

May 30

Jeanne d’Arc (Joan of Arc)

Mystic and Soldier, 1431

Jeanne d’Arc, or Joan of Arc, was born the daughter of peasant stock in France in 1412. Called the “Maid of Orleans,” she was a religious child, and at a young age she began to experience spiritual visions, which she described as voices emerging from a powerful flash of light. She believed that Saint Michael and Saint Catherine, among other saints, called her to save France from the civil war between the Houses of Orleans and Burgundy. At first, her visions were looked upon skeptically, but she eventually convinced King Charles VII, the not yet consecrated King of France, of the genuineness of her visions.

In consultation with several of his theologians, Charles decided to allow Joan to lead an expedition to Orleans. According to legend, she wore a suit of white armor and carried a banner bearing the symbol of the Trinity and the words “Jesus, Maria.” Charles’ troops were inspired and won the battle for their city. She convinced Charles to proceed to Reims for his coronation, and she stood at his side throughout the ceremony.

Joan was eventually taken prisoner by Burgundian troops and sold to the English. In 1431, she returned to France, appeared before the Bishop of Beauvais, and was tried at Rouen on charges of witchcraft and heresy. Her visions were declared “false and diabolical” and she was forced to recant. Later that year, however, she was tried and condemned as a relapsed heretic and burnt to death at Rouen. In 1456, following an appeal of her trial, Pope Callistus III declared her to have been falsely accused. She was canonized by Pope Benedict XV in 1920.

Although her efforts were unsuccessful in ending civil war in France, she inspired later generations with her faith, her heroism, and her commitment to God and to her King. She is today one of the patron saints of France.

Rite I Holy God, whose power is made perfect in weakness: we honor thy calling of Jeanne d’Arc, who, though young, rose up in valor to bear thy standard for her country, and endured with grace and fortitude both victory and defeat; and we pray that we, like Jeanne, may bear witness to the truth that is in us to friends and enemies alike, and, encouraged by the companionship of thy saints, give ourselves bravely to the struggle for justice in our time; through Christ our Savior, who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Rite II Holy God, whose power is made perfect in weakness: we honor you for the calling of Jeanne d’Arc, who, though young, rose up in valor to bear your standard for her country, and endured with grace and fortitude both victory and defeat; and we pray that we, like Jeanne, may bear witness to the truth that is in us to friends and enemies alike, and, encouraged by the companionship of your saints, give ourselves bravely to the struggle for justice in our time; through Christ our Savior, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

For Liturgical Celebration: [Common of a Martyr, A7] [Of the Holy Cross, A41] [For Social Justice, A58]