

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

Apparition of the Virgin Mary in PELLESTRINA



ITALY, 1716

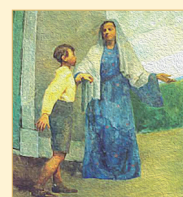
The year 1716 is dramatic for the Republic of Venice. In December of 1714 the great Ottoman vizier informed the Venetian ambassador that because of recent incidents in Montenegro, one being the Venetian interception of a Turkish boat in the Adriatic, he decided to declare war. It soon became clear that what was at very high stakes was the intention of the Turks to attack Venice itself. The danger was high. The senate ordered that the Marian Shrines of the Republic remained open at all times and urged the people to pray for divine protection. In fact, the Turks headed towards the fortress that was considered a true and proper port of entrance into the Adriatic: Corfu. If the Turks had conquered it, Venice would have been left with little hope of resistance. Corfu was then a key passage, decisive in the long war against the Turks. During the first few months of 1716, the great vizier sent an army of thirty thousand men to Corfu, an army undoubtedly superior to the Venetian forces.

On August 4, 1716 towards six o'clock in the morning a boy named Natalino Scarpa, around the age of 14 and a half, was heading towards his local parish in Ognissanti, passing in front of a small temple of Saints Vito and Modesto, that held an ancient painting of Our Lady of Carmine, and saw a woman that he did not know, short in stature and rather old, standing on the side of the church. The "Lady" was wearing a blue dress studded in red stars that went all the way down to her feet and she had her head covered by a white veil that reached down below her arms; her face was pale, her cheeks white, she had no adornments and she had a serious and worried look. The little church was closed and the lady stood there; she made a gesture with her hand until the boy got close to her and then she said: "Come here son, go to Piovano and tell him to have Masses celebrated for the souls in purgatory if we want a victory, and then bring me his answer; I say this to you because you are worthy of it." In order to reassure him and confirm that the vision was real, she touched his left wrist with her right hand, holding it affectionately for a few seconds. The detailed description that the boy reported demonstrates how much her image left an impression on the young boy; Natalino still recalls: "She looked like the mother of my teacher (the priest Antonio De Ambrosi), especially her gaze; but it certainly was not her because of her short stature." That day Natalino was alone and heading to the church of Ognissanti to accompany the administration of Communion to three sick people: no one else besides him had seen that woman. Natalino encountered Don Angelo Busetto, the chaplain, on the street in front of the parish church and he ran and caught up to him but he was not able to speak with him. Something got in his way, like a gust of air that closed his mouth while he felt a type of cold numbness, as Natalino later declared, testifying at a canonical process. When he reached the parish church he was able to tell everything to Piovano Don Paolo Zennaro, who was shocked by the detailed narration, even though initially he was

hesitant about the merit of the event, asking the boy more questions and having him repeat the story many times. In order to make the young boy feel better, he finally nodded to let him know that he understood him and recommended that Natalino in regard to that woman, whoever she was, consider himself absolved from the task.

Later, many people came to the small Church of Saints Vito and Modesto in the piazza where the apparition took place and started to notice the ancient image of Our Lady of Carmine moving its eyes. The entire day of August 4th was a revolving door of curious people and pilgrims coming to the place of the apparition and the image of Mary kept in the little church. It was necessary to keep record of many eyewitness testimonies to the movement and opening and closing of Mary's eyes. In particular was the testimony of some guards, among them a militia officer Antonio Pretti, who were completing a boat inspection in Fort Saint Peter in Volta and Fort Malamocco and then in the Chioggia Castle and the Brondolo Castle one afternoon, but when they reached the height of the church of Saint Vito they saw a big crowd and they wondered what was of such great interest. They asked some boaters and fishermen for an explanation and then Pretti grumbled something about the gullible people, but he let them stop and dock the boat anyway. The superintendent entered and driven by the meditation that inspired that place he started to pray. He then started to see the image of Our Lady painted on the tablet with eyes open holding Baby Jesus matus: now her right eye was closing and then her left eye but it only closed half way. Even the others who entered with him gave testimony to seeing the same extraordinary fact. Pretti declared all of this to the very last detail during the canonical interrogation on February 16, 1717 and also narrated that this extraordinary event changed his life for the better.

The next day, August 5, 1716, the battle of Petervaradino took place in Serbia a suburb of the city of Novi Sad with Catholic majority. Prince Eugene of Savoy succeeded in defeating the Ottoman army and also freed Belgrade. The news of the defeat in Petervaradino pushed the Turkish army commander to Corfu to risk everything and on the night of August 18 the Turks launched a decisive attack. After six hours the fight was still undetermined and no one was getting the upper hand; then Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg, the head of the Venetian army, decided on a type of surprise and with 800 strikes from a small port he attacked the back of one wing of the Turkish army. The Turks seeing themselves taken from behind and fearing being surrounded decided on a hasty flee. The next night a terrible storm devastated the Turkish camp and many ships with broken mooring lines went crashing one under the other. At dawn the Turks found themselves without a fleet. From then on Pellestrina would always remember August 4, the day of the miracle of the eyes, with great solemnity as the decisive date for its faith and its history.



Detail of the image of Our Lady with moving eyes. The miraculous painting of Our Lady of Carmine, painted on wood, is venerated every year, in a quite original way, by an association of about 400 people as a gesture of respect for the sanctity that he received from a family from that area. The Virgin is seated in a silver with the Baby Jesus in her arms on the sides. The martyr saints Vito and Modesto are depicted on the sides. It is a very artistically precious work, probably from a Spanish school, as it was declared by several Italian painters like Gian Battista Tiepolo that copied it especially without drink the painting the great idea for the fresco or even subject matter or for the sentiment that the artist, outside of Our Lady and the devotion of the martyrs, conveyed.



The childhood home of the boy Natalino Scarpa.



The island of Pellestrina.



The Shrine of Our Lady of the Apparition.



The fortress of Petervaradino.



Eugene of Savoy.



Pellestrina.



Inside the shrine.