

## **How the Miraculous Medal Changed My Life**

**Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.**

**One of the most memorable experiences that I ever had was with the Miraculous Medal! It changed my life.**

**In the fall of 1948, the year after my ordination, I was in what we call the Tertianship. This is a third year of Novitiate before taking final vows. In October of that year, a Vincentian priest came to speak to us young Jesuit priests. He encouraged us to obtain faculties, as they are called, to enroll people in the Confraternity of the Miraculous Medal. Among other things, he said, "Fathers, the Miraculous Medal works. Miracles have been performed by Our Lady through the Miraculous Medal."**

**I was not impressed by what the Vincentian priest was saying. I was not the medal-wearing kind of person and I certainly did not have a Miraculous Medal. But I thought to myself, "It does not cost anything." So I put my name down to get a four page leaflet from the Vincentians, with the then-Latin formula for blessing Miraculous Medals and enrolling people in the Confraternity of the Miraculous Medal. About two weeks later, I got the leaflet for blessing and enrollment, put it into my office book and forgot about it.**

**In February of the next year, I was sent to assist the chaplain of St. Alexis Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio. I was to be there helping the regular chaplain for two weeks. Each morning I received a list of all the patients admitted into the hospital that day. There were so many Catholics admitted that I could not visit them all as soon as they came. Among the patients admitted was a boy about nine years old. He had been sled-riding down a hill, lost control of the sled and ran into a tree head-on. He fractured his skull and X-rays showed he had suffered severe brain damage. When I finally got to visit his room at**

the hospital, he had been in a coma for ten days, no speech, no voluntary movements of the body. His condition was such that the only question was whether he would live. There was no question of recovering from what was diagnosed as permanent and inoperable brain damage.

After blessing the boy and consoling his parents, I was about to leave his hospital room. But then a thought came to me. "That Vincentian priest. He said, 'The Miraculous Medal works.' Now this will be a test of its alleged miraculous powers!" I didn't have a Miraculous Medal of my own. And everyone I asked at the hospital also did not have one. But I persisted, and finally one of the nursing sisters on night duty found a Miraculous Medal.

What I found out was that you don't just bless the medal, you have to put it around a person's neck on a chain or ribbon. So the sister-nurse found a blue ribbon for the medal, which made me feel silly. What was I doing with medals and blue ribbons? However, I blessed the medal and had the father hold the leaflet for investing a person in the Confraternity of the Miraculous Medal. I proceeded to recite the words of investiture. No sooner did I finish the prayer of enrolling the boy in the Confraternity than he opened his eyes for the first time in two weeks. He saw his mother and said, "Ma, I want some ice cream." He had been given only intravenous feeding.

### **This Experience Changed My Life**

Then he proceeded to talk to his father and mother. After a few minutes of stunned silence, a doctor was called. The doctor examined the boy and told the parents they could give him something to eat. The next day began a series of tests on the boy's condition. X-rays showed the brain damage was gone. Then still more tests. After three days, when all examinations showed there was complete restoration to health, the boy was released from the hospital. This experience so changed my life that I have not been the same since. My faith in God,

faith in His power to work miracles, was strengthened beyond description.

Since then, of course, I have been promoting devotion to Our Lady and the use of the Miraculous Medal. The wonders she performs, provided we believe, are extraordinary. In teaching theology over the years, I have many semesters taught the theology of miracles. And I have an unpublished book manuscript on "The History and Theology of Miracles." My hope is to publish the manuscript in the near future.