Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in KEVELAER

GERMANY, 1641

It is said that the town of Kevelaer, a small town near Düsseldorf, is one of the most visited places of Marian devotion in all of Germany. This story was reported by the Virgin herself, on Christmas of 1641, to a street urchin by the name of Hendricus Runnen, who, passing through the outskirts of Kevelaer, had stopped in front of a small chapel with a door that he often passed to play, and he heard a voice that asked him, "Is this location your most constant little chapel? in my home?" Surprised, the pedlar looked around and, having not seen anyone, proceeded on his way without thinking anymore about what happened. Nonetheless, one week later, passing by the place again, he heard once more the mysterious words, the significance of which became clear and distinct to him when his wife, Matilde Schlemer, a few months later, had a night vision of a small chapel with an image of the Blessed Mother of Lourdes of it, of which she had earlier visited the sanctuary proposed by her two traveling sellers. Her verbal declarations on the occurrence in the territory of Kevelaer were included in the memorandum by the Bishop of Vecht, the ecclesiastical investigations commenced exactly in 1642, which appeared almost immediately the pilgrimage of Kevelaer.

Here is the statement of Hendricus Runnen: "I am married to Matilde Schlemer, who is about 50 years old. I have my living being a merchant, and for this reason I am forced to move around from one place to another. One, during the Christmas season of the year of Lord 1641, I was returning from Wesel on the road that is found nearby Kevelaer. The first time I didn't pay attention to that voice and I proceeded on my way. After seven or eight days I found myself again on the same road, and at the same point I heard for the second time, in a clear and distinct way, the same voice and the same words that originated from the side of the road. Considering the possibility and the nature of my situation, I felt bad about it. However, I hadn't a choice but to continue my path, and I had to go to the chapel to perform the promise of the saints and the offerings to the image. The image had a great brightness and light that enveloped a circle containing no image similar to the known images. It was so bright that the one who passed through it could not see the image with the naked eye. Nonetheless, the devotion to the image increased, with the result that since the early morning, at least one in the church. Nevertheless, the devotion increased to give greater reverence to the image, so I put my wife in those additions to make the image. They, however, had allowed them in the second instant, who at the time was in Germany under arrest. When he was released, Michel went to him and asked for one of his two images. However, the image was covered and immediately taken by children. Hendricus Runnen described the appearance of the image like this: In a later stage, the Capuchin friars and the community requested that the image would be brought in procession to Kevelaer. One Sunday evening, at the end of May 1642, the parish priest of Kevelaer took the image in secret, and the following day placed it in the niche built by the image my wife had seen it in the nocturnal apparition. Immediately, in the same day, many people rushed there, coming from Düsseldorf and from other locations. Afterward, many miracles took place that were documented. All that is affirmed was occurred in the way described and is true and real. Hendricus Runnen, son ready to swear. I declare this so that the glory of God and of His Most Holy Mother and Virgin is propagated all the more."

Hendricus Runnen and his wife ended the testimony of their faith with a writing at the base of the entire capital. The same year in which the sacred image was placed in the little chapel, at times up to 20,000 pilgrims a day were counted, and according to a report, in the year that followed more than 100,000 pilgrims there. To accommodate them, from 1643 to 1645 a church was built and, in 1647, the house of the priests, dedicated to host the Capuchin friars. The Bishop of Osnabrück was in charge of the building and the construction of the church. After World War II, despite being situated in a zone of military operations, the Shrine was saved because of the prayers to the Virgin by the residents of the area and because of the courage of the German official who did not obey the order to blow up the Basilica and the two chapels of Grace and of Cana. The Shrine is visited today by about 500,000 pilgrims each year.