THE APPEALS OF OUR LADY

APPARITIONS AND MARIAN SHRINES IN THE WORLD

Apparition of the Virgin Mary in AOKPE

AFRICA, 1992

The Virgin Mary appeared in October 1992 to a twelve year old girl named Christiana Agbo in the small village of Aokpe situated in Nigeria. The apparitions became more frequent as time passed, most of all between 1994 and 1995. In the first message Christiana received from the Virgin she told her: **"I come from Heaven. I am the refuge of sinners. I come from Heaven to gain souls for Christ and give refuge to my children in my Immaculate Heart. I want you to pray for the souls in Purgatory, for the world and to console Jesus. Will you accept?"**– Christiana replied without hesitation: **"Yes"**.

The first apparition came in the morning while Christiana was working in the fields. Around ten in the morning, while she was taking a break, she lifted her eyes and saw a sudden flash of light, but her sisters said they saw nothing. Later Christiana was collecting herbs when, to her surprise, she saw a beautiful woman in the sky, it was the Virgin Mary looking at her, smiling at her without saying a word. Christiana fled in fear. In the same month of October the second apparition took place. At three in the afternoon, while she was in her room, some singing angels appeared to her. Before disappearing one of them said to her: **"I am the Angel of Peace"**. Shortly after the Virgin Mary appeared. When Christiana saw her she collapsed to the ground and remained unconscious for three hours. Her relatives believed she was dead because she had become like stone. However, when she came to, she spoke about the Virgin Mary: **"She is too beautiful to describe. Our Lady was standing in the clouds, she had a radiant dress with a sky blue veil that covered her head and flowed over her shoulders and down her back. She looked intensely at me with a glowing smile and radiant beauty. Her hands were clasped at her chest holding a rosary…she told me: "I am the Mediatrix of all Graces"**. The public apparitions drew great numbers of people to Aokpe, many were attracted, above all, by the solar phenomenon that were coming regularly during the time of the apparitions. In a message on March 1, 1995, the Virgin said: **"Those of my children that pray the rosary with frequency and commitment will receive many graces, and so Satan will not succeed in getting close to them. My children, when you are assaulted by great temptations and problems, take your rosary and come to me and your problems will be solved. Every time you say Hail Mary full of grace, you will receive many graces from me. Those who recite the rosary will never be harmed"**. In another message: **"…Offer up all the little sufferings that you encounter in order to console Jesus. I come from Heaven to purify my children and through penance there will be purification"**. On July 21, 1993 the Virgin May told Christiana: **"Pray with fervor for the world. The world is corrupted by sin"**. Christiana affirms that the most important prophecies are those that speak of the punishment that God is about to send to the world. In his messages there have been various references to three days of darkness and it seems that this event will take place when God sends His punishment to the Earth.

The last apparition took place in 2004 and since then Aokpe has been transformed into a Marian Shrine. Among the various miracles, we remember the episode of August 4, 1994 in which Christiana received Communion from an angel. Father Samuel Ehatikpo arranged for two photographers to be present during the miraculous Communion, one was Father Emmanuel Idoko, a representative of the Bishop and the other was a professional photographer. Christiana herself describes what happened: **"I saw the angel bringing the Host, it was much bigger than the one we normally receive. As the Host got closer to me, the smaller it seemed to become and when I was ready to receive it, it became the normal size. As the Virgin recommended, I held my tongue flat so that the photographers could capture the photo more easily."** The Virgin Mary also recommended: **"Wherever the Most Holy Sacrament is, you must be absolutely silent"**.

Another gift that Christiana received, through the power of the Holy Spirit, was the ability to speak English so she could communicate with pilgrims. There were also many solar phenomenon, the biggest occured on November 21, 1999 where almost 100,000 people were present. Another miracle of Aokpe is the presence of healing waters. Our Lady appeared to Christiana while she was reciting the rosary and she made an arrangement to meet with her the following day at six in the morning near a spring. Here the Virgin said: **"This should no longer be called spring water but "Water of the Holy Spring" and it will be for the sick. It will cure some illness, but not all. My little children, my son Jesus, sent me here today to help the sick and to purify all of you. Many will repent in this Holy Spring. The sacrifices that you all will make before taking the water will bring great penance. The street that leads to this place should not be easy, but should be made of stone, this way one will make penance before arriving to the Holy Spring and before drinking, one must give the crucifix a small kiss"**. Today in order to get to the Holy Spring of Aokpe, one must follow a long path of about 150 yards on one's knees with a crucifix in hand as it happens in Fatima.

In one of the messages the Virgin said: **"In every joyful moment in the world one forgets about Heaven and this is a grave mistake. You must always think about Heaven, asking yourselves: 'Will I go to Heaven or not?' This must be your constant thought… It is through your penance and prayers that you will win souls for God"**. Moreover: **"That which unnerves me the most is when my children pray for the conversion of sinners and few people join them, but when there are miracles there are always long lines". "People who commit serious sins and do not respect the laws of the Church, but later repent and are sorry for their own sins, will always be shown mercy by God"**.

Among the numerous miracles that took place in Aokpe there is the healing of the young Samuel Apeh, who mute from birth, thanks to the sand and the water of Aokpe, immediately began to speak. Francis Onimhawo, sick, paralyzed, blind and mute from the time he was 14 years old, was healed by the waters of Aokpe.

In regard to reciting the rosary, the Virgin Mary said: **"After praying the rosary, sit and meditate for a while"** (December 1, 1992). **"When you say the rosary you must hold the beads with two hands and rest your eyes on them and that will help you concentrate"** (April 25, 1995). **"You must recite the rosary with the type of concentration you would have if someone told you that you were going to die in one minute and you were preparing yourself for this. If you only knew the importance of the rosary!"** (November 27, 1999). **"By reciting the rosary, you will better understand life, suffering and what the glorious resurrection of the salvation of Christ has brought to the world. The graces gained while reciting the rosary, will give you the strength to carry your cross with firmness. The devil will try to make you abandon your cross. Whoever wants to follow my Son, will have to bear his own cross with Him, share His sufferings, rise with Him and share in His glory. Do not abandon your cross. Do what pleases God, so you can come to Heaven. After you have lived a beautiful life on Earth, you will come to Heaven and receive your crown of glory". "Whomever amongst my children will pray the rosary often and with attention, will receive many graces, I will make sure that Satan will not be able to get close to that person". "My children, when you have great temptations and problems, take your rosary and come to me and your problems will be resolved"**. In a message the Virgin reiterated the need to live unattached to the world: **"When you hear the news there is always more bad than good. It is the same with the conversations of others, bad words come out more easily than good ones. Whoever wants to imitate me must disinterest himself from the things of this world"**.

The Virgin Mary urged making penance during Lent: **"Listen my little children, you are entering the period of Lent. This is the period in which one must think about the sufferings of Christ, you must pray with more firmness and offer many sacrifices and make penance. My children, your fast must be of bread and water. Through your prayers and penance you will earn souls for Jesus. My children, do not forget the Stations of the Cross. I want you to participate in the Stations of the Cross every time, especially during the Lenten period. My children, your love must be for Jesus before everything else. My children, pray and offer sacrifices, make penance"**.

Drawings of the apparition

Cardinal John Onaiyekan had to point out during one of his visits to the site of the apparitions that the Church in these cases is rather cautious, it is very rare that apparitions are approved while they are still in progress. An important sign of that the diocesan authorities felt positive about the apparitions was the construction of the Shrine requested by the Virgin Mary. Furthermore the Bishop of the diocese, Fidelis Uga Orgah officially authorized pilgrims

The Virgin Mary sometimes appeared to Christiana with tears in her eyes, she told her that she was crying because of the many souls that are going to hell and she asked her to pray for them

Within the last year, Aokpe had become a significant center of pilgrimages. Aokpe hosted the pilgrimage for the National Marian Movement of priests and religious leaders. The same Nigerian Bishops reunited in Aokpe for their annual Episcopal Conference and among them was the Apostolic nuncio (representing the Pope), the Archbishop Augustine Kasuja, and the Cardinal John Onaiyekan, the Archbishop of Abuja

Christiana working near the Holy Spring

Christiana during an apparition. Since 1995 the Virgin Mary has been called by the title of "Mediatrix of All Graces" in Aokpe

The fountains where the miraculous waters are collected

The miraculous Communion brought to Christiana Agbo by an angel

A photograph of one of the solar phenomenon observed during an apparition

Vision of Hell

The clouds came and surrounded us, and the last thing that I saw was that we were there. Our Lady told me: "Look at them in the fires of Hell". And I saw Hell. The whole place was very harsh with many ditches. Our Lady told me: "Touch the ground with your feet". When I touched the ground with my feet, at first I did not feel that it was burning, but when Our Lady asked me to touch the ground with my feet, the ground became very hot, it was intolerable. The surface of the ground was filled with pointy thorns. And there was another spot that emitted large flames with black smoke. The demons jumped continuously in it. The damned jumped always from one part of the fire to another with incessant cries of pain. Some were lying idly on the thorns. When the demons and the damned saw Our Lady, they began to run away. Our Lady opened her hands and from them sprung rays of light that pierced them and they fell down. I was very afraid and I held the belt of Our Lady while staring at the fires of Hell. One demon refused to fall down and Our Lady moved her rosary towards him and he ran away and Our Lady told me: "This is the reason why I always say that my children must continue to recite the rosary because it does not matter how courageous the devil is, he has no resistance against the person who always recites the rosary". There was fire and black smoke everywhere. They seemed to be part animal and part man. Some demons were arriving. They were transporting someone holding him by the neck and they threw him in the fire. The damned were in a room and their feet were like those of animals. I could not tell if they were men or women. I asked: **"Our Lady, will you ever free them from this place?"** Our Lady replied: "They themselves created this fire in which they are burning". I asked Our Lady: **"Mother, will they ever leave this place?"** Our Lady replied: "No, they will remain here forever". All of the trees were covered in thorns and the demons climbed on them. There were different types of suffering in the fires of Hell. When we were about to leave the place, Our Lady opened her hands and ribbons of light sprung out and hit the damned souls and the demons and they fell down.

Vision of Paradise

We climbed up some beautiful stars and we went into the clouds. I held tight onto Our Lady and she had me attached to her waist with a red belt that she took from my room. We continued to go until we reached a gate where I saw a very large crucifix. I was about to enter when Our Lady asked me to wait and she entered first. The gate opened automatically. The ground was covered with precious stones. There was a nice breeze. There was an exquisite perfume that could not be compared to any found on Earth. In truth, the splendor of Heaven was beyond any possible human description. I saw the people praying and covering their faces with rosary beads that they held in their hands. Some seemed to pray with crucifixes covering their faces. Some were without crucifixes and rosaries. Our Lady said "These are the people that pray for the sinners of the world. These are the ones who console God." The people were dressed in white and light seemed to come out of them. The light of Heaven was greater than that of the sun. The trees were always green and many people were also there. And I asked: **"Mother, you said that the people that are in Heaven are very few, but there are many people in Paradise?"** Our Lady replied: "God did not create any soul with the intention of losing it, this is why I told you that there are few in Heaven". In Heaven, there were no noises, chatter, or sounds except for those who were praying to God. I asked Our Lady: **"Do they eat?"** Our Lady replied: "The joy of Heaven is that God made it so that those here will be fine and never need to eat". Everything was extraordinary. When we left this place I saw many angels. They were lined up holding hands. They stretched out their wings and were all facing one direction. Their hands were folded and they had swords at their sides.

Vision of Purgatory

When we left the place we started our trip towards purgatory. Purgatory was very far from Heaven. The gate to Purgatory was big but it could not be compared to the gate of Heaven. A wind blew and Our Lady and I were taken above the gate and we stayed there. The souls that were suffering in this place were many and they seemed to hide themselves. I asked Our Lady why they were doing this. Our Lady replied: "Because they have no joy. They scream as if they were experiencing severe pain. They only experience joy when people pray for them. When people pray, it reduces their pain and some are freed. This is why I ask you to pray for the souls of purgatory". Then Our Lady took me back to the place where I came from and to the place where I left my sandals. Then Our Lady told me: "Did you know that when I took you from your room it was three in the morning and now it is nine o'clock?"

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