

OUR LADY OF LA SALETTE

On Saturday, September 19, 1846, a "Beautiful Lady" appeared to two children, both from Corps, in the French Alps: Maximin GIRAUD, eleven year old, and Mélanie CALVAT, almost fifteen, who were watching their herds on the slope of Mont Planeau (alt. approx 6,000 ft.), not far from the village of La Salette. In a little hollow, they suddenly noticed a globe of fire—"as though the sun had fallen on the spot." Within the dazzling light they gradually perceived a woman, seated, her elbows resting on her knees and her face buried in her hands.

The Beautiful Lady rose, and said to the children in French:

Come closer, my children; don't be afraid. I am here to tell you great news.

She took a few steps towards them. Maximin and Mélanie, reassured, ran down to her and stood very close to her.

The Beautiful Lady wept all the time she spoke. She was tall, and everything about her radiated light. She wore the typical garb of the women of the area: a long dress, an apron around her waist, a shawl crossed over her breast and tied behind her back, and a close-fitting bonnet. Along the hem of her shawl she wore a broad, flat chain, and from a smaller chain around her neck there hung a large crucifix. Under the arms of the cross there were, to the left of the figure of Christ, a hammer, and, to the right, pincers. The radiance of the entire apparition seemed to emanate from this crucifix, and shone like a brilliant crown upon the Beautiful Lady's head. She wore garlands of roses on her head, around the edge of her shawl, and around her feet.

The Beautiful Lady spoke to the two shepherds, first in French, in these words:

**If my people refuse to submit,
I will be forced to let go the arm of my Son.**

**It is so strong and so heavy,
I can no longer hold it back.**

**How long a time I have suffered for you!
If I want my Son not to abandon you, I am obliged to plead with him constantly.
And as for you, you pay no heed!
However much you pray, however much you do, you will never be able to
recompense the pains I have taken for you.**

**I gave you six days to work;
I kept the seventh for myself, and no one will give it to me. This is what makes the
arm of my Son so heavy.**

And then, those who drive the carts cannot swear without throwing in my Son's name. These are the two things that make the arm of my Son so heavy.

If the harvest is ruined, it is only on account of yourselves. I warned you last year with the potatoes. You paid no heed. Instead, when you found the potatoes spoiled, you swore, and threw in my Son's name. They are going to continue to spoil, and by Christmas this year there will be none left.

Mélanie was intrigued by the expression, *pommes de terre*. In the local dialect, potatoes were called *las truffas*. She looked inquiringly at Maximin, but the Beautiful Lady anticipated her question.

Don't you understand, my children? Let me find another way to say it.

Using the local dialect, she repeated what she had said about the harvest, and then went on:

If you have wheat, you must not sow it. Anything you sow the vermin will eat, and whatever does grow will fall into dust when you thresh it.

A great famine is coming. Before the famine comes, children under seven will be seized with trembling and die in the arms of the persons who hold them. The rest will do penance through the famine. The walnuts will become worm-eaten; the grapes will rot.

At this point the Beautiful Lady spoke privately to Maximin, and then to Mélanie. then she went on:

If they are converted, rocks and stones will turn into heaps of wheat, and potatoes will be self-sown in the fields.

Do you say your prayers well, my children?

"Hardly ever, Madam," the two shepherds answered candidly.

Ah, my children, you should say them well, at night and in the morning, even if you say only an Our Father and a Hail Mary when you can't do better. When you can do better, say more.

In the summer, only a few elderly women go to Mass. The rest work on Sundays all summer long. In the winter, when they don't know what to do, they go to Mass just to make fun of religion. In Lent they go to the butcher shops like dogs.

Have you never seen wheat gone bad, my children?

They answered, "No, Madam."

The Beautiful Lady then spoke to Maximin.

But you, my child, surely you must have seen some once, at Coin, with your father. The owner of the field told your father to go and see his spoiled wheat. And then you went, and you took two or three ears of wheat in your hands, you rubbed them together, and it all crumbled into dust. While you were on your way back and you were no more than a half hour away from Corps, your father gave you a piece of bread and said to you: "Here, my child, eat some bread while we still have it this year; because I don't know who will eat any next year if the wheat keeps up like that."

"Oh, yes," answered Maximin, "Now I remember. Just then, I didn't remember it."

The Beautiful Lady then concluded, not in dialect but in French:

Well, my children you will make this known to all my people.

Then she moved forward, stepped over the stream, and without turning back she gave the injunction.

Very well, my children make this known to all my people.

The vision climbed the steep path which wound its way towards the Collet (little neck). Then she rose into the air as the children caught up to her. She looked up at the sky, then down to the earth. Facing southeast, "she melted into light." The light itself then disappeared.

On September 19, 1851, after "a precise and rigorous investigation" of the event, the witnesses, the content of the message, and its repercussions, Philibert de Bruillard, Bishop of Grenoble, pronounced his judgment in a pastoral letter of instruction. He declared that "the apparition of the Blessed Virgin to two shepherds, September 19, 1846, on a mountain in the Alps, located in the parish of La Salette,....bears within itself all the characteristics of truth and that the faithful have grounds for believing it to be indubitable and certain."

In another pastoral letter, dated May 1, 1852, the Bishop of Grenoble announced the construction of a Shrine on the mountain of the apparition, and went on to add:

"However important the erection of a Shrine may be there is something still more important, namely the ministers of religion destined to look after it, to receive the

pious pilgrims, to preach the word of God to them, to exercise towards them the ministry of reconciliation, to administer the Holy Sacrament of the altar, and to be, to all, the faithful dispensers of the mysteries of God and the spiritual treasures of the Church.

"These priests shall be called the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette; their institution and existence shall be, like the Shrine itself, an eternal monument, a perpetual remembrance, of Mary's merciful apparition."