Apparition of the Virgin Mary at Genoa

ITALY, 1490

The story of the apparition which is at the origin of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Guard has reached us through popular tradition and a "memory of 1830, written forty years after the mysterious event, that begins like this: "In 1490 Benedetto Poreto, former of Livella, had climbed Mount Fignona to collect hay for his animals. He must have had with him perhaps part of his small flock and also a stick, which a farmer uses still today to cut the grass at the margins of busy areas and in narrow places. While he was attending to his work, he suddenly saw in front of him a woman who immediately did not appear to him as of this world, who addressing him in a gentle tone, said: 'Benedetto, come near me and do not fear, for I am the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of Jesus Christ.' Then she asked Poreto, remembered by the friendly tone in which the mysterious lady visitor had spoken to him, to build a chapel dedicated to her. Benedetto replied that he was ready to do what he had been asked, but his poverty, the labor, Monte Fignona being far from inhabited places... The Virgin exhorted Benedetto Poreto not to be afraid; he would be helped in the endeavor and he would not lack anything. The man promised and the vision disappeared going towards Heaven with a gale and he seemed to see many angels accompanying her. After returning to the village, Poreto recounted what happened and made known to his wife his intention to immediately begin the construction of the chapel, but the woman dissuaded him and Benedetto forgot his promise. Some time later Benedetto climbed a fig tree, but the branch gave away due to the weight of his body and it snapped. His fall left sever consequences that made him think the worst. Informed in bed, Benedetto received again a visit of the Virgin Mary who, gently reproaching him, invited him anew to build the chapel, and she bailed him immediately. The Virgin encouraged him with these words: "You will be helped and assisted by everyone for this construction." It was in this way that Benedetto Poreto some time later helped by the inhabitants of Livella and the people of Val Polcevera, who immediately hastened at the news of the apparition, built the first chapel, with great participation and devotion of the people... The meek figure of Benedetto Poreto is remembered at Livella in the parish church with frescoes recalling the mysterious "adventure" and the construction of the first chapel on Mount Fignona, that dominates from high over the scattered houses of this unusual village.