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064 - Beauraing Documents of Bishop Charue

Andre-Marie Charue

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ABOUT THE ARTICLE . . .

The apparitions of Beauraing are not well known in the United States. They deserve to be better known. Perhaps this will be the effect of an excellent book on the subject (Our Lady of Beauraing by Don Sharkey and Fr. Joseph Debergh, O.M.I.) which was recently awarded the Marian Library Medal.

The present Marian Reprint has simply one purpose—to show that the apparitions at Beauraing, Belgium, have the character of supernatural visions and, as such, have received the approbation of ecclesiastical authority.

Four documents are presentd—the first, a pastoral letter commemorating the silver jubilee of the apparitions which took place in 1932, and the three others, giving specific approval to the devotion to Our Lady of Beauraing and vouching for the supernatural character of the visions.

We are grateful to Father Debergh, moderator of the Pro Maria Committee (Lowell, Mass.) both for the translations and for obtaining the necessary permissions to reprint these four documents of the present Bishop of Beauraing, Andre-Marie Charue.

(published with ecclesiastical approval)
On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Apparitions at Beauraing

ANDRE-MARIE CHARUE—by the grace of God and the Holy Apostolic See—BISHOP OF NAMUR (Belgium)
To the clergy and the faithful of our diocese
Greetings and Blessings in Our Lord Jesus Christ

OUR DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

While Lourdes is about to celebrate the centenary of the Immaculate’s apparitions, our diocese is preparing to celebrate in more modest a fashion, but with great fervor, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the events at Beauraing. For it was on November 29, 1932, that the Queen with the Heart of Gold revealed herself for the first time to children whom she had chosen to make herself known to us.

May we briefly recall in this matter the official interventions of the diocesan authorities.

Bishop Heylen, our predecessor, had entrusted the study of this cause to a commission of inquiry. When the care of this diocese was given to us at the end of 1941, we were able to judge the value of the work already accomplished by this commission and, basing ourselves on the conclusions drawn by the inquiry, we canonically authorized the cult of Our Lady of Beauraing by a decree dated February 19, 1943. The following May there took place the solemn inauguration of this devotion in the midst of a great and joyous gathering of faithful.

In 1945, the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, recently assigned by Rome to the 22nd of August, was chosen as the special feast day of the cult rendered to the Queen of the Golden Heart. Since then, the greatest gathering of the devotees to Beauraing is held each year on that date.

In 1949, we signed the decree recognizing the miraculous character of two cures attributed to Our Lady of Beauraing. In 1954, we solemnly consecrated the votive chapel of the Apparitions, assisted in this heart-stirring ceremony by our honorable colleague of Tournai, His Excellency Bishop Himmel as well as by our Vicars General, Monsignors Koerperich and Blaimont.

Have we already made a pronouncement on the reality and the supernatural character of the events at Beauraing? Yes, we have clearly expressed our opinion as early as 1949 in a letter to our clergy.
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the eve of the twenty-fifth anniversary, and in order to avoid all ambiguity, we hereby publish, very beloved brethren, the following precise statement.

We declare that, in our judgment, it can be affirmed in all prudence that between November 29, 1932, and January 3, 1933, a group of children from Beauraing were brought in contact on several occasions and in a supernatural manner with the Virgin Mary, and that this intervention of the Divine Mother had for its purpose to instill in the Christian people the necessity of prayer and of self-denial, to obtain in this manner their collaboration with her in the conversion of sinners through love of her and through love of her Divine Son. At the same time, the Virgin proclaimed her Queenly dignity and power, her tender solicitude, and the incomparable wealth of her Immaculate Heart.

In all serenity shall we rejoice in the assurance that we possess of the authenticity of the events at Beauraing. Like Elizabeth at the Visitation, we, of course, ask ourselves why has the Mother of God favored our country to retell the Gospel message to men? We know not why; we content ourselves with expressing our thanks. We question ourselves further; for, like the undertakings of God Himself, those of the Mother of God might well not receive the cooperation that they rightly should! Ours is a great responsibility to have received Our Lady’s visit. The truthfulness of the events at Beauraing surely would not be invalidated by our indifference or unfaithfulness, but the spreading of their message, to say the least, might be restricted and, all the more so, their efficacy. May we ask the devotees of Beauraing to question themselves: have we profited by the lessons given to us twenty-five years ago by the Queen of the Golden Heart? Have we been faithful to her message? Going to the hawthorn to pray is not sufficient: we must live in the spirit of the Apparitions.

Like all the apparitions of the Virgin, those of Beauraing have for their purpose not to teach us something new, but to shake our torpor, recall the Gospel to our minds and bring a kind of heavenly confirmation to the teachings of Holy Mother Church.

Let us recall the essentials of Marian devotion. “We owe,” says the catechism, “a special cult to the Holy Virgin Mary and we must honor her more than all the saints and all the angels, because she is the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven and the Mediatrix of all graces.” Moreover, we are invited “to honor her eminent dignity, to love her with a filial love, to pray to her with complete confidence and
to imitate her virtues.”

The Gospel bears witness that this devotion to the Mother of God belongs to the very origins of our religion. The Angel Gabriel, the messenger of the Annunciation, proclaims Mary “full of grace” and tells her that the Lord is with her in a most privileged way. Shortly after, the Holy Spirit prompts Elizabeth to say, when she greets Our Lady at the Visitation: “Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.” The same Spirit animates Mary herself when she sings her Magnificat and exclaims in her astonishment: “Henceforth, all generations shall call be blessed; because He who is mighty has done great things for me.” One must remember these acts of homage and blessings to understand the emotion and the subsequent increasing fervor with which the Apostles, then all the Christians, will speak of the “Mother of Jesus.” The Creed, the symbol of Christian faith, does not hesitate in professing that Jesus Christ is born of the Virgin Mary, natus ex Maria Virgine. And finally, at the end of the New Testament, we find Saint John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, to whom Mary was entrusted on Calvary and who lived for many years in her intimacy, seeing in this blessed woman the Mother of Christians, the tutelary and invincible Queen of the Kingdom of God, the glorious Woman of the Apocalypse in whom is accomplished to perfection the mystery of the Church.

Dating from these apostolic origins, the Marian cult has never ceased to be dear to the Christian people, receiving as it did a particularly powerful impulse in the hours of danger and anguish. Evidence of this fact from the very early centuries is to be found in the always popular prayer of the Sub tuum praesidium: “Under thy protection do we take refuge, Holy Mother of God. Abandon not in their distress your children who implore thee, but deliver us from all danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.”

And now, especially in the last 150 years, we find the divine Mother multiplying her merciful undertakings among us, as if in truth men were in greater need of being helped to escape error and rediscover the ways of God. Everyone knows that in 1858, four years after Pius IX had defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the Virgin came herself to give a new orientation to our Marian devotion in the sense in which this truth had been defined. Of the other apparitions, those of Fatima have taken on an exceptional meaning: they remind us of the importance of the Rosary and urge us to con-
secrate ourselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Are not the apparitions of Beauraing and of Banneux, called the Apparitions of Belgium, also important? Only a few provocative comparisons are needed to show the relationship that exists between the message of Beauraing and the all-important teachings of Pope Pius XII on the Blessed Virgin.

Our Lady showed herself at Beauraing in the radiant light of her celestial glory; she wore on this occasion a brilliant crown and called herself the Queen of Heaven. It was in 1950 that the dogma of the Assumption was defined, according to which the Mother of God, at the end of her earthly existence, was taken up to the glory of Heaven in body and soul. And it was in 1954 that the Pope solemnly established the feast of Mary, Queen of heaven and earth.

When she appeared in our country at the end of 1932, this heavenly Queen stretched out her arms in a gesture of motherly greeting; she laid bare her luminous and glorious Heart; and she implored us not only to pray, but also to sacrifice ourselves through love of her and through love of her Divine Son. At the same time, Mary proclaimed her intention of converting sinners, engaging herself in a most categorical way: "I will convert sinners." This truly is an appeal to our collaboration of love in the struggle against sin. Let no one misunderstand: this is not solely a question of thinking about the conversion of great sinners. All of us are sinners, we are all called to conversion, to live more faithfully in the spirit of the Gospel. We could very well affirm that Beauraing is like the Paray-le-Monial of the Heart of Mary.

Here again, the message of Our Lady is related to the teaching of Pope Pius XII. In effect, our present Sovereign Pontiff is not content with calling men back to the meaning of God, to the meaning of sin, to the meaning of the Gospel; nor is he content with an urgent recommendation that we adhere to devotion to Mary as one of the surest means of Christian restoration; the Holy Father consecrates the Church and the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and he invites individuals, families, dioceses and nations to consecrate themselves to this admirable Heart of the Mother of God. Thereby do we understand that the great feast of Beauraing is August the 22nd, the feast-day of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and that we are happy to receive from Rome the privilege of celebrating the votive Mass of the Immaculate Heart in the sanctuaries of this Marian city.

The Queen of Heaven reminds us of the great realities of faith
and of hope. But let us not draw the conclusion that she is indifferent to our earthly and material problems. Is she not the Mother of Mercy, of compassionate goodness, Regina, Mater Misericordiae, as the Salve Regina calls her? Notice, our dearly beloved brethren, how she comes to us at Beauraing in the very midst of modern life, hard by the highway and the railroad, in one of our own villages. She comes very near to us and she stretches out her arms to us like a mother towards her children. And in the last twenty-five years, what innumerable favors has she granted to the sick, to the poor, and to those suffering from every kind of sickness! Consider the numerous thanksgivings that have been offered up towards the hawthorn of the Apparitions! Like so many of the Virgin’s sanctuaries, Beauraing has become the refuge of the poor creatures that we are; it has even become one of the most frequented, one of the dearest to our hearts.

Dearly beloved brethren, to answer the message of Beauraing is above all to remain faithfully attached to Mary; it consists in going to her with the utmost confidence in her Queenly powers, with the simplicity of a child who appeals to his mother, with the will to hear her appeal for prayer and for self-sacrifice, and with the determination to fight sin and to change one’s way of life. Nevertheless, we ask of you this year an exceptional homage on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Apparitions. We are confident that the diocese will celebrate this first jubilee of our Marian city in a fitting way.

Dearly beloved brethren, may these jubilee celebrations add a new impetus to the cult of Our Lady of Beauraing. For a long time now and in a most moving fashion our diocese has been responding to the Virgin’s appeal. Strangers come in ever increasing numbers to our Marian city. The labors of our diocesan Commission of Inquiry have been praised for their valuable contributions, and we have recently received again from the Vatican the testimony that in our procedures we have followed, “the wise and prudent way.” On several occasions, the Holy Father has deigned to tell us that he blessed the pilgrims of Beauraing. In conclusion, we are most grateful to the Virgin for the signs she has granted us and that were most encouraging in those hours when we had to assume responsibilities in so delicate a cause. For all these reasons, we have great confidence in the future. We count on God, on Our Lady and on you as well, our dearly beloved brethren, who will never want it be said that our Heavenly Mother came to us and we received her not.
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This pastoral letter shall be read from the pulpit of all churches and chapels in the diocese, Sunday, November the third.

Namur, October 19, 1957
† ANDRE-MARIE,
Bishop of Namur

(translation by Rev. Anatole Baillargeon, O.M.I.)

I—DECREE

Authorizing the Cult to Our Lady of Beauraing

By virtue of the decree of the Holy Office, dated December 7, 1942, granting Us power to express Our judgment freely on the case of Beauraing, in Our capacity of Ordinary thereof and of Our own authority:

By virtue of the notice of the diocesan Commission, which, following the first decree of the Holy Office, dated May 30, 1942, has resumed investigation of the case;

Whereas no decisive objection was stated against the supernatural and divine character of what are designated as the apparitions of the Most Blessed Virgin to the children of Beauraing; but, on the contrary, the conjectures in favor of this supernatural and divine character seem very serious and the passing of the years has contributed only in making these conjectures more impressive;

Considering the current of sincere and deep devotion which has drawn the faithful toward Beauraing during the past ten years—and the numerous, often outstanding and even marvelous conversions, plus the many favors, both spiritual and otherwise, all linked to the event of Beauraing—the perfect orthodox character, simultaneously real, from a doctrinal point of view, and beneficial, of the Message of Beauraing;

Having prayed the Holy Ghost and entreated the Virgin of Mediation, full of grace, to assist Us;

We have decided and do decide as follows:

1. We allow the carrying on, in our diocese, of public devotions to Our Lady of Beauraing, that is, the intercession of Our Lady under that name, emphasizing the meaning of the emblems and words associated with the visions to the children of Beauraing and the organization of religious ceremonies near the hawthorn of the Apparitions.
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It remains, however, forbidden to publish articles relating to the incident of Beauraing, to propagate pictures, tableaux, statues, medals, etc. of Our Lady of Beauraing, without obtaining Our authorization.

2. Anxious to comply with the customary extreme cautiousness of the Church in such matters, We reserve Our definite judgment on the facts of Beauraing and on their character.

3. These decisions are binding only regarding what we customarily call the apparitions to the children of Beauraing.

Namur, February 19, 1943
† ANDRE-MARIE
Bishop of Namur

II—DECREES

On the Subject of the Cures of Miss Van Lear and Mrs. Acar Group

Andre-Marie Charue, by the Grace of God and the Holy Apostolic See, Bishop of Namur

By virtue of the power conferred on Us by the decree of the Holy Office, on December 7, 1942, according Us the faculty of bringing Our judgment to bear on the case of Beauraing, in Our capacity as Ordinary thereof and of Our own authority;

Having seen the reports of the canonical Commission appointed by Us for the study of the cures of Miss Van Laer of Turnbout (in religion, Sister Pudentia of the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Holy Family) and of Mrs. Acar, née Marie-Madeleine Group, of St. Nicholas (Waes), in which are contained numerous testimonies judged worthy of belief, as well as some conclusions of medical experts having been able freely and separately to express their opinions about the nature of the said cures;

Having considered that these attestations where the value and the authority of the reasons are indisputable, prove, with the evidence, that Miss Van Laer and Mrs. Acar suffered from extremely grave diseases and that they had been cured instantly, perfectly and absolutely beyond curative power in the case at issue to account for these sudden unexpected changes;

Whereas it has therefore been demonstrated that these cures assume the nature of supernatural matters;

We acknowledge:
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1. That Miss Marie Van Laer who, for sixteen years, suffered from a serious disease, deemed incurable, of a tubercular nature, or more probably staphylococcic, in the region of the cervical vertebra and in the right leg, which had progressed to the final stage, has been immediately and absolutely cured on the twenty-fourth of June, 1933, on the day after a pilgrimage made to Beauraing for the purpose of obtaining a cure.

2. That Mrs. Acar-Group suffered from a myoma of the matrix, duly diagnosed by the attending physician, and found herself cured immediately and absolutely on July 30, 1933, on returning home from a pilgrimage made with the purpose of obtaining a cure.

Consequently, using Our power as Ordinary and taking into consideration the accounts and verdicts already sent Us by the diocesan Commission charged with canonical inquiry.

Having invoked the Holy Name of God.

We have judged and do judge, we have declared and do declare that the cures of Miss Van Laer and Mrs. Acar-Group are miraculous and that in view of circumstances in which they have taken place, they ought to be attributed to a special intervention of God through the intercession of Our Lady of Beauraing.

And let Our present judgment and Our declaration be made public for the honor of God, the glory of Our Lady, and the edification of the faithful.

Given at Namur, this second of July, 1949, on the Feast of the Visitation of Our Lady.

† ANDRE-MARIE
Bishop of Namur
by the order of:
F. TOUSSAINT, Prosecretary

III—LETTER TO THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE

Reverend and Dear Confreres:

The publication of the decree which you have just read marks a decisive date in the history of the devotion to Our Lady of Beauraing.

As you know, when we officially permitted this devotion, our declaration enforced strict reservations: we deemed that the moment had not yet come for us to "pronounce upon the reality and the supernatural character of the facts." Since then, the reasons for hesitation
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have considerably decreased and we are able to say before God that the signs are not lacking to satisfy us personally of the foolish character of the prudent reserves made at the beginning. But we looked forward to the hour when we would be able to publish our final approval. That hour, we think, has come. The happy termination of the reports of the diocesan doctrinal Commission permits us to declare the miraculous nature of the cures obtained through the intercession of Our Lady of Beaureing, occurring in the months which followed the events at Beaureing, among many other cases of spiritual and temporal favors, and at the height of a movement of Marian fervor which has subsisted to this day, these miraculous cures constitute the final element which wins our conviction of the supernatural character of the events.

We give thanks for it to God and to the Most Holy Virgin; we are able in all serenity and prudence to affirm that the Queen of Heaven appeared to the children of Beaureing during the winter of 1932-1933, especially to show us in her maternal Heart the anxious appeal for prayer and the promise of her powerful mediation for the conversion of sinners.

We, ourselves, marveling at the providential guidance which has led us after seven years to this final stage of the case, have signed this document with all the ardor of our heart and with the assurance that our entire diocese will join in our thanksgiving. In the name of all our people we again tell Our Lady with a growing confidence: Among us you are Queen; we are yours.

Please accept, venerable and dear confreres, our sentiments of spiritual and affectionate devotion, in Our Savior and Our Lady.

Namur, July 2, 1949, on the Feast of the Visitation of Our Lady.

† ANDRE-MARIE
Bishop of Namur
A SHORT HISTORY OF BEAURAING

On February 2, 1943, by virtue of the power conferred by the decree of the Holy Office on December 7, 1942, His Excellency, Bishop Charue of Namur, Belgium, officially authorized the title and special devotion of Our Lady of Beauraing, the Virgin with the Golden Heart.

Beautiful, indeed, is the story behind this recent apparition of Our Blessed Mother in the tiny village of Beauraing, which is nestled away in the hills of the Ardennes, some sixty miles south of Brussels, Belgium. Before the wonderful events of 1932-1933, Beauraing was only another Belgian town, attracting very little attention from the rest of the world.

THE FIRST APPARITION

It was on November 29, 1932, that the Virgin Mary first appeared to five children, four girls and a boy, as they were playing on the grounds of the boarding school of the Sisters of the Christian Doctrine. From then until February 3, 1933, the children were visited by the Blessed Mother more than 30 times.

At the time of the apparitions, the children, who ranged from 9 to 15 years of age, were no different from other children of their age. And yet, these were the five who, in the face of a ruthless questioning by some 90 physicians and surgeons, declared unanimously that the Virgin Mary had appeared and spoken to them.

The first apparition occurred at about half past six in the evening. After their initial alarm the children realized that in the soft light there was a lady dressed in a long robe of purest white. The Lady was the Virgin Mary.

The following day, accompanied by their incredulous parents, the children returned to the school yard at the same hour as the previous evening, and the Lady appeared to them again. And so it happened that the Virgin Mary came night after night until she had made thirty-three visits.

THE VISION

The children described Her as a Lady of dazzling beauty, dressed in a long, finely-pleated raiment of purest white, crossed diagonally from Her left shoulder to Her right foot with a reflection of azure blue.
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Golden rays of light radiated upwards from her forehead in the form of a crown. Her bearing was majestic and yet maternal. She was young, between 18 and 20 years of age. Her hands were always joined before her breast, in an attitude of prayer, until, when she was about to leave them, she opened her arms in a gesture of farewell. On December 29th, as she opened her arms in her usual farewell, the oldest girl saw on her breast a Heart of gold. This Heart of gold was revealed to all five on the last day of December.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN SPEAKS

On several occasions, Mary spoke to the group of children, and at times to teach one individually. She asked them “to be good always.” Several days later, she told the children she wished for “a chapel,” adding that she had appeared “in order that people might come here for pilgrimages.”

On the 21st of December she declared: “I am the Immaculate Virgin.” On the 29th of December, Fernande heard the Virgin’s recommendation “to pray . . . pray a great deal.” On the 1st of February, her sister, Gilberte, in turn, heard the words: “Pray always.”

Extremely important words were to be pronounced on the farewell day, January 3rd. To the three youngest, the Virgin confided a secret of which nothing was ever divulged. Moreover, the Lady told Andrée: “I am the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven.” “Pray always.”

The very last words were confided to Fernande, the eldest of the group: “Do you love my Son? Do you love me? Then, sacrifice yourself for my sake.”

Just before these words the Virgin confided a great promise to Gilberte Voisin which is the treasure of the Beauraing pilgrimage and Our Lady’s message to the world: “I will convert sinners.”

The five children of Beauraing have all married since then and founded excellent Christian families. They are not very much in evidence. They are not important, they say. It is Our Lady who is important.

EXPANSION OF THE CULT

The declarations of the children of Beauraing were, at first, greeted
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with the same abuse as those of Lourdes and Fatima. But soon the character of certain amazing cures and the many conversions and acts of grace, manifest to all, dispelled the skepticism which pervaded the minds of many. The very first year, two million pilgrims came to Beauraing to pay homage to their Queen and Mother.

On May 16, 1943, the devotion was solemnly inaugurated. On July 18, 1947, Bishop Charue personally received papal blessings for the Sanctuary and the Pilgrimages of penance; the same year the cornerstone of the chapel was blessed.

The final approbation was given on July 2, 1949. The cures of Miss Van Laer and Mrs. Acar (both in 1933) were declared miraculous by a decree given by Bishop Charue.

In a Pastoral Letter, dated October 19, 1957, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the apparitions, Bishop Charue firmly expressed his positive opinion.

The Chapel, requested by Our Lady, was consecrated in 1954. August 22nd is the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and feast of Our Lady of Beauraing.

Among the most famous of the conversions was that of a former editor of the Belgian communist newspaper, The Red Flag.

Since then millions more have come praying for special favors and graces from the “Virgin with the Golden Heart.”
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<td>Jean Galot, S.J.</td>
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