

“A Great Cloud of Witnesses”

A Historical Series of the Murals on the Walls of Holy Comforter-Saint Cyprian Church

Saint Joan of Arc

15th Century France

On the feast of Epiphany, 1410, St. Joan of Arc was born to a simple peasant family in northeastern France. This was a time of much turmoil in France as England was in charge of much of the country. The French kings were weak and could not keep the English from continually gaining more land. Yet at



the age of 14, St. Joan began to hear voices and receive heavenly visions, particularly from St. Michael. These voices and visions announced to her that she was given the mission of driving out the English from France.

At age 16, she traveled to the French prince and asked for soldiers to lead an army to help an important city then under siege by the English. She famously was able to pick out the French prince then under disguise, but the French ministers did not believe her. She was examined for 3 weeks by a group of theologians who pronounced St. Joan honest, good, and virtuous.

Finally given command of a small group of soldiers, St. Joan, clad in white armor, lead a successful attack to rescue the besieged city. Another victory soon followed for St. Joan, “the Maid” as she was affectionately called. She urged the crowning of the French prince as King of France, and he finally agreed.

She led other attacks, but the French court still viewed her with suspicion. She was captured during one such attack, and soon handed over to the English. The French court did nothing to try to free her. An ambitious bishop presided over her trial, and through the course of ten weeks, the 19-year old answered her interrogators with honesty and piety. Yet her ignorance of theological terms caused her to at times make damaging statements. At the end of the examinations, the judges pronounced the voices as coming from the devil, convicted her of being a hectic, and ordered her burned at the stake.

In 1431, the English civil authorities received St. Joan from the court and burned her at the stake. It took another 25 years for the English to be driven out of France, but after this, the Pope ordered a re-hearing of her case. Witnesses were heard and depositions made, and in consequence the previous trial was pronounced irregular. She was formally rehabilitated as a true and faithful daughter of the Church. The local French proclaimed her a savior of France. She is the patron saint of France and was canonized in 1919. **Her Feast day is May 30.**

Each month, this series will feature the murals painted on the walls of Holy Comforter-Saint Cyprian Church along with history and commentary. You can also find this series on our website at www.hcscchurch.org.
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