Apparition of the Virgin Mary in Badaia di Cava

ITALY, 1470

The origin of the construction of the Shrine of the Advocate, in Badaia di Cava (above Maiori, in the province of Salerno) is attributed to an apparition of the Virgin Mary to a young shepherd boy. On an afternoon in the month of November of 1470, a shepherd from Penterbrinca, by the name of Gabriele Cusano, while he was intently grazing a herd entrusted to his care, together with his young friend Dattilo Partio, he saw a graceful dove float around a high bluff of rock surrounded by ivy, that repeatedly entered and exited from a shelly cave located at a certain height. Driven by the curiosity he tried in vain to climb up the steep rock, but did not succeed. The following day he returned with a long ladder and a good basket to clear the tumble and brush, and entered into the hole the companion Dattilo who with a lantern could reach the beautiful and spacious grotto. The following night however, while sleeping, Gabriele saw the Blessed Mother in a dream, who said to him: “Gabriele, leave the care of the goats to others; build for me a chapel in this grotto, and I will forever be your Advocate.” The following morning Gabriele was confused about what to do, debating about a simple dream; nevertheless he decided to personally inspect the grotto. He found it suitable to be transformed into a chapel. Not many days passed that, while his flock was grazing and he was intent on weeding vines, he saw in the grotto a mysterious light and simultaneously heard the same words which the Blessed Mother had said to him in the dream. Astounded by this evident and urgent command, he decided to leave his job as shepherd, put on a rough sackcloth habit, and began a new life, calling himself Brother Gabriele. Having obtained the authorization of the Benedictine Abbey of Santa Maria de Olearia in Maiori, under whose spiritual jurisdiction the territory was, he built an altar in the grotto of the miracle, dedicating it to the Most Holy Virgin under the title of “Advocata.” The news of the wondrous event spread in a flash and quickly, with the involvement of the population, on the summit of the cliff was erected a church with a bell-tower annex and several rooms for the accommodation of pilgrims. These rooms in 1508 were increased and enlarged by the same Brother Gabriele, to satisfy the wish of seven of his countrymen who, like him, wanted to ordain a hermitic life. In 1587, Monte Corona was entrusted to the Camaldoliens who built there a regular hermitage. The Camaldoliens embellished the church with marble and precious furnishings. On the 16th of September of 1720 the church was consecrated and dedicated to Most Holy Mary, the Advocate by the Bishop of Salerno and Scala, Monsignor Garriero. In memory of the work of the enlargement and embellishment done by the Camaldoliens priests, a commemorative stone plaque was placed above the central door which still today can be read in Latin. It recalls the discovery of the grotto because of a dove, and the construction of the primitive church in honor of the Virgin Mary, the Advocate, by Gabriele Cusano in 1470, enlarged and adorned by the children of Saint Benedict in 1719. Around 1890 the mound and the hermitage were donated to the Benedictine Monks of Badaia di Cava who, because of the work of Fr. Romano Isanelli, renounced the church and part of the hermitage. Still today many pilgrims continue to climb on foot up Monte Fabiano (in fact, there are no driveways made nor electric lights, in order to reach the Shrine that is located at about 134 meters in altitude.