

The Story of Adele Brise and the Conversation that Changed Her Life

Adele, a 28 year old Belgian woman, lived a simple life with her family in Northeastern Wisconsin near the Red River. However, one day, something happened that would change her life forever. A visitor appeared to her and what she said to Adele still is being told today.

In early October, Adele was walking to the grist mill with a sack of wheat when she encountered "a lady all in white standing between two trees, one a maple, the other a hemlock." Adele was frightened, because she did not know who the visitor was. Eventually the vision disappeared and she continued on her way. A few days later, Adele walked the same eleven-mile route to Mass at her local church in Bay Settlement. This time she was not alone, but was accompanied by her sister Isabelle and a neighbor woman. Adele again saw the lady. Much like the first time, the lady did not say a word, and the apparition quickly vanished, leaving Adele distraught.

As she had done a few years earlier in Belgium when she needed advice, she went to confession following Mass and asked the priest for counsel regarding the two encounters. Fr. Verhoef, the parish priest in the settlement, advised Adele that if it were a heavenly messenger, she would see the lady again, and this time she should ask, "In God's name, who are you and what do you want of me?"

On the way home from Mass, again with her two friends, she encountered the same "beautiful woman, clothed in dazzling white, with a yellow sash around her waist. Her dress fell to her feet in graceful folds. She had a crown of stars around her head, and her long, wavy, golden hair fell loosely over her shoulders." Kneeling, Adele opened her mouth, beginning a conversation with the Blessed Virgin Mary that would change her life forever. "In God's name, who are you and what do you want of me?" asked Adele, as she had been directed.

"I am the Queen of Heaven, who prays for the conversion of sinners, and I wish you to do the same. You received Holy Communion this morning, and that is well. But you must do more. Make a general confession, and offer Communion for the conversion of sinners. If they do not convert and do penance, my Son will be obliged to punish them."

"Adele, who is it?" said one of the women. "why can't we see her as you do?" said another weeping. "Kneel," said Adele, "the Lady says she is the Queen of Heaven."

Our Blessed Lady turned, looked kindly at them, and said, "Blessed are they that believe without seeing. What are you doing here in idleness ... while your companions are working in the vineyard of my Son?"

"What more can I do, dear Lady?" said Adele, weeping.

"Gather the children in this wild country and teach them what they should know for salvation."

"But how shall I teach them who know so little myself?" replied Adele.

"Teach them," replied her radiant visitor, "their catechism, how to sign themselves with the sign of the Cross, and how to approach the sacraments; that is what I wish you to do. Go and fear nothing. I will help you."

The Queen of Heaven departed, lifting her hands as if giving a blessing. In a matter of minutes, Adele, a simple laywoman, uneducated but pious, received her vocation: to teach young people their catechism, how to make the sign of the cross, and how to receive the Sacraments worthily. Her education was meager, and she knew it. She was a humble servant who did not regard herself a fitting instrument of Heaven, yet she was wise in the ways of the Lord. Anticipating her humility, the apparition provided precise instructions which were drawn from Adele's own instruction in the faith. She was not told to receive a loftier education, but to teach from her own love of God and the Blessed Mother. In doing so, she fulfilled the divine plan for her life.

Parts adapted or taken from Fr. Edward Looney's Article Entitled, "Called to Evangelize: The Story of Adele Brise and the Mariophany that Changed her Life"

General Reflection Questions:

1. Have you ever asked Our Lady and her Son, "What do you want of me?" If not, use this tiny line from Adele in prayer - "God, what do you want of me?" and don't be afraid to listen for the answer.
2. Have you ever offered your Holy Communion for someone or something? Who might you offer your communion for next Mass? After receiving communion, go to your pew and say a prayer offering your communion for someone's soul. Use this prayer if you need one!
3. Our Lady asks, "What are you doing here in idleness?" During what times in the past week were you sluggish, lazy, or are simply plagued by inactivity?
4. Adele didn't feel well prepared or worthy to teach the children when she asked, "But how shall I teach them who know so little myself?" Have you ever felt unprepared or under qualified to do a task and the Lord helped you through it?
5. Where in your life do you live out of fear? Mary said that Adele should "Go and fear nothing. I will help you." Do you really believe that in our fear Mary and her Son will come to your aid?

Reflection Questions for those in Ministry

1. How often do you pray for the conversion of sinners - yourself and your RE/YM families?
2. Confession can be intimidating. Is confession a priority of yours - not just for others you minister to?
3. Have you ever asked Our Lady of Good Help for guidance in your ministry?
4. Have you ever offered your communion for someone or something? How about the idea of offering Communion for the conversion of sinners in your own parish?
5. Have you ever prayed for the families that might not bring their children to Mass or asked Mary to help them?
6. Where in your life do you act out of fear?
7. Where in your ministry do you catechize or evangelize out of fear?