



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

# Apparitions of the Virgin Mary at BÉTHARRAM



FRANCE, about the XVII Century

The Marian Shrine of Betharram is located about fifteen kilometers from Lourdes, on the bank of the same Gave River where in 1858, Saint Bernadette Soubirou, the visionary of Lourdes, had the apparitions of the Virgin Mary near the Grotto of Massabielle. Bernadette often visited Betharram and went there on pilgrimage also to thank Our Lady for the graces she received at Lourdes. At Betharram, Saint Michael Garicoits founded the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram (officially approved in 1841) and was able to restore the Shrine, in a miserable condition after the French Revolution. According to an ancient tradition, the origins of the Shrine date back to the XI Century, when under the vision of Saint Bernard, centers of Marian faith and devotion were established throughout Europe. Betharram became one of the main stops for the pilgrims who, from France and from all of Europe, traveled towards the Shrine of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. The Virgin of Betharram became very famous also for a copious number of miracles and healings attributed to her through the centuries. The first documented marvel dates back to around the beginning of the XI Century. One day some shepherds were leading their flock to pasture on the banks of the Gave River, when suddenly their attention was attracted by a very bright light that was coming from some rocks at the shore of the river. Upon hurrying to the place, they found themselves in front of a small statue of the Virgin Mary. After being informed of the discovery, the inhabitants of Lestelle Betharram immediately built a small niche on the opposite bank of the Gave to hold the statue. But every time they tried to move there the small statue of Our Lady, it miraculously returned to the other bank of the Gave, to the place where it had been found. Thus they understood that Mary wanted to remain at the original place. It was in this way that, according to popular tradition, the first small Marian chapel of Betharram arose. The second miracle dates back to 1616. Some farmers of the village of Montaut were resting after a long day of work in the fields. Suddenly they noticed the rising of a strong wind that violently devastated the hill adjacent to Betharram, on which had been planted a large wooden cross that fell to the ground. A few moments later the farmers saw the same cross lift itself up, surrounded by a halo of light. The news spread rapidly and in the following days an immense crowd of pilgrims began to rush to the place of the miracle. Thus in 1623 the first Calvary of Betharram was inaugurated. Initially in this place the Virgin shall be invoked with the name of Our Lady of Calvary and in a short time it will become the second place of pilgrimage of the kingdom. For example, the Archbishop of Paris, Pierre de Marca, collected the documentation of about eighty-two miracles that occurred between 1620 and 1642 thanks to Our Lady of Calvary of Betharram: blind, lame, and lepers were liberated from their affliction. It was thanks to one of these miracles that Our Lady of Calvary began to be invoked with the name of Our Lady of Betharram. The chronicles recount that a young girl, attracted by a particularly beautiful flower that blossomed on the bank of the Gave River, leaned forward to pick it and she fell in the swirling water. The waves were about to submerge her when she desperately invoked Our Lady of Calvary of Betharram. Suddenly in front of her she saw appearing a branch that the same Virgin Mary in person held out so she could cling to it. As a sign of gratitude for this miraculous rescue, the girl wanted to give to the Virgin a beautiful golden branch, that in the local dialect is actually called Betharram.



Miracle of the finding of the statue of Our Lady



Depiction of the girl, who during an excursion, separated herself from the other children to pick some flowers on the bank of the Gave torrent. She wanted to give them in homage to Our Lady, but she fell in the river and was saved by the miraculous intervention of the Virgin Mary herself!



which was approved in 1841. He was the only person who immediately believed in the supernatural reality of the apparitions of Lourdes. To those who argued to him that Lourdes would have marked the end of the Shrine of Betharram, he answered: "Why does it matter? As long as the Most Holy Virgin is honored". He went many times on pilgrimage to Massabielle. In 1853 he became ill and began a calvary of sufferings lasting 10 years; he died in 1863 and was proclaimed Saint in 1947.



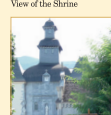
View of the Shrine



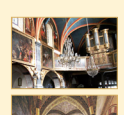
River where the girl fell



Our Lady of Betharram



Stained glass window illustrating some people meticulously beset by the Virgin



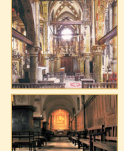
Interior views of the Shrine



Illustration of the miracle of the cross that lifted itself up, surrounded by a halo of light



Stained glass window illustrating some people meticulously beset by the Virgin



Interior views of the Shrine