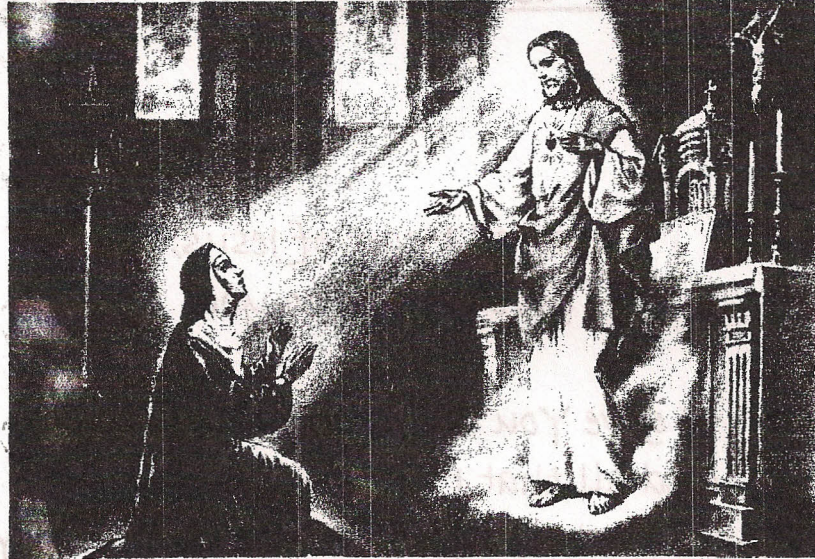


HOLY HEROES: ST. MARGARET MARY ALACOCQUE



St. Margaret Mary Alacoque was born in France in 1647. She was the fifth of seven children in her family. Tragedy struck their family when Margaret's father died suddenly in an accident. Her mother became so sick from grief she was unable to care for her children. Eight year old Margaret was sent away to a boarding school run by the Poor Clare nuns. When she was eleven she became sick with a crippling disease until healed by a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In thanksgiving she promised to give her life to God. When she was 17, Jesus appeared to her, just as He was after He was scourged. She decided at once to enter the order of the Visitation.

Sister Margaret Mary loved our Lord very much in the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus showed her His Sacred Heart in four visions. The flames that come forth from His Heart remind us of His burning love for us and His desire that we love Him in return. The crown of thorns around His heart reminds us of sacrifice to make up for sin. Jesus said to her: "Look at this Heart which has loved people so much, and yet they do not love Me in return. Through you My divine Heart wishes to spread its love everywhere on earth."

Jesus made at least 12 promises to her. The promises include all the graces necessary for a pure state of life, peace in the family, consolation in all troubles, a refuge during life and at the hour of death, abundant blessings on all undertakings, infinite mercy for sinners. The most important promise was the last: final repentance for those who receive Holy Communion on the First Friday of nine consecutive months.

Slowly, the news of this vision spread across Europe. It is now one of the most popular devotions in the Catholic Church.

Wrote Margaret Mary, "The Sacred Heart of Jesus is an inexhaustible fountain, and its sole desire is to pour itself out into the hearts of the humble so as to free them and prepare them to lead lives according to His will."

In 1690, Margaret Mary became ill and died suddenly, but peacefully. Her feast day is Oct. 16, and she is the patron saint against polio.