



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

Apparition of the Virgin Mary in LAS LAJAS

COLOMBIA, 1754



In an imprecise day of the year 1754, the indian Maria left the small town at the time called San Pedro Mártir de Ipiales where she was working, with the intention of making a visit to her relatives in the small borough of Potosí that was not too far away. While she was descending from the western slope of the Pastarán hill that was crossed the bridge over the Guátara river, she was surprised by a terrible tempest. In an attempt to find cover from the storm, she ran to a big natural grotto that was located midway down the slope, hoping that the rain would cease. Worried about the torrential rain, the desolation of the area in which she found herself, and tormented by the idea that the devil controlled the bridge to take possession of that unfortunate person who was found traveling alone, she was anguished, and began to cry and she asked for help from the Most Holy Virgin of the Rosary, to whom she had become devoted thanks to the Dominican fathers who for more than two centuries were evangelizing those areas. Immediately, she felt someone was touching her shoulder. Extremely frightened, the woman thought of nothing more than to take off running away quickly, crossing rapidly the bridge and arriving safe and sound in Potosí. After the initial fear passed, a few days later Maria decided to make the return trip to Ipiales. This time she did it in the company of her 5-year-old daughter, named Rosa, a deaf-mute since birth, who she carried on her shoulders according to the indian custom. When she arrived at the grotto of the Pastarán hill, she made a short stop to rest. The girl sweetly detached herself from her mother and began to climb on the stones. Maria heard immediately that her daughter was speaking: "Mama, look at that half-breed that fell from the rock with a little half-breed in her arms and two other half-breeds at her sides." Besieged by panic and bewilderment, she limited herself to put the little one on her shoulders and to run away from there. When she arrived at the home of the Torresano family, her former masters, she retold what happened, but no one believed her. Once the errands were completed for which she had gone to Ipiales, Maria returned to her village. Slowly she approached the famous grotto, however, she again began to have fear. When she arrived at the entrance of the grotto, she was hesitant and stopped. And the little girl spoke again, with greater force: "Mama, the half-breed is calling me!" New fear, new flight, new uncertainty... what is really in that grotto? As soon as she arrived in Potosí she recounted the event. The news spread by word of mouth, the neighbors gathered at Maria's home, everyone wanted to know directly from her the details of what had occurred. In the meantime, in the midst of much confusion, Rosita disappeared. As soon as it was noticed that she was missing, they began to look for her everywhere, but in vain. Where could Rosa have gone? There was no other explanation (innocent souls are irresistibly attracted to the supernatural): the little girl had surely replied to the call of the "half-breed." In Las Lajas, as in Lourdes, a century later, in the grotto of the Pastarán as in the one of Massabielle, Rosita like Bernadette, felt the same irresistible attraction. Maria also then went to the grotto in search of her daughter and there she found her in front of a wonderful spectacle. "Having arrived at the grotto she saw without any surprise her daughter kneeling at the feet of the Half-breed, while she was playing in a gentle and familiar way with the Little blonde half-breed" who had left the arms of His Mother. What an intimate and emotional scene! Only God would have been able to imagine something like that.

The vision was so extraordinary that this time Maria thought perhaps it would be better to not recount it. This new favor of the Virgin of Las Lajas would have remained unknown if a new and surprising fact had not rendered it made public. Some time after these events, Rosa fell gravely ill and died. The mother, in despair, decided to bring the lifeless body of her dear little girl to the feet of Our Lady of the Pastarán Hill, to remind her of the flowers and the candles with which the girl usually venerated her and to earnestly beg her so that she would be given her life back. In front of the insistent prayers and the copious tears, in front of a faith that would not bend, the Virgin could not resist and she obtained from her Divine Son the grace of the resurrection of the little Rosa.

Exulting from joy and gratitude, Maria Mueses de Quiñones went to Ipiales and knocked at the door of the Torresano family to whom she narrated the new miracle. The testimony is impressive, the proof is overwhelming, there is nothing else to do but to advise the Pastor. Regardless of it being the middle of the night, a committee headed by Don Juan Torresano was organized. The Dominican brother Gabriel de Villafuerte received them and proceeded with the normal procedure of interrogation. The bells were sounded and the news spread rapidly in the village: "The Virgin of the Rosary appeared among the stones of the Pastarán! Maria Mueses de Quiñones saw her! She is beautiful and radiant!" But the Pastor decided to ascertain everything himself, still not completely convinced. The following day, at the first light of sunrise, was the initiation of the first and crowded pilgrimage from Ipiales. On the 15th of September 1754, the date during that period of history of the feast of the Holy Name of Mary, at six in the morning, the pilgrims arrived to Las Lajas: "The miracle shined in front of their eyes and their hearts. It was not possible to have doubts: the Most Holy Virgin established her dwelling among the rocks of the Pastarán."

The current Shrine was reconstructed three times: the first, built right after the miraculous events, had been a very simple construction of wood and straw which lasted about forty years. The second reconstruction was brought about from 1859 to 1893. The third and current, was realized upon the desire of the Bishop of Pasto, Excmo. Moreno Díaz, who in a pastoral letter about Our Lady of Las Lajas expressed the idea of a new church to house the image of the Virgin; the work finished in August 1949. On the 30th of August 1950, Pope Pius XII declared the Shrine as a Minor Basilica.

THE AMAZING HEALING OF GONZALO SUÁREZ

Through that represents the first apparition to the young Indian Maria and her daughter, the Rosita.

Image that depicts the Little girl Rosa, already dead, who became venerated by the Blessed Mother.

Also with the depiction of the Blessed Mother. Pius XII, Our Lady of Las Lajas was canonically crowned on the 15th of September of 1950, in the presence of an impressive celebration to which almost all the Bishops of Colombia generated themselves.

The image of Nuestra Señora de las Lajas' venerated on the face of the stone slab, represents Our Lady of the Rosary, standing on a half-breed, who supports the Baby Jesus with the left arm and holds a Rosary in her right hand. At her sides are the figures of the Most Holy Virgin of the Rosary and the Most Holy Child Jesus. The rock is 20 meters high and 2 meters wide the image occupy a surface area of 2 meters in height and 1.80 meters width. A definition from other images of Marian devotion, in Las Lajas there were no witnesses. It was known that the image had been there since the beginning of the years there was never such of the image. It has never been possible to identify determinate or external signs. The traditional thesis, on the contrary, does not only hold up, but finds one more witness after the Rosary, a great devotion and devotion to the Shrine of Las Lajas to emphasize the devotion, after having seen in the centuries or groups of people before the image of the Virgin Mary, they did not even miraculously take in the stone and its reward that the Virgin of Las Lajas, who had the honor of being able to prevent for seven centuries through the rock.

Among the thousands of individuals that miraculously healed by the Virgin of Las Lajas the most notable was the one by the Colombian Captain, Gonzalo Suárez, who miraculously survived during the Thousand Day War (1810-1816).

"On the 16th of February 1811 at 3 in the morning, the underground was miraculously rescued by seven prophecies that struck his square in the foot, produced by the lightning of fire and great one of these falling passed through the right eye, another several the cord of the left eye, damaging the vision, and another destroyed his nose. At three in the afternoon of that same day the 16th of February, he was carried away from the place where he was hit and brought to the place established for the treatment of the soldiers of the fallen soldiers who died in battle. Since the miracle occurred around the base of a stone which I previously had, all the doctors and the medicals, after a brief time, declared that I was already dead. Since I had had my hearing, I clearly heard the orders that were given for my cremation; I then made efforts to make a confession that I was still alive, but in vain, there was a moment of great anxiety, the last order was given and I received down was not the one possibly given. Presently in that instant, I looked the statue of the Most Holy Virgin of the Shrine of Las Lajas grinning her face, of the words reported me from being remained alive, I would go to the foot of the site in which she was located to bow down on my knees in front of her. Finishing the prayer. At the end of this prayer, a lady appeared herself who asked for the name of Captain Suárez. I said that had me brought by my mother to her home. I mentioned that for four months, completely blind, after that, General Abáida had me brought to Pasto. The medicals... declared I would remain blind for life. (...) On the 15th of August I approached Holy Communion in the Chapel of the Hospital of Santa Trinidad after having received the sacramental food. I asked the Reverend Father Don Fermín Perdomo to give me a piece of cloth and, with the faith of a new Catholic, I declared in the name of our image of the Virgin of the Rosary that I venerated in that hospital. Each day and in my own eyes, I felt behind me my eyes, I would not with the piece of cloth. My gratitude toward the Mother of God was immense, when, one month later, on the 15th of October, I began to see perfectly from my left eye. The medicals who had treated the could were very surprised to observe this miracle and, afterwards, they said that I was inhibited to them. Now just to recall a fact of great significance that can only be explained by the Catholic faith. As I had already said earlier, a father had completely torn my eye, it was necessary to submit myself to an operation in a clinic-surgery. It was needed to take from another person cornea to cover the hole. The person had to have the same coloring as mine, to be related and without any contagious diseases, and finally, subject himself to a long and real operation. Not having my mother at that location, the only person who could have sacrificed herself for me, I believed that the operation would have resulted in a completely possible. While the cornea was gathered in a certain amount of time, I was in the hospital. I was informed in detail on the list of my list, out of the group of people that had formed the list of the best. When I heard that the person who offered her eye to me that I could be obtained the only wish that the medical needed to respect for me a favor... (...) The letter that made this great work of Christian charity is called Don Fermín Perdomo, that I had the honor to receive in the Shrine of Las Lajas, the 16th of August 1894. And it is in the Shrine of Las Lajas that I saw the miracle of being able to prevent for seven centuries through the rock.

The long promenade in which was exhibited the numerous of cures offerings.

Shrine statue that represents the Indian Maria and her little girl Rosa.

Photo: J. Moreno