



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

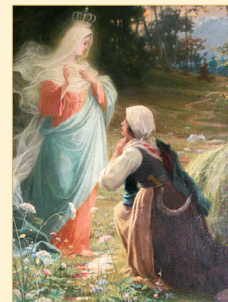
Apparition of the Virgin Mary at CARAVAGGIO



ITALY, 1432



In May 26, 1432, at five in the evening, a young mother named Giannetta, native of the town of Caravaggio, known by everyone for her most virtuous manners, her Christian piety, and her sincerely honest life, was outside the village along the road towards Misano, and was deep in thought about how she could carry home the bundles of grass that she had cut for her animals. Suddenly she saw coming down from the sky and resting right near her a beautiful and astonishing Lady, of majestic stature, graceful face, venerable appearance and indescribable beauty, clothed in a light blue dress and her head covered with a white veil. Struck by the very dignified appearance of the noble Lady, Giannetta exclaimed astonished: **"Virgin Mary!"**. And the Lady immediately said to her: **"Do not fear, daughter, because it is really me. Stop and kneel in prayer"**. Giannetta answered: **"My Lady, now I do not have time. My livestock waits for this grass"**. Then the Most Blessed Virgin spoke to her again: **"Now do what I desire from you..."**. And saying this she placed her hand on Giannetta's shoulder and had her kneel. She continued: **"Listen well and remember, because I desire that, wherever it will be possible, you report with your own words or have others say this..."**. And with tears in her eyes, that according to the testimony of Giannetta were, or seemed to her like glittering gold, she added **"My Son the Most High Omnipotent intended to destroy this land as a result of the iniquity of the people, because they do what is evil more every day, and they fall from sin to sin. But for seven years I have implored from my Son mercy for their faults. Therefore I want that you tell one and all to fast on bread and water every Friday in honor of my Son, and after vespers to celebrate every Saturday in devotion to me. They must dedicate that half day to me in gratitude for the many and great favors obtained from my Son through my intercession"**. The Virgin Mary said all those words with open arms and as in distress. Giannetta said: **"The people will not believe me"**. The most clement Virgin responded: **"Get up, do not fear. You report all that I requested you. I will confirm your words with such great signs that no one will doubt that you have said the truth"**. Having said this, and after making the Sign of the Cross on Giannetta, Our Lady disappeared before her eyes. Returning immediately to Caravaggio, Giannetta reported all that she had seen and heard. Therefore many people - believing her - began to visit that place, and found there a spring never seen before by anyone. Then several sick people went to the spring, and afterwards in ever greater numbers, trusting in the power of God. And the news spread that the sick came back freed from the infirmities from which they suffered, through the intercession and the merits of the most glorious Virgin Mother of God and our Lord Jesus Christ. The weeping of Our Lady at Caravaggio, like also the message which indeed must be long meditated on, has almost never been pointed out. However Giannetta was touched and had understood those tears and the distress of the Mother of Christ; the Virgin Mary speaks with tears in her eyes. It is true that they seem to her like glittering gold, but it is because they cannot escape affecting her. With open arms and in distress the Virgin shares with Giannetta her pain and at the same time her own intercessory compassion. The sorrow of the Virgin is the sorrow of her Son, provoked up to threatening punishment for the sins of people as in the Gospel: **"... If you do not repent, you will all perish as they did"** (Lk 13:3.5). And there was a reason, if we think of those years of troubled history for the Church and the violence of that time, perpetrated in the land of Caravaggio itself. Regarding the political situation in the territory of Gera d'Adda it must be remembered that since the beginning of 1431, the hostilities between the Venetian Republic and the Duchy of Milan were rekindled. Caravaggio will be an important crossroad for many years during the entire XV Century. Between 1432 and 1441, between 1448 and 1453 Caravaggio comes and goes under the rule of Milan and Venice, and is made a scene of battles, ceasefires, and negotiations of "chapters". Gera d'Adda will remain with Milan in relative tranquility until 1499. Then for about another ten years it will return under Venice.



Painting that depicts the apparition of Our Lady to Giannetta



The monumental shrine rises at the center of a vast oplanado surrounded by symmetrical porticos on all four sides, that run with 200 arches for almost 600 meters



Votive offerings for grasses received



The Shrine of Caravaggio



Interior of the Shrine



Under the main altar is located the Sacre Spese (Holy Grotto), that contains the wooden statu- ary ensemble which re-enacts the scene of the apparition



The Virgin Mary, as proof of her divine origin, started a flowing spring. In the square facing the



avenue leading to the town center there is a tall marble obelisk that with its inscriptions recalls the virtuous miracles attributed to Our Lady of Caravaggio. Just beyond the obelisk there is a large fountain, whose water runs under the cathedral, collects the water of the Sacred Spring and converges into the rear square, where it is collected in a pool available to the infirm to immerse their sick limbs.



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