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Saint Joan of Arc

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"Saint Joan of Arc Chapel" not authored by Dr. John Donnelly S.J.

Saint Joan of Arc

Saint Joan of Arc, born at Domremy in Lorraine in 1412, was an ordinary medieval peasant girl until she started to hear voices which urged her to free France from the English invaders during the Hundred Years' War. For five years she kept these secret, but in 1429 she stole away from home and went to Charles VII. The King had her examined by theologians before agreeing to follow her advice. For a peasant girl to command the royal army was almost unthinkable! Yet the King agreed. He had little to lose since he had already lost the richest parts of France. Joan's army lifted the siege of Orleans in a brilliant campaign, then again defeated an English army, thereby opening the way for Charles' coronation at Reims in 1429. That was the turning point away from ninety-two years of French defeats.

Joan fought another battle against the Burgundians in 1420 and was captured. They sold her to their English allies. The English could not be content merely to execute their prime enemy; they had to discredit her first. If her voices were from God, then the English cause in the war was against God.

Joan was put on trial as a heretic at Rouen and interrogated for three months in 1431. She was tricked into admission of guilt; this allowed the judge to sentence her as a relapsed heretic. He

turned her over to the secular authorities who burned her at the stake on May 30 (now her feast day). As the flames rose, she protested her innocence.

A Church court rehabilitated Joan in 1456, and she was canonized in 1920. The writers of many novels and plays, for instance, George Bernard Shaw, have used her life and death to push their own agendas.

Saint Joan of Arc Chapel

The Saint Joan of Arc Chapel is more than five centuries old. It was originally from a little French village, Chasse, and was known as the Chapelle de St. Martin de Sayssuel. After the French Revolution, the Chapel fell into ruin where it was left until after the First World War. It was then restored by an architect named Jacques Couelle.

In 1926 Gertrude Hill Gavin, the daughter of James J. Hill, the American railroad magnate, acquired the Chapel, and it was transferred to her fifty-acre estate on Long Island. The reconstruction plans were developed by one of America's leading architects, John Russell Pope, who also planned the National Gallery in Washington, D.C.

In 1962, the Gavin estate passed into the possession of Mr. and Mrs. Marc B. Rojzman. In 1964 the Rojzmans presented the Chapel to Marquette and had it