



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

Apparition of the Virgin Mary in VACCIAGO



ITALY, 1543

The origin of the Shrine of the Bociola in the municipality of Ameno, hamlet of Vacciago, province of Novara, is connected to an episode of the first half of the 1500s, in an age that also saw the emergence of many Shrines. According to what is read in the diary of notary Elias Olina, on Monday the 28th of May 1543, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to a young girl who was mute since birth and lived in Vacciago, in a house that is found still today along a little path just in front of the Shrine. That day she was herding as usual the cattle not too far away, nearby a chapel in which was portrayed the Enthroned Madonna with Child in her arms. All of a sudden she saw blaze between the branches of a wild prune tree (bocciolo in the local dialect) the Madonna with Child. **She spoke to her and said that she very much appreciated her prayers, and that soon she would have welcomed her in Paradise, but first she entrusted a message to her to bring to all of the inhabitants of the place: the Blessed Mother asked them to solemnify in her honor, other than Sundays, the Saturday afternoon; in exchange they would have had from Her a special protection.** To prove the veracity of the promise and the apparition, Giulia Manfredi acquired speech. When she reported to her countrymen that which occurred to her and that which she was ordered, the incredulity was won over by another miracle: suddenly the bells of the church began to ring in celebration without being touched by anyone. The custom of repose on Saturday was introduced, likewise it was rapidly thought to erect a little devotional church right there, where still today a commemorative stone placed in 1852 on the edge of the road that goes from Vacciago to Miasino, that recalls the descent of the Queen of Heaven. The flocking of the faithful and the fame of the place required the construction of a more ample Shrine, in which to incorporate also the image of the Madonna with Child in front of which paused in prayer the little shepherd girl at the moment of the apparition. There were also preserved in a cabinet some fragments of the prune tree upon which appeared the Blessed Mother.

The Shrine grew further in dimension and in beauty during the successive centuries, assuming its current appearance during the course of the 1700s. Since then there were many faithful followers of this place of devotion: among them is even the young Michelangelo Buonarroti who, in 1604, spoke of an "oratory under the title of Saint Mary of the Bociola" in one of his writings. Even the deaf of the area particularly fond of the Shrine, so much that the Deaf Apostolic Movement of Novara and Verbania took the Madonna of the Bociola as their heavenly Patroness.



The Blessed Mother appears to the shepherd girl Giulia Manfredi



The miraculous painting



Fresco present in the Shrine that illustrates the apparition



Frescoes that depict scenes of the Old Testament: in the first, Moses makes water gush from the rocks and in the second the people of Israel give thanks for having been able to cross the Red Sea and flee from the bondage of Egypt



Facade of the Shrine



Shrine of the Madonna of the Bociola



Altar of the Blessed Mother