

## ON THE CHAPEL OF THE RUE DU BAC

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We are here in the Rue du Bac in this sanctuary, familiar to you, where Our Lady appeared to St. Catherine Labouré. We are, in a manner of speaking in Mary's house. Not, the house of Nazareth but rather her heavenly home; heaven is symbolised by these blue mosaics which are before your eyes.

In this place, different races, languages and nations sit side by side in the same way as we do at the General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission, or of the Little Company, as St. Vincent, whose heart you can see on your right, used to call it.

Here was revealed the Medal which has toured the world and touched so many hearts with its understanding of the faith. This understanding and these hearts speak their message here every day and at this moment we are part of it too.

We have come here then to honour Mary our Holy Mother. We want to be humbly touched by her heart which is here beside her Son's so that we too might say as the motto of the Daughters of Charity says "The love of Jesus crucified is our driving force."

All this brings us back to the risen Christ, the crucified one, signified by that bare cross on the reverse side of the medal. And near to it, at its foot, Mary is still found, his mother, this mother who is given to us through the person of St. John by the last sign of the Fourth Gospel. But, let us return to the first sign which we have just read in the account of the Wedding Feast of Cana.

Here Christ the evangeliser of the poor can change the insipid taste of life into another taste, one of joy which is like the wine of the feast. Urged on by his mother, he begins by telling us to fill up, look around and taste. This is the kindness of the Lord. He urges us to do this with the means at our disposal, in our world, in spite of the permeating pain (the crown of thorns) which is our daily experience and which also affects the Church.

In this month of July, we are going to celebrate the 140 years since the first apparition of Mary to St. Catherine. In spite of the changing of our liturgical calendar, let us not forget that this apparition took place on the night of the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1830, the feast day of the Saint of Charity. Vincent always watched over Catherine and guided her,

having shown her his heart and having told her that the moment for receiving her special and specific mission was near.

And so the young novice found herself called to the chapel to see there the Immaculate One and, to talk with her for two hours and, to hear that St. Vincent de Paul had obtained the favour, by his heavenly intercession, that his spiritual daughters on earth would be given the task of reviving faith and trust by the Miraculous Medal. This is what happened three months later, on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> November at 17:30. The trusted confidante of the Immaculate One will receive the design of this medal and the responsibility of making it known across the whole world. As a true daughter of Monsieur Vincent, the young sister is going to accept this mission. Her patience and her faithfulness will overcome all the resistances and all the obstacles.

Silently Sister Labouré will follow for her entire life the ideals of her spiritual father, in humility and service of the poor.

And for the fifty years that Sister Catherine will live, the medal will tour the world. Marvellous happenings will abound which will bring about God's will and the wishes of St. Vincent. May all those who love the Miraculous Medal — and we all love it do we not? know that we owe this gift from heaven, in large measure, to the love and intercession of St. Vincent. By the little Medal, the Apostle of Charity and the Servant of our Lady continues his work among us, his untiring evangelisation and his reaching out to those who need a hand.

Yes, the saints are always active in heaven. Near to God, like Mary, they pursue the mission that they had on earth. So, Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac and Catherine Labouré are here present in this chapel; it is up to us to work with them, firing ourselves up with their lives and their work, because as St. Vincent appearing in the guise of an old man said to the young Catherine "God has a plan for you!"

Translation: KIERAN MAGOVERN, C.M.