On July 2, 1597, the Most Holy Virgin appeared on the hills of Montallegro to the farmer Giovanni Chiabranda from Cernevale, who had stopped to rest on the road that took him back home. The Virgin Mary asked to be praised with these words: "Do not fear, oh Giovanni! I am the Mother of God, I have chosen you as messenger according to my maternal will. Go to the ecclesiastics of Rapallo and let them know that the Mother of God has chosen this place as her perpetual abode and wants a church erected here. Fast on Saturday".

Mary left confirmation of her apparition in the form of a precious tunic, an object of particular devotion in that century, measuring 10cm x 10cm and depicting the transept of Mary into heaven by an unknown author who mysteriously painted it on a small wooden tablet with lively colors, filling the very small space with 10 figures among them the Virgin Mary lying down raising crowned by the Divine Holy Trinity with the Greek letters "ΦΩΤ" identifying her as the Mother of God and her triumphant assumption into heaven. Giovanni Chiabranda went to Rapallo right away in order to report the message of the Virgin Mary and accompany the clergy representatives to the location. The news of the apparition spread immediately even among the people who ran to the location to admire the small painting placed on the rock. A vivid water spring gushed from the spot where Mary had stopped. The small painting was taken to the Church of Saint Giovanni and Pentano and held in the rectory for protection. The following morning the image was returned to the place where Mary had stood and where the water spring appeared. The curator returned to the mount and took the icon back to Rapallo, with a great procession, where it was exhibited in the church all day long. The following morning the little painting was again found in Montallegro as testimony to the desire that Mary wanted to be honored in Montallegro. The Archbishop of Genoa, Girolamo Sauli, put his Vicerà, Monsignor Egidio Paolica in charge of conducting an accurate investigation, listening to direct testimony and verifying the facts. It resulted in two decrees, both bearing the date August 6, 1598, where the extraordinary event was recognized, the richness of the peculiar graces on this mount officially gave way to the construction of the shrine.