

## Sister Justine Bisqueyburu and the “Green Scapular”

Sister Justine Bisqueyburu was born in Mauléon, France on November 11, 1817. At an early age she was entrusted to the care of her maternal aunt, Miss d'Anglade and her husband with whom, she grew up, received her First Communion, and was educated.

When the time came for her to decide to choose a state in life, the Divine call came to her. She was twenty-two years old when she asked permission of her aunt to join the Daughters of Charity. In August 1839, she left to make her postulancy at the hospital of Pau.

After her postulancy ended, she left for Paris to begin her Novitiate. She made the journey to Paris in the care of Father Jean Marie Aladel, Director of the Daughters of Charity who, happening to pass through the city of Pau on his return to Paris, willingly agreed to accompany the young postulant on her journey to Paris. She entered the Seminary November 27, 1839, on the ninth anniversary of the famous apparition of the Blessed Mother to Saint Catherine Laboure, which led to the Miraculous Medal. Father Aladel was the Confessor and spiritual director of Sister Catherine Laboure.

On January 28, 1840, Sister Justine was in the chapel at the convent at Rue du Bac in Paris in prayer. The Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to her, dressed in a long white gown and a light blue mantle; her hair was not covered. She held in her hand her the Immaculate Heart; at its top were bright flames. Our Lady said nothing. At the end of the retreat Our Lady appeared to Sister Justine again and the vision recurred five times during her novitiate. On each occasion, the vision was identical to the first and on each occasion, Our Lady said nothing.

After nine months of Seminary training, she was placed in the house of Charity of Blangy-sur-Bresle (Lower Seine) where she taught school. On September 8, 1840, the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, while Sister Justine was at prayer as a postulant in the convent of Blangy-sur-Bresle, the Blessed Mother again appeared to her. Although in other ways her appearance was unchanged from previous visions, this time Our Lady held a green scapular in her left hand: a single piece of green cloth strung on green cords. On it was an image of the Blessed Mother as she had appeared to Sister Justine, holding her Immaculate Heart in her right hand. On the cloth's reverse was "a Heart all ablaze with rays more dazzling than the sun and as transparent as crystal". The heart was pierced by a sword, surmounted by a gold cross and with words in the shape of an oval around the heart: **Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us now and at the hour of our death.** Sister Justine heard by an interior voice

say that Our Lady wished the scapular to be promoted widely as an instrument in the conversion of souls and that Jesus desired to establish among mankind a more tender and confident appreciation and love of His Most Beloved Mother by means of devotion to her through the title of her Immaculate Heart. When invoked under this title and through this holy image, Our Mother Mary would obtain great favors from her Divine Son - especially in the areas of health of mind, heart, body, and soul. The Blessed Mother wanted copies of the scapular made as soon as possible and distributed with great confidence.

Sister Justine only told her superior and her spiritual director, Father Jean Marie Aladel C.M. about the visions.

Certain questions needed to be answered about the Scapular. What circumstances were necessary to make the scapular effective? Was there a special blessing for it? Was there a ceremony for enrolling persons in its use? Were there any obligations for those who used it? Was the scapular for use only by certain groups of people or in certain situations?

To resolve these difficulties, it was decided that Sister Justine would ask the Blessed Mother herself what God's Holy Will was in these matters. The Blessed Mother replied that this scapular is not like others (it is not based on a religious habit) but is simply two holy images on a single piece of green material. Therefore, no special formula is required to bless it or enroll someone in its use. It suffices that it be blessed by a priest and worn by the one whom we desire to benefit by Our Blessed Mother's intercession. If, on the other hand, the person is unable to receive it and/or pray its prayer, then the scapular may be kept nearby or for them.

If the person who is the intended beneficiary does not say this prayer, then anyone else can say it for them. The Green Scapular may be used anywhere, for anyone. Miraculous changes have taken place in work environments and other public places.

In 1841, Sister Justine moved to the House of Charity of Notre-Dame parish at Versailles, where she remained until 1855. It was there she made her Holy Vows.

When the Crimean war broke out in 1854 and military authorities made an appeal to the devotedness of the Daughters of Charity for the nursing of the wounded soldiers on the battlefield, the Superior readily complied with Sister Justine's expressed wish to be employed for that purpose. She left for

Constantinople in 1855 with the other Sisters destined to the same charitable functions, and, like them, she devoted herself unreservedly to this work.

The devotedness of the Daughters of Charity in the painful labor of the ambulances, aroused an admirable enthusiasm in those who witnessed it regardless of religion or nationality.

At her return to France in 1856, Sister Bisqueyburu was placed at the military hospital at Val de-Grace in Paris, where she remained for two years.

She was then assigned to manage the Dey's Military Hospital in Algiers. She held this office for nine years, from 1858 to 1867. In 1867, her Superiors sent her to Italy to serve the Pontifical Army.

In 1868, she left Rome to take over the management of the Hotel-Dieu of Carcassonne. The Hotel-Dieu of Carcassonne was her last mission. She remained there for thirty-five years from 1868 to 1903. Sister Justine died on September 23, 1903.

To the end of her life Sister Justine maintained her silence about the visions, only speaking to her superior and her spiritual director about them.

The Green Scapular was approved by Pope Pius IX in 1870.

Miraculous gifts of healing have been granted by the Blessed Mother to people of all faiths, even non-Christians. Such is the mercy, power, and love of Jesus' Mother! Greatest graces are attached to the use of the Green Scapular, but these graces are in proportion to the degree of confidence of the person praying. This was the meaning of the various levels of brightness of the rays which fell from the Mother of God's hands during her last apparition.

#### References:

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