

OUR LADY OF PRAYER

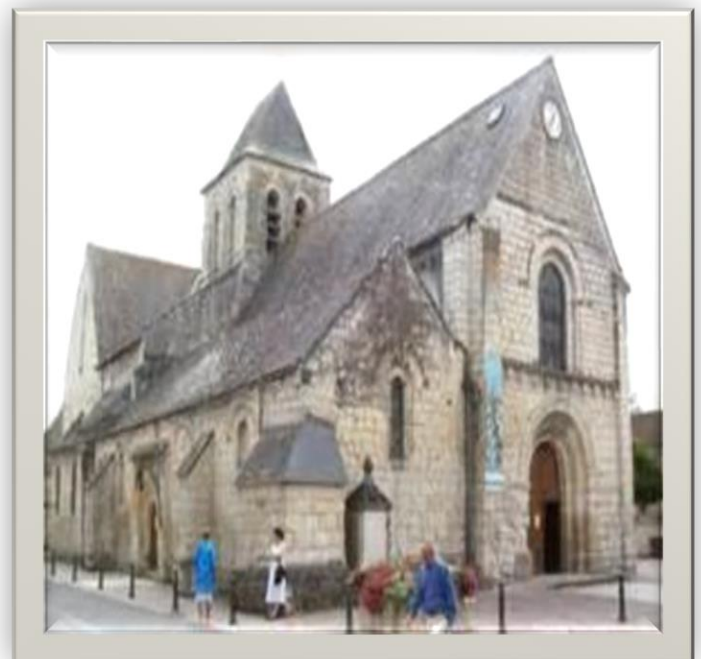
L'Ile Bouchard, France 1947

When the Soviet Union was intent on expanding their influence in France, they were involved in acts of sabotage throughout the country. Trains were being derailed, food shortages were becoming more severe than they were during the World War that had recently ended, and there were general strikes that threatened the economy that was already on the verge of collapse. General chaos had the French government so worried they recalled over one hundred thousand reservists to help defend France in case of civil war and the country's total collapse.

In the midst of all this confusion, our Blessed Lady came down to help her children by appearing in the little church of Saint Giles in the village of L'Ile Bouchard that was located in the northwestern part of France, in the Archdiocese of Tours. It was the only church in the village which also had only one school that was attended by fifty pupils.

The children had attended school on December 8, 1947, which was to be a very special day. Not only was it the feast of the Immaculate Conception, but it would also be remembered as being the first apparition of Our Lady of Prayer.

During the day the nuns who taught at the school encouraged the children to pray for France which was in terrible danger. Three little girls, Jacqueline Aubry, aged twelve,



her sister Jeanette, aged seven, and their cousin Nicole Robin, aged ten, had eaten their lunch at home and were returning to school when Jacqueline Aubry suggested they stop on their way to make a visit to the chapel of the Blessed Mother in the church. On arriving at the altar of the Virgin they began to recite a decade of the rosary and were not quite halfway through when they looked up and saw a beautiful Lady with her hands joined in prayer; a white rosary hanging from her right arm. To the left of the Lady was an angel, holding a lily while his eyes were fixed in contemplation of the Lady.

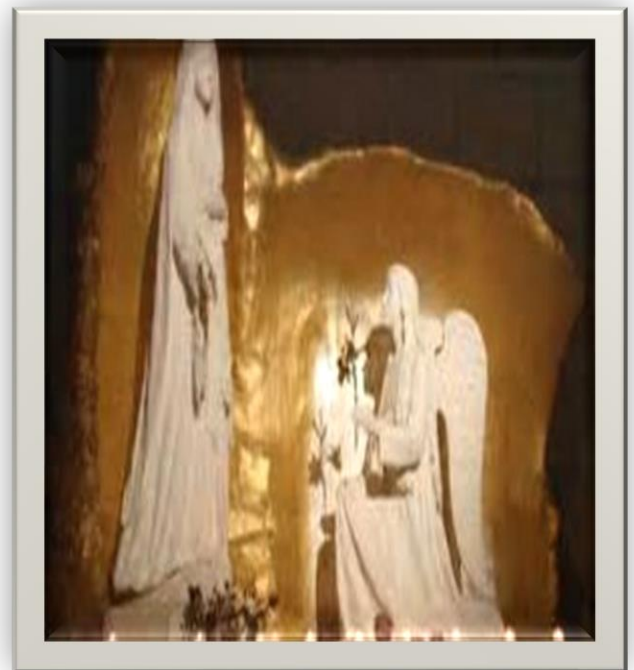
While the beautiful Lady smiled at them, Jacqueline whispered that other people should see the vision as well and ran outside to notify others. She immediately came upon their school friends Laura Croizon, aged eight and her sister Sergine, aged thirteen. Returning to the church Laura immediately saw the apparition while the oldest, Sergine, could not and had to be told what was happening.

The children described the Lady as being very beautiful. She was wearing a brilliantly white dress with gold trim at the neck and wrists. There was a blue sash around her waist while her head was covered with a veil. Its white color, they said, was different than the dress. On close inspection the girls noticed that it was decorated along the edges with motifs known as “Touraine” which was popular in their region of France.

The girls noticed that the lady’s hands were joined in prayer and that she radiated a strong golden light. They also noted that her eyes were blue and they estimated her as

being sixteen or seventeen years of age. Unusual to this apparition was the Lady’s long blond hair that fell down on either side almost to her knees. The Lady stood on a stone block that was decorated with a garland of five pink roses. On the rock, written in gold were the words, “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee,” words made familiar during the apparitions of our Lady at Lourdes.

The angel was described as kneeling on his right knee. He wore a robe which was a soft rose color. He, too, had blue eyes and long blonde curly hair. In his left hand he held a lily stalk while his right hand was placed over his heart. His white wings were trimmed



in gold while his feathers moved slightly in a breeze that the children could not feel. During the whole of the vision he seemed to be in profound contemplation of Our Lady. The area of the church during the apparition was lit by a light with colors that the girls had never seen before. Eventually the apparition disappeared into what they could only describe as a cloud of silvery dust.

After the apparition faded the children returned to school and excitedly told Sister Marie de L'Enfant Jesus who immediately believed them while the parish priest, Fr. Clovis Segelle did not, although he questioned the girls extensively.

After school ended, the children returned to the church and were delighted to see the Lady beckoning them. The Lady seemed extremely sad as she slowly uttered: "Tell the little children to pray for France, for her need is great."

Jacqueline wondered about the Lady's identity and asked if she were the "Maman du Ciel" ("Heavenly Mother"). The Lady replied, "But of course I am your Maman du Ciel." On inquiring about the angel, he turned toward the girls and said: "I am the angel Gabriel."

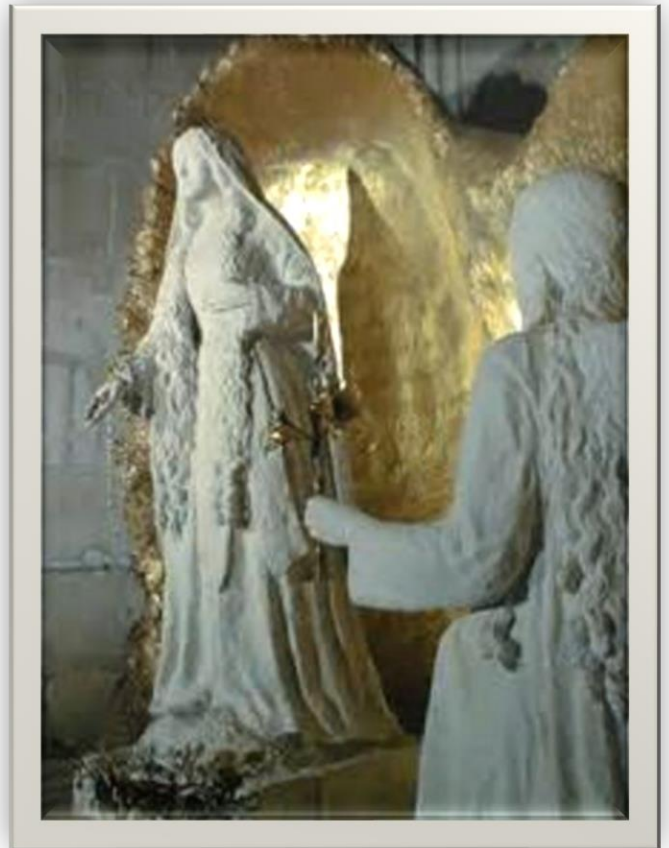
The next day, December 9, at one o'clock, the four girls assembled in the church as the Lady had requested the previous day. While praying a decade of the rosary the Lady appeared in a shining golden sphere. Her hair, which had intrigued the children before, was now hidden by her veil while across her breast was written in gold letters the word "Magnificat." The words on the rock now read, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

The apparition lifted high the golden crucifix of her rosary and asked the girls to kiss it. Jacqueline and Nicole stood up to do this, while to the surprise of all present, the two shorter girls, unable to reach the crucifix, were lifted up by Jacqueline as though they

were weightless. Once again the vision asked the girls to “Pray for France, which is in great danger.” The Lady also asked that a grotto be built and that her image and that of the angel should be placed in it.

Fr. Segelle, who had already questioned the girls a number of times, informed the archbishop of what had occurred. That same day, to the surprise of the region, the Communists decided to abandon plans of a general strike.

The next day, Wednesday, December 10, approximately one hundred and fifty people were awaiting the appearance of the Virgin. During this apparition, Jacqueline’s mother called out to her daughter telling her to request a miracle so that all would believe.



To this Mary replied, “I have not come here to perform miracles, but to tell you to pray for France.” Then addressing Jacqueline, who wore thick glasses and had to wipe her eyes often because of chronic conjunctivitis, the Lady told her, “Tomorrow you will see clearly and will no longer have need of glasses.” The Virgin then disappeared into a golden ball of light.

When Jacqueline awoke the next morning she was able to open her eyes without difficulty and discovered that she had normal vision. Her overjoyed father then rushed to tell Fr. Segelle about the miracle to which news the priest exclaimed, “So it is true that she has descended among us!” The next day, December 11 at one o’clock the church was full of people. The vision

asked the children if they had prayed for sinners to which they replied that they had.

Then Mary led them through ten Hail Mary’s, but she only said the first part of the prayer, the words with which the angel Gabriel had greeted her at the Annunciation.

Three hundred people were present on December 12 when Mary appeared wearing a crown composed of twelve sparkling rays each about a foot long. These were interspersed with smaller ones of various colors. After listening to the singing of the Hail

Mary, the Virgin led the children in ten Hail Mary's of the Rosary, again pronouncing only the words of the angel Gabriel. The word "Magnificat" was again visible in letters across her chest.

A crowd of about five hundred attended the vision the next day. During the vision the Blessed Virgin appeared without the crown and to Jacqueline's request for a miracle that all would believe, the reply was, "Later." The child was then told that the last apparition would take place the following day.

The church of St. Giles that day was crowded with people who began praying the rosary. The Blessed Mother and the angel appeared and remained for over a half hour. The Lady requested that the Magnificat be sung which Fr. Segelle sang reverently with the people. After this the Virgin asked for more prayers for sinners and in response to the request for a miracle, Mary responded with a smile: "Before I go I will send a bright ray of sunlight." After blessing the people the Lady vanished, but a mysterious bright ray of sunshine streamed through a window and settled on the very place of the apparition. It grew in strength and size so that all had to shield their eyes. As for the children, they were surrounded by sparkles of various colors.

The ray of light was later determined to be inexplicable in natural terms since it would normally have been interrupted by some of the pillars of the church. Subsequent tests proved that it was physically impossible for a normal ray of sunlight to have entered that part of the church at that time of the year because of the position of the sun. It was therefore determined to have been a miraculous occurrence.

Fr. Segelle examined the girls separately as he did after all the apparitions and found them to be truthful and to have agreed on all the details of the vision. Archbishop Honore, who was the archbishop of Tours at the time, after carefully studying the facts of the apparitions, authorized the construction of the grotto requested by the Lady and permitted pilgrimages to the church. He also sanctioned the veneration of Our Lady under the title of "Our Lady of Prayer."

Forty-one years later, in November 1988, after several investigations were performed by noted ecclesiastics, the grotto was built and statues of Our Lady and the angel, in the attitude of the vision, were placed in the church of St. Giles. Monsieur Piquot, the Secretary General of the Interior Ministry, having heard of the events in L'Ile Bouchard, immediately went to meet the girls, and in front of the whole community declared, "France was saved by the prayers of these four children and by the people here who prayed at the feet of the Virgin Mary." Subsequent theological investigations

followed and all proved favorable including the most recent one headed by French theologian Father Vernet in 1992. Following this was Bishop Andre Vingt-Trois of Tours, who, in a Decree dated December 8, 2001, declared: "Having carefully studied the events, and taken council with appropriate persons, I authorize these pilgrimages, and all manner of public worship.