



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

Apparition of the Virgin Mary in CARTAGO



COSTA RICA, 1635

In 1635, in the city of Cartago, mulattos lived in the so-called Puebla de los Pardos (City of the Half-Breeds), a quarter situated in the eastern zone of the city, shortly after the cross of the Caravaca, which represented an unmistakable sign for the mulattos because they were not to surpass the indicated boundary line.

At a short distance from there, among whites and natives, lived a very simple-minded woman who went into the woods every morning to gather wood. In this place, on the 2nd of August, the poor mulatto woman found on a rock a small image carved in the stone. Juana Pereira, unaware of the importance of this finding, picked it up, brought it home and put it in a case. At noon, the woman returned to the woods and again found the image on the stone. Having admired it, she picked it up, thinking that it was another similar to the previous one, and she brought it home. When she opened the case, to put it away together with the first, she discovered, to her great surprise, that the first image was no longer there! Her bewilderment increased when, returning for the third time to the woods, again she found the image on the same stone. She again took it and brought it home one more time, where she verified yet again that the stone image was no longer there. The young woman was so frightened at that point that she ran to the priest to whom she recounted what happened and to whom she gave the image. The priest placed it in a case promising that he would examine it as soon as he had time.

The next day, the young mulatto went back to the woods to get firewood and she saw it again on the stone where she had found it three times already. She then ran to the priest and, together with him and other people, returned in haste to the woods. From there, the image was carried in procession to the parish church and placed to rest in the tabernacle. The following day, when they opened the tabernacle to examine it, the image had vanished again. They returned to the woods and found, for the fifth time, the image in the same place. They lent more attention than previous times and they noted that the image represented the Virgin with the Baby Jesus in her arms. Then they understood that the Mother of Jesus Christ desired to establish her dwelling in that place and so they worked to build her a retreat in that spot. The Shrine was constructed thanks to the support of the colonists, many of whom had cocoa plantations.

In 1777 the work for the present day altar was initiated, whose incisions of stylized leaves surrounded a carving that represents a large berry of cocoa under which another one, still growing, is found.



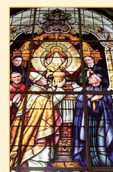
Stained glass window illustrating the appearance of the miraculous statue



The remembrance of the young woman who had the honor of finding the image of Our Lady of the Angels seems to have disappeared from the history of Costa Rica. It is certain of her existence because the writings of the Church going back to that period testify to it, but after the discovery of the "Negretta" stone, nothing more is known. The Bishop of San José, Monsignor Victor Manuel Sanabria, sought to recover information on the young mulatto. In his investigations he found that most of the women who lived in that area were called Juana and had the surname of Pereira. Unable to discover her true identity, he called her "Juana Pereira" in honor of all the mulatto women who know the real one who had found the image of Our Lady of the Angels. In this way the honor of its discovery remains attributed to the whole aborigine culture of Costa Rica



The image of the "Negretta" is composed of three different types of stone: graphitic, jade, and volcanic rock. Archeologists are very interested in the composition, since it is very difficult, if not impossible, to put together these three stones. Nevertheless, all are in agreement that the image of the Virgin has characteristics of all three stones. According to some studies, in that era in Costa Rica there was no graphite, while in the Old Continent the other two were not present. The image, 20 centimeters high, was called the "Negretta" because even its true coloring is a greenish gray. The Virgin has traits of mixed ethnicity and her gaze is in front of her, while her son looks into her eyes and touches her heart with his little hand



Stained glass window that illustrates the moment in which the statue was solemnly carried into the new Shrine



The little image of 20 centimeters was baptized with the name of Virgin of the Angels because on the 2nd of August the Franciscans celebrate the feast of Our Lady of the Angels or the Portuñuela. Cartago is proud of its vast Franciscan community, for this reason the church decided to render thanks to God for his gift by honoring the little image with the same title that the Saint from Assisi had attributed to his celestial mother. It is estimated that the discovery occurred in 1635



The present day Shrine was built thanks to the support of the colonists, many of whom owned cocoa plantations. The cupola dome is an enormous crown in which is read the anagram of the Virgin Mary; the last capstone is represented by the image of Saint Michael the Archangel defeating the devil



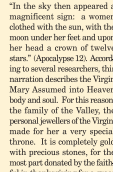
Interior of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Angels, Patroness of Costa Rica. The title "Saint Mary of the Angels" spread notably due to the action of the Franciscan friars: to Saint Mary of the Angels was in fact dedicated the little church in Assisi, the so-called Portuñuela which Saint Francis declared as his abode "because of his veneration for the Angels and of his special love for the Mother of Christ." In 1216 Pope Honorius III granted a plenary indulgence to those who would visit the church on its titular feast day: the 2nd of August. The apparitions in Costa Rica, nation of which Saint Mary of the Angels is the patroness, began on the 2nd of August 1635



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The exquisite gold monstrance where the miraculous little statue is kept



"In the sky then appeared a magnificent sign: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." (Apocalypse 12). According to several researchers, this narrative describes the Virgin Mary Assumed into Heaven body and soul. For this reason, the family of the Valley, the personal jewels of the Virgin, made for her a very special throne. It is completely gold with precious stones, for the most part donated by the faithful in thanksgiving for a grace received. The structure is a total of one meter in height



The decking with flowers of the streets in honor of the Blessed Mother who is celebrated on the 2nd of August

The miraculous little statue of Our Lady of the Angels is highly venerated