



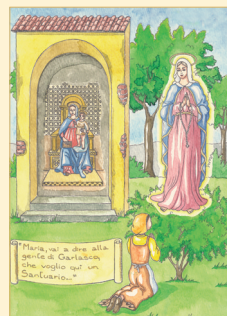
THE APPEALS
OF OUR LADY
APPARITIONS
AND
MARIAN SHRINES
IN THE WORLD

Apparition of the Blessed Mother in GARLASCO



ITALY, 1462

The construction of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Thornbush is indebted to the apparition of the Blessed Mother which occurred in Garlasco in 1462. It is located about a kilometer from Garlasco, a place that was formerly covered by bushes of hawthorns that in dialect were called "bossi," or "büsion," from which is derived the name "bozzola." In the middle of this thicket rose a little chapel, upon which was painted the image of the Blessed Mother seated on a pulpit with the Child Jesus, upright on her knees, and with a book in His right hand. In this area, a young thirteen year-old girl by the name of Maria Benedetta was usually accompanying to pasture the little herd that was entrusted to her. Of her childhood she vaguely remembered, like a bad dream, images of soldiers on horseback, with swords drawn from their sheathes and images of her family slaughtered in front of her eyes: both of her parents and her brother Ludovico. That day of bloodshed and the terror she endured rendered her mute. The pastor of the village, Fr. Andrea Guazzoni, took care of the little orphan and brought her far from the place of the massacre, entrusting her to the care of a new family. On an unknown day in the summer of 1462, Maria Benedetta was bringing her flock to graze in the vicinity of that chapel, when suddenly the sky darkened as it would when a storm is about to begin. The lightning began to strike frequently and the thunder was deafening. The frightened animals dispersed into the clearing, and the scared young girl sought refuge under the little roof of the chapel. Maria Benedetta turned her gaze upon the image of the Virgin to ask for her protection and help. All at once the weather calmed and the sky became serene. Suddenly the image of the painted Madonna on the wall came to life and approached the young girl in a maternal fashion with these words: **"Maria Benedetta, go and tell the people of Garlasco that I desire a Shrine here for the protection of all the Lomellina area."** The intense emotion and joy of the young girl, who in the meantime understood she had been healed, was at a high point and she quickly ran to inform the townspeople. The miraculous healing immediately provoked the interest of the religious and civil authorities and the enthusiasm of the people of Garlasco and the nearby towns, who quickly put themselves to work on the construction of a shrine. The young shepherdess, Maria Benedetta, then embraced the religious life as a cloistered nun, retreating into a convent of sisters in the Cascina Veronica, near the Terdoppio river. The initial construction, begun only a few months after the event, corresponds to the present-day presbytery and to the space underneath the dome of the current Shrine. The high altar is drawn out by utilizing the antique chapel, conserving the intact fresco which portrays the Virgin. Many numerous ex-voto give testimony, sometimes in a naive but very moving way, to the recognition of the Virgin by many of the devout in this past 600 years of history. In 1927 the Shrine was admitted as a Minor Basilica to the Vatican Basilica, and on the 8th of September in 1931, while the 15th Centenary (1500 year Anniversary) of the Council of Ephesus was being celebrated (in which the Divine Maternity of Mary, Mother of God, was defined as dogma), the image of the Madonna and Child were solemnly incoronated.



View of the Shrine



Interior of the Shrine

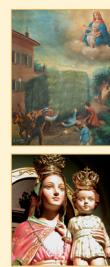


Statue that portrays the apparition

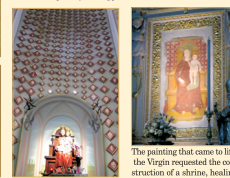
A thirteen-year-old girl from Garlasco by the name of Maria, who had lost her ability to speak during the slaughter of her whole family by the hand of a group of soldiers, had brought her animals to graze amongst the oak trees and hawthorn bushes. Around noon, seeing the sky darken, she thought a thunderstorm was coming and she took shelter in a chapel with an image of the Virgin. The painting unexpectedly came to life and the Virgin Mary appeared to her in person.



Series of votive paintings



Our Lady of the Thornbush



Ex-voto, religious offerings as thanks for answered prayers

The painting that came to life: the Virgin requested the construction of a shrine, healing the mute young visionary