



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

Apparition of the Virgin Mary in S. SALVATORE MONFERRATO



ITALY, 1616

In 1533 a ferocious dispute is ignited over the succession to the title of Marquis of Monferrato between the Duke of Savoy, backed by Francis I, King of France, and the Duke of Mantova, endorsed by Charles V, King of Spain and Emperor. An unarmed people is one that is subjected to the worst consequences of the battles between the strong powers that be, and therefore it harbors a deep hatred towards the occupying armies, because they cause death and devastation. In this atmosphere of war and of rebellion, comes to fruition the attempt of the murder of the Spanish soldier Martino de Nava, saved by direct intervention of the Blessed Mother.

On the 15th of May in 1616, at about noon, a company of Spanish soldiers departed from Valencia to go to Casale Monferrato by way of crossing the hills of San Salvatore. Amongst the soldiers there was Martino de Nava, particularly devoted to the Madonna, and who had with him a Rosary. The day was exceptionally torrid and the soldiers were in search of wells of drinkable water. Martino, having left his weapons at camp, was patrolling the area when he saw a pillar upon which was painted an image of the Blessed Mother: nearby there appeared, almost hidden amongst the foliage, a well without a parapet, almost ten meters deep. The discovery of the water for Martino was like a grace from Heaven, he knelt down to finish the Rosary. He turned again to gaze upon the image of the Madonna on the pillar, then he tried to use the bucket he had with him to draw water. He laid down on the ground when he was attacked, insulted and wounded many times on the arm, so much so that Martino, overpowered, lost a lot of blood, fainted and collapsed. The aggressor, to hide his crime and to avoid the revenge of fellow soldiers a short distance away, threw the soldier into the well. Upon making contact with the cold water, Martino revived, clung to a root of an elm tree, and he called out for help.

Nevertheless, the echo of his voice was lost in the silence. Raising his eyes he saw, in the space of the sky that is opened above the well, the image of the Blessed Mother painted upon the pillar. He then turned to her with faith and begged for help. All of a sudden, on the edge of the well, Martino saw a beautiful Lady who held in her arms a sweet Child, while the water, tinted red with his blood, began to slowly rise, bringing him up to the brim of the well. Martino was surprised: the Lady of celestial countenance held out her hand to him and so did the Child. Martino gazed in ecstasy, first to the Woman, then to the Child, and emerged from the well. He had no words to thank his Benefactress who helped him, holding him up, to return to the bivouac of the soldiers. Sustained by the Lady, Martino joined his fellow soldiers. Several comrades went toward him to assist him while the Lady stopped. Martino and the soldiers thanked the kind Rescuer. Meanwhile the Captain, Don Juan Bravo de Laguna, arrived unexpectedly with some officials and who, having heard the extraordinary occurrence from Martino himself, ordered to give a recompense to the Lady who, however, suddenly vanished. The soldiers were stupefied and were the first to believe the miracle and to talk about it amongst themselves. The Captain immediately had the area patrolled but however meticulous the searches were of the Woman, nothing more was known. Among the people the news quickly spread about the miracle of the "Madonna of the Well."

The Bishop of Pavia, to whom San Salvatore was answerable, instituted proceedings to ascertain the facts: all of the witnesses, and in particular Martino, confirmed under oath exactly what had happened. The Bishop, with the decree of April 2, 1617, recognized the event as miraculous and authorized on that place the erection of a chapel "in honor of the Most Glorious Mother of God."



The Virgin Mary saves Martino de Nava from death



Panoramic view of San Salvatore Monferrato



The Shrine of Our Lady of the Well



Facade of the present day Shrine which replaced the chapel erected in 1617



The Blessed Mother accompanies the wounded soldier



Interior of the Shrine