



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

Apparition of the Virgin Mary in MONTEFORTINO



ITALY, 1000



Set in a large gorge in the heart of the Sibillini Mountains between sloping forests and steep rocky walls, entirely immersed in silence and isolated between the mountains, sits the enchanting **Shrine of Our Lady of Ambro**. Situated on the slopes of Mount Priora and Mount Castel Manardo, the shrine is the oldest one in the Italian province of Le Marche and after Loreto, the most important and most visited Marian place. Every year it is the destination of millions of pilgrims, who not only increase in numbers, but they stay to visit this place in worship to give homage to the Virgin Mary. The shrine gets its name from the nearby Ambro River, which flows from the Tenna River that runs right next to it and during the hot summer days it gives off a pleasant feeling of freshness. It is also called the **"Little Lourdes of the Sibillini Mountains"** because of its similarity to the river in France and the "coincidences" that link them in some ways. Lourdes is in the Pyrenees Mountains and Ambro is in the Sibillini Mountains; the Gave River runs next to Lourdes and the Ambro River runs next to this shrine; In Lourdes the Virgin appeared to a little girl named Bernadette and in Ambro the Virgin appeared to a little girl named Santina. Also, the rock that frames the area, almost recreates the same atmosphere of the grotto where the Virgin Mary appeared to little Bernadette Soubirou. Located in the hollow of a beech tree there was an image of Our Lady and one day, a shepheress named Santina, deaf and mute from birth, was leading her herd to pasture in this area and as usual she would bring Mary some flowers that she collected along the way. One day in the month of May, the year 1000, the Virgin appeared to her on this sacred rock surrounded by a splendid light and in exchange for her prayers and wild flowers that the little girl always brought to her in homage, she gave her the gift of speech. The story described above can be read on a commemorative plaque granted by Father Federico da Mogliano and posted inside a chapel engraved as follows: **"In May, 1000, the most holy Virgin, surrounded by extraordinary splendor, appeared on this sacred rock to the humble shepheress Santina, mute from birth. The young girl received the gift of speech in reward for the prayers and offerings of wild flowers that she gave every day to the image of Our Lady on the hollow of a beech tree..."**

Since the beginning of the XI century, the small Church of Saint Mary in Amaro or Saint Mary of Steterano was built on this sacred place of the apparition and entrusted to the Benedictines of the nearby Abby of Saint Vincent and Anastasio, embellished and decorated with many fine donations from the friars and feudal lords of the area. It later went under the jurisdiction of Fermo and its archbishop, Felice Peretti who later became Pope Sisto V, who ordered the canon laws of the Cathedral of Fermo to send a permanent chaplain. In the beginning of the 1600s the Church of Saint Mary in Amaro became too small and worn down over time and thus it was ready for the construction of a bigger and newer building. The job was entrusted to architect Ventura Venturi of the Holy House of Loreto, who was in charge of designing the church, the current shrine as it appears today, which incorporated the original church within the interior with 6 side by side chapels located along the nave. Central to the devotion is the miraculous image of Our Lady, a classic work from the XV century, sculpted in stone and colored with oil. Our Majestic Lady is smiling and seated on a golden throne and to the side kneeling is the blessed Child. Because of the great devotion to this worshiped image, a symbol of miracles and graces, the Vatican Capital decreed the coronation on April 23, 1922 in which the celebration took place on August 9, 1925. The feast day, celebrated with a festival, takes place on August 15. The first Sunday in September there is a distinctive offering of "baskets of wheat" and a procession of a praiseworthy wooden crucifix that was donated by the sanctuary of Pope Pius XI in 1933. Since 1890 the shrine has been run by the Order of Capuchin Friars Minor and still today they are attentive and considerate custodians.



Depiction of the apparition



The miraculous image to which little Santina brought flowers every day



Inside the shrine



The Shrine of Our Lady of Ambro



Detail of the frescoes on the ceiling



Frescoes on the life of Our Lady adorn the shrine



The Sibillini Mountains offer enchanting views. The Sibillini Mountain chain gets its name from a legend that says that in ancient times a Sybil, a figure of classic antiquity that had divine powers, used to live in the mountains

