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- † *"All those who wear it (the medal of the Immaculate Conception), when it is blessed, will receive great graces, especially if they wear it around the neck."*

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**The Back of the Miraculous Medal**

The cross symbolizes Christ; the "M" stands for Mary, who stood beneath the Cross, as her Son was crucified. The two hearts represent the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary. The twelve stars recall the vision of St. John: *And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars (Apocalypse 12:1).*

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## **St. Catherine Labouré**

Born in France on May 2, 1806, Catherine Labouré entered the convent of the Daughters of Charity on April 21, 1830. During that year, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, appeared to St. Catherine.

### **The First Apparition**

During the night of July 19, Catherine was awakened from her sleep by a beautiful child. The child spoke, "Sister Labouré, come to the chapel. The Blessed Virgin is waiting for you." Catherine entered the chapel, knelt down at the communion rail, and prayed. A short while later, the Blessed Virgin appeared and spoke to Catherine: "God wishes to charge you with a mission. You will have the protection of God and St. Vincent (de Paul). I will always have my eyes upon you." Then, the Blessed Virgin departed.

### **The Second Apparition**

On November 27, the Blessed Virgin appeared, standing upon a globe, crushing the head of a serpent with her feet. Rays of light streamed from her hands. The rays represent, as Our Lady would later tell St. Catherine, "the graces that the Blessed Virgin obtains for those who ask them of her." Surrounding the image of Our Lady

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were the words "O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee."

The Blessed Virgin told Catherine, "Those who repeat this prayer with great devotion will be in a special manner under the protection of the Mother of God." She then instructed Catherine: "Have a medal struck upon this model. All those who wear it, when it is blessed, will receive great graces, especially if they wear it around the neck."

### **The Medal of the Immaculate Conception**

After a thorough investigation as to the authenticity of St. Catherine's visions, the Church approved the making of The Medal of the Immaculate Conception. The first medals were distributed in 1832.

### **Miraculous Healings**

In February 1832, a deadly cholera epidemic claimed the lives of more than 20,000 Parisians. It was during this epidemic that the Sisters of Charity began to distribute the first copies of the medal. So many cures and protections were reported that it began to be referred to as "The Miraculous Medal" — the name by which it is still commonly known today. Some 10 million copies were distributed in the first five years.

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## **Miraculous Conversions**

Besides physical miracles, the medal is also known for spiritual miracles. Perhaps the most notable is that of the vehemently anti-Christian, Jewish banker, Alphonse Ratisbonne. A friend persuaded him to wear the medal. A short time later, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him as she appears on the medal. Struck with awe, he not only converted, but went on to become a Catholic priest. The full story of this event can be found at [www.marypages.com/ratisbonneEng1.htm](http://www.marypages.com/ratisbonneEng1.htm).

### **"Help My Unbelief!"**

We live in an age of unbelief, an age in which many people refuse to believe in Jesus Christ God and man, in the supernatural, and in a life hereafter. Some people desire proof, or signs (cf John 6:30). Indeed, our Lord does give signs: The bodies of certain holy people remain in the same condition in which they died, free from decomposition. As the psalmist declares: *Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption (Psalm 15:10).*

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