

Mar. 18, Bl. Martha Le Bouteiller

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Mar. 18, 2010 NCR Today

Aimee-Adele Le Bouteiller, who was born in 1816 in Percy, Manche, France, grew up "helping her widowed mother run the family farm and later working as a housemaid. She still found time to volunteer in her parish school, and she always joined in the parish's annual pilgrimage to the ancient shrine of Our Lady of Chappelle-sur-Vire."

--from [1]http://www.amazon.com/Big-Book-Women-Saints/dp/006082512X/ref=sr_1_9?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1268872370&sr=1-9 *The Big Book of Women Saints*, by Sarah Gallick, HarperOne, 2007, p. 88. (Search term: Postel.)

(Click [here](#) [2] to see some old postcards of the shrine and of processions to the shrine. At the bottom of the page, you can click on various other towns in France to see other old postcards of religious sites, street scenes, etc. The postcards of Lisieux and other medieval towns in Normandy show what they looked like before the bombing.)

While on the 1841 pilgrimage, Adele visited the ruined abbey of St. Sauveur le Vicomte, where [St. Marie Madeleine Postel](#) [3] had founded her religious congregation, the School Sisters of Mercy. Adele Le Bouteiller decided to enter the convent.

She was given the name Martha, perfect for one who would spend her religious life serving in the kitchen, the gardens, the laundry, and on the farm. Finally, perfect for one named Le Bouteiller, she was assigned to the cellar to take care of the wine and the cider. "Sister Cider", she was called.

The stories of Bl. Martha's life always mention the care she provided for French soldiers quartered on the convent during the Franco-Prussian war. Somehow she found provisions and wine for everyone.

There was a difficult situation in the community. The young superior, Bl. Placide Viel, was constantly away raising funds, trying to fulfill the dream of the founder, St. Marie Madeleine Postel, to restore the ruined abbey. In her absence, her older cousin, Sr. Marie Viel, ran the motherhouse. She treated Mother Placide badly when she returned for short visits, and Bl. Martha was caught in the middle of this.

"A special relationship between Mother Placide and Sr Martha was an enormous source of strength to the superior, but to Sr Martha, bearing the burden of two, it could spell much suffering. . . . Instinctively she understood Mother Placide's actions; intuitively she grasped what others did not. When Mother Placide was at the point of death, Sr Martha could not join her Sisters in giving her a final embrace. It was perhaps her only moment of weakness, if one can call it that."

--from [1]http://www.amazon.com/Butlers-Lives-Saints-Teresa-Rodrigues/dp/0814623794/ref=pd_sim_b_1 *Butler's Lives of the Saints*. (Search term: Placide.)

Bl. Martha died in 1883, "a radiant example of fidelity lived out in utter simplicity, a model of sanctity within the reach of all. She was beatified by Pope John Paul II on 4 November 1990."

Click [here](#) [4] to see a picture of Bl. Martha Le Bouteiller.

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