

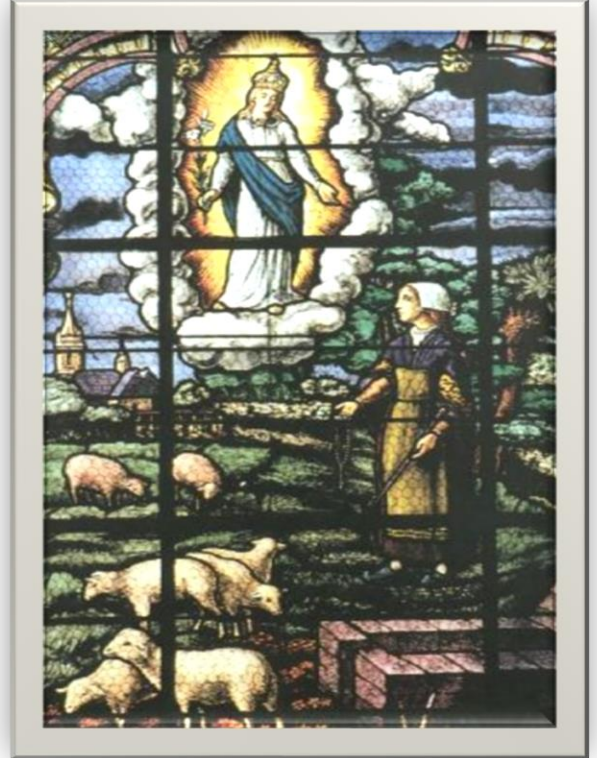
OUR LADY OF ETERNAL AID(OUR LADY OF ALL HELP) QUERRIEN, LA PRENESSAYE, FRANCE 1652

FIRST APPARITION AT QUERRIEN, LA PRENESSAYE, FRANCE

QUERRIEN is a small village located in the northwestern part of France known as Brittany. Here the Blessed Virgin appeared on August 15, to a poor shepherdess, Jeanne Courtel, who was twelve years old. Both deaf and mute since birth, Jeanne was tending her father's flock of sheep and was reciting her prayers when the Blessed Virgin appeared holding the Child Jesus on one arm and holding a stalk of lilies in the other. The Lady spoke only a few words when Jeanne realized she was miraculously healed and could hear. The Blessed Madonna spoke in a sweet voice, "I choose this place to be honored. Build for me a chapel in the middle of this village and many people will come." Then a dialogue began between the Holy Virgin and the shepherdess. The apparition said, "Charming shepherdess, give me one of your lambs." Jeanne would willingly have given one to the Lady, but she replied, "These sheep are not mine, they are my father's." The Lady then directed, "Return to your parents and tell them that I require a lamb." The girl turned to leave, but then asked, "But who will keep my herd?" "Myself. I will keep your sheep!"

The little girl returned quickly to her parents who were astonished to hear her speak. Jeanne excitedly told them, "A Lady came to see me, and she asked me for one of your lambs." The father was overjoyed at his child's miraculous recovery, and replied, "Ah, my daughter. Because this Lady has made you speak, we will give her all the flock." Jeanne also related that the Lady said he should dig the nearby pond to find her statue that had been buried there for centuries. "And did the Lady say who she was?" In utter simplicity Jeanne answered, "She said she is the Virgin Mary and we need to build a chapel in the village so many pilgrims will go there to honor her." "If this is true," the father said, "we will ask the bishop to allow us to build a shrine to the Virgin Mary." In the days that followed, the Virgin appeared again, and repeated her request for a chapel.

History relates that in the year 610, St. Gall had visited the region to erect a hermitage and had sculpted a statue of the Virgin Mary. During a disastrous time in the region, the chapel he built was destroyed, and the statue was lost. But on August 20, having been directed by the Lady to search the pond for the statue, it was duly found and proved to be in excellent condition despite its having been buried in water for centuries. During the same year of 1652, on September 11, Monsignor Denis de La Barde,



bishop of the region, made an appearance and was informed about all that took place. Several days later, on September 20, after conducting his investigation, he formally recognized the validity of the apparitions and blessed the first stone of the future chapel. Begun in 1652, the chapel was completed four years later. Because of the large crowds that visited the shrine, it was enlarged in 1779, and now entombs the body of the visionary, Jeanne Courtel, who died in 1703.

CORONATION OF THE MIRACULOUS STATUE

It is recorded that twenty thousand pilgrims visited Querrien on August 14, 1950, for the coronation of the miraculous statue by the local bishop who did so in the presence of many ecclesiastics. The year 1968 witnessed the building of a large portico to accommodate outdoor ceremonies and in 1981 a building to house pilgrims was opened.

One of the most splendid ceremonies to take place at the shrine was that in honor of Cardinal Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris, who paid homage to the Madonna and then blessed the new buildings on September 10, 2000. Two years later, the area observed the 350th anniversary of the apparitions of the Virgin of Eternal Aid.

The shrine of Our Lady is proud to announce that it is the only one in Brittany that has been authenticated by the Catholic Church.