

Joan of Arc's Voices

Background

History's most fascinating warrior princess is the medieval French maiden named Joan of Arc (1412-1431 AD). In only one year of public life, she accomplished more on the international stage than even the most skilled statesmen could have. Leading the French army, she went undefeated in a dozen battles, brought an end to the Hundred Years War, and helped to re-invigorate the French Monarchy. No other nineteen-year-old in history has had such an impact on the world.



Eugène Delacroix: Alamy.com

But the power behind Joan's accomplishments was entirely spiritual, as Joan herself readily acknowledged. She was a mystic before she was a warrior. At age thirteen she began to receive visits from St. Michael the Archangel himself, who told her that God had chosen her to save her country from the invading English. Soon after that, she began to have visions of two female martyrs of the early Church: St. Catherine of Alexandria and St. Margaret of Antioch. All three divine messengers spoke to her virtually every day and guided her military victories. She called them her "voices".

Mystical Features

Joan actually saw **St. Michael the Archangel** with her own eyes, as she later testified:

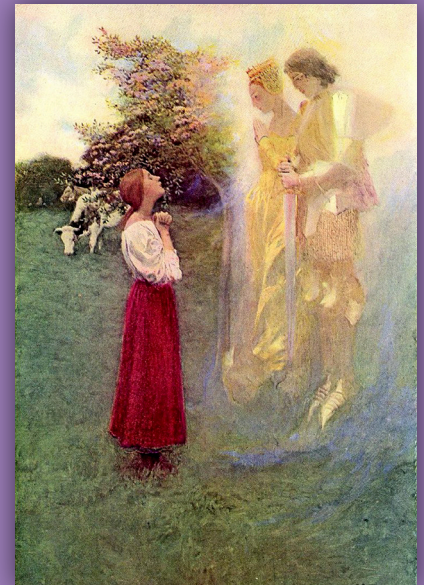
It was St. Michael whom I saw...and he was not alone but was well accompanied by angels of heaven... I saw them with the eyes of my body as well as I see you; and when they left me I wept and wished that they would have taken me with them.

The warrior angel prepared Joan's soul for her difficult mission and gave her the gift of prophecy to know the future outcomes of battles and the precise timing of events. Joan also saw, heard, smelled, and even touched the garments of her two female saints.

St. Catherine (ca. 300 AD) was probably the most colorful martyr of the early church. She was Joan's same age when the Roman Emperor Maximinus visited Alexandria and demanded that everyone worship the pagan gods. Catherine refused. Maximinus then made her debate 50 scholars of the law, but Catherine converted them all to Christianity, including the Emperor's wife and 200 guards! He attempted to kill Catherine first by starvation and then by torturing her on a wheel, which broke in pieces and killed her torturers instead. She was eventually beheaded.

St. Margaret (ca. 300 AD) was rejected by her family for converting to the Christian faith. When she rebuffed the Roman prefect's advances, he hauled her before a court to force her to renounce her faith. She refused and then survived numerous attempts to kill her, including boiling in oil and burning at the stake. Margaret too was beheaded.

These saints from heaven, Joan's "voices", were her mystical patrons in warfare as well as symbols of Joan's own final struggle, which ended, unbelievably, in a trial before 50 scholars, threats of torture, and actual burning at the stake for the cause of her mission and her voices.



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