



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

Apparition of the Virgin Mary in CERRETO DI SORANO



ITALY, 1853

In 1841 Cerreto di Sorano was a small rural center where just four families, descendants of the Nucci family, lived and owned properties in the neighboring area. One family was Antonio Nucci and Maria Stella Franci and their four children. The last daughter, born on November 26, 1841 was named Veronica. When she was 12 years old she was in the field intent on tending her sheep. Suddenly the sky was covered by clouds and it got dark. Soon lightning and thunder created a frightening environment. The young girl was with her brother John Baptist, a bit younger than her, who hurried and pushed the sheep towards a small canopy to shelter them. All of a sudden it began to rain. The brother was already under the shelter with the sheep, while Veronica stopped in stupor to look at a lady dressed in white right in that spot. Moreover, the rain was not falling around that glowing lady. This is the direct testimony of Veronica: **"I saw before me a woman genuflecting...she called me and I genuflected...she was very beautiful, dressed in a white dress covered with little red flowers... a black shiny sash around her waist...a sky blue mantel on her head that flowed to the bend in her knees..."**

She had her hands reaching out as if she were begging and on her head she wore a golden crown with a cross in the middle. The lady told her to come closer without fear because she would not get wet in spite of the rain. She turned towards the church and asked Veronica to pray with her. The child saw tears run down the face of Our Lady and asked her the reason for her pain. She responded that she was crying for sinners: **"I weep for so many sinners. Do you see how much it rains? There are more sins than all these falling rain drops. My Son has His hands and feet pierced, and also has five open wounds. If sinners do not repent, He wants to bring the world to an end."** Then she recommended: **"Every day, say seven Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be to the Lost Blood of Jesus, five Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be to His five wounds and seven Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be to me, Our Lady of Sorrows."** Veronica was not touched by one drop of rain during the whole time she was next to Our Lady, she returned home to find her mother sick and did not tell her right away about the exceptional circumstances; she did it the next day, in the presence of others, who were left amazed and confused just like her family. Immediately the news of the apparition of the Virgin spread like lightning through the neighboring towns; the next morning many people came to Veronica's house to know and hear what happened straight from her mouth; but one of her cousins took a wooden cross, and started to head out and everyone followed him in silence; the cross was placed on the sight of the apparition, and here everyone noticed with amazement the imprint of a kneeling person in the soft dirt. So Veronica was telling the truth! The archpriest Busatti was informed on May 22 and he also went to the place, where the imprint of "Our Lady" was still visible. The first spontaneous pilgrimages started immediately. A few days later, while Veronica was praying on the hill where the apparition took place, she heard a voice say to her: **"Veronica... take yourself to the Bishop and tell him to make a chapel here."**

The ecclesiastic authorities from the parish of Sorano to the Bishop of Sovana-Pitigliano were overseeing the investigation of the case, but in the meantime, growing crowds kept coming to Cerreto and before long they started coming from far away. It became necessary to safeguard Veronica because everyone wanted to see, hear, and touch her, so she willingly accepted the decision to enter the Monastery of the Poor Clare's in Ischia di Castro. Here the young girl took her vows as Veronica of Our Lady of Sorrows and lived an exemplary life of meekness, poverty, and strong spirit touched by mystic experiences; she died in the odor of sanctity in 1862 just after turning 21 years old. On the site of the extraordinary apparition, with the donations of numerous faithful people who came to Cerreto, the construction of a small church began and was completed in 1864 during the upheavals of the events that led to the unification of Italy; it became the church that replaced the old Parish of Saint Mary of Aquila, which is now in bad condition.



Painting of Our Lady that appeared to Veronica Nucci

The following July 20th, after much consideration, the archpriest Busatti wrote to Pope Pius IX, telling him in detail what had happened. On August 13, the Pontiff responded with a letter, of which the original is saved in the archives of the Diocese of Pitigliano. Here is an excerpt from the Pope's written response: **"You write that you are worried about this issue and have interrogated the young girl. However strict warnings and rigorous orders were not used sparingly, from near and from far you have had great crowds of people that have increased donations for raising a chapel to God in the honor of His Sorrowful Mother. You ask us for advice on how to handle yourself. It is necessary...that the information you wrote in regard to Veronica Nucci, May you and the flock of people and the universal Church be under the perpetual presence of the Most Holy Saint Virgin Mary, through whom God gives many favors and assistance."** This stamp from Saint Mary Major in Rome on August 13, 1853, Year VIII of Our Pope; Pope Pius IX.



Front exterior of the shrine kept by the Carmelite Sisters



The surrounding woods



Town of Cerreto



Carmelite Sisters in the countryside around the shrine and the old Carmelite convent