



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

Apparition of the Virgin Mary at BOCCADIRIO



ITALY, 1480



Two children of Baragazza, a town about 30 km from Bologna, ten-year old Cornelia Vangelisti and younger Donato Nutini, gathered in prayer while in the pasture. One day the Mother of God appeared to them to communicate an important message.

It was July 16, 1480 when Donato and Cornelia, about seven and ten years old, were leading their sheep to the pasture near the "mouth of the Davena River". They began to pray and suddenly saw a Lady with a child in her arms, whom they immediately recognized to be the Virgin Mary, who announced to them: "You, Donato will become a priest and you, Cornelia will become a nun. I desire that in this place be built a church in my honor and I promise protection and graces to those who will come here to pray to me". Besides the grace of the vocation for the two visionaries, a gift of primary importance, the white Lady brought another message that concerned also the other people. In fact the Lady asked the two children to make known to the inhabitants of Baragazza her desire to be venerated in that place, and for this she promised protection and graces. "I am the Mother of God, descended from Heaven for your consolation and for those who will want to listen to my words!" The two children returned to their homes and recounted to everyone with great joy the apparition and the words they heard in Boccadirio. After an initial and natural moment of uncertainty, the people of Baragazza believed their simple and innocent story. Immediately they began to build a "small church" dedicated to the Virgin of Graces in the place where Our Lady had spoken to the two children. It is interesting to note how since the beginning, at Boccadirio Our Lady was venerated and invoked as Virgin of Graces. Always more numerous pilgrims and devotees hastened to her, with their human burden of misery and hope, and around the small church, gradually grew the elaborate architectural complex that today is the Shrine of Boccadirio. And it is just like this for more than five hundred years. The numerous graces are testified by moving and simple votive offerings hung on the walls of the church. The apparition of the Virgin Mary is closely related to the vocation of the two visionaries; indeed the call of the Virgin Mary had timely fulfillment for both young people, as it had been prophetically announced to them: "You will be a priest and you will be a nun". Donato Nutini, ordained a priest, was for some time chaplain in Castiglione dei Pepoli and afterwards, from 1531 to 1548, the year of his death, he was pastor at San Pietro in Cirignano near Barberino, as it is shown in the archives of the Episcopal Curia of Florence. Regarding Cornelia, the "letter" of an anonymous fellow sister recounts that she was led by her relatives to various places in Tuscany, in the search for the monastery indicated to her by the Virgin Mary in the apparition. She finally arrived at "the monastery of the nuns of Santa Caterina in Porta Leone", where she put on the religious habit with the name of Sister Brigida, and she was an example of every perfection. The monastery of Santa Caterina in Porta Leone was enlarged and completed a few years later, and Sister Brigida herself, having become superior of her community, directed it with exceptional wisdom for more than 40 years, dying at about 74 years, precisely in 1543. For this in the Shrine of Boccadirio the Virgin Mary is invoked also with the title "Our Lady of Vocations". Pope Pius XII called Mary "Mother of Priests" precisely in the address given for the beatification of Blessed Antonio Maria Pucci, the Holy Curate of Viareggio, who felt called to become a priest while praying in front of Our Lady of Boccadirio. Like him there are many priests who owe their vocation to Our Lady of Boccadirio.



Representation illustrating the apparition



View of the Shrine among the rugged hills



Interior of the Shrine



Hall of the votive offerings



Miraculous image by Andrea della Robbia, donated to the Shrine as a gift by the visionary Cornelia, who then became Sister Brigida