

## Lesson 7: Apparitions of Mary

*Please click twice to watch the video* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkVNuyP8Tpo>

Apparitions of Our Blessed Lady have been reported on every continent on our globe. Those who have seen Mary have been people from many walks of life: men, women, and children. The locations where Marian Apparitions have occurred are numerous: large cities, remote areas, caves, churches, fields, homes, monasteries, and other places.

**Church's Approach:** "The Roman Catholic Church has wisely been cautious to approve, disapprove, or condemn reported apparitions." In general, studied apparitions are classed as "not worthy of belief," "not opposed to the Faith," or "worthy of belief." The message of an approved apparition cannot have any content that is contrary to the teachings of the Church.

**Supernatural Character:** Prior to any classification, the local bishop appoints a committee to take testimony, investigate, study, and report its findings. The approval of an apparition's supernatural character means that the case cannot be explained away due to a problem in the visionary, nor as fraud, nor as a natural phenomenon, nor of demonic origin.

**Faith Expression:** The local bishop has decided to encourage prayer and devotion at the site of a Marian apparition. Decisions about "faith expression" are made before the supernatural character of an apparition is decided upon. If the bishop should ever rule that the specific apparition is not of supernatural character, then of course, there would no longer be any devotion that is approved at that site.

### **Church Decisions:**

If the Church makes a negative ruling about a particular apparition, we are not to believe in that apparition.

If the bishop makes a positive ruling about an apparition, we are not bound to believe in the apparition, but we cannot criticize the messages nor the apparition once the Church declares it valid.

Some of the best known apparitions are:

**Fatima, Portugal:** Three children, Lucia de Santos, aged 10, and her two cousins, Francisco Marto, aged 9, and Jacinta Marto, aged 7, saw Mary six times between May and October 1917. Mary described herself as "Our Lady of the Rosary," while urging prayer, and particularly the rosary, as well as penance for the conversion of sinners, and the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart.

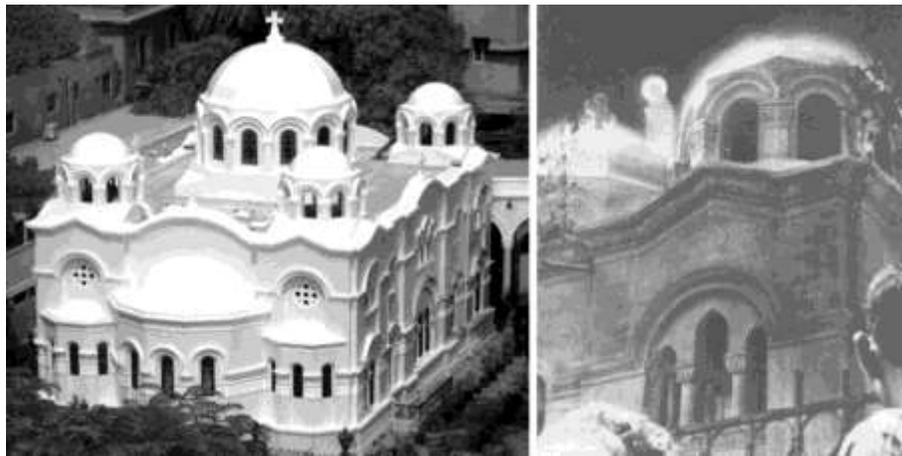
**Beauraing, Belgium:** Mary appeared thirty-three times to a group of children in the winter of 1932-33 at Beauraing in Belgium, in a convent garden near a hawthorn tree. Mary described herself as "the Immaculate Virgin" and "Mother of God, Queen of Heaven," while calling for prayer for the conversion of sinners.

**Banneux, Belgium:** Mary appeared eight times to Mariette Beco, aged 11, outside the family home at Banneux, a small village, in Belgium. She described herself as the "Virgin of the Poor," and promised to intercede for the poor, the sick, and the suffering.



**Akita, Japan: Our Lady of Akita** is the title of the Blessed Virgin Mary associated with a wooden statue venerated by faithful Japanese who hold it to be miraculous. The image is known due to the Marian apparitions reported in 1973 by Sister Agnes Katsuko Sasagawa in the remote area of Yuzawadai, an outskirt of Akita, Japan. The messages emphasize prayer (especially recitation of the Holy Rosary) and penance in combination with cryptic visions prophesying sacerdotal persecution and heresy within the Catholic Church.

The apparitions were unusual in that the weeping statue of the Virgin Mary was broadcast on Japanese national television, and gained further notice with the sudden healing of hearing impairment experienced by Sasagawa after the apparitions.



**Zeitoun, Egypt:** on April 2, 1968, a Muslim bus mechanic saw something strange hovering over St. Mary's Coptic Church in Zeitoun. He thought someone was going to commit suicide, but after closer examination, he saw it was a silhouette of light that resembled a woman. The apparition attracted a large crowd, but only lasted a few minutes.

The following week it happened again, and continued 2 or 3 times a week for a total of three years, ending in 1971. Many believed the apparition was the Virgin Mary, clothed with light. The phenomenon occurred on top of a church that is traditionally held to be a location where the Holy Family stayed during their sojourn in Egypt.

The apparition was witnessed by people of every faith, including both Muslims and Christians. The head of the Coptic Church made an investigation of the apparitions and he declared them miraculous and an authentic appearance of the Virgin Mary.

**Kibeho, Rwanda:** On Nov. 28, 1981, at a time of increasing tension between two tribes in Rwanda, Mary appeared to 3 young girls at Kibeho College, a secondary school for girls. In one of the most powerful apparitions, Mary shared with the girls an apocalyptic vision of Rwanda descending into violence, horror, and hatred.

**Guadalupe, Mexico:** Mary appeared four times to Juan Diego in 1531 at Tepeyac hill near Mexico City. She proclaimed herself the spiritual mother of all mankind and left her miraculous image on Juan Diego's outer garment, his tilma. To this day, Mexicans have a great devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe. She is the Patroness of the Americas.

**Rue de Bac, Paris, France:** Mary appeared to Catherine Labouré, in the chapel of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, at Rue du Bac in Paris, three times in 1830. She showed her the design of the medal of the Immaculate Conception, the "Miraculous Medal." This medal helped to renew devotion to Our Lady, both in France and eventually around the world.

**La Salette, France:** Mary appeared to two children in 1846, one afternoon while they were looking after the animals high up on the mountain. She appealed for penance and an end to Sabbath breaking and blasphemy in the region. This apparition is credited with a major revival of Catholicism in the area.

**Lourdes, France:** Mary appeared to a child named Bernadette a total of eighteen times at Lourdes in southern France, at the Grotto of Massabielle. She asked for penance and prayer for the conversion of sinners, and described herself as the "the Immaculate Conception." Lourdes is most famous for the miraculous spring which has been responsible for many cures accepted by the Church.

**Pontmain, France:** Mary appeared in the sky over the small town of Pontmain in north-western France to a group of young children for about three hours in January 1871, as war was threatening the area. Her message appeared on a banner under her feet, and encouraged prayer while emphasizing Jesus' love and concern. The village was spared invasion.

**Knock, Ireland:** Mary appeared at Knock, a small village in Ireland in August 1879. A number of villagers of diverse ages saw a silent apparition, which lasted about three hours, outside the local church. They saw three figures, Mary, Joseph, and St. John the Apostle, as well as a lamb on an altar and angels.

**Green Bay, Wisconsin:** In 1859, a young Belgian woman saw a bright vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary appear between two trees in one of the most unlikely places in eastern Wisconsin. The Marian site has been designated a National Shrine, and is also known as the first Marian apparition site in the United States.

# Best-known Marian Apparitions

The Blessed Virgin Mary has appeared around the world many times, often to children, and she has often communicated the need for penance among the people of the world. This graphic shows some of the best-known apparitions, and these seven have been approved as authentic by the Vatican. The faithful are not required to believe a particular apparition actually occurred, but the Vatican has approved these as worthy of belief. The building of shrines, prayers of devotion and pilgrimages to the sites often follow the authentication of an apparition.



## Banneux, near Liège, Belgium

**8** times Mary appeared between Jan. 15 and March 2, 1933. **1949** Devotion approval was given.

Mary called herself the **Virgin of the Poor** and has since been venerated as **Our Lady of the Poor, the Sick and the Indifferent**.

## La Salette, France

**2** peasant children see Mary as a sorrowing and weeping figure Sept. 19, 1846. **1942** A Mass and Office with this title were authorized.

The message she confided to them regarded the **necessity of penance**.

## Beauraing, Belgium

**33** times Mary appeared between Nov. 29, 1932, and Jan. 3, 1933, to **five children** in the garden of a convent school in Beauraing. **1949** Final approbation was given.

## Lourdes, France

**18** times Mary, identifying herself as the **Immaculate Conception**, appeared between Feb. 11 and July 16, 1858. **1907** A feast commemorating the apparitions was extended throughout the Church.

## Guadalupe, Mexico

**4** times Mary appeared in 1531 to an Indian, Juan Diego (beatified in 1990 and canonized in 2002), on Tepeyac hill outside of Mexico City, and instructed him to tell Bishop Zumarraga of her wish that a church be built there. **1910** Designated patroness of Latin America. **1942** Designated patroness of the Americas.

## Fátima, Portugal

**6** times Mary appeared between May 13 and Oct. 13, 1917. **October 1930** Apparitions were declared worthy of belief.

Devotion to **Our Lady of Fátima** was authorized under the title of Our Lady of the Rosary.

## Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, France

**3** times Mary appeared in 1830 to Catherine Labouré (canonized in 1947). **1832** Miraculous Medal made for the first time.

Mary commissioned Catherine to have a medal made of the **Immaculate Conception**.

For a full story on Our Lady of Laus, not listed on this graphic, visit [www.osv.com/Magazines/TheCatholicAnswer](http://www.osv.com/Magazines/TheCatholicAnswer)

THE CATHOLIC ANSWER

(Source: 2014 Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Almanac)



