



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

# Apparition of the Virgin Mary at CASTELPETROSO



ITALY, 1888

The history of the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows begins on March 22, 1888, the day when the Virgin appeared for the first time. Two peasant women of the area, Fabiana Cicchino (called Bibiana) and Serafina Valentino, were near the place named "Cesa tra Santi" to work on a plot of land; they brought with them two little sheep but in the afternoon they realize that one of them was missing. Thus they decide to split to go find it. Searching among hedges and crevices Fabiana saw the little sheep in front of a ravine from where a strange light was coming. Intrigued by such an occurrence the woman drew closer and beheld a celestial vision: in the glare of the light she recognized the image of Our Lady of Sorrows semi-kneeling with her dead Son at her feet, her look turned towards heaven and her arms widened in an act of offering. After an initial moment of dismay the visionary started to shout the name of Serafina so that she would reach her, the latter one upon arrival to the place could not see anything and was very surprised to hear from Bibiana what she had seen. Ten days later, on the first of April, the day of Easter, the apparition happened again and this time also Serafina could benefit from it.

Word of the apparitions quickly spread in town, and although many considered the two peasant women merely liars, others began to go on pilgrimage towards the holy place where a cross was placed in remembrance of what had happened. On September 26, 1888, the Most Rev. Francesco Macarone Palmieri, Bishop of Bojano, went to the sacred place to "inquire" about the alleged apparitions and had the grace of seeing Our Lady of Sorrows as she had appeared to the two peasant women. Another extraordinary event was added to the apparitions: at the bottom of the cliff gushed a spring of water, immediately proved to be miraculous.

The news about the wondrous events of Castelpetroso spread rapidly especially through the press; particular attention was given by the magazine of Bologna *The Servant of Mary*, of which Carlo Acquaderni was editor. At the end of 1888 Acquaderni personally went to "Cesa tra Santi" together with his twelve-year old son Augusto, gravely ill of bone tuberculosis, to ask for the grace of healing. Augusto drank the water of the spring, and through the intercession of Our Lady of Sorrows, received the gift of healing. At the beginning of 1889, after the medical findings that verified the miraculous healing, Acquaderni and Augusto returned again to the cliff to thank the Virgin Mary who gave them the gift of appearing in the same posture as the prior visions. And it is truly to give thanks to the Mother that in Carlo Acquaderni started the idea to build a Temple dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. After receiving support and collaboration by Bishop Macarone Palmieri, together they began to organize in collecting funds and they entrusted the engineer Francesco Gualandi of Bologna to design the majestic project. It was September 28, 1890 when the first stone of the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows was laid. On this day, Most Rev. Francesco Macarone Palmieri, during a solemn celebration, officially gave the kickoff for the construction. The consecration, instead, occurred only on September 21, 1975.



On March 22, 1888 at Castelpetroso, in the province of Isernia, two peasant women, 35 and 34 years old, Fabiana Cicchino and Serafina Valentino, were looking for a little sheep that was lost. Suddenly Fabiana was struck by a light coming from a cave. After drawing closer, she saw the Virgin Mary, with her heart pierced by seven swords, her arms open wide and her look turned to heaven, kneeling in front of the body of Jesus lying dead, covered by wounds. The Virgin did not speak. After hurrying to that place, Serafina at first did not see anything, but ten days later, on the day of Easter, the apparition repeated and also Serafina could contemplate it.



Apparition to Fabiana Cicchino and Serafina Valentino

Apparition to Bishop Macarone Palmieri



Bronze statues reproducing the apparition



Giovanni Gagliardi, Our Lady of Sorrows of Castelpetroso, oil on canvas, 1890



Thanks to the miraculous water of the Spring of the Shrine there were many miraculous healings, among them the one of a six-year old deaf and mute boy, Angelo Verma, of Fara San Martino. The child had been brought by his father Luigi to Castelpetroso, to satisfy the mother of the little one, Annamaria Tiranti, in the hope that in that place the child would reacquire his speech. In the small chapel of the Shrine, near the "Grotto of the apparition" where there was a spring of water, the pious woman, who had much faith took some water with a pitcher and made the child drink it. At the same instant little Angelo shouted: "Mum, mum", and since then his speech "remained clear and audible for all his life". That event is recorded in the declaration of the priest Beniamino Orsini, entrusted by his Archbishop to verify the truthfulness of that miracle. That occurred in 1888, but also many other episodes of healings of deaf and mutes have taken place recently.



Portal of the Shrine



Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows of Castelpetroso



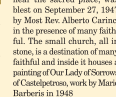
The chapel of the apparition, thus called because it is located near the sacred place, was built on September 27, 1947 by Most Rev. Alberto Caracini in the presence of many faithful. The small church, all in stone, is a destination of many faithful and inside it houses a painting of Our Lady of Sorrows of Castelpetroso, work by Mario Barberis in 1948



Altar where an image of the apparition is kept



On December 6, 1973, upon request of the Bishops of Molise, the Holy Father Paul VI promulgates a decree which proclaims Our Lady of Sorrows, venerated in the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows of Castelpetroso, patroness of Molise



Interior of the Shrine