Apparitions of the Virgin Mary at Garaison

France, 1515

In the 16th century, there was nothing in this place where the village is located today, except for an overgrown, muddy field. Rather, the people believed that in these fields the Sabbath witches would assemble to perform their prophesy of evil. But Garaison changed appearance when in 1515 the Virgin Mary appeared three times to a young shepherd girl named Angélique de Maguy in a field near a fountain. In fact a few years later, a chapel was built in the exact place of the apparition that became a destination for thousands of pilgrims. There were many miracles with which the Virgin Mary was given her reputation in the village.

It all began on June 1515, when a young girl about twelve years old who was looking after the sheep, sat near a fountain. The Mother of God then appeared to her and told her to inform, through her father, the consuls of Mont-Leon, a town one mile away, that in this place she desired a church be built in her honor. The exact words of the Virgin were these: “I am the Mother of God. Here I will spread my gown. I want that you build a church here.” Do not forget to thank God for his grace. The consuls refused, believing the story. Upon returning the next day to the spring, Angélique again saw Our Lady who repeated the request for her father. He obeyed, but still was not believed. Thus on the following day the girl went again to the spring but this time she was accompanied by some relatives and acquaintances. Mary appeared to her and everyone could observe the miracle that she performed: the small black and dry bread that the vicar was carrying in a basket turned into a white and soft bread. The Virgin also told Angélique to inform her parents to open the storage truck of their house because they would find it filled with bread and other provisions for the needs of their family.

The pastor of Mont-Leon, impressed by the miracle, went to speak to the authorities and succeeded in convincing them about the truthfulness of the apparitions and the need to obey the Virgin Mary. In 1544 the consuls then decided to build first a chapel and afterwards a beautiful church. The miracles were so many that the Virgin Mary was invoked as Our Lady of Garaison (Healing), that in dialect became Garaison.

Thanks to the involvement of the religious of the time, Notre Dame de Garaison became an important place of pilgrimage until the French Revolution. After the Revolution this site will become a place of education and teaching. Today the institute Notre Dame de Garaison has about 600 students.