

**OUR LADY OF GOOD HELP
CHAMPION (NEW FRANKEN),
WISCONSIN UNITED STATES 1859**

THE declaration of approval for the first apparitions to be approved in the United States took place on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 2010, when Bishop L. Ricken of Green Bay formally announced that the appearances of the Blessed Mother to Adele Brise in 1859, were authentic. Before a huge crowd in the shrine of Our Lady of Good Help, Bishop Ricken gave this welcome news:

I declare with moral certainty and in accord with the norms of the Church that

the events, apparitions and locutions given Adele Brise in 1859 do exhibit the substance of supernatural character, and I do hereby approve these apparitions as worthy of belief (although not obligatory) by the Christian faithful.



The bishop's decision to affirm the apparitions took place only after he received a favorable decision from three theologians who had been appointed by him two years earlier. They studied the nature and history of the appearances, the character of the

visionary, and the many miracles and answers to prayer that resulted.

ADELE BRISE, A BELGIAN IMMIGRANT TO THE UNITED STATES

According to the shrine in Wisconsin, the history of the apparitions begins with a Belgian immigrant to the United States, Adele Brise, who was born in Dion-le-Val on January 30, 1831. A healthy and energetic child, Adele was unfortunately involved in an accident with lye that caused blindness in one eye. She endured this handicap patiently and was known for her charming personality and religious fervor. Although burdened with a meager education, she had a fervent desire to become a religious in her homeland, but when her parents were making preparations to leave for the United States, she sought the advice of her confessor. He told her that she might still become a religious in the new country, so she accepted his advice. Together with her parents, Lambert and Marie Catherine Brise, and three siblings, the twenty-four-year-old Adele left Belgium in early June of 1855. After enduring all the hardships of a seven-week voyage, they arrived safely in New York.

From there they journeyed west and settled on the Green Bay Peninsula where they established a farm on 240 acres of land they had purchased for \$120.00. Adele settled into the routine of daily chores, one of which led to an encounter with the Mother of God.

THE FIRST APPARITION

The apparition was recorded for us by Sister Pauline LaPlant to whom Adele told her story: Adele was going to the grist mill about four miles from Champion with a sack of wheat on her head. As Adele came near the place, she saw a lady all in white standing between two trees, one a maple, the other a hemlock. Adele was frightened and stood still. The vision slowly disappeared, leaving a white cloud after it. Adele continued on her errand and returned home without seeing anything more. She told her parents what had happened, and they wondered what it could be—perhaps a poor soul who needed prayers?

THE SECOND APPARITION

Sister Pauline's testimony continued:

On the following Sunday, October 9, 1859, Adele had to pass there again on her way to Mass at the Bay Settlement, about eleven miles from her home.

This time she was not alone, but was accompanied by her sister, Isabel, and a neighbor woman, Mrs. Vander Niessen. When they approached the trees, the same lady in white was standing where Adele had seen her before. Adele was again frightened and said, almost in a tone of reproach, "Oh, there is that lady again."

Adele had not the courage to go on. The other two did not see anything, but they could tell by Adele's look that she was afraid. They thought, too, that it might be a poor soul who needed prayers. They waited a few minutes, until Adele told them it was gone. The vision had disappeared as during the first time, and all Adele could see remaining was a little mist or white cloud. After Mass, Adele went to confession and told her confessor how she had been frightened at the sight of a lady in white. Father William Verhoef bade her not to fear, and to speak to him of this outside the confessional. Father Verhoef told her that if it were a heavenly messenger, she would see it again, and it would not harm her, but to ask in God's name who it was and what it desired of her. After that, Adele had more courage. She started home with her two companions and a man who had been clearing land for the Holy Cross Fathers.



THE THIRD APPARITION

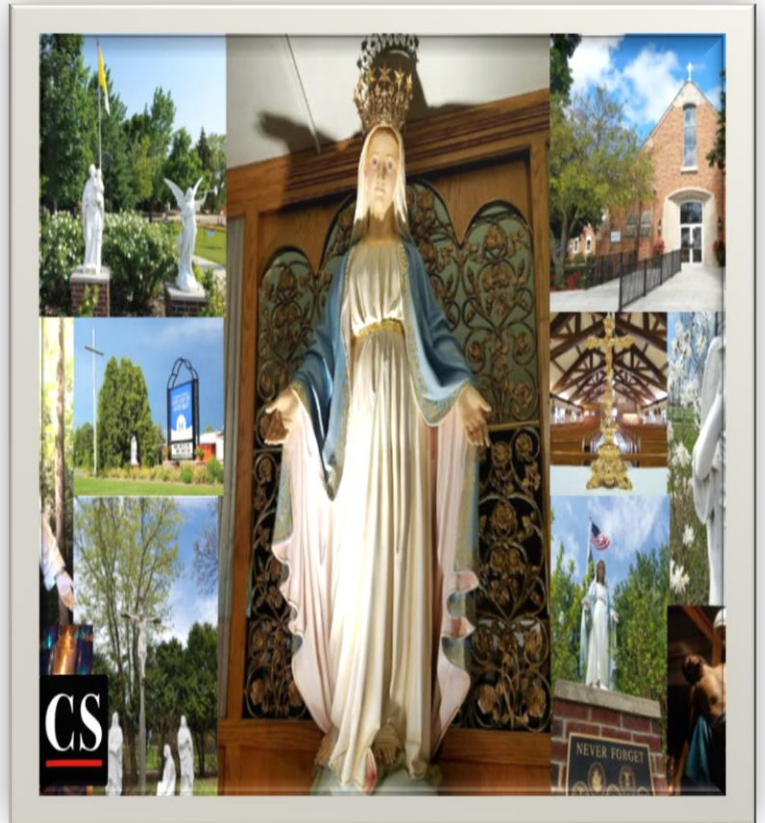
That same day, As they approached the hallowed spot (October 9, 1859), Adele could see the beautiful Lady clothed in dazzling white, with a yellow sash around her waist. Her dress fell to her feet in graceful folds. She had a crown of stars around her head, and her long, golden, wavy hair fell loosely around her shoulders. Such a heavenly light shone around her that Adele could hardly look back at her sweet face. Overcome by this heavenly light and the beauty of her amiable visitor, Adele fell on her knees and asked, “In God’s name who are you and what do you want of me?” The beautiful Lady responded, “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.”

When one of Adele’s companions asked Adele, “Who is it and why can’t we see her as you do?” Adele said, “Kneel. The Lady says she is the Queen of Heaven.” The Blessed Mother turned, looked at the companions and said, “Blessed are they that believe without seeing.” Then looking at Adele she asked, “What are you doing here in idleness ... while your companions are working in the vineyard of my son?”

“What more can I do, dear Lady?” Adele asked while shedding heartfelt tears. “How shall I teach them who know so little myself?”

The radiant visitor instructed, “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.”

After the Lady lifted her hands as though beseeching a blessing for those at her feet, she slowly vanished, leaving Adele prostrate on the ground.

Although some scoffed at the report of Adele and the vision, her father believed and honored the apparition by erecting a small ten-by-twelve-foot chapel near the place of her vision. Soon after the great event, Adele obeyed the directive given by the Blessed Mother. She began catechizing children and correcting sinners throughout the area. So effective were her efforts that the Reverend Philip Crud in 1865 advised her to solicit funds for the building of a convent and to recruit help from pious women. Shortly afterward a group of Franciscan tertiaries, with Adele as their superior, began to assist Adele in all her endeavors. These devoted women helped Adele in soliciting funds and with Adele, they were often obliged to ask local farmers for produce, grain and meat to feed the students and her little community.

While Church authorities rejected Adele’s efforts, she was nevertheless joined by many who resorted to prayer for the humble shrine’s acceptance and success. Soon miracles were taking place; cures of the blind and lame. But the most spectacular miracle took place on October 9 and 10, 1871, the anniversary of Adele’s third apparition.

THE FOURTH APPARITION

The miracle involved a fire, now known as the Peshtigo Fire, which began and quickly spread through 400 square miles of northeastern Wisconsin, killing about 1,500 people. It soon spread to the Belgian region. Many, fearing the flames, fled to the lake for refuge while Adele and her community called upon Heaven for protection. To demonstrate their confidence in the Blessed Virgin, they removed her statue from the chapel and carried it in procession around the perimeter of the land together with all the people who had come there for protection. This was to be the first of many processions. When the fire was extinguished, it was seen that the fire had destroyed all the land outside the chapel grounds and had stopped abruptly at the fence. It had miraculously left undisturbed the five acres of the shrine and all the cattle and farm animals which had been brought there for safety.

All seems to have gone well for Sister Adele until one day when she was on her way to Mass. She was thrown from a wagon, and experienced constant physical pain from that time until her death. Unable to continue the management of the school because of

her painful condition, the care of the school was passed to another. One day Sister Adele spoke the words, "I rejoiced in what was said to me. We shall go into the house of the Lord." She died that day, July 5, 1896, and was laid to rest in the little cemetery near the chapel. Sister Adele was sixty-six years of age.

ANOTHER CHAPEL IS BUILT

The simple chapel built by Adele's father soon after the apparition, quickly became inadequate for the many people who visited. Another chapel was built when Gregory and Isabella Doyen donated the five acres of land that encompassed the site of the apparitions. One wooden chapel replaced another until a chapel of brick was constructed, which received the blessing of Bishop Krautbauer in October 1880. One of the former students of Adele's school recalls the building of the 1880 chapel:

I remember well, when I was about eight years old, we would pray and sing hymns around the trees where the Virgin Mother had appeared to Sister Adele.

I also remember when the brick chapel was built and the precious trees were cut down to build the chapel, and the altar placed on the spot.

There are carefully preserved remnants of the trees, as well as other precious relics kept in the chapel.

The work this good sister started continues. The simple chapel and school have been enlarged and improved during the years, and today beautiful brick buildings house a convent and school, a chapel with a crypt that was dedicated in July 1942. The crypt and altar that stand over the place of the apparitions have behind them a number of crutches that represent the many miracles that happened at the shrine. An outdoor Way of the Cross and a Rosary walk are available to the huge number of pilgrims who continually visit the shrine of Our Lady of Good Help.

In commemoration of the procession that took place during the Peshtigo fire, a procession takes place every August 15, the feast of Our Lady's Assumption. An outdoor Holy Mass is offered for the thousands in attendance.

One of the sisters who worked with Sister Adele left us this little memorial of her:

Sister had a great deal to suffer from some misunderstandings, especially from the clergy; but all this was to make her feel that this is not our true home, and she took it in good faith. I never heard her say an unkind word against them.

She was always charitable and obedient. Her work prospered, and she did a

great deal of good. Dear Sister Adele, from your happy home above,
remember us. More than a hundred years after her death, pilgrims by the thousands visit the
shrine where prayers are answered, many are converted and miracles of healing are granted.
It is apparent to all that the good sister's work continues to prosper as the Mother of God
knew it would