



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

# Apparition of the Virgin Mary at RZESZÓW

POLAND, 1513

**I**n

1513, during the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, Jakub Adu was walking in his own orchard appreciating the multitude of fruits. He was looking at the apples with admiration and he collected them with his hands worn from the toil of work, he caressed them delicately and thanked the Lord for the extraordinary abundance of the harvest provided to the land of Rzeszów in that season.

While he was approaching his favorite pear tree, a plant that always gave him excellent fruits, much appreciated and loved by his children, he noticed an extraordinary light. He instinctively had fear, since he had never seen before something similar. The light radiated an extraordinary glare, but it did not blind his sight. Jakub drew near and heard a calm and delicate female voice: "Do not be afraid, I wish that here in this place the glory of my Son be manifested and that assistance be brought to the needy". In his heart Jakub understood that the voice belonged to the Most Holy Virgin that he loved so much, for whom he was working and to whom he had dedicated his whole life. Also the wife of Jakub rushed there and their children behind her. At that moment the light dissolved in the air and appeared the figure of the Virgin Mary with the Baby Jesus. The news about the apparition spread rapidly. Weary of illnesses, of the Tartar invasions and of their heavy labor, the people began to hasten to the place of the miraculous event. God was restoring sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf and the sinners were redeemed. A wooden chapel was built to house the statue of Mary and when it was determined that it could not hold all the faithful desiring to encounter their beloved Lady, a larger wooden church was built (1531-1536).

The small church was very dear to the castellan of Sandomierz Mikołaj Spytka Liègeza and to his wife Zofia of the Rzeszowski family. They themselves often came into the small church to present their requests to Our Lady and they were always heard. The wooden church was again too small to satisfy the number of faithful who arrived to give homage to the Virgin Mary. Thus Mikołaj and his wife decided to build a brick church, and a monastery, that they wanted to entrust to monks. The construction began in 1601 and it lasted almost 20 years.

During the feast of the Annunciation in 1629, the pastor of Rzeszów and the canon of Wislica, Father Bartolomiej Robakowski, celebrated the solemn installation in the church and in the monastery of the monks known in Poland for their particular devotion to Our Lady. At the head of the Bernardine Friars there was Michał Heller who accepted from the founders the leadership of the new monastery with great joy and emotion, entrusting three very devoted fellow religious brothers to look after the Shrine. The monastery where the Bernardines initially settled was made up of few rooms (5 cells, a kitchen, a storeroom and a cellar). After a short time the monastery was enlarged and a house intended for guests was built next to it. The entire structure was surrounded by walls.

The founders oversaw that the church had all the necessities for guaranteeing to the Sons of Saint Francis the food and the ecclesiastical services. The Shrine attracted not only the faithful of Rzeszów, but also from the surrounding areas. The news of the Virgin Mary who was listening to all the supplications and the possibility of asking graces for one's children spread rapidly. The number of miracles and graces increased from year to year. The Marian devotion became so strong that the Bernardines decided to initiate the requesting procedures for the crowning of the miraculous statue of the Virgin Mary. They were supported by Jerzy Ignacy Lubomirski and thanks to his patronage, Bishop Wacław Sierakowski convened a special commission which had the aim of examining the numerous healings that occurred thanks to the intercession of Our Lady. The outcome of the commission's evaluation was the basis for issuing a consent for the crowning on the part of the Vatican. All the requests were carried out under the patronage of Lubomirski who offered a large sum of money for the procedures that related to the purchase of golden crowns for Our Lady.

On March 25, 1754, Jan Kapistran Kwolek brought to Rome the crowns for the blessing of Pope Benedict XIV. Unfortunately it was not possible to celebrate immediately the crowning due to the death of Jerzy Ignacy Lubomirski. Ten years later, the matter was taken up again by Jerzy's widow, Anna Lubomirska and the crowning finally took place on September 8, 1763 on the occasion of the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. The ceremony was presided by the Archbishop of Lviv, Wacław Sierakowski. The chronicles report that a few thousands of pilgrims participated in this celebration with 180 priests and religious coming from the nearby dioceses. The last important events for the Shrine of Rzeszów were the conferral of the title of Minor Basilica to the church, but also the confirmation of the liturgical celebrations of Our Lady of Rzeszów for the city of Rzeszów and for the entire diocese. This occurred thanks to the efforts of Bishop Kazimierz Górny and the Bernardine Friars with Rafał Klimus at the head.



Painting representing the apparition

Statue of Our Lady of Rzeszów

The Convent of the Bernardine Fathers

Statue of Our Lady of Rzeszów

The Shrine of Rzeszów

The main altar

Interior of the Shrine

Statue of the suffering Christ

Detail of the Shrine

The devotion to Our Lady of Rzeszów is continuous growth is witnessed by the tradition that, from 1910, during the anniversary of the crowning in 1863, about 100 thousand faithful assembled, arriving from Galilee, from the dioceses of Rome, Lviv and Przemyśl. The ceremony was presided by the Archbishop of Lviv Franciszek Kasprzyk Wierzbicki, and all the requests were taken care by the cover of the earth and the administration of the monastery Sandomierz-Syczów.

In honor of Our Lady of Rzeszów, in 2013 a Jubilee was celebrated for the 500 years since the Apparition of Our Lady at Rzeszów