Apparition of the Virgin Mary in Foggia

ITALY, 1001

In last week, and more precisely the last Saturday of the month of April in the year 1001, the Count of Aragon, being one of the lords of the region of Apulia, after a long day of hunting, spent the night in a rustic cabin near the Caruso stream in the wooded forest. In the middle of the night he was awakened, startled by the聲音 of some of his scullers who invited him to flee with them, frightened by strange glowing blues, seemingly to be of a fire. The Count got up, he was surprised and terrified, but rather than follow his friends in flight, courageously he prepared to ascertain the strange phenomenon, and with caution went toward the thicket from which emanated the blues. With great astonishment, already near the place of the fire, the Count realized that what he saw were not real flames, but strange flames of lights, like sigmas. Intrigued, he observed with attention and wonder as he caught sight of, in the middle of those flames, a most lovely Lady, of superhuman beauty, resplendent with a very vivid light who, turning her sweet gaze upon him, encouraged him and told him not to fear because she was the Mother of God. Then, pointing out to him a great tree, she let him see that on top of it was a statue of the Blessed Mother, with a darkened complexion, seated on a throne, and she added: “I want that here appears a Shrine in your honor, without gold and precious ornaments. I will be the one to render it well-known by the many graces that I will bestow upon the devoted who will come to honor me.”

In that instant a peasant arrived at the same place, a certain Nino, nicknamed ‘Ninozappo’ (ragged cape), who was going to do his daily work; he also saw the vision, and heard the words said by the Count by the Madonna. The beautiful and resplendent Lady meanwhile had vanished together with the luminous beams. The Count and the peasant, in fraternal enthusiasm embraced each other, united in the same sentiments, in the same fidelity, and in the intention of building a chapel in the location of the Apparition, near that oak tree which, amongst its dense branches, displayed the statue of Mary, enlarged, flanked by two Angels that held on her head a triple crown. It was possibly hidden up there by some devoted followers in order to save her from destruction during the Iconoclastic war. From that moment began many wonders in the woods of the Incoronato. The news of the miraculous event, in fact, spread in a very surprising way and the faithful, by the thousands and from all places, rushed to see, to honor, to beg the Blessed Mother, who, good and benign, granted favors and graces upon her children. At the same time a chapel was built and the state of the Virgin, removed from the oak tree, was placed upon a more dignified throne. The immense flow of numerous faithful led then to providing for the custody and care of the chapel. In the beginning, some custodians were voluntary hermits who loved to live out a solitary and penitent life in the woods. Following them were the Benedictine monks, then the Cistercians. Afterward various, and rather painful, secular destinies of the Shrine came to pass. Only in 1932, after the formal pact between the Holy See and the Italian State, the Incoronato returned under ecclesiastical jurisdiction and the Bishop of the time, Monsignor Fortunato Maria Pizzuto, assisted by secular priests, who assumed total responsibility, until in 1950 it was permanently entrusted to the congregation of Don Orione. The unadorned walls were knocked down, and they restored both the church and the attached locales; they constructed a seminary, a center of spirituality, and ample spaces for pilgrims, rendering it a modern and fortified Shrine, elevated by Pope Paul VI on the 31st of May 1978 to the dignity of a Minor Basilica.