

Miraculous Medal

By Paul Turner

The miraculous medal is a devotional article adopted by many Catholics around the world. The medal is worn on a ribbon around the neck to assist in the practice of prayer.

Saint Catherine Labouré had just begun her life in the Parisian religious community of the Daughters of Charity in 1830 when she saw a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary proclaiming her care for the world and her desire to help those in need.

The design of the medal comes directly from Catherine's vision. On the front is an image of Mary, standing atop a partially visible globe and crushing the head of a serpent. (Genesis 3:15 says that a woman – or her offspring – would crush the head of the tempter.) Rays of light stream from Mary's fingers, symbols of the grace she channels for believers. Along the oval border stand the words, "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." Thus the image affirms the belief that Mary was preserved from sin throughout her entire life, from the moment she was conceived in her mother's womb. The Church celebrates the Immaculate Conception each December 8.

On the reverse is the letter M, over which stands a cross resting on a bar that weaves through the letter. Twelve stars surround this image, recalling the prophetic vision of Revelation 12:1. Near the bottom are two suffering hearts, one wrapped with thorns, signifying the heart of Christ, and the other penetrated by a sword, recalling a prophecy from Luke 2:35, representing Mary.

Many people testify that some who put on the medal experience miraculous cures. Anyone who wears it may become more attentive to the favors God grants at the intercession of the Blessed Mother.

*Paul Turner is pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Kansas City, MO.
A priest of the diocese of Kansas City, he holds a doctorate in
sacred theology from Saint Anselmo in Rome.*

