



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

Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in ZEITUN



EGYPT, 1968-1970

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Zeitun is a small town on the outskirts of Cairo, scene of a series of apparitions of the Virgin from 1968 to 1970, preceded often by unusual flashes of light; such manifestations took place nearby a local Coptic church. It is necessary to effectively start by saying that the events of Zeitun had begun much earlier and were the consequence of a promise that the Virgin Mary had made to one of her faithful children. In 1918 in fact, a wealthy member of the Khalil Ibrahim family (a prosperous family of land owners in Zeitun) was experiencing a grim family crisis. The Virgin Mary appeared to her and said to her two things: "Build a church on your land... In 50 years I will bless the church." The church was completed in 1924 and precisely as announced by the Virgin Mary in 1918, the night of Tuesday, the 2nd of April 1968, at 8:30 in the evening, several non-Christian laborers were working when they noticed a young woman dressed in white in front of the cross on the dome of the church. Some women who were passing by also saw the same things. Thinking that it was a woman attempting suicide, one of the workmen shouted to her to stop herself. The woman then got up. Everyone saw her luminous dress, similar to the garment worn by the Virgin Mary. One of the pedestrians recognized her and emitted a cry of joy saying 'Settina Marian,' which means 'Our Lady, Mary.' The woman asked for a blessing from the Most Holy Virgin. One of the first miracles was that of the worker who had shouted to the Blessed Mother to not throw herself down; he had a finger bandaged that the medical physicians needed to amputate. When they unwrapped the bandage to operate on him, the doctors certified the complete healing of the finger. The apparitions were repeated and always a greater number of people gathered at the site where the Madonna had appeared: Jews, Muslims, Catholics, and Atheists. Several witnesses had described the events in a very detailed way: "In the evening sky appeared several 'spiritual figures' similar to white doves that quickly flew over the church. A few moments later appeared a luminous cloud, of a vague shape and imprecise dimension which, while altering itself, assumed the features of a human silhouette, from its feminine contours." According to the declaration of a high Coptic prelate and of several witnesses, the image was so radiant that it was almost impossible to see even with eyes half-closed. The event lasted almost two hours. On evenings that followed, the apparitions repeated themselves in front of an always greater number of people, even in the presence of an ecclesiastical commission requested by the Orthodox Patriarch, the Pope of Alexandria, Kyrillos VI, leader of the Christian Copts of Egypt. On those occasions the images of the Virgin appeared more delineated, as she had to declare Athanasios the Archbishop. There were, among others, registered cases of sudden healings by sick people who were deemed incurable, according to what was affirmed by a member of the commission, Orthodox Patriarch Gheorghiu. From the 2nd of April the phenomenon intensified, making more than 60 apparitions recorded, supported by over 100,000 direct witnesses. In particular, on the 28th of May in 1968 at one o'clock in the morning, in front of a crowd of about 10,000 people appeared, upon the cross placed on top of the church facade, a luminous cloud portraying the Virgin, with a flock of pure white birds that flew around her. One unusual fact that had accompanied the events of Zeitun was that, despite all of the people present, both Egyptians and foreigners, equipped with photographic cameras, only one was able to immortalize the peculiar apparitions: the local photographer, Waghib Ziz. The young man, unlike his colleagues who were outfitted with more modern equipment, he was able—with his old photographic plate camera—to document the luminous figures on two occasions. The exceptional nature of his pictures is also given by the fact that Waghib had a minor handicap: to one arm, having remained rigid after an automobile accident that happened the year before. Extremely emotionally moved, the young man positioned the tripod of his camera upon a little terrace and as soon as the luminous cloud appeared, he shot the first photograph. While he was concentrated on changing the plate in order to take another shot, Waghib ascertained with great surprise that his stiff arm now moved easily. He had not asked the Virgin for a favor; he wanted only to be able to resapture her with his camera, and the attempt had a successful resolution. The following month, from the same post, Waghib shot other photos in which were imprinted both the figure of the Virgin and the "mysterious doves." The events of Zeitun ceased in 1970.

The Christian Coptic Church of Egypt, as a result, officially confirmed the magnificent and miraculous nature of the apparitions of Zeitun. After five years passed, an international private team, conducted by Dennis Filichis, the overseer of a research organization, effected and published an accurate investigation of value with a relevant report. On the 5th of May 1968, the Coptic Orthodox patriarchal authority, Kyrillos VI, officially recognized the apparitions of Zeitun, near Cairo. The Bishops and the priests of the commission of inquest that was instituted by Kyrillos VI have also authenticated with facility the statements of witness testimony collected, seeing that they themselves were given the opportunity to be present at the apparitions, as were a great number of the faithful. The official declaration of Kyrillos VI on the 5th of May 1968 was made public through the principle press organizations for Egyptian and foreign information: "The Papal Residence declares with full faith and great joy and humility of a thankful heart toward Almighty God, that the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared various times in clear and stable forms, over the course of many nights and for periods of variable length, and even lasting for more than two hours, from the 2nd of April 1968, up until now, on top of the Coptic Church of Zeitun, a district in Cairo, found on the road to El-Matarya, Cairo, which is on the path taken by the Holy Family when they fled into Egypt."

There were very many miracles of healing thanks to the intercession of the Blessed Mother of Zeitun: cancers, blindness, muteness, deafness, paralyzed limbs cured. The Pontifical committee has in its possession a long list compiled by medical physicians. Reported here in particular is the healing of a poor mother near the end of her life, afflicted by a cancer in her neck which was cured by the Blessed Mother of Zeitun: "O God! How this lady cried! She was practically a river of tears! She was crying bitterly near the altar, and she continued to cry from her heart after all the others had gone away. And so, I approached her and asked what was wrong. She replied that she was sad that the Madonna did not help her. She said that the Virgin healed so many people, but left her with this malignant tumor in her neck... Always in tears, the woman continued saying: 'My children need me, and the doctors say I only have 40 more days to live.' I reassured her and encouraged her to pray with faith that night, and to supplicate the help of the Virgin so that she would surely have come to help. Then, I anointed her with Holy Oil. That night, the woman prayed with fervor and with insistence, imploring the Madonna to help her. She fell asleep in tears. The Virgin appeared to her in a dream and, with a loving tone and full of mercy, reassured her saying to her: "Be not afraid, I am healing you." The Virgin touched the neck of the woman with her hand and extracted the malignant tumor that she placed upon a dresser in the woman's room... The following day, the lady rushed to the church, radiant with felicity, with the tumor wrapped in a handkerchief she carried in her hand..."

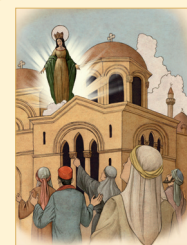
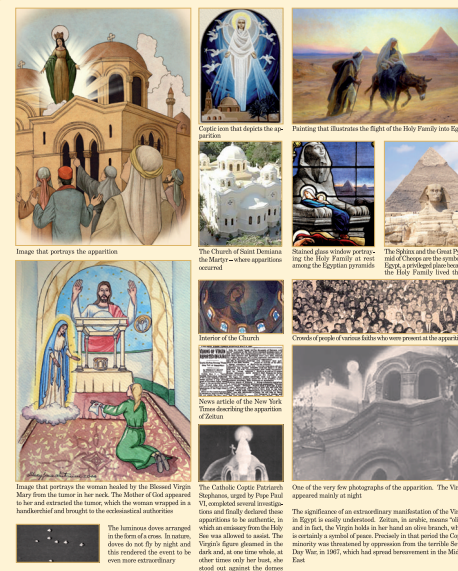


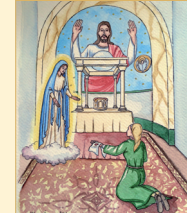
Image that portrays the apparition



The Church of Saint Demetrius the Martyr—where apparitions occurred



Painting that illustrates the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt



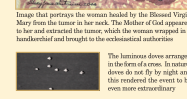
The Church of the Christ



Statue of the Virgin Mary



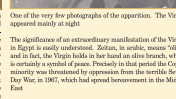
The Sphinx and the Great Pyramid of Cheops on the occasion of Egypt's 40th anniversary



The luminous dove arranged in the form of a cross. In matters down do not. On by night and this rendered the event to be even more extraordinary



The Catholic Coptic Patriarch



One of the very few photographs of the apparition. The Virgin appeared mainly at night

Photo: A. Rossi