



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

Apparition of the Virgin Mary at GENOVA



ITALY, 1490

The story of the apparition which is at the origin of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Guard has reached us through popular tradition and a "memory" of 1530, written forty years after the mysterious event, that begins like this: "In 1490 Benedetto Pareto, farmer of Livellato, had climbed Mount Figogna to collect hay for his animals. He must have had with him perhaps part of his small flock and also a sickle, which a farmer uses still today to cut the grass at the margins of bushy areas and in narrow places. While he was attending to his work, he suddenly saw in front of him a woman who immediately did not appear to him as of this world, who addressing him in a gentle tone, said: **'Benedetto, come near me and do not fear, for I am the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of Jesus Christ'**. Then she asked Pareto, reassured by the friendly tone in which the mysterious lady visitor had spoken to him, to build a chapel dedicated to her. Benedetto replied that he was ready to do what he had been asked, but his poverty, the labor, Monte Figogna being far from inhabited places... The Virgin exhorted Benedetto Pareto not to be afraid: he would be helped in the endeavor and he would not lack anything. The man promised and the vision disappeared going towards Heaven with a glow and he seemed to see many Angels accompanying her... After returning to the village, Pareto recounted what happened and made known to his wife his intention to immediately begin the construction of the chapel, but the woman dissuaded him and Benedetto forgot his promise. Some time later Benedetto climbed a fig tree, but the branch gave away due to the weight of his body and it snapped. His fall left severe consequences that made him think the worst. Infirm in bed, Benedetto received again a visit of the Virgin Mary who, gently reproaching him, invited him anew to build the chapel, and she healed him immediately. The Virgin encouraged him with these words: **'You will be helped and assisted by everyone for this construction'**. It was in this way that Benedetto Pareto some time later helped by the inhabitants of Livellato and the people of Val Polcevera, who immediately hastened at the news of the apparition, built the first chapel, with great participation and devotion of the people...". The meek figure of Benedetto Pareto is remembered at Livellato in the parish church with frescoes recalling the mysterious "adventure" and the construction of the first chapel on Mount Figogna, that dominates from high over the scattered houses of this unusual village.



Painting depicting the apparition



Benedetto Pareto falls from the tree



This building does not rise on the summit of the mountain like the others, but it is placed on its slopes, in the locality 'Paretto' of Livellato, where tradition claims that the house of Benedetto Pareto was located. This place is reachable by taking the road that in San Bernardo locality branches out from the road that from Bolzaneto climbs to the Shrine. Already in the past centuries, utilizing what remained of the staves that made up the Pareto's house, a small chapel was built containing a plaque in remembrance of the events of 1490. In 1902, next to this first chapel, another one was built octagonal in shape. Its interior has been painted with frescoes in 1985 by the painter Father Francesco Boccardo, with very simple but effective strokes. In the frescoes are depicted scenes of the life of Pareto and images of the more recent history of the Shrine



Benedetto, close to death, is healed by the Virgin Mary



Statue depicting the apparition



Native offering



Present ceiling inside the Shrine



Present ceiling inside the Shrine



The original chapel is a very modest building, of rectangular shape, about 3 meters long and about 4 meters wide



Statue located inside the original small chapel