them know how she struggled to convince her director that the Mother of God had appeared to her and entrusted her with a mission to have a medal struck. Once the medal was diffused, so many miracles occurred through Mary's intercession, especially during a cholera epidemic, that the people began calling it "miraculous." It was thus that it became known universally as the Miraculous Medal.

Teach them what Mary told Catherine:

Come to the foot of this altar. Here, graces will be spread over all who ask for them with confidence and fervor.

These rays are a symbol of the graces that I pour out on those who ask them of me.

You might share with them too some of the stories of the many, many miracles that have occurred and graces received through the intercession of Mary and her Miraculous Medal. You can find these on various sites on the internet including the Central Association of the Miraculous Medal.

In this way, the people will begin to trust in Mary's intercession. Invite them to wear the Miraculous Medal always around their necks, as well as put it in other places (pockets, purses, cars, at the entrance to their homes, etc.) so that it is ever with them. Encourage them to share it with their family members, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances, thus helping to spread devotion to Mary through the Miraculous Medal.

In addition to evangelizing by bringing the Miraculous Medal everywhere you can, I encourage you also to continue forming prayer groups within the Association of the Miraculous Medal. Invite new members to join the Association, so that it might grow and its new members might help to diffuse Mary's message. Urge young people to form their own prayer groups within the Association. They know how to reach out to their peers better than anyone does.

I beseech you to reflect, during this General Assembly, on how to start the Association of the Miraculous Medal in countries where it is not yet present. What might be the best way to do this? We still have a long way to go if we want to establish the Association of the Miraculous Medal in all 165 countries where at least some branches of the Vincentian Family are present.

By being evangelizers, missionaries on fire, may you go to the ends of the earth to proclaim the love that Jesus bears for us through such a concrete sign as Mary's Miraculous Medal. In so doing, we will have the certainty of walking on a secure path.

Let me conclude with the lovely prayer of Pope Francis to the Virgin Mary:

*Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life
in the depths of your humble faith:
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own “yes”
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.*

*Filled with Christ’s presence,
you brought joy to John the Baptist,
making him exult in the womb of his mother.
Brimming over with joy,
you sang of the great things done by God.
Standing at the foot of the cross
with unyielding faith,
you received the joyful comfort of the resurrection,
and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit
so that the evangelizing Church might be born.*

*Obtain for us now a new ardor born of the
resurrection,
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life
which triumphs over death.
Give us holy courage to seek new paths,
that the gift of unfading beauty
may reach every man and woman.*

Virgin of listening and contemplation,

*Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast,
pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are,
that she may never be closed in on herself
or lose her passion for establishing God's kingdom.*

*Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent, and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.*

*Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,
pray for us.*

Amen. Alleluia!⁶

Questions:

1. What can I do best to invite other persons, especially young people, in my country to become part of the Association of the Miraculous Medal?
2. What concrete steps can I take, in collaboration with other members, to bring the message of the Miraculous Medal to the people by word and deed?

⁶ EG, no. 288.

3. What concrete steps can I take in collaboration with other members to bring the Association of the Miraculous Medal to the countries where it is still not present?

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