

OUR LADY OF CUAPA CUAPA, NICARAGUA 1980

THE FIRST VISION

BERNARDO Martinez was the sacristan of the church in Cuapa and had arrived to ring the bell to alert the parishioners for the recitation of the Rosary when he saw a brilliant light coming from the shrine of Our Lady. His only thought then was the expense of the unnecessary lighting of the church. Although he cannot remember the exact date, he does remember that on April 15, 1980, he saw the shrine bright once again and upon inspection saw the statue of the Virgin illuminated. Thinking that the boys playing outside had somehow damaged the church to let in the light, he realized on inspection that the light was definitely coming from the statue.

This was a great mystery for me, with the light that came from her one could walk without tripping. And it was nighttime, almost eight o'clock at night ... I then understood that it was a strange thing.

When news of the happening reached the parish priest he asked for a description of the vision and also wanted to know what were the usual prayers that Bernardo recited. The sacristan replied, "I told him I recite the Rosary and three Hail Mary's to the Holy Virgin ever since I was little. I was also taught to say when I had any tribulations: "Don't leave me, my Mother." The priest then advised him to keep the vision secret and not to report any future events to the parishioners.

This first apparition was a silent one, but on May 8, 1980, things were different. Bernardo tells that one night he felt sad because of financial, employment and spiritual problems. He had been ridiculed because his work at the church was so menial: sweeping, dusting and washing altar linens. He spent a restless night, but in the morning



he thought he would go fishing and enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the isolation.

THE SECOND VISION

He was walking home with his collection of fish when suddenly there was a flash of lightning followed by another. To his amazement, a beautiful Lady was standing above a group of rocks but was actually supported by a brilliant cloud. Bernardo describes the vision in this way: I was wondering if it was the same statue as in the chapel, but I saw that she blinked ... that she was beautiful. On the cloud were the feet of a very beautiful lady. Her feet were bare. The dress was long and white. She had a brilliant cord around the waist. Long sleeves. Covering her was a veil of a cream color with gold embroidery along the edge. Her hands were held together over her heart. It looked like the statue of the Virgin of Fatima.

I saw that she had human skin and that her eyes moved and blinked ... she extended her arms like the Miraculous Medal that I had never seen before, but which later was shown to me. She extended her arms and from her hands came rays of light stronger than the sun ... the rays that came from her hands touched my heart. I asked her "What is your name," and she said, "My name is Mary ... I come from heaven. I am the Mother of Jesus." She requested that the Rosary be said in a family group, including children and it was to be prayed at a set hour when there were no problems with the work in the home.

She told me that the Lord does not like prayers we make in a rush or mechanically ... She recommended praying the Rosary with the reading of biblical citations (the Scriptural Rosary). She later recommended the propagation of the devotion to the shoulder wounds of Christ.

The Lady also wanted the renewal of the five first Saturdays and warned, "If people do not change there will be grave dangers and they will hasten the arrival of the Third World War." When the cloud began to rise, the vision raised her arms to Heaven as in the statue of the Assumption and gradually vanished from sight.

Hoping to avoid another vision that might bring him ridicule if he told of it, he decided to avoid the river where she had first appeared and instead walked through a pasture in search of a missing cow. While he was walking, the Lady again appeared, preceded by lightning flashes. She promised him help in relating the vision. This filled his soul with peace and allowed him to tell what had happened with no fear of ridicule.

During the night of June 8, the Lady favored him with a detailed dream in which he was shown Dominican and Franciscan monks and groups of people praying the Rosary in procession. He was also granted a nighttime vision of an angel who foretold several events which eventually occurred. The Blessed Mother again appeared in September, but this time as a child. During the course of the apparition, when Bernardo asked her whether the people of his parish should build a new church they had been planning, she said, "The Lord does not necessarily want a material Church, He wants living temples which are yourselves." The last apparition took place on October 13, during which the people experienced a strange phenomenon. After reciting the Rosary and while singing the hymn My Queen of Heaven, a luminous circle formed on the ground. The light came from above and marked the area ... I looked up and saw that a circle had also formed in the sky. Everyone present, without exception saw it. During this apparition the Blessed Virgin's garments changed to a grey color, her face became sad and she cried. She said through tears: "It saddens me to see the hardness of those persons' hearts. But you will have to pray for them so they will change."

No doubt inspired by the Blessed Mother's apparitions, it is reported that Bernardo Martinez became a priest and served the people of Nicaragua with dedication.

The apparitions have found favor with a number of bishops including Archbishop Pio Bello Ricardo in 1987, and in 1982, Bishop Bosco M. Vivas Robelo and the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Managua as well as Bishop Pablo Antonio Vega, the Prelate Bishop of the diocese where the apparitions took place. In 1987, Archbishop Pio Bello Ricardo wrote "I approve the site for pilgrimages as a place for prayer, meditation and worship ..." and on May 26, 2009, Bishop Freddy J. Fuenmayor of Los Teques wrote: In the exercise of my faculties as Bishop of Finca Betania, and the tenor of Canon 1230 of the Canonical Code .. I declare the place a Marian diocesan sanctuary of Mary Reconciler of all Peoples and Nations