



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

Apparition of the Virgin Mary in PLANTÉES



FRANCE, 1649



The history of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Willow Tree (*Notre-Dame de l'Osier*) is linked to an apparition of the Virgin Mary that occurred in 1649, during the initial years of the reign of Louis XIV. On Thursday the 25th of March 1649, in Plantées, an obscure village of the magistrate of Vinay's territorial jurisdiction, in the diocese of Grenoble, which is found not too distant from the hamlet, there were about 20 inhabitants, and among them was Pierre Port-Combat. Pierre was a Huguenot, a French Calvinist Protestant, whereas his wife, Jeanne Pélon, was Catholic. In those days, the great religious feasts were obligatorily respected throughout the kingdom: as in the case of the 25th of March, feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. But Pierre was not interested in the great Marian feast and, ignoring the absolute ban on working, despite the pleas of his wife, he took the pruning hook and began to cut the white willow tree that was in front of his home. After having worked for a few moments, he realized that his hook and his clothes were covered in blood. Believing himself to be injured, he went back in the house and, helped by Jeanne, he cleaned himself... but he did not find any wound. Together with his wife he returned to the tree and resumed working: at this point they both verified that the blood gushed from the cuts in the willow. A neighbor that was passing by there was a witness. News of this extraordinary event spread. Pierre became persecuted and condemned by the law of the King for having violated the prohibition of work on a feast day. Afterward he was interrogated by order of a religious inquest led by Monsignor Scarron, Bishop of Grenoble. The religious authorities noticed the importance of the event the news of which spread well beyond the confines of the region. One year later it was even the subject of a publication in the "*Gazette Parisienne*" (Parisian Gazette) of the great journalist Théophraste Renaudot, with the title "*Nouvelle Extraordinaire*" (Extraordinary News). The pilgrims began coming to pray around the miraculous willow tree. Eight years passed and one March morning in 1657 Pierre was again working in his field, south of the village, in which a small chapel had already emerged. Suddenly Pierre was stopped by a beautiful Lady who he did not know but who made him understand that she knew him well: she inquired about the visits to the little sanctuary, then she scolded him about his religion and announced to him an imminent death that "she will not be able to evade if he will not change." She asked him also for more fervent prayers from those who went to visit the chapel of the willow tree.

A few weeks later, Pierre fell ill; he understood the end was near, and remembered the message and warning of the beautiful stranger ("the most beautiful creature that exists in the world", according to his own words); he renounced the Calvinist errors and converted to Catholicism before dying, the 21st of August 1657. A cross and a chapel were built on the site of his encounter with the beautiful Lady. The apparition of 1657, the conversion of Pierre Port-Combat, the numerous documented miracles that were confirmed in the weeks and months that followed rendered the Shrine famous. Pilgrims arrived from all the dioceses but also from nearby provinces. In 1663 there were not fewer than eleven inns and lodges with regular license. Up to ten priests took up residence in Osier. The miracles followed one another according to the rhythm of the pilgrimages: 27 recognized between 1656 and 1660, 9 between 1661 and 1670. And so the Shrine, land of miracles, would live more than 100 years of intense religious activity – interrupted because of the French Revolution. In 1830, Our Lady of the Willow Tree became a parish. Then, in 1834, the very young Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate was called to occupy the place of pilgrimage. In 1840, the Oblates constructed the *Hospice de Bon-Rencontre* (Home of Good Encounter) and founded a community of Oblates entrusted with hosting the pilgrims during their sojourn to Osier. In 1841, they opened a novitiate which would accept up to 70 boarders each year. This institute of religious formation would provide many missionaries to Africa, the Indies, and to North America. The revolution of 1848 spared the Shrine. In 1856, the inauguration of the tower joined to the chapel of the Good Encounter (apparition site of the Virgin) beckoned 30,000 pilgrims. On the 17th of May 1858, the Oblate Fathers placed the first stone of a new church, the present Basilica, based on the project of Alfred Berruyer. Her construction would require 10 years of labor and would never be brought to completion, for lack of funds! It would remain without steeples, pinnacles, and bell tower. Inaugurated in 1868, consecrated on the 8th of September 1873, it would become a Minor Basilica by the hands of Pius XI in 1924.



In spite of the work ban on feast days, Pierre Port-Combat took his pruning hook and began to cut the white willow tree that was in front of his home. After having worked for a few moments, he realized that his hook and his clothes were covered in blood.



Between 1654 and 1660 at least 8 miracles were registered. In particular, the last to have been reversed stands out: in 1915, Paul Bréchet, from Saint-Jean-en-Royans, an invalid from war, discharged because of rheumatism to the contracted limbs in the Encholle trenches, came in pilgrimage to Osier; he left cured, leaving his crutches and an ex voto offering as his thanksgiving.



Stained glass window that depicts the miracle.



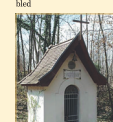
Panoramic view of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Willow Tree.



Relic of the willow tree that bled.



Interior of the Shrine of Notre-Dame de l'Osier.



Constructed in 1888 on the site where the Virgin Mary appeared to Pierre Port-Combat, the Chapel of Epimune is a modest Shrine on a rectangular platform, surmounted by a roof with two gables. It contains a small Virgin of the Immaculate Conception in polychrome plaster.



Commemorative medal of the miracle.