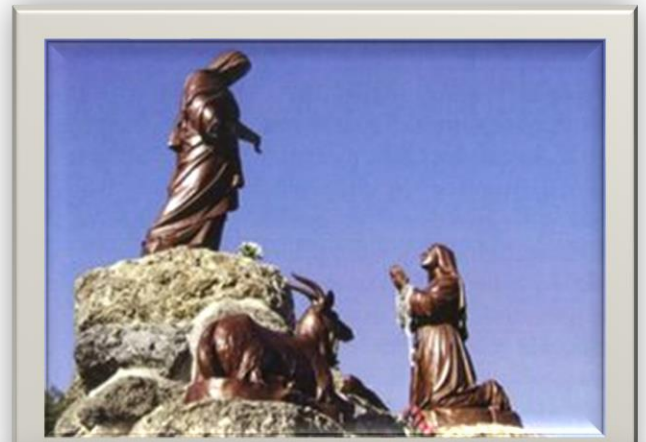


## Our Lady of Laus (1664–1718)

Benôte Rencurel was an orphan, born on Sept 16, 1657, in Saint-Etienne d'Avancon. After her father died when she was only 7 years old, she helped her family by serving as shepherdess for a neighbour. Benôte had not learned to read or write; her only source of education was the parish church and the sermons she heard at Mass.

In May 1664, she saw a beautiful lady holding a child in her arms and standing on a rock in the valley of Laus, where Benôte was guarding her neighbour's flocks and praying the Rosary. Her simple response, offering to share the hard bread she had to eat after softening it in the nearby fountain, made the beautiful lady smile. Her desire to hold the little child made the lady smile again, but she left without saying a word.

Over the next four months, the beautiful lady, whose name Benôte did not know, returned daily to instruct her on her mission. Benôte told her neighbour about the lady, and the neighbour did not believe her. Following Benôte to the valley one day, she heard the lady — although she did not see her — warn Benôte that her neighbour was in spiritual danger: “She had something on her conscience” and needed to confess her sins and do penance, because she took the name of Our Lord in vain. Benôte's neighbour took this message to heart and did penance for the rest of her life.



Benôte finally asked the lady who she was. “My name is Mary,” she replied. Mary called on Benôte to pray for sinners and work for their conversion. She asked Benôte to meet her at a chapel in Laus which was to be used as a shrine. Once the diocese recognized the authenticity of the apparitions, the same chapel was replaced by a larger church, the present shrine church. The miraculous healings with the oil from the sanctuary lamps continued, drawing more and more pilgrims to Laus. (At the present time, more than 120,000 travel there yearly.)

Like all visionaries, Benôte knew suffering and misunderstanding. After all, she was a simple peasant instructing priests on how to welcome penitents with kindness and charity in the Sacrament of Penance to encourage them to confess their sins and repent. Benôte also urged young girls and older women to be modest, sometimes correcting their dress or behavior. She became a Third Order Dominican and received visions of Jesus in His passion

from 1669 to 1679. Among these five visions, Jesus told her once, “My daughter, I show myself in this state so that you can participate in My passion.” Benôite mystically participated in the sufferings of Christ for 15 years, enduring great pain starting every Thursday evening and continuing until Saturday morning. On Christmas Day 1718, she received holy Communion; on the feast of the Holy Innocents, she went to confession, received extreme unction and died. Bishop di Falco Leandri, in addition to urging the Vatican approval of the apparitions — the first approval in this century and the first approved in France since Lourdes — has also supported the cause for Benôite’s canonization.

Our Lady of Laus asked for sinners to do penance, a chapel of Eucharistic adoration to be built so Jesus could convert sinners, and a house for priests to be built so the priests could administer the sacraments to sinners. At the heart of the message given to Benoite is a conversion of souls which aims to bring full reconciliation with oneself, with others, and with God

Our Lady of Laus, Refuge of Sinners, pray for us!