



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

Apparitions of the Virgin Mary at MONTEFALCO



ITALY, 1861

Fight years after the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854), in the vicinity of Montefalco, in the Archdiocese of Spoleto, the Blessed Virgin chose to appear many times to a five-year old boy, Federico Cionchi commonly called Righetto. One day Righetto was probably playing or pasturing the sheep with his sister Rosa, two years older than him, nearby a small dilapidated church. After entering the church to say a "Hail Mary", they remained among the ruins and Righetto was drawn to an image of Our Lady who was smiling and calling him. Back home, Righetto said to his mother: **"Do you know, mom, inside that place (pointing to the small church) a woman has called me"**, then turning to his sister Rosa: **"Is it true Rosina?"**. Their mother adds: **"And what did she say to you?"**. The Lady told me: **"Righetto, be good!"**. She was looking at me smiling.

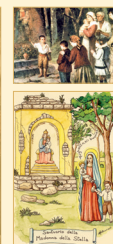
His sister Rosa, not having seen and heard anything, denied everything and the insistence of Righetto led to an argument between them, which ended with the tears of the innocent child. The mother silenced her children and did not believe the words of Righetto, attributing them to children's imagination. That evening everyone quieted down and fell sleep, but that did not prevent Righetto from returning to the little church the next day and the following days, powerfully drawn by a beautiful Lady who called him by name, smiled at him, held him in her arms and said to him very beautiful words.

One day, mother Caterina had gone out early in the morning and left Righetto in bed. When he woke up Righetto did not await the return of his mother to go to the little church, rather after dressing himself for the first time, he ran to the feet of the "beautiful Lady". When mother Caterina returned home, not finding her son, she looked for him everywhere without finding him. While she searched her eyes glanced at the window and she saw him coming back from the church, singing and hopping. After he arrived home mother Caterina gave him a strong reprimand: **"What is this leaving home at an early hour and without permission?"**. To it Righetto replied sorrowfully: **"I went to my Madonna"**. And his mother: **"I would like to know why must you go so far to visit Our Lady, when at home there are so many images?"**. And Righetto: **"Over there, mom, I see a very beautiful Lady who tells me: 'Righetto be good' and then she takes me by the hand and tells me to be good and asks that I go often to see her. That is why I always go there"**, and he pointed to the little church of St. Bartholomew. His mother Caterina kept the secret for a long time, but one day she wanted to share it with a friend, Angela Cianfroni: **"I wonder if I should believe what Righetto tells me, that he sees the Virgin Mary in the chapel of St. Bartholomew? That she calls him by name and takes him by the hand and talks with him?"**. To it Angela Cianfroni, with her peasant wisdom, answered: **"Don't you know, my dear, that Our Lady and the Saints love children? They, in fact, are not sinners like us. Children are pure souls and attract the benevolence of Heaven"**.

News of the apparitions of Our Lady to Righetto started to spread through word of mouth and in a short time they reached the entire countryside of S. Luca and Fratta. People came from everywhere: in pilgrimage, in procession and by every means. The numerous pilgrims, after having fulfilled their devotion towards the Mother of God, felt strongly the desire to see the little visionary. Righetto for his part was willing to satisfy their interest. There were many miracles and given the number of pilgrims, the ecclesiastical authorities decided to build a Shrine in honor of the apparitions. Later on Righetto joined the Somascan Fathers and became a priest. He died in 1923 in the odor of sanctity.



Paintings that depict the apparition



The Shrine of Our Lady of the Star



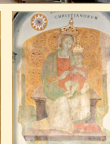
Interior of the Shrine



Righetto Cionchi



Interior of the Shrine



The image of Our Lady of the Star



Righetto Cionchi when he became a priest