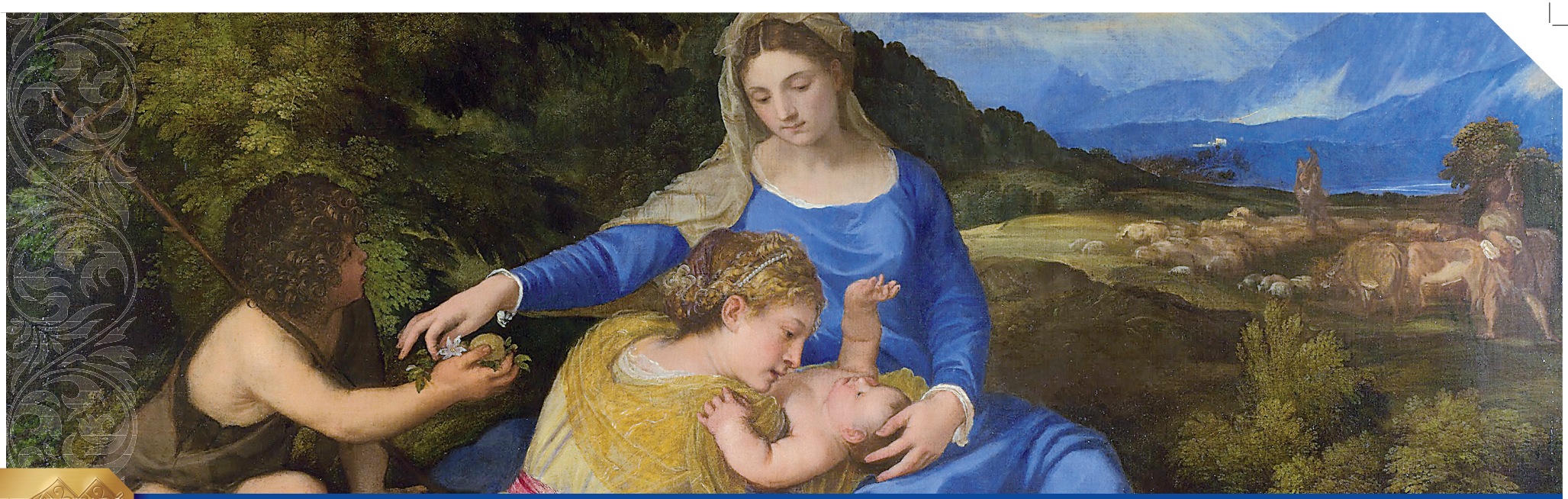

THE APPEALS OF OUR LADY
APPARITIONS AND MARIAN SHRINES IN THE WORLD

Apparition of the Virgin Mary at CHAMPION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 1859

On October 9, 1859, the Queen of Heaven manifested herself to Adele Brise at Champion (Robinsonville), in Wisconsin, USA. According to Sister Pauline LaPlant, to whom Adele had often told her story: "She [Adele] was going to the mill, at about five miles from here [Champion] with a sack of grain on her head […]. When Adele had almost arrived, she saw a lady all dressed in white behind two trees, a maple and a fir. Adele was frightened and remained still. The vision disappeared slowly, leaving a white cloud behind it. Adele continued her walk and returned home without seeing anything else. She recounted what happened to her parents and they asked themselves what it could have been, perhaps a soul in distress who had need of prayers? The following Sunday, she had to pass again by the same spot to go to Mass at Bay Settlement, at about eleven miles from her house […]. This time she was not alone but accompanied by her sister Isabel and by a neighbor [Mrs. Vander Niessen]. When they were near the trees, the same lady dressed in white was in the spot where Adele had seen her the first time. Adele was again frightened and said, almost in a tone of reproach: **"Oh, here is again that Lady"**. Adele did not have the courage to continue, The other two did not see anything but, from the look of Adele, understood that she was frightened. They too thought that it could have been a soul in distress needy of prayers. They waited for a few minutes until Adele told them that she had disappeared. She had disappeared like the first time and all that she could see was haze or a white cloud. After the Mass, Adele went to confess and told her confessor how much she was frightened at the sight of the Lady in white. He [Father William Verhoef] encouraged her not to have fear and to talk to him about this phenomenon outside the confessional. Father Verhoef told her that if it was a heavenly messenger, she would have seen her again and she would not have harmed her; however, she should have asked her, in the name of God, who she was and what she wanted from her. At this point Adele felt relieved. She started towards home with her two traveling companions and with a man who had to level the land for the Brothers of the Holy Cross at Bay Settlement. As they were approaching the sacred place, Adele saw the beautiful lady, clothed in dazzling white, with a yellow band around her waist. The dress reached her feet in elegant folds. She had a crown of stars around her head and long golden hair fell loosely on her shoulders. She was surrounded by a light so bright that Adele had difficulty looking at her sweet face. Overwhelmed by this heavenly light and by the beauty of her lovely lady visitor, Adele knelt. **"In the name of God, who are you and what do you want from me"**, asked Adele as she had been told to do. **"I am the Queen of Heaven who prays for the conversion of sinners and I desire that you do the same. You have received Holy Communion this morning and this is good but you must do more. Make a general confession and offer the Communion for the conversion of sinners. If they do not convert and do not do penance, my Son will be forced to punish them"**. **"Adele, who is she?"**, asked one of the women. **"Why can't we see her like you?"**, said another one crying. **"Kneel"**, said Adele, **"The Lady says to be the Queen of Heaven"**. Our Blessed Lady turned around, looked at them and said: **"Blessed are those who believe without seeing. What do you do here in idleness while your companions work in the vineyard of my Son?"**. **"What else can I do, beloved Lady?"**, asked Adele crying. **"Gather the children of this wild place and teach them what they should know to be saved"**. **"How can I teach them what I myself know so little?"**, replied Adele. "Teach them catechism, how to make the Sign of the Cross and how to prepare for the Sacraments; it is this what I desire that you do", replied the Lady. **"Go and do not fear anything. I will help you"**. Then the manifestation of Our Lady raised her hands to Heaven, as to implore the blessing for those who were at her feet, and she slowly vanished, leaving Adele overwhelmed and prostrated to the ground. When the news spread about the apparition of the Blessed Virgin to Adele Brise, the majority of the people believed the story and were amazed. Some considered the event as the illusion of an insane. However, Adele considered it like a mission, that of catechizing the children and admonishing the sinners of Bay Settlement. To honor the presumed apparition, Adele's father built a rustic chapel near the spot of the vision of Adele.

In 2009, the Most Reverend David L. Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay, opened a formal ecclesiastical inquiry on the Marian apparitions that occurred in 1859 where there is the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help. On Wednesday, December 8, 2010, the day of the Immaculate Conception, Bishop Ricken granted the official approval of the Church to the Marian apparitions that took place in the month of October at Champion, in Wisconsin. Reading the decree, the bishop declared: "I declare with moral certainty and in conformity with the norms of the Church that the events, the apparitions and the locutions revealed to Adele Brise in October of 1859 confirm the substance of their supernatural nature and with this decree I approve these apparitions as worthy of faith (although not mandatory) on the part of faithful Christians". This declaration makes the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help the first and only Marian shrine in the United States located at the place of an approved apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Image depicting the apparition

View of the Shrine

Faithful gathered in prayer in the Shrine

Adele Brise

Adele and her fellow sisters together with their students

Interior of the Shrine

Statue of the Virgin present inside the Shrine

The tomb where lies Adele Brise

Still today the nuns of Sister Adele are involved in teaching children

Procession of the Our Lady of Champion, Our Lady of Good Help

Remaining wood of the tree where the Virgin Mary appeared to Adele

The beautiful bay of Green Bay, where Champion is located

View of the countryside around the Shrine of Champion

THE FIRE OF PESHTIGO - MIRACULOUS PRESERVATION

Much was written about the great fire of Peshtigo which caused the death of about 2500 people; a fire 10 times larger than the Chicago fire that occurred on the same day. However, it is our intention to show how this tragedy had an important role in the events that occurred in Champion. At the beginning of the month of October of 1859, Adele Brise received the first visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The following Sunday, October 9, when the Blessed Mother appeared to Adele for the first time, she said to her: "If they do not convert and do not do penance, my Son will be forced to punish them".

It is not our intention to express judgment on the causes of this catastrophe but, one day, 12 years after the apparition of Champion, on October 8, 1871, the great calamity struck and from the tragedy a miracle came forth. The Belgian settlement that encompassed a large part of the peninsula and included Champion, was struck by the same whirl of fire and wind that devastated Peshtigo. When the fire tornado approached Robinsonville (Champion), Sister Adele and her fellow sisters were determined not to abandon the chapel. Surrounded by the inferno, the sisters, the children, the farmers of the area and their families take refuge in the Shrine. When the wind and the fire threatened to suffocate them, they turned towards another direction to hope and pray, with the Rosary. A few hours later, the rain fell in bursts as in a storm that dampened the fury of the fire outside the chapel. The area of Robinsonville was destroyed and desolate … with the exception of the convent, the school, the chapel, and the five acres of land dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Although the fire had destroyed the fence of the chapel, it could not enter inside. The ones who were gathered in the chapel, aware of having witnessed a miracle, retreated into the convent at the request of Sister Adele, where they lodged better for the rest of the night. Moreover, the only heads of livestock that survived the fire were the animals brought to the chapel by the farmers and their families who came to the Shrine seeking shelter from the fire. Although the chapel's well was only a few meters deep, it provided the animals all the water that they needed to survive the fire while many deep wells of the area had dried up. This is why the well of the chapel is sometimes called the "well of miracles".

In the days following the great fire, the poor Belgian pioneers did not need anymore proof to understand that Mary's visit to Sister Adele was real. Father Peter Pernin, known as the "hero of the Peshtigo Fire", visited Sister Adele a little after the catastrophe, and wrote: "I do not have the intention to express a judgment on the apparition of the Blessed Virgin nor on the pious pilgrimages that derive from it. The ecclesiastical authority has not spoken yet on the matter; it silently allows that the work continue, perhaps awaiting more evident and irrefutable proofs before pronouncing its verdict. Far from me is the idea to anticipate the ecclesiastical judgment. However I would like to add one thing. If it were possible for my readers to go to the place and visit this humble destination of pilgrimage which, although still at the beginning, I believe is the only one of this type in the United States, in all honesty I suggest them to do it. Here they can meet and interview Adele Brise, who without having wanted, is the soul and heroine of a pious work evolving in great strides day after day. And I am sure that, like me, those who will go there armed with good intentions will return edified and overflowing with joy, if not even convinced in the truthfulness of the apparition of Our Lady".

The fire of Peshtigo did not devastate the chapel of Champion, being one of the largest in the history of the United States

The map made by Frank Tilton in his book "Great Fires in Wisconsin", 1871

Wood that remained intact in the fire

STORIES OF MIRACLES

Numerous were the graces and the miracles that occurred in the chapel. In the Shrine are seen many crutches left through the centuries by people miraculously healed.

In 1954 a man who was wearing an hearing aid approached a woman who was reciting the Rosary for a group of people during the procession for the Feast of the Assumption. After asking her at what point of the Rosary the group had arrived, the man returned to his place. At about halfway through the procession, the man removed his hearing aid. Before entering the chapel, the woman stopped and said: **"Thank you for having recited the Rosary with us"**. The man answered **"Thanks to you and to God! Now I can hear!"**

The same woman told of an instantaneous healing to which she witnessed at the time of Adele, when the woman was a student at the school of the chapel. A mother had brought her blind boy to the chapel for the novena. During the prayers of the rosary, the blind boy shouted the name of his mother, pointing in various directions and yelling **"Look mom! Look, look mom!"** The boy was seeing.

Another example: a five year-old girl, niece of Sister Margaret and Sister Addie, was kicked in the face by a horse. When her mother saw the lifeless and bleeding body of her daughter, she immediately promised to undertake a pilgrimage of 12 miles on foot towards the chapel. Immediately afterwards the girl's body stopped bleeding, and after a subsequent visit, it was determined that the girl did not have internal wounds or physical consequences. The girl became a nun in Wisconsin for many years and her family was always grateful for the special protection of Mary.

Michael LaFond, nine years old, fell from a hayloft, and was left crippled. Four years later, nine women recited a novena at the chapel with Michael. After the third visit, Michael recovered and left the crutches at the chapel.

A three-year old girl had an open wound for which she was receiving medical treatments for a long time. After a novena at the chapel, the wound healed.

A five-year old boy could not walk. His mother promised to visit the chapel, which was 16 miles from their house. She made the pilgrimage on foot, certain that her prayers would have been heard and, on the way back, she took her child by the hand and told him to walk. The boy, who had never walked before then, was able to walk from that moment on.

An almost blind girl of Bay Settlement had the measles which affected her sight, leaving spots and scales on the pupils of her eyes. After her mother had brought her to the chapel and prayed to the Blessed Virgin, the eyes of the girl healed almost immediately.

A seventeen-year old boy contracted a serious double pneumonia, followed by pleuritis. Soon afterwards, three doctors diagnosed him with tuberculosis and the youth was advised to move west. After a novena in the chapel, his lungs healed. He passed all the military exams, served for 19 months in World War I and lived for a long time in perfect health. He was sure of having been cured through the intercession of Our Lady.

Before giving birth, a young woman contracted a serious kidney infection that kept her bedridden for five weeks. She had fever and suffered a lot. The doctor told her that the conditions of her kidneys would not be improved except after giving birth. Nine people recited a novena for her in the chapel. A few days later, the woman was standing and walking, in perfect health for the whole two months remaining until the birth of her baby. As a sign of gratitude, the parents dedicated the child to the Blessed Virgin

Jim and Martha Nejedlo, miraculously cured by Our Lady of Champion from a very aggressive stage 4 cancer

Jennie Anderson, mother of the boy instantly cured of leukemia as soon as he arrived at the Shrine

Luisa Rizzi - 2010 - 2011