



L'ÎLE-BOUCHARD

Sanctuaire marial et angélique

Europe in 1945 was politically unstable; in fact, it was in a mess. Many countries were badly damaged by World War II and military forces from the US, the UK and others were spread all over the place trying to bring back law and order.

Does this not sound like the United States of America and so many others!

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In Central and Easter Europe there was even a bigger threat from Bolshevik Communists who were under the command of Josef Stalin. He was a despot as bad as Hitler if not worse, and historians seem to think that he killed more than Hitler. The figure for the number of dead in World War II could be as high as 200 million people, of which 100 million died in the slave camps of the Soviet Union, another 30 million died in Europe during the war, and many more died immediately or soon afterwards, due to starvation and health problems.

By 1947 the evil Soviet Empire began to expand and to have influence not only in the East but among the fascists in France. The Communists here were poised to take over, and they were the most organized political force, and on the verge of revolutionary success. They were not only obedient to Stalin, but were following his instructions to the letter, and were in constant contact with Moscow. They were involved in acts of sabotage all over France, trains were being derailed, food shortages were becoming more severe than during the war, and a general apprehension and fear continued to shake the entire country. Weapons and military arsenals were seized, as blood thirsty communists looked for opportunities to create chaos. There was also a long drawn out general strike, and the economy was on the verge of collapse. It seemed that events were out of control and the elected leaders were powerless to avert what seemed to be a hopeless situation. There were even rumors of a civil war in France; such was the hatred between French men. There were evidently two sides of the new republic,

those who supported the Vichy government and the Nazi's during the war, and those who were on the side of General De Gaulle. The French government were so worried that they had called up over 100,000 reservists to help defend France in case of total collapse, anarchy or of an invasion, but everyone was prepared for the worst.

There was a holy woman called Martha Robin who was a victim soul and the founder of the Foyers of Charity. She was speaking to Father George Finet, her spiritual director, on December 8th, Feast of the Immaculate Conception, in 1947, after the private mass in her bedroom where she was confined to bed all her life. Father Finet stated that everyone felt that France was collapsing toward a civil war within days, and that the communists were poised to take over France and united themselves somehow with Soviet Russia. The plan was to take over the entire Western Europe and place it under communism. Martha Robin however told him not to worry that France was going to be saved by the prayers of little children.

In a small village in the heart of France there is a church called the church of Saint Gilles. There was nothing unusual about this small parish church, except the plaque on the wall that stated that on the 6th of March in 1429, Saint Joan of Arc stopped there to pray on her way to Chinon, where King Charles III of France would give her an army to liberate France from the English. Saint Joan spent several hours in prayer on that Saturday morning, prostrated in front of the Altar of Our Lady. The Church is dedicated to Saint Gilles, who is the patron of crippled people, (today we would say "handicapped") and France was definitely crippled in 1947 and on the point of disaster. However, heaven was about to intervene to save her, the "First Daughter of the Church," as France is known historically.

The small town of L'Ile-Bouchard (Bouchard Island) in north-western France is in the Archdiocese of Tours, it had a small population of about 1,500 people, with one Church, one school run by nuns and almost one of everything else. In the school were some 50 children of various ages including four young girls, [Jacqueline Aubry \(12 years old\)](#) and her sister [Jeannette Aubrey \(7 years old\)](#), their cousin [Nicole Robin \(10 years old\)](#) and their next-door neighbor [Laura Crouzon \(8 years old\)](#). These children were quite normal and well known in the

town; in fact, the oldest girl, Jacqueline, had eye problems. She was not only cross-eyed but had chronic infections in both eyes and required daily medications; she also had to wear very thick glasses in order to see, but despite that she was quite happy. Her parents owned the local pastry shop, while the parents of the other children were farmers. Both families were Catholic but non-practicing and both households were anti-clerical.



All the girls had gone to school as usual, but this day the 8th of December 1947 was to be very special indeed. However, one of the nuns asked the girls to pray for France, for peace and protection, because the sister told the children that France was in terrible danger. In response the four girls went next door to the Church to say some prayers to Our Lady, during their lunch break. They made their way inside the Church to the left where the side altar of Our Lady can be seen. They decided to say one decade of the Holy Rosary and started with blessing themselves. Having recited 4 of the Hail Mary's a sudden light appeared, in which they saw Our Lady, whose hands were joined in prayer and she had rosary beads draped over Her right arm. An Angel was kneeling next to her and he was holding a flower in his hand. On seeing this apparition, they cried out "*O la belle Dame-O le bel ange,*" ("O beautiful Lady-O the beautiful Angel"). The Lady smiled at them as She looked intensely at Jeannette. Sometime had gone by and

the girls were lost in admiration at what they were seeing, although they did not know who the persons were in the vision yet.

The Lady was beautiful, and they later described Her as wearing a brilliantly white dress with gold trim at the neck and wrists and She wore a blue sash. On Her head was a veil of but its white color was different to that of the dress. On close inspection the girls noticed that it was decorated along the edges with the motifs of the "Touraine" region of France, that this town was in. A few curls of blonde hair could be seen as well as Her teeth when She smiled. She stood with Her hands together in the traditional way as one in prayer and radiated a strong but not blinding golden light. They also noted that Her eyes were blue, and they put Her age at 16 or 17 years old. Beneath the Lady's feet, written in gold were the words "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you." We know that this is the same message from Rue Du Bac in Paris in 1830, when Our Lady asked for the miraculous medal to be printed and distributed. The Angel, who was also there in the apparition, was described as one who was kneeling on his right knee; he also wore a robe which was rose-white coloured. He too had blue eyes and long blonde curly hair. He seemed to be in profound contemplation of Our Lady. The area of the Church was lit up by light and glittered entrancingly with colours that the girls had never seen before. Eventually the apparition disappeared into what they could only describe as a cloud of silvery dust.

The girls returned to school and expressed great delight at what they had seen in the church, and the word spread very quickly, not only in the school but in the town itself. Jacqueline Aubry then realized that she had actually seen the Blessed Virgin Mary and decided to report it to the nuns who advised her to be quiet about it, and not to mention it again, even the parish priest Father Clovis Segelle would not believe the excited girls. He thought that because Jacqueline had chronic conjunctivitis and very thick glasses that she was seeing things and had convinced the others they too were seeing things. However, each girl was questioned separately, and each gave her own account, and to both the priest and the nuns the accounts were exacting in every detail, even when cross examined.

Later that same afternoon (December 8th) the same girls decided to go back to visit the church and to pray again, except this time the Lady was waiting for them and she had a beautiful smile for them. As they knelt down in front of Her and the Angel, Her expression became very sad and She slowly began to speak “Tell the children to pray for France, for her need is great.” Jeannette the youngest, at the behest of her sister asked the Lady “Are you the *Maman du Ciel*?” (The Mother from Heaven), to which the Lady replied, “But of course I am your *Maman du Ciel*.” Jacqueline then asked about the Angel, at which time Our Lady looked toward him and he, looking at the girls, responded “I am the Archangel Gabriel.” (The girls were looking at what happened at the “Annunciation” when Mary gave her eternal “Fiat” to God, but they did not realise it.

Our Lady then asked the girls “Give me your hands to kiss.” Jacqueline was the first to respond, presenting her hand with the palm up. Our Lady took the hand and turned it around to the back of the hand and kissed it. Jacqueline, because she was oldest and tallest, lifted up the other girls with no difficulty, although Our Lady had to bend down a little more to kiss the hand of Jeannette. The girls later were to say that the lips of the Lady were soft and warm, and they felt a human solidarity with Her after that. Our Lady asked them to return later again that afternoon at 5pm and again during the lunch time the next day at one o’clock.

When the girls went back to school the Sisters asked them to write an account of what had happened and all that was said. The accounts were given to the parish priest who was preparing for the rosary and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the church that evening. By 5pm the girls were back in the church as commanded and began to pray the rosary. The Virgin appeared to them and still had the most beautiful smile that one can imagine and signaled them to approach even closer to Her. Some of the nuns were now watching every movement along with the priest, Father Clovis. During the benediction, the Virgin disappeared and the focus of the girls and all in the church was on the Blessed Sacrament.

After the benediction, Father Clovis prayed “O Mary conceived without sin, pray for France,” and with that prayer the Virgin re-appeared to the 4 girls, who spent the time in silent prayer and contemplating the beauty of the Blessed Virgin, and the Archangel.

The next day, December 9th, the second day of the apparitions, the girls were keen to keep the appointment with Our Lady at one o'clock as She had suggested. They knelt at the altar while several other girls from the school were looking into the church from the main door. Once the girls began to pray, a "golden globe" appeared shining brightly; it seemed to have come out of the wall and it opened out and seemed to deploy itself between the glass window depicting the image of Our Lady of Lourdes, and the tabernacle on the altar. The Virgin Mary looked intensely more beautiful and the Archangel Gabriel still knelt in veneration before Her. The golden inscription this time read "I am the Immaculate Conception." Jacqueline asked Our Lady if she could bring in her friends, to which the answer was "Yes, but they will not see me." Then Our Lady changed Her expression which then became serious. In the palm of Her right hand She held out a golden crucifix and with an air of sadness asked the girls to "kiss the cross of my rosary."

The girls kissed the crucifix, some were again lifted up by Jacqueline, which was extraordinary as she was a frail girl and sickly. After this apparition she tried to lift the smaller girls again and she was unable. In the church during the apparition was a Madame Trinson, who could not see the apparition, but who was astonished to see Jacqueline lifting the others and how they all kissed the exact same point in the air.

Our Lady then spoke to them "I am going to tell you a secret which you can tell in three days." Then again looking intensely at the 4 girls and stressing every word, she said again "Pray for France which in these days is in great danger." After a short pause, the Virgin said "Go tell the priest to come here at 2 o'clock. He should bring the children and a crowd to pray." And finally, She made the last statement of the morning "Tell the priest to build a grotto as soon as possible here where I am and to put my statue and that of the Angel in it."

As the Virgin requested, some 20 children and 30 adults had assembled in the Church by 2pm and the Virgin who appeared and smiled at the 4 seers asked them to sing the Hail Mary " Sing *je vous salue Marie* the canticle I love so well."

When the song was finished, the girls repeated the invocation 3 times “O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.” Then the Virgin asked the girls to “tell the crowd to approach and recite 10 Hail Mary’s.” When the prayers were finished Jacqueline asked if they should come back, to which they received this reply “Yes come every day at 1pm. I will tell you when it will all be over.”

The Archbishop was informed by phone and he was delighted to hear of it, and immediately informed the priest in Saint Gilles that the Communists had called off the general strike and had gone back to work and that all hostility within France had suddenly disappeared. The Archbishop stated that it was all a miracle, and as he had prepared for the worst, even death, but now, miraculously the cloud of despair and danger had vanished with such an immediate effect.

Wednesday the 10th of December was the third day of the apparitions and the word was out that something extraordinary was taking place in this small parish church, and in such a way that all of France was being affected positively by it. When the girls arrived, there were 150 people waiting to see what was happening. Once they had blessed themselves the Virgin appeared and smiled at them and asked “Sing *je vous salue Marie*” (Hail Mary), then the decade of the rosary was said, and at the end of it the Virgin asked “Kiss my hand.” To the amazement of all in the church again, they saw Jacqueline lift up the others and they also saw the girl kiss the same spot in the air exactly. Jacqueline asked the Virgin for a miracle so that people might believe, to which she received the reply “I have not come here to perform miracles but to tell you to pray for France, but tomorrow you will see clearly and you will not need to wear glasses anymore.” The Virgin then asked if they would come again the next day at the same time to which they agreed. After the apparition the parish priest asked the nature of the message and recorded the details. Jacqueline told him that the Lady promised work a miracle and that she would be cured of her eye infections and that she would not need to wear glasses anymore.

Nobody wanted to believe Jacqueline, as her eyes were in a dreadful condition, but the following morning, the fourth day of the apparitions, when she woke up, her eyes were in perfect condition. Her father and mother, who never went to

church, ran there in tears to give thanks and to inform the parish priest of what happened. That same day, when 1pm came along, the church was full to overflowing and onto the street outside. The Virgin appeared and asked again for the girls to sing the “Hail Mary,” because this is what pleases Her very much. Jacqueline thanked Our Lady for the cure and told her that she now had a list of questions from the parish priest, one of these was why did the Virgin Mary choose this little parish church and why were they so honored with Her presence? “Because there are pious people and because Jeanne Delanoue came here” was the response. (Jeanne was known in religious life as Jean of the Cross. She was born on June 18th, 1666 and died on August 17th, 1736 at the age of 70 from natural causes. She was the founder of the Congregation of Saint Anne of Providence. She was beatified by Pope Pius XII on November 8th, 1947 and Canonized on October 31st 1983 by Pope John Paul II). As one can see Jeanne Delanoue was beatified just a month before these apparitions; as at Lourdes, the Mother of the Church confirms the Church’s teachings.

Jacqueline had another question, “Madame, would you cure the people who suffer from rheumatisms and nervous disorders and who suffer physically and morally?” The Virgin answered “There will be happiness in families, now would you sing the Hail Mary.” Then the Virgin asked yet again “Is the priest going to build the Grotto?” The children said in one voice, “Yes Madame, we promise.”

On the fifth day of the apparitions the Virgin appeared again but this time She wore a crown of shining rays, each a foot long, of beautiful intense colours, blue, red, yellow, green, pink; on Her breast were the words written in gold “Magnificat.” During this day, the Virgin asked them to sing the Hail Mary three times and eventually asked the seers to “Kiss my hand.” She also asked “Do you pray for sinners?” to which the answer was “yes *Madame*.” Our Lady then said “Good, above all pray a lot for sinners.”

The sixth day was a Saturday, December 13th, and again the church was full of people anxious to be healed. The girls were given pieces of paper with prayer intentions to pray for this one or that one, who was sick, and when Our Lady is asked, She never refuses. They were asked to sing again and each time they did so, the Virgin looked toward Heaven and as She did so She seemed to become

ever more beautiful, which seemed to reflect her joy. On this occasion the girls were told that “I will come tomorrow for the last time.”

The seventh and last day of the apparitions was on Sunday December 14th 1947. Because this was a Sunday, many were already in town for the mass and decided to stay on to see what was happening, others who had known the children involved were already in church along with the nuns. Many prayed who had not done so in years and there was a demand for confession. This apparition lasted 35 minutes and began with the sung French version of the Hail Mary. This day the Virgin looked down at the girls with radiant sweetness and kindness. The graces which emanated from Her, the elegance of Her stance, Her charm, inspired their admiration ever more profoundly.

Our Lady then asked if they would “pray and make sacrifices” and to “continue to pray the rosary” and for the girls to ask the people present to “sing the Magnificat.” Again, they were asked if they were going to build the grotto in Her honour. And the children cried many time “yes-yes.” Jacqueline asked for proof of her presence so that all might come to believe that she was really there with them. The Virgin promised that “before I go, I will send a bright ray of sunlight.” Two thousand people were later to swear that a marvellous phenomenon occurred – a ray of sunlight penetrated the church through a certain pane in the window of the choir. It grew progressively stronger and curved around the south eastern pillar and, fanning out, illuminated the north east corner of the church exactly where the girls were looking, becoming stronger and stronger as it went along, all who saw became believers that day.

Monsieur Piquot, the Secretary General of the Interior Ministry, having heard of the events in L’Ile Bouchard in Paris, immediately came to meet the girls and the parish priest and in front of the whole community declared “France was saved by the prayers of these 4 children and by the people here who prayed at the feet of the Virgin Mary.”

In many ways one could say that Our Lady taught the children how to pray, and they in turn taught others, especially their parents. In many ways also it can be

said that the prayers of holy and innocent children are much more powerful than those of sinful men. Archbishop Honoree, who was the Archbishop of Tours at the time, gave full recognition to this shrine in 1988 and ordered that the grotto which Our Lady had requested, be built. He also sanctioned the veneration of Our Lady under the title of "Our Lady of Prayer."

Subsequent theological investigations followed, and all proved favorable, including the most recent headed by French theologian Father Vernet in 1992. On December 8th 2001 in a public decree the then Archbishop of Tours, now Cardinal Andre Vingt-Trois, Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, authorized pilgrimages and the public veneration of Our Lady of Prayer in the parish church of Saint Gilles, where there are a stream of cures, miracles and conversions.

For those who would like to know more see www.ilebouchard.com, the nearest airport is Tours Airport.

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