



The Franciscan Sisters of Christ the King

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Many Americans do not know the interesting connection between Saint Joan of Arc and the American writer and father of American snark, Mark Twain. While walking home from his job as a printer's apprentice in Hannibal, Missouri, at age 12, a page from her biography blew across his path. Reading the leaflet, he grew indignant over the injustice of her trial and was deeply impressed by her courage and charity in answering the inquisitors. Later in life, in France, he had access to archives closed to the public since the French Revolution, and read the original transcripts of her trial. He completed his own biography of her there.



Mark Twain said of the book *I like Joan of Arc best of all my books; and it is the best; I know it perfectly well. It furnished me seven times the pleasure afforded me by any of the others; twelve years of preparation, and two years of writing. The others needed no preparation and got none.* Twain, who had no use for organized religion, nevertheless took great pains to present the trial accurately, and his love and admiration of St. Joan is more than evident throughout the work. In spite of the fact that Twain considered *Reflections of Joan of Arc* his best work, Twain experts hardly give it notice. To one young boy who approached him in his old age and told him how much he liked *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain scolded "You should not read books about bad boys! You should read *Reflections of Joan of Arc*. You will understand it when you are older. It is my best work."

Twain wrote to his wife that Catholicism is "the most peace-giving and restful of all the religions...If I ever change my religion I shall change to that." He even approved of his daughter attending a Catholic boarding school, and would not have minded at all if she chose to convert to Catholicism. He appears to have been more anti-

hypocrisy than anti-Catholic, and he was honest enough to praise genuine virtue.

In the photo, a model dressed as St. Joan of Arc presents Twain with a wreath of bay leaves at a dinner held in his honor in 1905. Deeply moved, he was rendered speechless. Recovering himself, he spoke of his twelve years of research and about St. Joan of Arc, "...the divine soul, the pure character, the supreme woman, the wonderful girl." We can hope that St. Joan did not forget Mark Twain at the end of his life.

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St. Joan of Arc came from a peasant family in Domremy, France, and certain evidence strongly supports the fact that she was a Franciscan Tertiary. The Hundred Years' War over the control of the French crown raged on at the time. Starting at the age of 13, St. Joan heard the voices of St. Michael, St. Catherine of Alexandria, and St. Margaret of Antioch directing her to go to the Dauphin to get permission to command an army, so in her simplicity, she did as they bid her. However, in spite of the fact that St. Joan, having never met the Dauphin, picked him out of the crowd and privately revealed secrets known only to himself as proof of her divine calling, Charles VII did not grant her permission to carry out her mission. A weak man, he had many courtiers

surrounding him, all advocating for personal political interests that would suffer defeat should Joan gain a victory over the English. Giving in to them, he hesitated, and subjected her to interrogations from prelates that lasted for weeks. Joan did not counter the machinations with those of her own. She simply prayed, answered the redundant questions directly, and waited.



Charles VII finally did give his permission. Joan donned her armor, and at her command the Army drove the English out of Orleans and had the Dauphin crowned. She would have pushed the English all the way into the English Channel had not the Dauphin stalled at the insistence of his political advisors. We know the tragic end: captured, she fell prey to the traitorous prelates serving the enemy. The Dauphin she honored never made a single move to secure her release, even though the offer of ransom for an officer was a standard practice at the time. Abandoned by the Dauphin and the men she commanded, she endured ill treatment in prison and a long, tedious, and often absurd trial. At her rehabilitation, many witnesses testified that the inquisitors acted wickedly and convicted her under false pretenses.

The inquisitors had her burned at the stake. There, an English soldier, her enemy, moved with compassion at her pleadings for a crucifix, fashioned a cross from two pieces of wood for her to look on through the flames. She gave up her soul to God. Her heart and internal organs would not burn, no matter how hard the executioner tried. The English had them thrown into the river Seine. Divers have reported hearing a heartbeat in the river, but cannot locate the source.

Guided by her voices, her tactical decisions excelled those of experienced generals. She led from the front, climbing ladders to scale the walls of English strongholds. Charles VII presented her with a coat of arms for her family, an honor not bestowed on women. However, she took on the masculine task only because God asked her to do it. That summarizes the difference between a feminist and a Saint. A feminist thinks she should do anything she wants because she wants to do it, and a Saint knows she should do what God wants and does it at all costs. The will of God lies in the balance. Most of us will not hear saintly voices revealing God's will. The ordinary means to determine God's will are a well formed conscience, prayer, peaceful reflection, and consultation with a wise director.

Saint Joan's life is an example to women (and men!) more because she prayed and lived her Faith than because she commanded an army. She prayed in the chapel now at Marquette University. She prayed on the battlefield, before and after combat. She received communion as often as possible and went to confession regularly, encouraging and even demanding that her men do the same. She sought guidance from her confessor, and she did not embark on her mission without the approval of the Dauphin. She lived her Faith to the end.



The Saint Joan of Arc Stone, now mounted into the wall of the chapel in Wisconsin.

There are places to pray to Joan of Arc in the United States. At Marquette University, Wisconsin, the Medieval St. Joan of Arc Chapel, transported stone by stone from France, contains the "Saint Joan of Arc Stone," where she knelt to pray before a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In Manhattan, NY, one can view a statue of St. Joan of Arc built on a pedestal containing fragments of the dungeon where she was imprisoned. Another stone from the dungeon can be venerated at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.. If we cannot travel, we can kneel right where we are and pray, pray while we walk from one task to another, pray on our sick bed, asking St. Joan to help us conquer the worst enemy of all, ourselves, and to seek only what God asks of us, and nothing more, so that when at last we go to face God, He can say to us "Well done, good and faithful servant."



Just before school started, four Sisters drove to Green Bay, Wisconsin, where they spent a day with the girls of St. Michael's Chapel in De Pere. On Sunday the Sisters gave a presentation about our community.



On the anniversary date of the consecration of St. Vincent de Paul Church, the Sisters celebrated with the 7th through 12th grade girls. Activities included dance, speeches, an obstacle course, and impromptu skits.



Sister Frances Marie examines a tree with the 2nd Grade on a field trip to a local nature center (left.) Sister Mary Leona and the children visit the gerbils Topsy and Turvy, the 2nd Grade classroom pets (below.)





St. Francis and St. Dominic traded a belt for a cord. Mother Mary Joseph and Mother Mary Madeleine of the Wanganui Dominicans traded nun dolls. We were happy to have Mother and her companion stay with us during the Angelus Press Conference along with Fanjeaux Dominicans, Consoling Sisters, and students from three SSPX Schools.

Sr. Mary Philomena brought her Kindergarten class to the convent for a field trip, and let the children try the organ.



**Without the grace of God I should not know how to do anything.
-St. Joan of Arc**



With the leftover funds from the window project, we will be able to pay for the re-roofing of two sections of roof, starting very soon. We are also holding on to the funds earmarked for the tuck-pointing portion of the window project, which has been postponed until the spring or summer of 2026. We hope to begin remodeling our side chapel, where we pray in the hot months. Improvements will include a different altar, new pews and modesty bar, the re-routing of the line set for the ductless mini-split, the removal of the large air conditioning duct on the left in the photo, and a new floor (no more pink carpet!)

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