In 1536 the Virgin Mary appeared at Savona two times to the young farmer Antonio Botta on March 18 and on April 8. The chronicles of the time describe him as a man of deep faith, devoted to prayer and to charity towards his neighbor, with a profound and filial devotion to the Virgin Mary, whom he honored with the daily recitation of the Holy Rosary.

On the Saturday morning Antonio Botta had gone into his vineyard to tie the branches that were already pruned, but remembering that the vineyard of one of his relatives had not been pruned yet, he started to go there to perform this act of charity. Along the way he was praying the Rosary, when he reached a stream of rushing water in the valley of Lentino, Antonio bent down to wash his hands and with great astonishment saw the heavenly Lady who asked him to tell the people of Savona to honor Good Friday and to fast for three consecutive Saturdays, holding processions of reparation. These were her exact words: "...because if it were not for those few prayers and good works that are performed by the confraternities and by other servants of God, the world would be more troubled than it is now; therefore tell all the people to amend from iniquities, letting go vices and sins, because my Son is very angered at the world for the great evils that are presently widespread in it and if they will not do that, their life will be short".

The second apparition of Our Lady occurred, as she promised, on the fourth Saturday from the first event, on April 28 of 1536, the vigil of Palm Sunday. The Virgin appeared again to Antonio Botta after the prayer, with the same burning light and at the exact spot of the first apparition; the farmer remember her with hands extended towards the ground and opened in a gesture of mercy. Once again the Virgin Mary asked the ancient town for three Saturdays of fasting and a new procession carried out by the people and in a special way by the pastoral confraternities. In the message delivered by Mary, as popular tradition recounts, she praised the good actions of those confraternities in the work of spreading the Word of God and exhorted Antonio and his fellow citizens to follow the religious doctrines. Our Lady ended her divine message and disappeared with those words of blessing: "I desire mercy and not justice". In honor of the apparitions, a Shrine was built under the title of Our Lady of Mercy.

Many miracles soon confirmed the authenticity of the apparitions. From time to time, among the crowd filling the valley, a cry was lifted "Mercy, Mercy!" It was a blind man who had regained his sight, a crippled man who started walking, and a sick man healed. The Abbot, who lived those days of great enthusiasm, wrote that those healed from physical infirmities were so numerous, that ten days would not be enough for recording all of them. One miracle particularly moved the entire city: two children of Cleri, 18-month old Giovanni Guglielmo Burgiati, and 7-year old Maddalena Tuxes, blind since birth, came to implore a miracle. They prayed for a long time kneeling on the ground, with their little hands joined, and when, almost disappointed, they were on the way back, the eyes of the two children were opened to the light and they saw for the first time the sky and the mountains, the stones of the path and the astonished faces of their parents crying for joy.