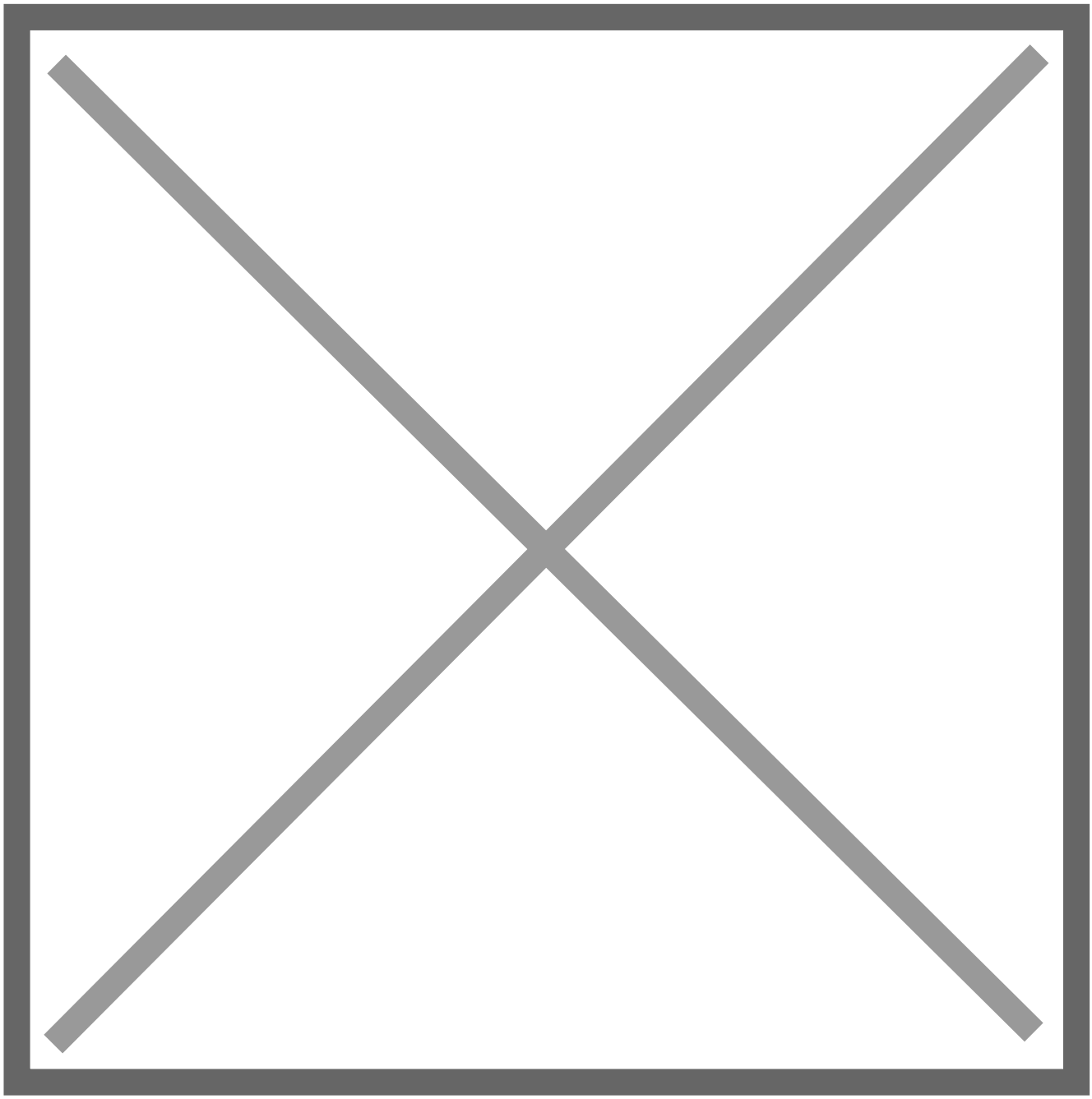


This scene from the film "Sacré Coeur," depicts St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, to whom Jesus was showing his heart between 1673 and 1675 in Paray-le-Monial, in the French region of Burgundy. The French blockbuster is coming to theaters in the U.S. just in time for the consecration of the nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and will premiere for U.S. audiences from June 9-14, 2026. (OSV News/Courtesy of SAJE)

Caroline de Sury

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The relics of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, the French Visitation sister who experienced visions of Jesus revealing his Sacred Heart, will be present with the U.S. bishops in Orlando, Florida, when they consecrate the United States to Jesus' Sacred Heart June 11.

The relics will be flown from Paris to New York June 2 and will remain in the U.S. until September. As part of their plenary assembly in Orlando June 10-12, the U.S. bishops will concelebrate Mass and pray the act of consecration. The bishops also will hear reflections on the Sacred Heart ahead of the Mass.

Arnaud Bouthéon, the lay leader of the Knights of Columbus in France, will be in charge of the unusual transatlantic trip with the reliquary.

"I will personally go to the Shrine (of the Sacred Heart) of Paray-le-Monial to retrieve the reliquary and bring it to the United States," he told OSV News.

Bouthéon will first take the reliquary to the international headquarters of the Knights of Columbus in New Haven, where the relics will be venerated during the first week of June. Then they will be taken to Orlando, Florida, for the consecration.

Meanwhile, "the arrival of the relics of Margaret Mary in the United States is an invitation to consecrate families and individuals to the Sacred Heart," Bouthéon said.

St. Margaret Mary received visions of Jesus between 1673 and 1675 at the Monastery of the Visitation in Parais-le-Monial. Christ showed her his Sacred Heart and invited her to experience his love, mercy and tenderness. Devotion to the Sacred Heart subsequently spread thanks to St. Claude La Colombière, her Jesuit confessor, and then with the help of the entire Society of Jesus.

St. Margaret Mary was canonized in 1920, and today her relics are venerated in the Chapel of the Apparitions of her convent, where a large reliquary contains a wax effigy of her body, as well as most of her bones.

Four portable reliquaries allow St. Margaret Mary's relics to be sent to dioceses and parishes in France and abroad. "They traveled extensively during the year of the 350th anniversary of the apparitions, between December 2023 and June 2025," Bouthéon noted.

The reliquary that is heading to the United States is the largest of them all. Standing 1.3 feet tall, 2.3 feet long and 1.2 feet wide, it weighs nearly 150 pounds with its protective case. It contains the saint's clavicles, two of her ribs and a small piece of her brain. It can be carried in procession using two poles and two to four bearers.

"It will have to go in the cargo hold of the plane," Bouthéon confirmed to OSV News. "I won't be able to keep it in the cabin."

After the consecration of the U.S. to Jesus' Sacred Heart, the relics will be in Denver Aug. 1-6 for the Knights of Columbus' annual convention and then travel back to New Haven for veneration Sept. 25-27. The shrine in Parais-le-Monial hopes that dioceses will also take advantage of the relics' pilgrimage to the U.S. and invite the relics to their churches.

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This won't be the first time Bouthéon has traveled to the United States with relics.

"In 2019, the Knights of Columbus organized a nine-month pilgrimage of a relic of the Curé d'Ars through American dioceses," he recalled, using the French name for

"the parish priest of Ars," St. John Vianney. "It was (St. John Vianney's) heart which I had brought with me from France. For the trip, it was officially classified as 'organic matter.' It fit into a small box that I carried in a backpack, which I kept with me the entire journey. It was very moving."

"Many very positive testimonies followed this pilgrimage of the relic of the Curé d'Ars," Bouthéon said. "That is what prompted us to organize the exhibition of the relics of St. Margaret Mary, with the approval of the rector of the shrine of Paray-le-Monial."

The Church highly regulates the transport of relics, Bouthéon clarified.

"Such a journey requires a great deal of official authorizations, starting with that of the bishop of Autun, to whom the shrine of Paray-le-Monial is subject, and that of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome," he said. "Everything is closely supervised."

The relics' American pilgrimage coincides with the U.S. release of a French documentary on the Sacred Heart. Released in France in October 2025, the film depicts the apparitions of Christ and the revelations received by St. Margaret Mary.

The documentary highlights the "extraordinary, even disconcerting, nature," of the apparitions, Bouthéon explained. "But it also features priests, religious and other witnesses who explain, in contemporary language, how the spirituality of the Sacred Heart is relevant to Christians today."

In the documentary, "we also see many ... of today's witnesses who recount their own experience of God's love, which they have perceived through the spirituality of the Sacred Heart," Bouthéon added. "They explain how they came to understand that Christ awaits them in prayer for a personal relationship full of tenderness. These testimonies deeply moved people."

The film was a phenomenal success in France — "something no one could have predicted," Bouthéon recalled. "It quickly surpassed 500,000 admissions, which was a record."

He added: "Many people have drawn closer to the faith after seeing it, and have wanted to visit Paray-le-Monial. It is also very successful abroad. It is a French docudrama, but it clearly shows that devotion to the Sacred Heart has a universal

dimension."

Bouthéon himself appears in the film, among those interviewed. "My family has a special devotion to the Sacred Heart," he said. "My grandmother, my mother and my daughter are named Margaret Mary. But it was thanks to the Knights of Columbus that I rediscovered the spirituality of the Sacred Heart. Their founder, Fr. Michael McGivney, was devoted to it. He wore a Scapular of the Sacred Heart."

"The veneration of a relic must be presented in an educational manner," he stressed. "It helps us to become tangibly aware, as popular devotions do, of the mystery of the Incarnation — that God, in Jesus, came to dwell among us."

"To personally consecrate oneself to the Sacred Heart on this occasion is to accept the reminder that Jesus has a gentle and humble heart, and that he wishes to share his tenderness with us," Bouthéon concluded. "It is drawing closer to that burning love that is his. And it also means asking ourselves: Do I love others as Christ loves me, with gentleness and humility?"