



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

Apparition of the Virgin Mary in PIETRALBA



At the center of one of the most vast and superb panoramas of the Alps, rises the town of Pietralba (Weissenstein, in German), at 1520 meters above sea level, almost at the natural border between Trento and Bolzano; a small town surrounded by beautiful forests, also an oasis wrapped in silence. The most important and most frequented Shrine of the region of Trentino-Alto Adige is located here.

The story of its origins narrates that, toward the middle of the 16th century, a peasant by the name of Leonardo was dwelling in the wooded mountain, where today the Shrine is situated; here he possessed a great homestead and farm, called Weissenstein, in the locality of Nova Ponente. In this vast and quiet solitude, he lived serenely with his family, conducting a virtuous life, even though he was often under the trials of much suffering.

Stricken by a mental illness, he fell into a ravine, where the Virgin appeared to him, promising him a complete healing if he would build a chapel in her honor. She said to him: "So that you will not have any doubt about that which I promise to you, you will remain in this place for nine more days, without food or drink; at the end of the ninth day, family members will find you. You, then, do not forget my words!"

And so it happened. Leonardo, however, quickly forgot the promise and was assailed again by terrible pain with even greater aggressiveness. From that moment, at night a light was seen, always in the same place and no one could explain it. Leonardo remembered everything, again reacquiring his health, and so he put himself quickly to work. Excavating the foundation, he found a little statue of the Madonna portraying the "Pietà." He thought it was a sign from Heaven and, finishing the chapel, he placed it there so that it would be venerated. And it was truly a celestial sign: the Virgin wanted to manifest the great mercy of her Sorrowful Heart and multiplied her graces. This was in 1553. The news spread of these miraculous occurrences, many of the devout, or simply the curious, rushed to prostrate themselves in front of this little statue of the Sorrowful Virgin, which continued to grant her favors. Leonardo, meanwhile, having entrusted the care of his homestead to his children, occupied himself only with the decoration of the chapel until, rich of merits, he died in 1571.

The flood of the pilgrims was such that, already in 1638, in place of the chapel was projected the plan to build the church existing today that, finished in 1654 and consecrated on the 1st of June 1673, was later entrusted to the care of the "Servants of Mary," also for their particular devotion to the Sorrowful Virgin. Those of the Servite Order are (going back to 1718, except for a brief period of wicked 'expropriation and closure' because of the work of the Emperor Joseph II, from 1787 to 1836) meticulous custodians of the Shrine and of its annexed majestic conventual complex: to mark their time, there is the written phrase of the Dominican monk Alberto who designed two solar timepieces on the outside of the Sacristy, accompanying them with the chronogram: "Sorrowful Mother of Christ, full of grace toward penitents, look upon us with benevolence."



Painting that portrays the apparition



The Shrine Shrine is more than 1500 meters in height, in the middle of beautiful forested woods. It dates back to the middle of the 16th. It is linked to the apparition of the Madonna in a ravine by the name of Leonardo Weissenstein and his finding an alabaster statue of the Pietà.



Detail of the facade



Panoramic view around the Shrine



Vault of a nave in the Shrine, fresco painted by A. Mola (1720)



The fresco of the ceiling, painted in 1720 by Adam Mola, having not only artistic value, but more for the content: there is illustrated the significance of the Shrine from the point of view of the piety of the people, of the Marian devotion, and of the local church.



There are vast religious offerings number in the thousands, many of which are of much value. In addition, three long paths lead up to the Shrine, accompanied by the Via Crucis (The Way of the Cross)



Ex-voto - religious offerings given in thanks for graces received



Place where the Blessed Mother appeared



The shrine and a painting of the apparition of the Virgin Mary



The miraculous little statue

