

December 2008

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Recommended Citation

Regelsberger, Christina (2008) "Joan of Arc & Francis of Assisi: Some Parallels," *Verbum*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 1 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/verbum/vol6/iss1/9>

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Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"and passionate about their God. Despite the fact that they lived at different times in history, both were revolutionaries in their own way. As such, these auspicious individuals warrant the attention of people today. The biographies, writings, stained glass paintings and prayers of these saints give us a small glimpse into their character."

Joan of Arc & Francis of Assisi: Some Parallels

Christina Regelsberger

St. Joan of Arc and St. Francis of Assisi were both individuals who were devoted and passionate about their God. Despite the fact that they lived at different times in history, both were revolutionaries in their own way. As such, these auspicious individuals warrant the attention of people today. The biographies, writings, stained glass paintings and prayers of these saints give us a small glimpse into their character.

In the biography of St. Joan, it is mentioned that certain prominent individuals such as Robert de Baudricourt, commander of King Charles VII of France's armies, did not welcome her, her opinions and her accounts of visions from God. However, in the face of adversity, St. Joan remained undeterred. Joan pursued what she believed to be God's purpose for her. Leading the French army into several battles, St. Joan proved her worth to her king; most importantly, she stood true to what she believed even against persecution. St. Francis was also not embraced for his thoughts when he became radical in his faith. Pietro Bernardone of Assisi, Francis' father, rejected Francis' beliefs and newly found devotion to God. This only encouraged Francis, who pursued the founding of the Order of Friars Minor. Both St. Joan and St. Francis did the unexpected and were revolutionary people in their respective eras.

In a letter, St. Francis writes, "...A man sins who wishes to receive more from his neighbor than he himself is willing to give to God." St. Francis realized not only the importance of serving God, but the value of giving God all of oneself in obedience to

God. St. Francis claimed that individuals should be willing to fully commit themselves to the service of others and thus the service of God. By doing so, individuals exemplify their unconditional obedience to God. This theme is also reflected in what was said by Joan of Arc: "Since God commanded it, it was necessary that I do it. Since God commanded it, even if I had been a king's daughter, I would have gone nevertheless." St. Joan's bold claim evidences her devotion and unconditional obedience to her Heavenly King. St. Joan does not consider obedience to God an option, but rather states that it is "necessary." For Joan God was to be obeyed no questions asked. Both St. Joan of Arc and St. Francis of Assisi capture the essence of what it means to serve God wholeheartedly.

The stained glass windows portraying St. Francis of Assisi exude a peace and joy of a divine nature. By holding a bird in his hand, Francis illustrates God's love and protection of all. This image emanates tranquility and the "peace of God that transcends all understanding" spoken of in the Bible. In a stained glass portrayal of St. Joan of Arc, she is depicted with a military standard in hand walking beside a small child. The military standard illustrates the moral strength that Joan possessed. Upon looking at the small child, individuals are filled with a peace that God will protect them just as St. Joan sheltered the small child. This sense of peace and strength in God is similar to the image portrayed in the stained glass window of St. Francis. Both saints are providing refuge for others. This illustrates their trust in God that he will protect them.

Undoubtedly, the prayers to St. Francis and St. Joan are prayers for hope and encouragement. The prayer of St. Francis reads, "Where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope." Individuals ask St. Francis to help them have faith and hope when they feel they cannot continue on. When praying this prayer, individuals speak of faith and

hope into their lives. The theme of faith and hope is likewise reflected in a prayer to St. Joan for faith: "I pray that I may be as bold in my beliefs as you, St. Joan. I ask that you ride alongside me in my own battles...Help me hold firm in my faith." The prayer begs St. Joan for faith in the personal battles a person may have to face. From the biography of St. Joan, it is known that St. Joan sacrificed her life for her faith. She possessed a courageous spirit and spiritual strength that individuals seek when they pray to her. When one speaks and prays these prayers, one feels empowered and encouraged by the faith and the hope expressed in the lives of St. Francis and St. Joan.

Although St. Francis and St. Joan lived very different lives, it is clear that they had a common passion. Both individuals were revolutionary leaders. The legacy of these saints transcends time and inspires individuals with boldness, courage, hope and faith. As revolutionaries in their own time, St. Joan and St. Francis challenge individuals today to believe in God unwaveringly and to stand firm in the faith.