THE APPEALS OF OUR LADY APPARITIONS AND MARIAN SHRINES IN THE WORLD

Apparition of the Virgin Mary in VALE DO PARAÍBA

BRAZIL, 1717

The history of the Stories of Our Lady of Aparecida in Brazil, originated in the XVIII Century when some fishermen were casting their nets, as usual, in the Pará River near São Paulo. That day they found a statue of the Blessed Mother which started performing many miracles. In 1717, Father Pedro de Almeida Portugal e Vasconcelos, Count of Assunção, Governor of the port authorities of São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and Santa Catarina. One day he was traveling near the gold mines of Guaratinguetá and stayed there from October 1740. Here the Count was received with great regard and sumptuous banquets. Since they could not ignore the exquisite fish of the southern Paraíba River, the communal council ordered the most expert fishermen to cast the net, because they needed a large amount of food for the illustrious guest.

Domíngos Alves Garcia, his son João Alves, Felipe Pedroni, his brother-in-law and João's uncle, along with others got to work. However, in spite of their efforts they could not catch even one fish. However, they caught a small, decrepit statue of the Virgin Mary with the head floating lower down in the net. Being very zealous Catholics, they kept the precious item in their canoe and cast the nets again into the river. Surprised, they saw a report of what happened to the apostles in the Sea of Galilee eighteen centuries ago; they found their nets as full of fish; they could not keep them all inside the canoe! The good fishermen attributed the miraculous catch to the presence of Our Lady of Conception. Felipe Pedroni, being the oldest, took the statue home and he and his family began praying before it. They started to notice a series of extraordinary events that still go on today. The first miracle attributed to the little statue took place on a clear and silent night, while the family and the neighbors were reciting the rosary in front of the statue. Two candles went out without anyone blowing on them, and then they lit up again on their own. The light of those miraculous candles illuminated their hearts and reawakened a great love and devotion to the Virgin Mary. Another miracle was similar to the one that happened to Saint Peter while he was in jail and an angel broke open his chains so he could escape (Acts 12:28). At the end of the XVIII century "a fugitive slave named Zacharias, was taken back to work in a factory, passing by the church where the sacred statue of the Virgin was kept, he asked permission to go to the church to say a little prayer. While he prayed before the statue, the chains miraculously fell from his neck and his wrists and landed on the ground. Moved by the event, the ex-slave was taking back to his owners, left the price of the slave on the altar and took him home as a free man". The heavy chains falling from Zacharias' neck and wrists is an eloquent testimony of the power of the Holy Virgin Mary's intercession for free people from the prison of sin. In 1695, the first basilica was erected, it is known as the "Old Basilica". August 15, 1867 the "New Basilica" was inaugurated. On this occasion, Pope John Paul II, through one of his delegates, offered to the Virgin a "Golden Rose". In July of 1980 Pope John Paul II entrusted the Brazilian people with a solemn consecration to the maternal care of Our Lady of Aparecida and gave the "New Basilica" the title of "Mother Basilica".