Catherine Labouré

Born: 1806

Died: 1876

Feast Day:

28 November

DERRY DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL CENTRE

Catherine Labouré was born in the Burgundy region of France to Madeleine Louise Gontard and Pierre Labouré, a farmer. She was the 9th of 11 living children. Her baptismal name was Zoe, but her family rarely used that name. Catherine's mother died on 9 October,1815, when Catherine was nine years old. From that moment on Catherine said that the Blessed Virgin Mary was now her mother.

Her aunt offered to care for her and her sister Marie Antoinette and the sisters moved to Saint-Rémy. It is there that Catherine had a dream of a priest, whom she later recognised as Vincent de Paul. The priest said to her: '*My daughter, it is good to care for the sick. For now, you flee from me, but one day you will be glad to approach me. God has plans for you. Don't forget it!*'

At the age of 12, Catherine returned to her father's farm to help care for her family. Later, her father, wishing to deter her from her religious vocation, sent her to Paris to work in his brothers' eating establishment for poor workers. There, she observed their suffering and her decision to enter the nursing order of Saint Vincent de Paul, the Daughters of Charity, was reinforced.

Catherine began her noviciate on April 21, 1830, at the convent on the Rue du Bac in Paris and on, January 30, 1831, she took her vows. It is at this Convent that she had the visions of the Virgin Mary that led to the creation of the Miraculous Medal.

The Miraculous Medal was quickly adopted by millions of Catholic. It also played an important role in the proclamation by Pope Pius IX of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 1854. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception had not yet been officially promulgated, but the medal, with its "conceived without sin" slogan, was influential in popular approval of the idea.

Immediately after taking her vows, Catherine was sent to the Hospice d'Enghien, located in the village of Reuilly. She spent the next forty years there, caring for the elderly and infirm. During this time, she not only cared for the sick, but also worked on the hospice's farm. She looked after the poultry and cleaned the stables.

Her life was notable for her devotion to the poor and elderly and for her humility and profound silence. Catherine spent the next 40 years of her life caring for the elderly, sick and disabled. She died aged 70. Her body was discovered to be incorrupt after being exhumed in 1933. She was canonized by Pope Pius XII on July 27, 1947.

Catherine is often shown with the Daughters of Charity habit and the Miraculous Medal. She is the patron saint of the elderly, infirmed people and the Miraculous Medal.