Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in BETTOLA

ITALY, 1496

Bettola developed as a town precisely because the entire valley of the Nure river was recognized as a religious center after news spread that the Virgin appeared to a shepherdess at the end of the year 1496. The numerous faithful flock quickly and pilgrimage are so imposing that, for reasons of public order, at the beginning of May, Ludovico Il Moro, the Marquis of Milan, asks for pristine news from his commissary, Ambrogio Zanesco, a resident in Piacenza. The reply from the commissary is from the 15th of May 1497, dated and stamped from Piacenza, and refers to twelve healings believed to be miraculous, which occurred in the Nure Valley between the 10th of April and the 6th of May: “due to the image of Our Blessed Mother appearing in Val di Nure.” The original document is preserved in the State Archive of Milan, in the ducal correspondence section.

Tradition bequeaths us, as a summary, the account of the apparition of the Blessed Mother: “It was about midday, the sheep were nibbling amongst the shrubs, and the shepherd girl was sitting in the shade of an oak tree. Suddenly there struck, between the branches of the oak tree, a light more vibrant than that of the sun; the young girl, surprised and fearful, raised her gaze and in that light she sees a woman of superhuman beauty who bags a baby to her bosom and says to her: ‘Am the Blessed Mother... you will tell the elders of the village that I desire a church to be built here in honor and glory of my Jesus.’ The young girl ran to recount the vision and the order received by the celestial lady, but the elders did not lend her credence. The young girl returns to the place of the apparition and again sees the Blessed Mother. She repeats the story of the miracle, showing her fingers lit like ardent candles. In that moment they then believed in the miraculous event and set about to construct the church.” (R. Lorenzini).

Next to the little church a convent is also built, both are entrusted to the Franciscan Friars of the Third Order Regular. Instead, the faith of the people is great and it gives us some true works of art, as in the beautiful golden statue of wood of the 15th century, the Banner of the Shroud, and the antique carving of 1704 illustrating the apparition. As the times improved, a new Shrine was built and consecrated on the 31st of May 1885.