

Our Lady of Good Counsel



According to tradition, in the year 1467, in the midst of the festivities for the Feast of Saint Mark, the townfolk suddenly heard "exquisite music." A mysterious cloud was then said to have descended and obliterated an unfinished wall of the parish church. In front of the populace, the cloud dissipated and a beautiful fresco, no thicker than a carte-de-visite and no more than eighteen inches square, of the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child was revealed. It was widely believed that it had been miraculously transported from a church in Scutari, Albania. On November 17, 1682, Pope Innocent XI had the picture solemnly crowned. In 1753, Pope Benedict XIV established the Pious Union of Our Lady of Good Counsel. More than any other pope, Leo XIII, was deeply attached to this devotion. On April 22, 1903, that same Pope included the invocation "Mater boni consilii" in the Litany of Loreto. In 1939, Venerable Pope Pius XII placed his pontificate under the maternal care of Our Lady of Good Counsel and composed a prayer to her. Her feast is celebrated on April 26th.

Our Lady of Aparecida



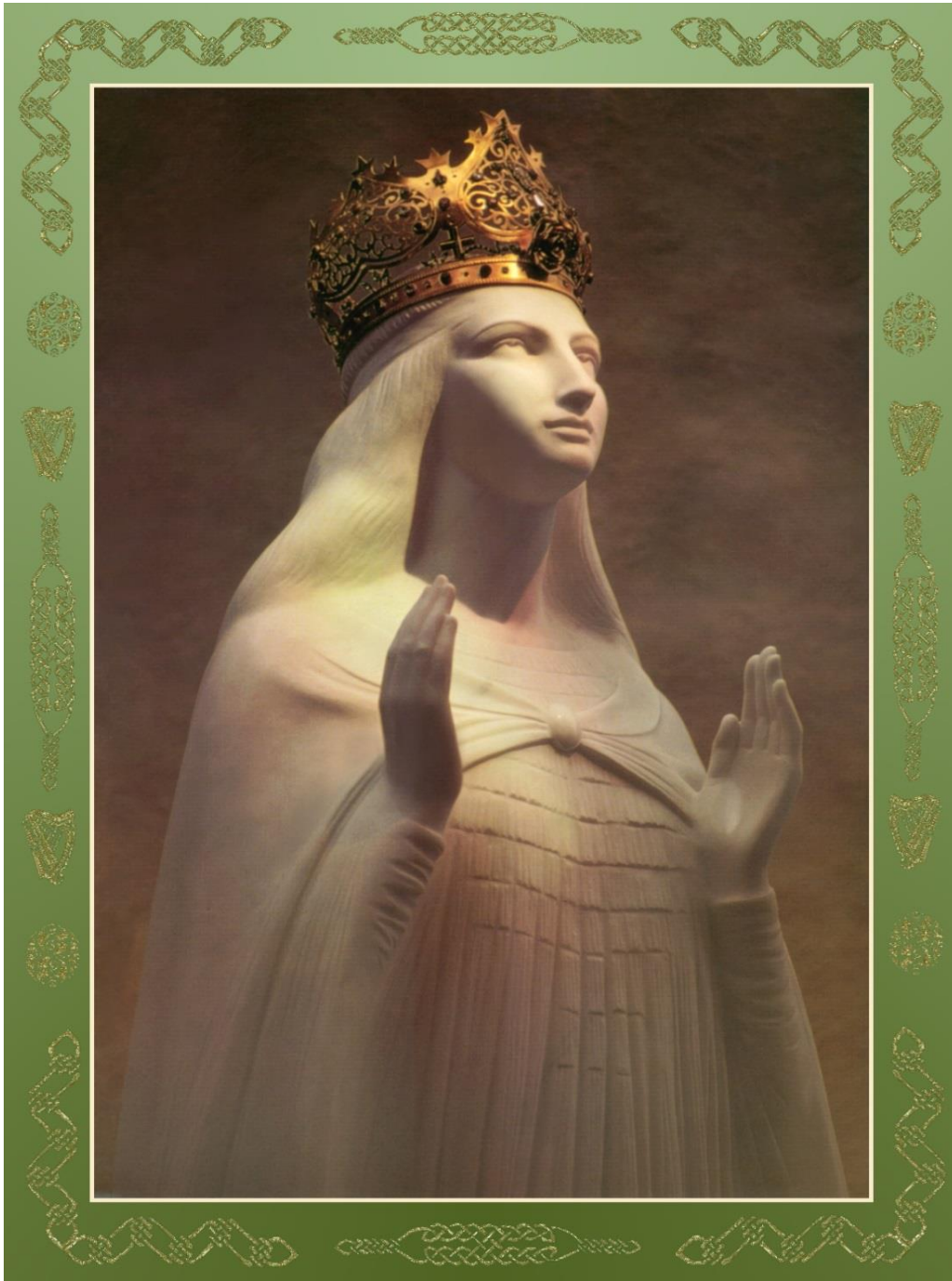
Our Lady of Aparecida appeared to 3 fishermen in Brazil (Domingos Garcia, Filipe Pedroso, and João Alves) in October 1717. The fishermen prayed to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception that God would grant a good catch. The fishermen, having a run of bad luck, cast their nets in the River Paraíba and dragged up a headless statue of the Virgin Mary. They also salvaged the head and, according to the legend, then netted plenty of fish. After cleaning the statue, they found that it was a black version of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. Legend has it that when the fishermen recovered the body, then the head, the slender figure of the Aparecida Virgin became so heavy that they couldn't budge it. Devotion to the statue grew rapidly, particularly among Afro-Brazilians, not only for its black Madonna status, but also because one of the first miracles attributed to the image was reportedly performed to an enslaved young man. Over the years following its apparition, veneration of the Virgin invoked as Aparecida increased as many miracles were attributed to her. The dark statue is kept in the Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida located in Brazil and is the largest Marian shrine in the world, holding up to 45,000 worshippers. Since the 19th century, the Feast Day of Our Lady Aparecida is celebrated on October 12. The date coincides with the foundation of the Empire of Brazil in 1822, and is regarded in Brazilian culture as *children's day*. In the Roman Rite Catholic Liturgical Calendar approved for Brazil, the day of Our Lady Aparecida ranks as a solemnity, and is a holy day of obligation. The feast day of Our Lady of Aparecida has been a National Holiday in Brazil since 1980. The federal statute declaring October 12 a National holiday in honour of "Our Lady of Aparecida", Patroness of Brazil, was passed by Congress and signed into law on June 30, 1980, during Pope John Paul II's first visit to the country; that was also the first visit by a Pope to Brazil, and during that visit the "New Basilica" of Aparecida was consecrated.

Our Lady of Guadalupe



Official Catholic accounts state that on the morning of December 9, 1531, Juan Diego saw an apparition of a young girl at the Hill of Tepeyac, near Mexico City. Speaking to him in Nahuatl, the girl asked that a church be built at that site in her honor; from her words, Juan Diego recognized the girl as the Virgin Mary. Diego told his story to the Spanish Archbishop of Mexico City, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, who instructed him to return to Tepeyac Hill, and ask the "lady" for a miraculous sign to prove her identity. The first sign was the Virgin healing Juan's uncle. The Virgin told Juan Diego to gather flowers from the top of Tepeyac Hill. Although December was very late in the growing season for flowers to bloom, Juan Diego found Castilian roses, not native to Mexico, on the normally barren hilltop. The Virgin arranged these in his peasant cloak or *tilma*. When Juan Diego opened his cloak before Bishop Zumárraga on December 12, the flowers fell to the floor, and on the fabric was the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe is the most visited Catholic pilgrimage destination in the world. The representation of the Virgin on the tilma is Mexico's most popular religious and cultural image, and under this title the Virgin has been acclaimed as "Queen of Mexico", "Patroness of the Americas", "Empress of Latin America", and "Protectress of Unborn Children" (the latter three given by Pope John Paul II in 1999). Under this title, she was also proclaimed "Heavenly Patroness of the Philippines" in July 1935. Over the Friday and Saturday of December 11 to 12, 2009, a record number of 6.1 million pilgrims visited the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City to commemorate the anniversary of the apparition.

Our Lady of Knock



On the evening of August 21, 1879, two women from the small village of Knock, Ireland (Mary McLoughlin & Mary Beirne) were walking home in the rain when they passed by the back of the town church. There, against the wall of the church, stood the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, St. John the Evangelist and an altar with a lamb and a cross on it. There were also several angels flying around the altar. They women called other people (15 people in total) to the church that also saw the apparition. They saw a beautiful woman, clothed in white garments, wearing a brilliant crown and her hands were raised as if in prayer. This woman was understood by all who saw her to be the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus and the Queen of the Angels. Other villagers that were not involved with the apparition, still reported seeing a very bright light illuminating the area around the church. There were also subsequent reports of inexplicable hearings associated with visits to the church of Knock.

Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima



On May 13, 1917, ten year old Lúcia Santos and her cousins Jacinta and Francisco Marto were herding sheep at a location known as the Cova da Iria near their home village of Fátima, Portugal. Lúcia described seeing a woman "brighter than the sun, shedding rays of light clearer and stronger than a crystal goblet filled with the most sparkling water and pierced by the burning rays of the sun". The lady spoke to them and said: "**Fear not! I will not harm you.**" "Where are you from?" the children asked. "**I am from heaven**" the beautiful lady replied, gently raising her hand towards the distant horizon. "What do you want of me?" "**I came to ask you to come here for six consecutive months, on the thirteenth day, at this same hour. I will tell you later who I am and what I want. And I shall return here again a seventh time.**" Lucia said : "Do you come from heaven...and will I go to heaven ?" "**Yes, you'll go**". "And Jacinta?" "As well" " And Francisco?" "**Him too , but he will have to say many rosaries**". Then she opened her hands with a loving gesture of a mother who offers her heart. From it an intense light departed that seemed to go through them. The vision vanished telling them : "**Recite the rosary every day to obtain the peace for the world and the end of the war.**" And She disappeared. Thousands of people flocked to Fátima in the following months, drawn by reports of visions and miracles. On August 13, 1917, the provincial administrator, believing that the events were politically disruptive, intercepted and jailed the children before they could reach the Cova da Iria that day. Prisoners held with them in the provincial jail later testified that the children, while upset, were first consoled by the inmates, and later led them in praying the rosary. According to Lúcia's account, in the course of her appearances, the woman confided to the children three secrets, now known as the Three Secrets of Fátima.

Our Lady of Lourdes



Our Lady of Lourdes is a title of the Blessed Virgin Mary invoked by Roman Catholics in honor of the Marian apparitions of 1858 in the vicinity of Lourdes, France. The first of these is the apparition of 11 February 1858, when Bernadette Soubirous, a 14-year-old peasant girl, admitted to her mother that a "lady" spoke to her in the cave of Massabielle (a mile from the town) while she was gathering firewood with her sister and a friend. Similar appearances of the "lady" were reported on seventeen further occasions that year. Bernadette Soubirous was later canonized as a Saint, and Roman Catholics believe her apparitions have been validated by the overwhelming popularity and testament of healings claimed to have taken place at the Lourdes water spring. In 1862, Pope Pius IX authorized Bishop Bertrand-Sévère Laurence to permit the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lourdes. This Marian title, *Our Lady of Lourdes*, has been widely copied and reproduced, often displayed in shrines or homes, most notably in garden landscapes. The Catholic Church celebrates a mass in honor of "Our Lady of Lourdes" (optional memorial) in many countries on February 11 of each year — the anniversary of the first apparition. The following prayer is said by Catholics as an act of consecration to Our Lady of Lourdes: *"Holy Mary, Mother of God, Virgin Immaculate, you appeared 18 times to Bernadette at the grotto in Lourdes to remind Christians of what the truths in the Gospel require of them. You call them to prayer, penance, the Eucharist and the life of the church. To answer your call more fully, I dedicate myself, through you, to your Son Jesus. Make me willing to accept what he said. By the fervor of my faith, by the conduct of my life in all its aspects, by my devotion to the sick, let me work with you in the comforting of those who suffer and in the reconciliation of people that the church may be one and there be peace in the world. All this I ask, confident that you, Our Lady, will fully answer my prayer. Blessed be the Holy and Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us. St. Bernadette, pray for us."*

Our Lady of Perpetual Help



Our Mother of Perpetual Help (Latin: *Nostra Mater de Perpetuo Succursu*) also known as Our Lady of Perpetual Help and more formally as Our Lady of Perpetual Succour) is a Catholic title of the Blessed Virgin Mary given by Pope Pius IX. It is associated with a celebrated Byzantine icon of the same name dating from the 15th century. The esteemed icon has been in Rome since 1499, and is permanently enshrined in the church of Sant'Alfonso di Liguori, where the official Novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help text is weekly recited. In the Eastern Orthodox Church this artistic iconography is known as the *Virgin of the Passion* or *Theotokos of the Passion* due to the Archangels surrounding the image. Due to the Redemptorist Priests who had been appointed as both custodians and missionaries of this icon by Pope Pius IX in 1865, the image has become very popular among Roman Catholics in particular, and has been very much copied and reproduced. Modern reproductions are sometimes displayed in homes, business establishments, and public transportation. The Redemptorist priests are the only religious order currently entrusted by the Holy See to protect and propagate a Marian religious work of art.^[1] Due to the overwhelming Philippine devotion to this Marian title, the image is also affectionately known as the Holy Virgin of Baclaran. Today, Our Lady of Perpetual Help's solemn feast day is celebrated annually on June 27, with novena devotions held every Wednesday of the weeks of the year. Under Pope Pius XII's Pontificate, our Mother of Perpetual Help was designated as the national Patroness of the Republic of Haiti and Almoradi, Spain.

Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows



The Seven Sorrows of Mary are a popular Roman Catholic devotion. In common religious Catholic imagery, the Blessed Virgin Mary is portrayed in a sorrowful and lacrimating affect, with seven daggers piercing her heart, often bleeding. Devotional prayers which consist of meditation began to elaborate on her Seven Sorrows based on the prophecy of the Rabbi Simeon. Common examples of piety under this title are Servite rosary, or the Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady and the Seven Joys of Mary and more recently, "Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary". The feast of Our Lady of Sorrows is liturgically celebrated each 15 of September, while a feast of Friday of Sorrows was also commemorated before the changes of the Second Vatican Council. The Seven Sorrows are events in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary which are a popular devotion and are frequently depicted in art. It is a common devotion for Catholics to say daily one Our Father and seven Hail Marys for each.

(These Seven Sorrows should not be confused with the five Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary.)

1. The Prophecy of Simeon. (Luke 2:34-35)
2. The Flight into Egypt. (Matthew 2:13)
3. The loss of the child Jesus in the Temple. (Luke 2:43-45)
4. Mary meets Jesus on the way to Calvary.
5. Jesus dies on the cross. (John 19:25)
6. The piercing of the side of Jesus, and Mary's receiving the body of Jesus in her arms. (Matthew 27:57-59)
7. The body of Jesus is placed in the tomb. (John 19:40-42)

Our Lady of Assumption



On November 1, 1950, Pius XII defined the Assumption of Mary to be a dogma of faith: “We pronounce, declare and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma that the immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul to heavenly glory.” The pope proclaimed this dogma only after a broad consultation of bishops, theologians and laity. There were few dissenting voices. What the pope solemnly declared was already a common belief in the Catholic Church. The feast was celebrated under various names (Commemoration, Dormition, Passing, Assumption) from at least the fifth or sixth century. Today it is celebrated as a solemnity. Since Mary is closely associated with all the mysteries of Jesus’ life, it is not surprising that the Holy Spirit has led the Church to belief in Mary’s share in his glorification. So close was she to Jesus on earth, she must be with him body and soul in heaven.

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal



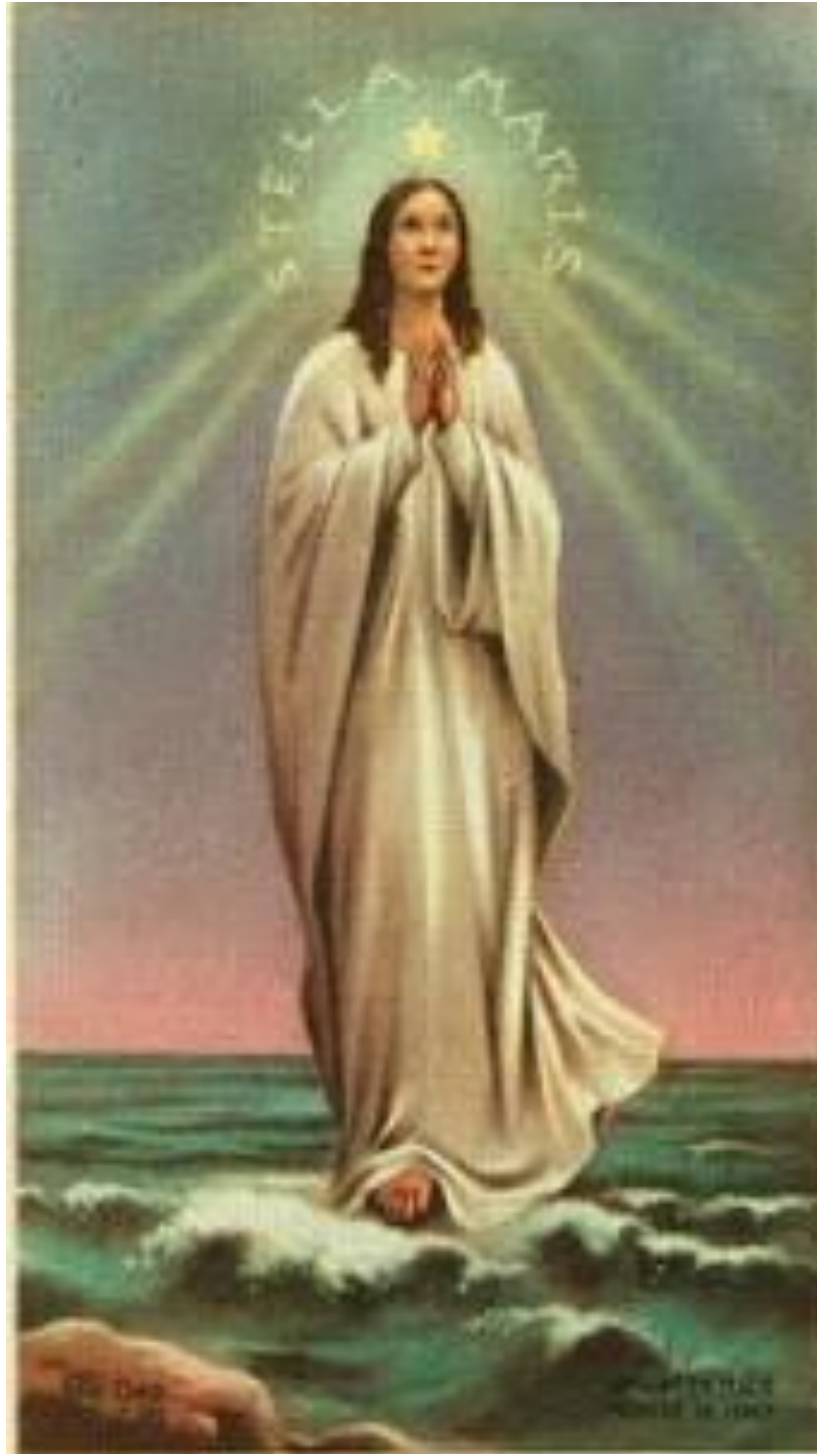
Catherine Labouré stated that on July 18, 1830, the eve of the feast of St. Vincent, she woke up after hearing the voice of a child calling her to the chapel, where she heard the Virgin Mary say to her, "God wishes to charge you with a mission. You will be contradicted, but do not fear; you will have the grace to do what is necessary. Tell your spiritual director all that passes within you. Times are evil in France and in the world." On November 27, 1830, Catherine reported that the Blessed Mother returned during evening meditations. She displayed herself inside an oval frame, standing upon a globe, wearing many rings of different colors, most of which shone rays of light over the globe. Around the margin of the frame appeared the words "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." As Catherine watched, the frame seemed to rotate, showing a circle of twelve stars, a large letter *M* surmounted by a cross, and the stylized Sacred Heart of Jesus crowned with thorns and Immaculate Heart of Mary pierced with a sword. Asked why some of her rings did not shed light, Mary reportedly replied, "Those are the graces for which people forget to ask." Catherine then heard Mary ask her to take these images to her father confessor, telling him that they should be put on medallions, and saying: "All who wear them will receive great graces." Catherine did so, and the request was approved and medallions were designed and produced through goldsmith Adrien Vachette. Some Catholics believe that wearing the medal with faith and devotion can bring special graces through the intercession of Mary at the hour of death. The medallions are not charms and should not be construed as so, but serve as reminders of devotion and Mary's promise.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel



On July 16, 1251, Our Lady appeared to St. Simon Stock, the Father of the Carmelite Order, and presented him with the Scapular. St. Simon's story began as an English hermit that lived in the hollow of a tree. He received the name "stock" because he lived in the hollowed trunk or stock of a tree. In time he would become a Carmelite and later the Father General of the order. He led the order during a time of great struggle. The Carmelites in the beginning were hermits on Mount Carmel, near Nazareth in the Holy Land. When they migrated to Europe, in this case England, some decided to no longer be hermits and instead became friars who would work among the people. St. Simon guided them through this state of transition. In the year 1251 a miraculous vision took place. St. Simon Stock, newly transplanted to England, prayed fervently to Our Lady for Her help. Then: To him appeared the Blessed Virgin with a multitude of angels, holding the Scapular of the order in her blessed hands. Our Lady gave St. Simon a scapular for the Carmelites with the following promise: Receive, My beloved son, this habit of thy order: this shall be to thee and to all Carmelites a privilege, that whosoever dies clothed in this shall never suffer eternal fire...it shall be a sign of salvation, a protection in danger, and a pledge of peace. The Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (July 16) is known to many Catholic faithful as the "scapular feast," associated with the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, a devotional sacramental signifying the wearer's consecration to Mary and affiliation with the Carmelite Order.

Our Lady, Star of the Sea



Our Lady, Star of the Sea is an ancient title for the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ. The words *Star of the Sea* are a translation of the Latin title *Stella Maris*. The title was used to emphasize Mary's role as a sign of hope and as a guiding star for Christians, especially gentiles, whom the Old Testament Israelites metaphorically referred to as the sea, meaning anyone beyond the "coasts", or, that is to say, sociopolitical, and religious (Mosaic law), borders of Israelite territory.

Under this title, the Virgin Mary is believed to intercede as a guide and protector of those who travel or seek their livelihoods on the sea. This aspect of the Virgin has led to Our Lady, Star of the Sea, being named as patroness of the Catholic missions to seafarers, the Apostleship of the Sea, and to many coastal churches being named *Stella Maris* or Mary, Star of the Sea. This devotion towards Our Lady with this ancient title is popular throughout the Catholic world.

Our Lady of Good Health



Also known as Our Lady of Vailankanni, is a celebrated Catholic title of the Blessed Virgin Mary believed to have appeared in the town of Velankanni Town, Tamil Nadu, India. Traditional beliefs surrounding the Marian apparition is held to have occurred to a young boy delivering milk to the neighborhood when the Virgin Mary, carrying a child Jesus, is said to have appeared. This apparition has not been approved by the Holy See. The Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health was erected by Portuguese and Indians is standing in this site. The iconic depiction of the Madonna is also unique since it is one of two only icons where Mary is portrayed wearing an Indian Sari costume, while the other statue is said to have been buried with Aurangzeb, the Mughal Emperor. The basilica is known for its pilgrims from all over India and its assembly of multilingual prayers every Christmas. September 8, the Feast of the Nativity of Mary, is also commemorated as the feast of Our Lady of Good Health. The celebration starts on 29th August and ends on the day of the feast. The feast day prayers are said in Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada, Konkani, Hindi and English.

Our Lady of Good Remedy



800 years ago Christians were being captured by the Moslems and sold into slavery by the thousands, and nobody knew what to do about it. In the year 1198 St. John of Matha founded the Trinitarian order to go to the slave markets to buy the Christian slaves in order to set them free. To carry out his plan, the Trinitarians need a large sum of money. So, they placed their efforts under the patronage of Mary. They were so successful that, over the centuries, the Trinitarians were able to free thousands upon thousands of people who were able to return safely home. In gratitude for her miraculous assistance, St. John of Matha honored Mary with the title "Our Lady of Good Remedy." Devotion to Mary under this ancient title is widely known in Europe and Latin America, and the Church celebrates her Feast on October 8. When in need-----for whatever reason, but especially when having difficulty obtaining help-----invoke the aid of Our Lady of Good Remedy, and you will surely be helped by the power of her intercession.

Our Lady of Immaculate Conception



The Immaculate Conception is a dogma of the Catholic Church maintaining that from the moment when she was conceived in the womb, the Blessed Virgin Mary was kept free of original sin, so that she was from the start filled with the sanctifying grace normally conferred in baptism. It is one of the four dogmas in Roman Catholic Mariology. (The four dogmas of Perpetual Virginity, Mother of God, Immaculate Conception and Assumption form the basis of Mariology.) The doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary concerns her own conception by her mother and father, not Mary's conception of Jesus (the virgin birth of Jesus) nor the perpetual virginity of Mary. Although the belief that Mary was sinless and conceived immaculate was widely held since at least Late Antiquity, the doctrine was not dogmatically defined until December 8, 1854, by Pope Pius IX. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception is observed on December 8 in many Catholic countries as a holy day of obligation and in some as a national public holiday.

Our Lady of the Snows



Devotion to Mary under the title of Our Lady of the Snows dates back to 352 A.D. In that year a rectangle of snow was discovered on Mount Esquiline, one of the famous Seven Hills of Rome. According to tradition, on the night of August 4th, a *childless aristocratic Roman couple dreamed* that the Blessed Virgin Mary instructed them to go to the Esquiline Hill in the morning where they would find a plot of land covered with snow. Mary told them that a church consecrated to her should be built on the snow-covered plot of land. *On this same night*, She also appeared to Pope Liberius in a dream telling him of her desire. The next morning the couple went to Pope Liberius to tell him about their dream. The pope then led a procession to the spot indicated in the dream and discovered that snow had indeed fallen on the Esquiline Hill. *Snowfall of any sort was unheard of in Rome at that time of year.* People crowded to see the patch of snow, which persisted despite the heat, amazed that it had fallen in only one place. All of Rome proclaimed the summer snow a miracle, and the couple accepted this as a sign that they were to use their wealth to help build the church. As soon as the plot for the building had been staked out the snow melted. *On that site, the pope built a shrine to the Holy Virgin. Originally the church was called Santa Maria ad Nives (St. Mary of the Snows).* The Feast day for Our Lady of the Snows is August 5th.

Our Lady of Peace



Our Lady of Peace, Mother of Peace, Queen of Peace or Our Lady Queen of Peace is a title of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Roman Catholic Church. She is represented in art holding a dove and an olive branch, symbols of peace. Her official memorial feast is celebrated on January 24 each year in Hawaii and some churches in the United States. Elsewhere, the memorial feast is celebrated on July 9. Our Lady of Peace is the patroness of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary religious order, founded by Peter Coudrin in Paris during the French Revolution. When the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary established the Catholic Church in Hawaii, they consecrated the Hawaiian Islands under the protection of Our Lady of Peace. They erected the first Roman Catholic Church in Hawaii to her. Today, the Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace in Honolulu is the oldest Roman Catholic cathedral in continuous use in the United States. On July 9, 1906, the statue of Our Lady Queen of Peace was solemnly crowned in the name of Pope Pius X by his Eminence Cardinal Amette, Archbishop of Paris. Every year on July 9 the feast of Our Lady Queen of Peace is celebrated with great solemnity in the Congregation of the Fathers and Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and Perpetual Adoration.

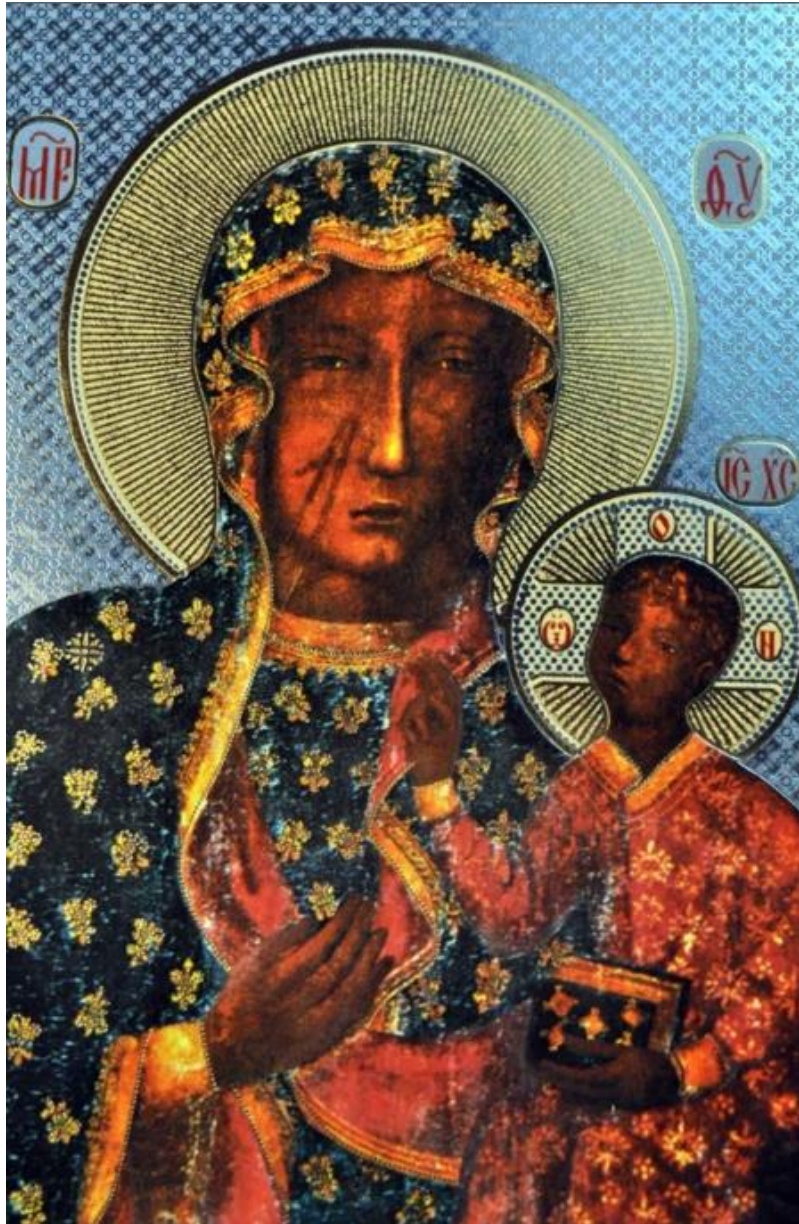
Our Lady of Light



Early in the 18th century, a Jesuit, Father John Genovesi, lived in Palermo, Italy. At the beginning of his missionary career, he placed the souls over which he would have charge under the protection of the Blessed Mother, deciding to take with him to each of his missions an image of Mary. Not knowing which image of Our Lady to use, he consulted a pious visionary telling her to ask Our Lady what she desired. One day as this lady knelt in prayer, she beheld approaching her, the Queen of Heaven, surrounded by pomp, majesty and glory, surpassing anything else she had ever beheld in any of her visions. The Virgin appeared in a glorious light, surrounded by a host of seraphim and was extremely beautiful.

She wore an imperial crown and had a girdle adorned with jewels that surpassed the beauty of the stars. On her shoulders was a blue mantle. On her left arm, she carried the Child Jesus. With her right hand, she lifted a sinful soul from the horrible throat of Hell, keeping it from falling back in. On the other side, a kneeling angel held up a basket filled with hearts, which he presented to the Divine Child in His mother's arms. He took the hearts one at a time and inflamed them with his love. The Virgin Mary said she wished to be called "Mary Most Holy Mother of Light", and repeated it three times, and said not to forget that. February 27th is the Feast Day of Our Lady of Light.

Our Lady of Czestochowa



Our Lady of Częstochowa, also known as The Black Madonna of Częstochowa, is a revered icon of the Virgin Mary housed at the Jasna Góra Monastery in Częstochowa, Poland. The origins of the icon and the date of its composition are still hotly contested among scholars. The difficulty in dating the icon stems from the fact that the original image was painted over, after being badly damaged by Hussite raiders in 1430. The legend concerning the two scars on the Black Madonna's right cheek is that the Hussites stormed the Pauline monastery in 1430, plundering the sanctuary. Among the items stolen was the icon. After putting it in their wagon, the Hussites tried to get away but their horses refused to move. They threw the portrait down to the ground and one of the plunderers drew his sword upon the image and inflicted two deep strikes. When the robber tried to inflict a third strike, he fell to the ground and squirmed in agony until his death. Despite past attempts to repair these scars, they had difficulty in covering up those slashes. The painting displays a traditional composition well known in the icons of Eastern Christians. The Virgin Mary is shown as the "One Who Shows the Way." In it the Virgin directs attention away from herself, gesturing with her right hand toward Jesus as the source of salvation. In turn, the child extends his right hand toward the viewer in blessing while holding a book of gospels in his left hand. The icon shows the Madonna in fleur de lys robes. The Black Madonna is credited with miraculously saving the monastery of Jasna Góra from a 17th-century Swedish invasion, The Deluge. Another legend concerning the Black Madonna of Częstochowa is that the presence of the holy painting saved its church from being destroyed in a fire, but not before the flames darkened the fleshtone pigments.

Our Lady of Grace



Also known as “Saint Mary of Graces,” is a devotion to the Virgin Mary in the Roman Catholic Church. Churches with this dedication often owe their foundation to thankfulness for graces received from the Virgin Mary, and are particularly numerous in Italy, India, Australia, United States, France and the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland and her feast day is celebrated on February 7th. In 1610 a Carmelite, Dominic of Jesus-Mary, found among the votaries of an old altar in the monastery church of Maria della Scala in Rome, an oil painting of the Mother of God, dust-covered and somewhat torn, which grieved him. Taking it into his hands, he shook the dust off it, and kneeling down venerated it with great devotion. One night while he was praying fervently before the picture, he noticed that some dust had settled on it. Having nothing but his coarse woollen handkerchief he dusted it with that and apologized. To his great surprise, the face of the Mother of God appeared to take on life, and smiling sweetly at him, she bowed her head, which thereafter remained inclined. Fearing he was under an illusion, Dominic became troubled, but Mary assured him that his requests would be heard: he could ask of her with full confidence any favor he might desire. He fell upon his knees and offered himself entirely to the service of Jesus and Mary, and asked for the deliverance of one of his benefactor’s souls in purgatory. Mary told him to offer several Masses and other good works; a short time after when he was again praying before the image, Mary appeared to him bearing the soul of his benefactor to Heaven. Dominic begged that all who venerated Mary in this image of Our Lady of Grace might obtain all they requested. In reply the Virgin gave him this assurance: “All those who devoutly venerate me in this picture and take refuge to me will have their request granted and I will obtain for them many graces; but especially will I hear their prayers for the relief and deliverance of the souls in purgatory.”

Our Lady of Chartres



On July 13th, we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Chartres. Chartres, France not only houses the oldest shrine in France, but also – in all probability – the oldest shrine of Our Lady in the world. It is actually pre-Christian, like the Athenians’ “altar to the unknown god” and was dedicated to the Virgin who would bring forth a son, at least a century before the birth of Christ. Later, it was a pilgrimage site due to a well located there, “the Well of Strong Saints,” for the bodies of many early Christian martyrs had been cast into that well. So Chartres was a site of pilgrimages long before the construction of the beautiful Gothic cathedral that now occupies the spot. Eleven centuries later, 1140, Christians were returning from the first crusade with new Byzantine dignity added to their idea of the kind of art demanded for the veneration of royalty. In 1144 “men began to laden themselves with stone and wood...and drag them to the site of the church, the towers of which were then a-building. It was a spectacle the like of which he who has seen will never see again.” Rich and poor alike put their strength and their possessions into the work for Our Lady of Chartres.

Our Lady of Banneux



According to Mariette, she first saw the Blessed Virgin on the evening of Sunday, January 15, 1933, as she was looking out the kitchen window. A woman in white stood in the garden and called to her to come out, but her mother would not let her. Three days later the woman in white reappeared and told Mariette she was "Our Lady of the Poor". The lady appeared eight times in all. In one of these visions, Beco said the Lady asked her to plunge her hands into a small, telling her the spring was for healing and "for all nations". Over time the site drew pilgrims. The Beco family and many others became model Catholics. The chapel was built, and the spring became the site of numberless cures. During the German occupation of Belgium in 1942, the bishop encouraged the cult of Our Lady of Banneux, Our Lady of the Poor. In 1947, the bishop approved the devotion. In 1948 the cornerstone of a new basilica was laid; this was to supplant the small chapel. During the war, Marietta married a Dutch salesman. During the Battle of the Bulge in 1944, an American chaplain found them and their 15 month old baby living in a cellar of a small home occupied by American troops. Today, the small spring yields about 2,000 gallons of water a day with many reports of miraculous healings. After the apparitions, Beco decided to remain a private person, married and led a quiet family life. A small chapel stands where the *Virgin of the Poor* is said to have requested it to be built. Beco died 2 December 2011 at the age of 90. In 2008 she made a final statement about her role in the apparitions: "I was no more than a postman who delivers the mail. Once this has been done, the postman is of no importance any more." (January 15th is the Feast Day for Our Lady of Banneux.)

Our Lady of the Pillar



According to ancient Spanish tradition, on January 2, 40 AD, in the early days of Christianity, James the Greater, one of the original Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ, was preaching the Gospel in what was then the pagan land of Caesaraugusta (now Zaragoza), in the Roman province of Hispania. He was disheartened with his mission, having made only a few converts. While he was praying by the banks of the Ebro River with some of his disciples, Mary miraculously appeared before him atop a pillar accompanied by angels. Mary assured James that the people would eventually be converted and their faith would be as strong as the pillar she was standing on. She gave him the pillar as a symbol and a wooden image of herself. James was also instructed to build a chapel on the spot where she left the pillar. It is generally believed that Mary appeared to James through bilocation, as she was still living either in Ephesus or Jerusalem at the time of this event. She is believed to have died three to fifteen years after Jesus ascended to Heaven. The feast of Our Lady of the Pillar is celebrated on 12 October and she is the Patroness of the Hispanic peoples and the Spanish Civil Guard. A grand, 9 day festival, known as *Fiestas del Pilar* is celebrated in Zaragoza every year in her honor. The feast of the Lady of the Pillar is also a national holiday in Spain as it coincides with the *Fiesta Nacional de España*, which commemorates the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas in 1492.

Our Lady of China



Our Lady of China is the name given to an apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Donglu, China, first appearing in 1900.

An officially sanctioned image of Our Lady of China was blessed, granted and promulgated by Pope Pius XI in 1928, in response to the requests made by the 1924 Shanghai Synod of Bishops in China, the first national conference of bishops in the country. Following the event, Archbishop Celso Costantini (along with all the bishops of China), declared the Chinese people dedicated to Our Lady of China, using the official image. In 1941, Pope Pius XII designated the feast day as an official feast of the Catholic liturgical calendar. In 1973, following the Second Vatican Council, the Chinese Bishops conference, upon approval from the Holy See, placed the feast day on the vigil of Mothers Day (the second Sunday of May). Several churches, chapels, and pastoral centers around the world, predominantly those focused on ministry to Chinese-speaking Catholics, have adopted the name, including a mission in Washington, DC. There is a mosaic of Our Lady of China in the National Shrine of the United States in Washington, DC, established and dedicated in 2002 under the Most Rev. Michael J. Bransfield. There has been some controversy because the image used in the Chapel is not the officially approved image of Our Lady of China, but instead uses the image of Our Lady of China and Baby Jesus painted by John Lu Hung Nien. The late Cardinal Thomas Tien Keng-Hsin, the first Chinese Cardinal, used this image for the prayer card for the persecuted in China, which was widely promoted in the U.S.A. and Canada.

Our Lady of Akita



Our Lady of Akita is the title of Marian apparitions reported in 1973 by Sister Agnes Katsuko Sasagawa in the remote area of Yuzawadai, near the city of Akita in Japan. The messages emphasize prayer and penance. Sister Sasagawa stated that the Virgin Mary told her: "*Pray very much the prayers of the Rosary. I alone am able still to save you from the calamities which approach.*" For several decades, Agnes Sasagawa had encountered many health problems as a result of a poorly performed appendix operation and was immobile for over a decade. Her health reportedly improved after drinking water from Lourdes. After going totally deaf, she went to live with the nuns in the remoteness of Yuzawadai in Akita prefecture. Sister Agnes reports that in the first message the Virgin Mary asked her to recite a prayer of reparation together, and told her in 1973 that her deafness will be cured. The other reported messages ask for the praying of the rosary and to pray to repair the sins of others, as *Acts of Reparation*. During a Sunday Mass in 1982, Sister Agnes was totally cured from her deafness, despite the fact that professional medical examinations were performed initially after she'd lost her hearing (verifying that she was 'incurably deaf'), and again after she was healed (verifying that her hearing was 'normal'). Some time later, a Korean woman with a terminal brain tumor was miraculously cured after friends and relatives prayed for the intercession of Our Lady of Akita. She received visions of Mary related to the Akita events during her recovery, the first while comatose. Her disease was diagnosed and (later) cure verified by medical professionals in Korea. A recent "fun fact" is that in March 2011, Japan received the deadliest earthquake (and resulting tsunami) in her recorded history. The earthquake's epicenter was 90 miles from where Our Lady of Akita warned of terrible destruction if people did not repent; despite the close proximity, the city was found to suffer less damage than surrounding regions.

Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn



Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn is the prominent painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary venerated by the faithful in the Chapel of the Gate of Dawn in Vilnius, Lithuania. The Renaissance painting, completed possibly in the first half of the 17th century, is an unusual portrayal of Madonna as she is depicted without infant Jesus. The artwork soon became known as miraculous and inspired a following. A dedicated chapel was built in 1671 by the Discalced Carmelites. At the same time, possibly borrowing from the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the painting was covered in expensive and elaborate silver and gold clothes leaving only the face and hands visible. In the following centuries, the following grew stronger and *Our Lady* became an important part of religious life in Vilnius. The following inspired many copies in Lithuania, Poland, and diaspora communities worldwide. The chapel was visited by Pope John Paul II in 1993. It is a major site of pilgrimage in Vilnius and attracts many visitors, especially from Poland. In 1761, the monk Hilarion published a book enumerating 17 miracles attributed to the painting and the Virgin Mary. The first miracle he recorded occurred in 1671, the same year the first chapel was built. A two-year-old child fell from the second floor onto a stone pavement and was badly injured. The parents then prayed to *Our Lady* and the next day the child was healthy once again. (The above picture is the original painting.)

Our Lady of Ransom



The story of Our Lady of Ransom begins with Saint Peter Nolasco, born in Languedoc about 1189. He conceived the idea of establishing a religious order for the redemption of captives seized by the Moors on the seas and in Spain itself. On August 1, 1218 the Blessed Virgin appeared to Saint Peter, to his confessor, Raymund of Peñafort, and to King James I, and through these three servants of God established a work of the most perfect charity, the redemption of captives. Its members would undertake to deliver Christian captives and offer themselves, if necessary, as payment. Word of the apparition soon spread over the entire kingdom, and on August 10 the king went to the cathedral for a Mass celebrated by the bishop of Barcelona during which Saint Raymund narrated his vision with admirable eloquence and fervor. The king besought the blessing of the bishop for the heaven-sent plan, and the bishop bestowed the habit on Saint Peter, who emitted the solemn vow to give himself as a hostage if necessary. The Order was approved by Gregory IX under the name of *Our Lady of Mercy* and spread rapidly. Eventually a feast day was instituted and observed on September 24, first in the religious order, then in Spain and France, and eventually to the entire Church. To this day, September 24th is still the Feast Day for Our Lady of Ransom. Our Lady of Ransom is the principal patron of Barcelona. In England the devotion to Our Lady of Ransom was revived in modern times to obtain the rescue of England as Our Lady's Dowry.