



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

Apparition of the Virgin Mary in COTOCA

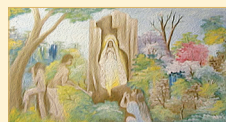
BOLIVIA, late 18th Century



In the latter years of the 18th century, three young and humble peasants, unjustly accused of a homicide that they did not commit, fled in the direction of the Rio Grande in order to head toward the distant lands of Chiquitos. After having walked for nearly forty leagues (over 160 km), they were surprised by a cold and windy night; the fugitives decided to rest in a small clearing on the Mount of Asusaqui, east of Santa Cruz, and they prepared to light a fire to combat the cold. One of them began to strike a thick tree trunk with an axe to obtain wood for the fire and he realized that the trunk sounded as if it were hollow. He then asked what could possibly be inside this strange empty tree trunk, perhaps a hidden treasure? Then all of them began to vigorously strike with their axes and, to their great surprise, they saw buried in the bottom of it a little image of the Virgin Mary from which emanated a mysterious light. Emotional for the discovery, the fugitives decided to bring the image to their boss, renouncing in this manner their flight, convinced that the discovery was a divine signal that confirmed their innocence. They then returned to the region from which they came and they were not condemned for the homicide, but they were free to go in peace and for this they were eternally grateful to the image. Soon thereafter, the fame of the miraculous recovery spread throughout the region and the number of people who went to render homage to the Virgin and to ask for blessings was always increasing. The numerous graces and miracles that the "Little Mother of Cotoca" had granted to her devout had made its fame become well-known throughout the eastern area of Bolivia; furthermore, the Virgin continues to be admired in the areas around the country. After the Chaco War, devotion toward the Little Mother of Cotoca spread even into boundary areas with Brazil and Argentina. Upon the initiative of the residents of Santa Cruz, the Virgin was enthroned in the Cathedrals of La Paz and Cochabamba. In the Marian year of 1954, centenary of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Pope Pius XII conceded the privilege of solemnly crowning the venerable image of Cotoca, for the greater glory of the Virgin Mother of God in the year of her jubilee.



Representation of the apparition of the little statue of the Virgin surrounded by a glowing light from the trunk of the tree



Painting that depicts the apparition



Facades of the multi-colored Shrine



The feast of the Shrine of the Virgin of Cotoca is celebrated from December 8th to the 15th, the span of time in which thousands of faithful flock to the Shrine coming from the whole region and all of Bolivia



The miraculous statue of the Blessed Mother found inside the trunk of a tree



Interior of the Shrine



Internal courtyard of the Shrine