Apparition of the Virgin Mary in CARTAGO

COSTA RICA, 1635

In 1635, in the city of Cartago, a mulatto woman lived in the so-called Puebla de los Padres (City of the Old Fathers), a quarter situated in the eastern zone of the city shortly after the cross of the Morazán, which represented an unmistakable sign for the mulattoes because they were not to surpass this delimited boundary line.

At a short distance from there, among whites and natives, lived a very simpleminded woman who went into the woods every morning to gather wood. In this place, on the 3rd of August, the poor mulato woman found on a rock a small image carved in the stone. Juana Ponsor, unaware of the importance of this finding, picked it up, brought it home and put it in a case. At noon, the woman returned to the woods and again found the image on the stone. Having admired it, she picked it up, thinking that it was another similar to the previous one, and she brought it home. When she opened the case, to put it away together with the first, she discovered, to her great surprise, that the first image was no longer there! Her bewilderment increased when, returning for the third time to the woods, again she found the image on the same stone. She again took it and brought it home one more time, where she verified yet again that the stone image was no longer there. The young woman was so frightened at that point that she ran to the priest to whom she recounted what happened and to whom she gave the image. The priest placed it in a case presuming that he would examine it as soon as he had time.

The next day, the young mulato went back to the woods to get firewood and she saw it again on the stone where she had found it three times already. She then ran to the priest and, together with him and other persons, returned in haste to the woods. From there, the image was carried in procession to the parish church and placed to rest in the tabernacle. The following day, when they opened the tabernacle to examine it, the image had vanished again.

They returned to the woods and found, for the fifth time, the image in the same place. This last occurrence and subsequent times and they noted that the image represented the Virgin with the Baby Jesus in her arms. Then they understood that the Mother of Jesus Christ desired to establish her dwelling in that place and so they decided to build her a sanctuary in that spot. The sanctuary was constructed thanks to the support of the colonists, many of whom had cacao plantations.

In 1777 the work for the present day altar was initiated, which incursions of stylized leaves surrounded a carving that represents a large bough of cocoa under which another one, still growing, is found.