



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

# Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in CORDOBA

SPAIN, 1420



Corboda celebrates on the 8th of September the Feast Day of its Patroness, Our Lady of the Holy Font. The origin of the devotion to the statue of the Virgin of the Holy Fountain seems to be contemporary to the moment of the apparition. According to tradition, around the year 1420 (during the reign of Juan II), in the village of San Lorenzo, there lived a wool-comber who was called Gonzalo Garcia. This man was very worried about the misfortune that afflicted him: his wife was paralyzed and his only child suffered from dementia. One day, to escape for a while from this burdensome situation, he decided to take a walk in the nearby surroundings. After having passed the walls of the gateway of Baeza, he headed towards a brook which flowed not too far away. There, he encountered a young man and two young ladies, one of whom told him to take some of the water from a nearby font, and to bring it home to have his wife and daughter drink it in order to heal them. The woman who spoke was the Virgin Mary, accompanied by Saint Acisclo and Saint Victoria. Right after having pronounced these words, the young lady mysteriously disappeared together with the other two youths and Gonzale went to a potter nearby to purchase a vessel for the water. After having filled it he returned home and had his wife and daughter drink it, and they were healed immediately. After this event, the water from the font began to be considered miraculous by the inhabitants of the area and many people went there in pilgrimage to cure their own maladies. About twenty years later, probably in 1442, a hermit from Albaida, seriously ill, came to know of the miraculous powers of the water from this font, and he decided to try it. After having received the miracle and having been healed, the hermit raised his prayers to the Virgin and one day (precisely, the 8th of September) he heard a voice that invited him to go to the font where, in the interior of a tree near it (precisely, a wild fig tree), he would have found an image of the Virgin hidden in that spot by Christians from the time of the Muslim conquest. Having heard these words, the hermit went to the tree, he knocked it down and found within it the image of Our Lady of the Holy Font which was given that name in memory of the miraculous font where she appeared. Several years later, toward the middle of the century, the construction of a Shrine in the Gothic style was begun to house the image of the Virgin. The church was built near the place of the apparition and above the "holy" font was erected a little shrine, also Gothic, that we can still admire today. This Shrine is a pilgrimage destination and a favorite place of devotion for many inhabitants of Cordoba who come to drink the water that can heal their maladies and, in thanksgiving for the healing, where they hang on the walls of the church their numerous *ex voto* offerings.

Among these *ex voto* stands out an embalmed alligator, that was the protagonist of another story associated with this place. Because of the overflow of the river Guadalquivir, the alligator got all the up to Cordoba and was terrorizing the townspeople, until one day a gimp, invoking the help of the Virgin Mary of the Holy Font, succeeded with shrewdness in killing it with one of his crutches. Among the many modifications that the Shrine underwent in 1641, it is worth noting the one regarding the current facade of the church. The church was flooded on different occasions during the cresting of the river that, until about 150 years ago, would flow much closer to the edifice compared to today; as testimony of these inundations remain several ornamental tiles near the little well (where the miraculous water is collected), which indicate the level of water during the floods.



The Blessed Mother appears with Saint Acisclo and Saint Victoria to Gonzalo Garcia



The Shrine of the Virgin of the Holy Font



Interior of the Shrine



Ceramic tile artwork which illustrates the apparition



The Virgin of the Holy Font



Particular characteristic of the Shrine



Virgin of the Holy Font carried in procession



Saint Acisclo and Saint Victoria appeared with the Blessed Mother to Gonzalo Garcia



Ex voto, religious offerings given in thanksgiving for answered prayers