

First Approved Apparition of Virgin Mary in U.S.A.

Our Lady of Good Help Appeared in Wisconsin in 1859

By Daniel P. McGivern

In 1858, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to 14-year-old Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, France. This site is world-famous and draws millions of pilgrims annually.

Very little known, until now, is Our Lady's appearances the following year—1859—to a 28-year-old French Belgian immigrant to northeastern Wisconsin in the U.S.A.

In 2010, the Bishop of Green Bay (world-famous as the home of the National Football League's Green Bay Packers) approved the apparitions of Our Lady of Good Help to Adele Joseph Brise.

Our Lady appeared on three occasions to Adele, who later became a lay Third Order Franciscan and was known as Sister Adele. She and her sisters wore habits.

Many miracles have taken place, quietly, for the past 150 years at the chapel and crypt built where the Virgin Mary appeared and spoke to Adele.

*"I am the Queen of Heaven who prays
for the conversion of sinners, and I wish you to
do the same. You received Holy Communion
this morning and that is well. But you must do more.
Make a general confession and offer communion for the
conversion of sinners. If they do not convert and do
penance, my Son will be obliged to punish them."*

As recently as 2010, a little boy, born on the feast day of Our Lady of Fatima (May 13) was cured of acute leukemia, praying at the crypt. In the hospital the next day, the doctor told the mother "There are no leukemic cells in this boy's body." Later, on the hospital's 10th floor, he told his mom who noticed he was sitting next to the Infant of Prague statue, "I'm sitting by Jesus. He healed me."

For many years, there have been crutches placed at the shrine's crypt by those who could now walk normally.

Miraculously, hundreds of adults and children were spared by Our Lady's intercession during the great Peshtigo fire in Wisconsin, which burned 2,400 square miles, killing 1,500 to 2,500 people.

Adele Brise and her companions, and many in nearby areas in all directions fled to the shrine for Mary's and God's help.

Fr. Peter Pernin reported what Sister Adele told him later. They knew they could not escape the fire, so the people took up the statue of Mary—as she appeared to Adele dressed in white with a yellow sash—and bore it in procession around the grounds. When the flame and wind blew so strongly in the direction of the chapel they awaited a lull or turned in the other direction around the chapel, praying and hoping.

In the morning, October 9, 1871—12 years to the day after Mary spoke to Adele as Queen of Heaven—rain came.

All the houses and fences in the neighborhood had been burned with the exception of all structures on the six acres of land consecrated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was an emerald field of green amid a sea of ashes outside the green land on which the school, chapel, crypt and wood fences still stood.

On October 8, there was also another famous fire, the great Chicago fire which destroyed only four square mile of the city, killing over 300 people. So although the Peshtigo fire was much worse, it was little written about or known outside the state of Wisconsin.

Messages were given by Our Mother to Adele on only one day, unlike those given to St. Bernadette over a period of months at Lourdes.

The following are the Blessed Virgin Mary's words to the young woman Adele Joseph Brise on October 9, 1859: "I am the Queen of Heaven who prays for the conversion of sinners, and I wish you to do the same. You received Holy Communion this morning and that is well. But you must do more. Make a general confession and offer communion for the conversion of sinners. If they do not convert and do penance, my Son will be obliged to punish them."

The two young women with Adele knelt down as Adele did, although that saw and heard nothing, as was also true with Bernadette's two companions in Lourdes.

"Gather the children in this wild country and teach them what they should know for salvation. Teach them their catechism, how to sign themselves with the sign of the cross, and how to approach the sacraments. That is what I wish you to do. Go and fear nothing. I will help you."

Looking at Adele's kneeling companions, Our Lady said, "Blessed are they that believe without seeing."

Mary went on to ask, "What are you doing here in idleness while your companions are working in the vineyard of my Son?"

Adele started to cry and asked what more she could do.

"Gather the children in this wild country and teach them what they should know for salvation. Teach them their catechism, how to sign themselves with the sign of the cross, and how to approach the sacraments. That is what I wish you to do. Go and fear nothing. I will help you." Then Our Lady's apparition ended.

Adele took her “marching orders” to heart and went to all the surrounding homes for years, offering her household services for free in return for teaching the children as Our Lady instructed.

Funds were eventually donated to build a school (no tuition was charged so attendance was great) church and crypt on the site of the apparitions of Mary. In 2010, Bishop David L. Ricken approved the apparitions of Blessed Mother as worthy of belief, the first such site approved as authentic by the local bishop in the history of the United States of America.

Many thousands go to the site on August 15 annually for the solemnity of the Feast of the Assumption. The website is www.shrineofourladyofgoodhelp.com. The phone number is 920-866-2571.

The Fathers of Mercy are serving as priests at the shrine, near the little town of Champion, 17 miles from Green Bay which has more than ample accommodations for pilgrims who choose to stay overnight or longer.

On a daily basis, hundreds go to the shrine, small compared to other great shrines of Our Lady. But it has only become really known since last year.

Our Lady's message on October 9, 1859 is just as important today: teach the children their catechism, the sign of the cross and how to approach the sacraments—especially confession and the Eucharist. The message applies to all parents. It is ultimately their responsibility.