

# JOAN OF ARC

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## THE LESSON: FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS

*“God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise;  
God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.”  
(1 Corinthians 1:27)*

Joan was born in 1412, the daughter of a peasant farmer, and grew up in a small village in the north-east of France. She had no formal education and could not read or write, but she was intelligent and virtuous, with a very strong faith. Joan lived at a time when continuous war was being waged between the French and the English over who would rule France – a conflict which had begun in 1337 and would go on to last for more than a hundred years.

When Joan was in her early teens something unusual happened. She began to hear voices, telling her to save the city of Orléans from the English (who at that time controlled much of France), and to see the French heir, Charles VII, crowned. Joan identified the voices as being those of three saintly ambassadors sent from God, and she was determined to do as they asked.

*“If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain,  
‘Move from here to there’, and it will move.”  
(Matthew 17:20)*

It was no easy task for a peasant girl to gain an audience with the French heir to the throne, but Joan was resilient and resourceful. At each stage of her journey she met with people who did not believe her story, but she never wavered in her conviction. She made predictions which came about. She recognized Charles VII, though he met her in disguise. And she was found faultless after enduring a three-week theological examination.

Joan had been set the task of bringing about an end to the siege of Orléans. She was 17 years old at this time, but she held high the banner which she carried into battle, and the troops were inspired by her presence. Under her influence the speech and conduct of the soldiers was checked, and many of them began to spend time in the churches praying. Against the odds, the battle was won and the siege of Orléans was ended, though Joan was injured in the fight. Not long after this Charles VII was crowned.

Joan’s voices had told her that she did not have long to live, and now that she had fulfilled her mission she intended to return home, but she was prevented from doing so. She had become a rallying symbol for the French troops, and they did not want to let her go. But then it happened that Joan was captured. She found herself in the hands of the English, who imprisoned her, accused her of heresy, and finally burned her at the stake. In her last moments of life, Joan asked for a cross, which she then held before her, insisting on the divine origin of her voices, and calling out the name of Jesus. She was then only 19 years old.

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”  
(Proverbs 3:5,6)*

Many have been unsure as to how to think about Joan’s life and death. The Church came to the conclusion some years after these events had passed that she had been a young woman of faith and courage, who obeyed God in accordance with the understanding that she had, and suffered a great deal as a result. It is for these reasons that she is honoured as a saint.

(SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: DAVID FARMER, “OXFORD DICTIONARY OF SAINTS” | JUSTO GONZÁLEZ, “THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY, VOLUME 1” | GERARD SAMPSON, “LAYMAN’S BOOK OF SAINTS” | WIKIPEDIA.ORG, “JOAN OF ARC”.)

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## AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE "FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES", WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Review today's lesson. Choose a line of scripture or a phrase from the story of Joan that you find edifying, inspiring or instructive:

Throughout this week, spend some time prayerfully reflecting on the phrase you've chosen. Decide on one concrete action you can take this week based on your reflections, *and* share your reflections and your plan of action with a friend.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through the following prayer.

*O God, who by thy Holy Spirit hast given unto one man a word of wisdom, and to another a word of knowledge, and to another the gift of tongues: We praise thy Name for the gifts of grace manifested in thy servant Joan, and we pray that thy Church may never be destitute of the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.* (SUPPLEMENTARY COLLECT OF A DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH, POET, OR SCHOLAR, P. 317)