



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

# Apparitions of the Virgin Mary at PONTASSIEVE



ITALY, 1484

The Shrine of Our Lady of Graces, also called Our Lady of the Rock, was built following a series of apparitions of the Virgin Mary that took place in 1484. In that year Mary appeared for five times to two shepherd girls who had asked her for the healing of their dying father. During one of the apparitions the Virgin restored the health of the dying man and, at the same time, asked the two shepherd girls "to make known to the city of Florence, to the Clergy and to the People, that their Heavenly Mother invited everyone to return to read and meditate on the Gospel, receiving the Word of God with the dispositions of mind and heart by which she herself received the Word in the Annunciation". Moreover Our Lady ordered the young girls and also their miraculously healed father, Giovanni Ricovera, to invite the authorities to build a church on the Rock, larger than the primitive Oratory already there. The Virgin Mary herself would say: "Here I desire to be venerated and from here I will bestow graces on whoever will request them properly".

The apparitions of Our Lady were several - for her messages, the Virgin preferentially turned to Eletta the older one of the two young Ricovera sisters - but the Shrine commemorates liturgically only five apparitions because they are well documented historically: April 22, June 24, July 2, September 21, December 26.

The two visionaries began immediately to communicate to everyone the desires of the Mother of God: but, although confirmed by the testimony of their healed parent to whom the Virgin had also appeared, they were not listened to sympathetically. The objections to the establishment of the Shrine were however overcome thanks to the so-called "great apparition". In fact on August 22, 1485 the Virgin, carrying in her arms Baby Jesus, showed herself to all the people gathered in prayer with the young Ricovera sisters in front of the Oratory. With a clear voice she confirmed the truthfulness of the messages transmitted by the visionaries and repeated her invitation and her promise to all those present: "Build here a larger church because I desire to be venerated here and from here I will bestow graces on those who, listening to my maternal invitations, will request them in a worthy manner".

In remembrance of the "great apparition", the numerous witnesses, after the church was built, wanted to place under the table of the main altar a piece of the rock on which they saw the Virgin Mary sit. Presently the liturgical and spiritual service is entrusted to the care of the Community of the Children of God, an association founded by Father Divo Barsotti.



Fresco depicting the Virgin Mary appearing to the two sisters



Panoramic view of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rock



Clister of the Shrine



Crypt where the miraculous image of Our Lady is located, and where some votive offerings are preserved



Miraculous image of Our Lady



Interior of the Shrine



View of the Shrine



The Rock on which the Virgin Mary sat



The Virgin Mary would have said to the two young visionaries "to make known to the city of Florence, to the Clergy, and to the People, that their Heavenly Mother invited everyone to return to read and meditate on the Gospel, receiving the Word of God with the dispositions of mind and heart by which she herself received the Word in the Annunciation"