



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

Apparition of the Virgin Mary in ROME



ITALY, 1842

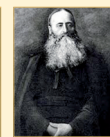
In the year 1830, in the chapel of Rue de Bac in Paris, the apparitions of the Blessed Mother to St. Catherine Labouré occurred. Precisely because of these events, in 1832 the minting of the Miraculous Medal began, a little medal upon which are found an image of the Madonna and a short prayer engraved in her honor. Twelve years later Alphonse Ratisbonne, born to a rich Jewish family of bankers, converted thanks to the Miraculous Medal and to the apparition of the Blessed Mother which occurred in Rome.

Alphonse decided to marry his cousin Flore, but before their wedding he wanted to go to Jerusalem to visit the cradle of his religion. Because of a breakdown of the ship that transported him, he was forced to stop in Rome while waiting for repairs. Here he encountered the baron de Bussières, a fervent Catholic and family friend. Challenging the anticlericalism of Ratisbonne, one evening the baron gave him a Miraculous Medal as a gift. Alphonse accepted to wear it around his neck, to demonstrate the futility of his friend's faith. The morning of January 20th of the same year, he found himself in the horse-drawn carriage of the baron de Bussières, who was going to the church of Saint Andrew of the Thickets for an errand. Even though he would have asserted that he wished to stay on board the carriage to wait for his friend, Alphonse, incited by curiosity, decided to visit the church. Upon entering, Ratisbonne had the experience which changed his life: **"All of a sudden I felt myself taken by a strange turmoil: the church seemed all dark, except for a chapel, as if the light was focused all there... Nevertheless, I raised my eyes towards the light that shined and I saw standing on the altar, alive, grand, majestic, beautiful and of a merciful air, the Holy Virgin Mary, similar in gesture and in stature to the image of the medal which was given to me so that I would wear it... The Virgin said not even one word but I understood perfectly... I felt within me such a total change that I thought I was someone else, a most ardent joy burst in the depth of my soul; I was unable to speak... I could not be accountable for the truths which I obtained: faith and knowledge. All that I can say is that the veil fell from my eyes; not just only one veil, but the whole multitude of veils which had surrounded me disappeared; I came out of an abyss of darkness, I saw in the pit of the abyss the extreme miseries from which I was extracted by means of an infinite mercy; many men calmly descend into this abyss with eyes closed because of pride and indifference... It is asked of me how I came to learn these truths, since it is certain that I never opened one book of religion, I never read a single page of the Gospel... All that I know is that, entering into church, I ignored everything, and exiting it, I saw everything all clear, I did not have a literal knowing but I interpreted the sense and the spirit of the dogmas... All of this occurred within me, and these impressions, a thousand times more rapid than thought, did not just touch my soul, but they directed it toward a new life... the prejudices against Christianity no longer existed, the love of my God had taken the place of every other love."**

Eleven days later he was baptized with the name of Alphonse-Marie, subsequently he decided to become a Jesuit, and on September 24, 1848 he was ordained a priest. In the meanwhile, a court of inquiry was instituted to verify the authenticity of what occurred. After months of depositions and testimonies, Cardinal Patrizi, on June 3rd, 1842, signed a proclamation in which it is recognized as "instantaneous and perfect" the conversion of Alphonse-Marie from Judaism as a result of the apparition.



Painting that depicts the Apparition of the Blessed Mother to Alphonse Ratisbonne



After several years in the Society of Jesus, he understood that his mission was altogether his brother Theodore, who already for years before his conversion was in the Congregation of Notre-Dame of Zion, established by him for the conversion of Jews to Catholicism. With the initials from Pope Pius IX he left the Jesuits and transferred to the Holy Land: here he founded in 1838 the convent "Ecoz Home," with an attached school and orphanage for girls, to which followed the conversion of Saint John in 1860 (belonging to a church and orphanage) and the orphanage for boys dedicated to Saint Peter, with an annexed mechanics school, near the town of Jaffa, in the region of Judea



Church of Saint Andrew of the Thickets in Rome



Ein Karen, Our Lady of Zion, tomb of Alphonse-Marie Ratisbonne, where he died May 6, 1884. Ein Karen is the place which tradition links to the Visitation of Mary to Saint Elizabeth



Interior of the church



Image in the church of the Madonna as she appeared to Alphonse Ratisbonne