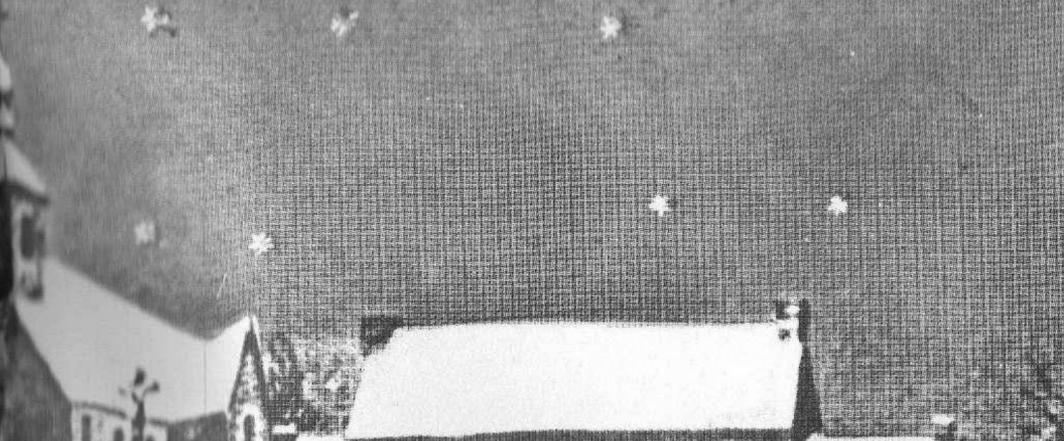


Space holder for
those who prefer viewing
2-page spreads

*** What
happened
* at**



Pontmain.



This book belongs to the public domain. You are most welcome to download it and share it. Anyone has permission to print it as a fresh publication.

This edition utilizes a PDF currently available on the internet.

Corrupt pages were rescanned from a printed text borrowed from a Carmelite monastery.

Neither the printed copy, nor the PDF, provided the original date of publication. Text in the appendices suggests that the book was printed by the Blue Army press in the early 1970s. However, the introduction explains that the text is an English translation of a 1939 French publication, which was a re-publication of the “first edition” of 1871. In other words, this text is a foundational document for learning the events of Pontmain. Almost everything else is merely a commentary.

This edition adds a third appendix to provide an update on the good priest who was present during this apparition in his parish.

Colored artwork replaces black and white photos on some pages.

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☆
WHAT
HAPPENED
☆ at ☆
PONTMAIN

by
Abbe M. Richard

Printed in U.S.A.

by



Ave Maria Institute
Washington, New Jersey

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pages are not missing from this digital edition.
In this old-fashioned layout
the cover was counted as page 1

Introduction to the English Translation

Although Our Lady of Hope, the Virgin of Pontmain, is already known in America, especially through the Oblate Fathers, there was lacking a translation of the "official" story of her coming in the skies of France. And now that void is filled.

I wish first to thank John M. Haffert for this translation. He would have preferred not to have his name mentioned, but since his love for Our Lady compelled him to this added labor, we pray that in return he will obtain from Jesus many graces which may extend to all the Blue Army, which he represents, and upon all the readers.

The message which the Virgin came to bring from God to the world on that evening of January 17, 1871, is more than ever applicable in this present hour of tension, of war, of technical advance and of the conquest of space.

This message underlines the absolute necessity of a dialogue with God, Master of all the Universe.

It recalls the continuing role of Providence in all that happens.

It spotlights the priestly role of Jesus Christ Who never fails to permit Himself to be moved to help man go beyond himself and to be saved.

Pontmain is a harbor of Peace.

Moreover, now that there is developing a spirit of ecumenism in the world, the epiphany of the Virgin at Pontmain allows all who believe in Jesus Christ to come together in united, fervent, lasting prayer. Some will be happy to find in this manifestation of Our Lady the prime place accorded to Christ, only Mediator and Saviour. In this apparition, all is in function with Christ. Our Lady, by her attitude and her silence, testifies to her role in the mystery of Salvation and of the Church: To lead to her Son that we may do all He commands us.

Those of the East will rejoice to see in the West an intervention of the Mother of God clothed in all the signs and characteristics of a miraculous Icon. Thus at Pontmain Our Lady throws a rope of loving understanding between her children of the West and of the East that through patience and truth the prayer of her Son may be fulfilled: "That they may be one."

That is Pontmain.

You will be enraptured by this apparition and you will feel compelled to speak of it to others.

As a consequence, in fulfillment of the desire of Our Lady of Pontmain who is at the heart of the Universe, in the midst of the stars, let us work effectively to establish peace in our world.

Canon Paul Poulain,
Rector of the Basilica of N. D. de Pontmain
January 1, 1971

Foreword

It is with satisfaction that we offer to the friends of Pontmain this new edition of a precious document, the original of which is preserved in the archives of the Sanctuary. A most qualified person on the subject said to us recently: "This is the masterpiece of the entire affair!" together with the Canonical Process. And of this there is no doubt.

This story (told with a seriousness and precision in the slightest details) was written just a few days after the apparition of January 17, 1871, by Father Richard, chaplain of the Sisters of Hope of Laval. And it is said that Father Richard wrote these pages to the praise of Our Lady of Pontmain on his knees.

In any event, he came personally to Pontmain to draw together the details of what happened. He questioned the four visionaries severely and critically as well as the sixty persons who surrounded them that night of January 17th. Then he wrote the book. Afterwards he came back to Pontmain and before the visionaries and all the other witnesses he read it and made, on

the spot, whatever corrections of detail were indicated.

We have before us the first edition which appeared in Laval with the Imprimatur of M. Wicart, Vicar General, dated March 1st, 1871.

We reproduce it here now in its entirety and without any change* indicating only in footnote two rather curious little corrections. They were made personally by Father Eugene Barbedette on the copy he read and corrected himself for us after the first visit we made to Pontmain on September 30, 1903. And there we heard (exceptional favor!) the account of the apparition by M. Barbedette in the Basilica square. Present were only Françoise Richer, M. Roulleaux, Canon Garry and the writer of these lines... who little dreamt that Our Lady of Pontmain, attaching him to her service, would one day use him, too, as a witness.

Msgr. Michel Even,

Rector of the Basilica of Pontmain

February 2, 1939

* (Translator's Note:) The original French is enhanced by frequent quotes of the original dialect, but otherwise the English version exactly follows the words of Abbé Richard. All footnotes are his unless referring to translation and so indicated. J. M. H.

Preface

Other apparitions of the Blessed Virgin may have been more impressive and may have become better known. Here Our Lady stoops to a nation already consecrated to her and now preparing, at the time she appears (1871), for public consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

But to her protection Our Lady places one condition: Prayer.

And when one considers that prayer is the principle of all graces one begins to understand that more than maternal protection is contained in her message. **IN THE APPARITIONS OF PONTMAIN THERE IS A FULL MESSAGE OF HOLINESS.**

Evidence of this is overwhelming. Never will souls exhaust the riches contained in this event.

Mary at Pontmain is the star-encircled Virgin appearing in the night;

The Virgin seen only by children;

The Virgin who smiles and who accompanies the singing of the villagers with movements of her hands;

The Virgin who presents a bloody crucifix and be-

comes sad during the examination of conscience of those who pray to her;

The Virgin of Hope and of prayers heard;

The Virgin who increases in size during the recitation of the Rosary;

The Virgin who is not disdainful of the simple devotion of candles illuminated about her;

The Virgin whose head is framed by three great stars, seen by all, which indicate the union of Mary with the Blessed Trinity. . .

For all these reasons we warmly congratulate the Rector of the Basilica of Pontmain for deciding to republish the account by Father Richard. There is no other account which gives a more accurate statement of what really happened at Pontmain. It is so complete that one need but meditate on it sentence by sentence to plumb the depths of this Marian treasure.

The previous edition contained a preface by Henry Laserre, the historian of Lourdes, who had been asked to write a book about Pontmain and who replied: "But the book is already written: it is the account by Father Richard. One would not be able to write anything more beautiful."

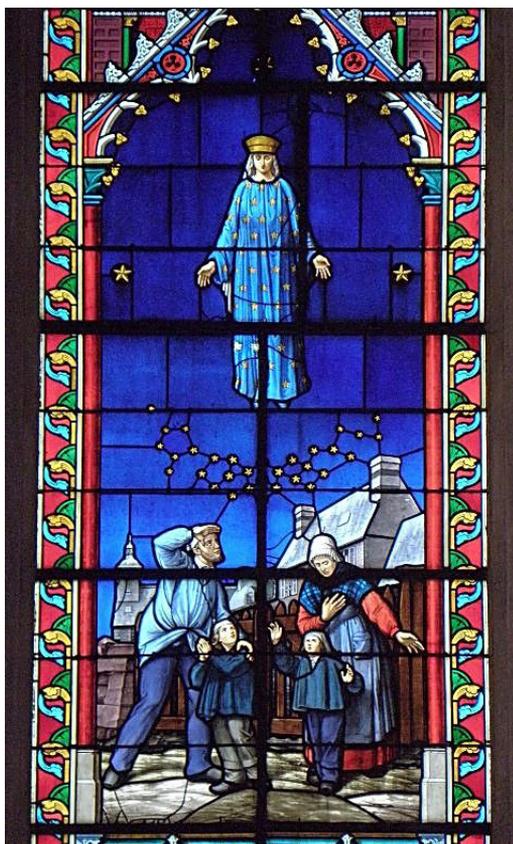
Pilgrim, read this little book with all piety. Reread it at home after your pilgrimage. Encourage oth-

ers to read it. You, and those whom you cause to read it, will say:

Are there many pages more beautiful than these among all that has ever been written about the glory of Our Lady, our Mother Mary?

+ Paul Richaud
Bishop of Laval

Easter Sunday, 1939



WHAT HAPPENED AT PONTMAIN

- I -

Long dependent on the parish of Saint-Ellier, Pontmain was made a parish in its own right in 1840. From 1836, Father Guerin (born in 1801 in Laval) was appointed to Pontmain by Bishop Bouvier of Le Mans.

For thirty-five years (before what happened at Pontmain) this pious pastor labored for his flock of some five hundred souls. And his efforts were blessed with a people deeply Christian. One never sees work on Sunday in Pontmain; it is indeed rare ever to hear the Lord's name in vain. Children, raised in the fear of God, respect and obey their parents. Three Sisters (Sisters Adorers of the Justice of God) instruct the boys and girls.

In the centre of this hamlet, on the left as you arrive from Saint-Mars, a little before the church situated at the right is a modern-looking house. But inside on the immense fireplace, is the date: 1598.

This is where the Barbedette family lives.

A little beyond, and belonging to it, is a very large, stuccoed barn with a large green doorway. If you turn



The third, fourth and fifth phase.

your back to this doorway and look in front of you, a little to your left you see the church. And just in front of you, at about seventy steps on the other side of the street which goes through the village (which gives the impression of being surrounded by low walls) is a house belonging to Augustine Guidecoq and by Adrian Boitin, a bootmaker. ¹ To the right is a house of a shoemaker named Rousseau. And hidden behind this house is the establishment belonging to the Sisters, on a level with the dwelling of Augustine Guidecoq and separated from the street by a garden and a little court in which the children play.

We will ask the reader to forgive us all these small details, but they are necessary for understanding what happened in Pontmain.

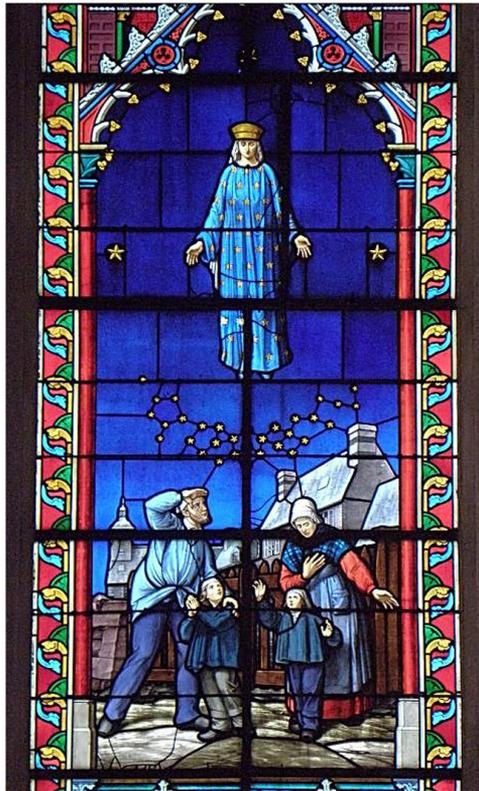
II

The Barbedette family has five members: the father, the mother, and three children. The eldest of the children is in the Army since the twenty-third of September. The next is Eugene, twelve years old. He has a face a trifle long-suffering, a serious air, intelligent, gentle, open, and good.

Joseph, his young brother, ten years of age, is frail and delicate but lively and active. On several occasions, we were surprised by his responses. They were as quick as they were spiritual. ² Born of pro-



The barn Barbedette



foundly Christian parents, they are very pious boys. Our readers can judge this for themselves when they learn how these two prayed that Tuesday, January 17, 1871, the day on which the extraordinary event happened which we are about to relate.

Their father came, as usual, to wake them up at six o'clock in the morning in the barn where they slept. After having offered their hearts to the good God, they began to pile up the bushes (ajonc) with which it was customary to feed horses in this country as in almost all of Brittany. They entered the house, and both of them said the Rosary aloud for their brother who is in the Army, then went to the church to serve Holy Mass.

While waiting for the pastor, they said the Morning Offering and the Way of the Cross. They had the habit of practicing this devotion almost every day since the war began. And they had missed it hardly once since their brother left for the Army.

After the Mass, they joined in public prayers for the soldiers, and then went to school.

III

This same day, after the evening class, both boys went to the barn with their father at about five-thirty. In the light of a pale and wavering resin candle, they took their long wooden mallets and began to prepare the evening ration for the horses.

They had worked about a quarter of an hour when the little door inserted in the larger door of the barn was suddenly opened. A woman entered. It was Jeannette Details who the children used to say "buried all the dead". Indeed, she had just come from fulfilling this sad function. She approached and spoke to Mr. Barbedette. The noisy work was thus interrupted. Profiting by this break, Eugene went to the door which was still partly open.

"I went," said he, "just to see the weather."

Snow covered the ground. The sky was clear and it was very cold. It seemed to him that he had never seen so many stars, especially over the road.³ As he looked, directly to the front, near the side of the house of Augustine Guidecoq he saw fewer stars.

SUDDENLY, AT ABOUT TWENTY FEET ABOVE THE CENTER OF THE ROOF, HE SAW A TALL, BEAUTIFUL LADY.

Her robe,⁴ seeded with golden stars, fell from the neck to her feet without belt or cincture. The sleeves were wide and flowing.

She was wearing slippers which were as blue as the dress, and at the center of each was a golden ribbon which formed a knot-like rosette. Her hair and ears were completely hidden by a black veil which also covered about a third of her forehead, falling to

APPARITION DE NOTRE-DAME DE PONTMAIN

17 JANVIER 1871 — 1^{re} Phase —

her shoulders to about the middle of her back. Abruptly pushed back, the veil did not hide the face.

On her head she wore a golden crown with no other ornament than a little red line in about the middle.

Placed upon the veil, about twenty centimeters high,⁵ the crown did not go straight up, but spread out like an inverted cone turning downwards at the sides and giving the impression of a diadem. The face of the Lady was small, very white, with an incomparable beauty.⁶ She had her hands spread out and lowered as one normally represents Mary Immaculate.

She looked at the boy and smiled.

Eugene thought it was the announcement of the death of his brother who was in the service and from whom his parents had not had any news for three weeks. However, he was not afraid because the Lady WAS SMILING.

IV

It had been about a quarter of an hour--stunned and astonished--that the boy had contemplated the vision when Jeanette Details came out of the barn. The moment she crossed the threshold, Eugene said to her:

"Jeanette, look over at the house of Augustine Guidecoq and see if there is something there."

She glanced at the point indicated by the child, and answered:

"My goodness, my poor Eugene, I see absolutely nothing."

Struck by the intensity of the expression in the boy's question, his father and brother, overhearing, quickly came to the door and also glanced in the indicated direction. The father saw nothing. Eugene said to his brother:

"Do you see it, Joseph?"

"Yes," said the child, "I see a beautiful tall Lady."

"How is she dressed?"

"I see a tall Lady who wears a blue dress, with golden stars on the dress, and blue slippers with golden buckles."⁷

"Tell me then, Joseph," continued Eugene, "look well and see if she has a crown."

"Indeed, I see a crown which spreads out, and a little red thread in the middle of the crown, and a black veil."

Hearing his children talk this way, the father opened his eyes widely, but saw absolutely nothing. Finally, he said to them:

"My poor little children, you don't see anything. If you saw something we would see it too. Come at

once and finish preparing the horse's food. I believe supper is ready."

Accustomed to obey their father's voice, without the slightest reflection the children immediately re-entered the barn. Remaining on the threshold, their father said to Jeannette Details:

"Don't say anything about this, Jeannette. Certainly no one would believe it and it might even cause scandal."

"Don't worry," she said.

She left, and Mr. Barbedette returned to the children.

V

Hardly had he given ten blows of the piloche⁸ than the father said:

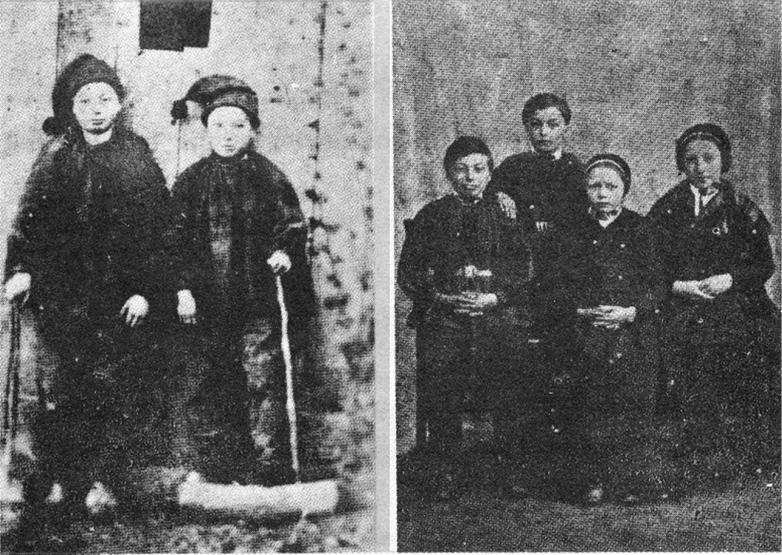
"Eugene, go again and see if you can still see it."

The child hastily obeyed. From the door he cried out: "Yes, it is still the same!"

"Then go," his father said, "and bring your mother to see if she can see something, and don't say anything to Louise.⁹ Say to your mother that I have something to tell her."

Eugene left.

"Mother," he said to his mother, "would you please come to the barn. Father has something to say to you."



Unique photo of the Barbedettes with their piloches and, right, the four seers.

In the rear: Cesar Barbedette, the Cure, Sister Vitaline.
 In the front: Sister Edouard, Victoire Barbedette, Joseph and Eugene, J.-M. Lebosse and Francoise Richer.



As she arrived at the door, Joseph, who had profited by the interruption of their work to go out and look at the beautiful Lady, was clapping his hands one against the other rapidly and crying at the same time:

"Oh, how beautiful she is! Oh! How beautiful she is!"²³

His mother gave him a blow on the arm saying: "Be silent! But be silent! Everybody is looking at us."

"Mother," said Eugene, "look over the house of Augustine Guidecoq, whether you see something."

"But no," she said, "I see absolutely nothing."

Then, Eugene and Joseph together:

"BUT YOU DON'T SEE A BEAUTIFUL, TALL LADY WHO HAS A BLUE DRESS...?"

"No," she said, "I see absolutely nothing."

Then, struck by the children's tone of sincerity, and knowing they were incapable of lying, and also struck by the emotion of their father, she exclaimed:

"It is perhaps the Blessed Virgin who appears to you. Since you see her, let us say five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys in her honor."

VI

Meanwhile, the cries of joy and admiration from the children had been heard by the neighbors. Coming to their doorways, they were saying:

"But what do you see? What is there?"

"Oh, nothing," said Mr. Barbedette.

His wife added:

"The children are foolish. They say that they see something and we see nothing."

Then they closed the doors of the barn in order to be quiet. Piously together they recited five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys.

When the prayer was finished:

"Go out and see," said the mother, "if you still see anything."

"Yes," said the children, "it is still the same."

"Then," she said, "I am going to get my glasses. Perhaps then I will be able to see something."

She soon came back bringing Louise. She carefully arranged her glasses, but in vain. Louise, too, could see nothing. Then the mother said to the children in a rude tone:

"Definitely, you see nothing! You must finish preparing the horse food. You are little liars."

They went back into the barn. The work was finished within five minutes and they were going out to dinner. Again, leaving, they saw the magnificent vision. The beautiful Lady was in the same place, looking at them with a sweet smile.

"If you would only leave me free," said Eugene, "I would stay until the end..."

"Come at once to supper," said their father.

The children followed, but with regret. For the first time, it really cost them something to obey. They went slowly, walking backwards, regarding the beautiful Lady and saying to their parents: "Oh! she is beautiful! Oh! she is beautiful!"

It was a quarter after six. ¹⁰

VII

They washed their hands, and while drying them returned to the door. It was always the same sight. Back in the house, they did not want to sit down to take their supper. They gulped the soup while standing.

"Let's hurry up, Joseph," said Eugene to his brother, "so that we can go and see if she is still there."

"Since you are going back to see," said their mother, "recite again the five Our Fathers and the five Hail Marys, but standing, because it is so cold."

At the end of a few minutes, the prayers finished, they returned to the house and said:

"IT IS STILL THE SAME... THE LADY IS THE SAME SIZE AS SISTER VITALINE." ¹¹

"Then," said their mother, "we have to go get Sister Vitaline. Sisters are better than you are. If you see, they will certainly see, too."

So, Joseph re-entered the house with his father,

and the mother with Eugene went to the Sisters' convent on the other side of the street.

VIII

At that moment, the good Sister was in the classroom reciting her office.

"Sister," said Mrs. Barbedette, "would you please come to our house. The children say that they are seeing something, and we do not see anything."

Sister Vitaline followed them to the door of the barn. Eugene showed her the place where he saw the vision and described the beautiful Lady.

"I opened my eyes widely," said the Sister, "and saw absolutely nothing." The child insisted with an injured tone:

"But my Sister, you do not see? You do not see those three stars which form a triangle?"--"Yes," said the Sister. "Well! the head of the Lady is just in the middle."

"I cannot see," she said.

And she retraced the path to the school with Victoria (this is the first name of mother Barbedette, and everybody in the village called her this), who said:

"I beg you, dear Sister, don't say anything about this. The children are out of their minds."

IX

Coming back into the Sister's building, Sister



Françoise Richer

Sœur Timothée

Jeanne-Marie Lebossé



Vitaline saw Francoise Richer sitting near the kitchen stove. She was an eleven year old child born in Le Loroux, in the diocese of Rennes. She also saw Jeanne-Marie Lebosse, nine years old, born in Gosne, in the same diocese.

"Little girls," she said to them, "come with me. Victoria has something to show you."

Francoise was afraid because it was night and she had fear of the dark. Nevertheless, she followed Jeanne-Marie. At the door, they found Victoria and said to her:

"What is it, what are you going to show us?"
"Come," she said to them. "Come and you will see. For my part, I do not see anything. . ."

Arriving at the gable corner of the Rousseau house, Francoise Richer cried out:

"But I see something over the house of Augustine Guidecoq, but I don't know what it is."

She was looking only from the side while walking along the street.

Then they ran to the door of the barn where Eugene was calling them. There, Jeanne-Marie Lebosse and Francoise Richer immediately said:

"Oh! The beautiful Lady. . . she has a beautiful blue dress. . . with golden stars. . ."

And they repeated exactly what the two boys had said.

X

At this moment, Joseph came out of the house and returned to the door of the barn. At the same time, Sister Vitaline arrived with the other religious, Sister Mary Edward.

"What do you see children?" she asked. And all four answered in one voice:

"Oh! Sister, we see a beautiful Lady."

And they gave a complete description as we have already given it.

Sister Mary Edward, like the other adults, had to regret that she saw nothing.

"Since the children see," she said, "we must get others, younger."

She ran to the house of M. Friteau and asked him to bring his grandson to the Barbedette Barn. From there she went to the rectory, next door, and asked the pastor in a voice trembling with emotion:

"Father, come quickly to the Barbedette place. There is a wonder, an apparition. The children see the Blessed Virgin. . .

"A wonder!! An apparition!! The Blessed Virgin!!!!" . . . repeated the good old man, deeply moved. "My Sister, you make me afraid."

He did not move. But elderly Jeannette, his servant, had already prepared the lantern saying:

"We must go see..."

As they went out, they found little Eugene Friteau, six and a half years old, whom his grandmother was carrying wrapped up in her mantle.

XI

Meanwhile, Sister Vitaline, surrounded with children and other persons who were running from every side, stood in the middle of the road and began to recite the rosary of the Japanese Martyrs. She had hardly said a decade when the pastor arrived with little Eugene Friteau and Sister Mary Edward, who still from a distance called out to the children:--"Do you still see her?"

"Oh yes, Sister," they replied.

Eugene Friteau¹² also saw the beautiful Lady; his answers resemble those of the other children.

The wife of Boitin, the bootmaker, drawn by the noise, ran up with her little daughter, two years and one month, wrapped in her arms. This child also cast her eyes at once towards the apparition, and waving her innocent hands cried out several times the words taught to her by her mother: "THE JESUS, THE JESUS!"

Her mother tried in vain to distract her by show-

ing her other objects, but always the eyes and the arms of the baby turned back to the apparition.

The good and worthy pastor pleaded with Heaven; he saw nothing of the vision. He was coming to the door of the barn when the children cried out all together:--"Oh! something is happening!"

"What do you see?" asked the good priest.

And they all said the same that they were seeing a large circle, of the same blue as her dress, oval, about as wide as an extended hand, surrounding the Lady at a distance of about a foot and a half.

Four candles were attached inside the blue circle, and two at the height of the knees of the Lady, two at the height of her shoulders. They also saw, over her breast, a little red cross about as large as a finger.

XII

The number of curious persons kept growing. By now about fifty persons surrounded the children, asking different questions about "the beautiful Lady." Some, touched by the accent of sincerity of the four children who were all different in age and character, believed their words and were deeply moved. Some, however, were incredulous. Jean Guidecoq even said to Eugene:

"You... you see, boy; why then should I not see?"

APPARITION DE NOTRE-DAME DE PONTMAIN



MAIS PRIEZ MES ENFANTS DIEU VOUS EXAUCERA EN PEU DE TEMPS ●
MON FILS SE LAISSE TOUCHER.

17 JANVIER 1871 — 2^e Phase —

If I had a pair of binoculars or a silk handkerchief,¹³ I would also see as well as you."

"Nothing is easier," said Victoria. "I have one in our place."

She came back in a few minutes bringing a silk scarf.

"Try, then," she said to Jean Guidecoq. He tried, but in vain, and his failure provoked laughter in the crowd, and they began to talk loudly and to joke. Then, Eugene Barbedette, who was standing in the middle of the street, cried out:

"Behold, she is turning sad!"

The other children confirmed what he said, and assured that the Lady began to take on a profoundly sad aspect when the people around them no longer occupied themselves with her, spoke loudly, laughed or expressed doubts about her presence.

The pastor, who had gone into the barn, requested silence.

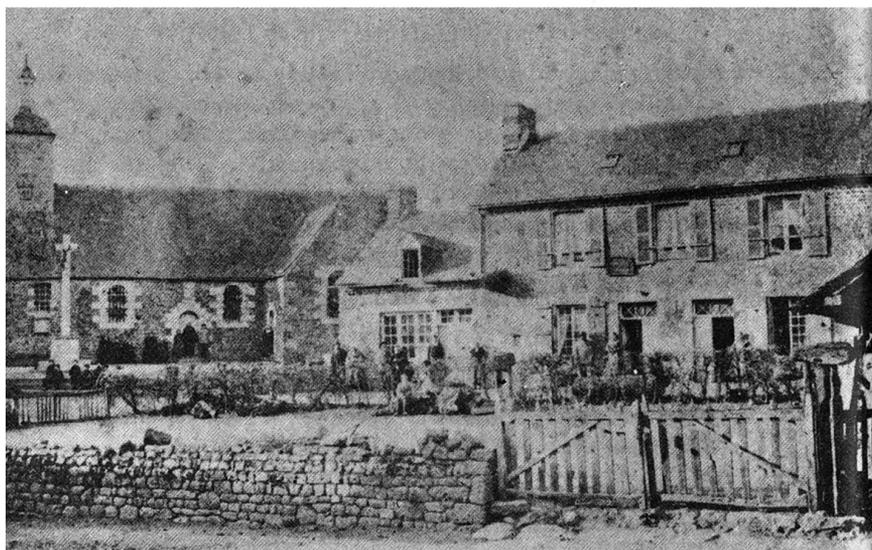
"If only the children see," he said, "it is because they are more worthy than we."

"But, Father," said Sister Mary Edward, "what if you would speak to the Blessed Virgin?"

"Alas," said the good old man, his voice deeply moved and with profound humility: "I do not see her, what would I say to her?"



The six children privileged to see the apparition.



The Guidecoq house and the church seen from the Barbedette barn, photographed in 1871

"But if you tell the children to speak to her?"

"Let us pray," said the venerable priest.

XIII

Everybody knelt down; some in the barn, others at the entrance. Just the small door was open. Kneeling on the threshold, Sister Mary Edward began the rosary to which everyone answered. During this prayer, the Lady seemed to go upwards, and increase in size in a manner clearly perceived by them.

"She is now," said the children, "twice as tall as Sister Vitaline."

The blue circle also increased proportionately. The stars "of the atmosphere"¹⁴ appeared to the eyes of the children to arrange themselves quickly into rows beneath the Lady, coming two by two beneath her feet. At the same time, the stars on her dress multiplied.

"It is," said the children, "like a hill becoming covered with ants... soon she will be nearly golden."

Sister Mary Edward intoned the Magnificat.¹⁵ She had hardly sung the first verse when the four children (Eugene Friteau had left) cried out together:

"Again something has happened!... Look a stick... It is like the joining of M, a great M as in the books."

A large white writing space, about one and a

half meters wide and twelve meters long¹⁶ had at the same moment appeared beneath the feet of the Lady and of the blue circle.

It seemed to the children that an invisible hand was slowly tracing, on this background of shining whiteness, in beautiful golden letters.

The Magnificat was interrupted a few minutes.¹⁷ During the silence, the first letter became completely formed:

"It is an M," the children said.

Then:

"Look another letter begins!... It is an A... "

Their eyes did not leave the spot in the sky where they were seeing these marvels. Then, they spelled out an I and an S.

The word MAIS, meaning "but", remained alone almost ten minutes.

It is to be remarked that at this time the children were not next to each other. The Sisters, and perhaps also other persons, separated the little boys and girls.

XIV

At this moment there came another inhabitant of the town named Joseph Babin. Amazed at the assembly and of the songs, he cried out:

"You have only to pray! The Prussians are at Laval!"¹⁸

This news, disturbing enough to upset everyone, made not the slightest impression on the crowd.

"They could be at the entrance of the village," said one lady, "and we would not be afraid."

Joseph Babin entered the barn. He was told what the children saw. Then he shared the faith and emotion of all the others. He began to pray with them.

XV

The faithful continued to sing the canticle of the Blessed Virgin. At the end of the Magnificat, the children read in golden letters, about twenty-five centimeters high:

BUT PRAY MY CHILDREN.

Over and over, interrogated by the good priest, by the Sisters, and by everyone around, the children spelled out the letters, assembled the words. There was never the slightest hesitation, let alone the slightest contradiction. Everybody felt a profound religious emotion. The incredulous dared not laugh and most were crying.

The beautiful Lady smiled constantly.

It was about 7:30 P. M.

XVI

Someone thought then to open the large doorway of the barn, where by now about sixty persons had sought shelter from the rigorous cold. At the en-

trance, some chairs were placed for the children. They often got up to manifest, by expressive and animated gestures, the sentiments of admiration inspired in them by the sight of the vision which they alone had the joy to behold.

"We must sing the litanies of the Blessed Virgin," said the venerable pastor, "and pray that she manifests her will." ¹⁹

Sister Mary Edward began the litanies. At the first invocation, the children quickly cried out:

"Look, again something is happening. They are letters. It is a D."

And they named one after another the letters of the following words which were completely written by the end of the litanies.

GOD WILL HEAR YOU IN A SHORT TIME. ²⁰

These words were written on the same line as the first, of the same height and in golden characters. After the word time was a period as large as the letters in gold, and which the children compared to a sun.

One can easily imagine the joy of the crowd in receiving this merciful promise:

GOD WILL HEAR YOU IN A SHORT TIME.

One heard joyous exclamations in the midst of sobs and tears. The Lady looked at the children and was smiling.

"Look, she smiles," they cried, and laughing themselves with joy repeated again, "Look, she laughs!"

XVII

Next they sang the hymn "Inviolata". Immediately, the children announced that new letters were forming on the white writing space, but on a second line. At the moment they finished singing O MATER ALMA CHRISTI, CARISSIMA! O SWEET AND BELOVED MOTHER OF CHRIST! The children had spelled out, letter by letter these words:

MY SON...

An indescribable emotion seized the crowd...

"IT IS INDEED THE BLESSED VIRGIN," said the children.

"IT IS SHE!" repeated the crowd.

XVIII

At the end of the "Inviolata" and the "Salve Regina", which were sung one after the other, the mysterious and invisible hand traced new letters.

The children read:

MY SON PERMITS HIMSELF...

Sister Vitaline, who was in the midst of them, said to them:

"That does not make sense... look well. Beyond

doubt the words should be: My Son worries Himself
... " 21

And the children:

"But no, Sister, there is an 'I'."

And altogether several times, they spelled out
the word "permits".

Then, in lively tone:

"But, Sister, wait. It is not finished. Look,
there are more letters."

Before the end of the "Salve Regina":

MY SON PERMITS HIMSELF TO BE MOVED.

A large underlining, golden like the letters, slowly
formed itself beneath this second line.

The singing finished, with profound emotion and
recollection, the crowd prayed. The silence was
broken only by the voices of the children who kept re-
peating over and over the complete inscription which
we give below, which they drew for the crowd at that
exact moment, and which they had reproduced for us
several times before our very eyes.

"Sing a hymn to the Blessed Virgin," said the
venerable priest.

And Sister Mary Edward sang:

"Mother of Hope, of name so sweet, protect our
country, pray for us, pray for us!"

During this singing, the Blessed Virgin lifted her

hands to the height of her shoulders (hands which formerly had been lowered and spread out) and moved her fingers lightly as if she were accompanying the singing of the hymn. She kept looking at the children with a smile of infinite sweetness as one read beneath her feet the complete message:

BUT PRAY MY CHILDREN, GOD WILL HEAR YOU IN A SHORT TIME... MY SON PERMITS HIMSELF TO BE MOVED...²²

"Look she's laughing!" they cried out. And they jumped joyously, clapping their hands, repeating a hundred times with an expression which would be impossible to communicate:

"Oh, how beautiful she is! Oh! How beautiful she is!"²³

The crowd laughed and cried at the same time. They saw on the faces of the children, so full of expression and so sincere, a reflection of the smile which caused them such transports of joy.

XIX

Towards the end of the hymn, which has eight verses, the inscription which had remained complete for about ten minutes now disappeared. It seemed to the children that a roller the color of the atmosphere was passing quickly over the letters, erasing them from sight.

APPARITION DE NOTRE DAME DE PONTMMAIN



MAIS PRIEZ MES ENFANTS DIEU VOUS EXAUCERA EN PEU DE TEMPS ●

MON FILS SE LAISSE TOUCHER

17 JANVIER 1871 — 5^{me} Phase —

Then they sang:

"My sweet Jesus, finally now is the time
To forgive our penitent hearts:
We will no longer offend Your supreme
Goodness, O sweet Jesus!"

Suddenly, the faces of the children took on an expression of deep sadness.

Again, it was the reflection of a change in the expression of the vision.

"Look, she becomes sad again," they said.

Then all of a sudden:

"Look, again something is happening!"

All the children at the same time saw a red cross about sixty centimeters high bearing a Christ of the same color.

The cross seemed to them to be about a foot in front of the beautiful Lady. And at once lowering her hands (which, during the singing of "Mother of Hope" had remained at the level of her shoulders) she took the crucifix and held it with her two hands slightly inclined towards the children, as though presenting it to them. At the top of the cross, on a long white background, were written in red letters: JESUS CHRIST.

After each verse of the hymn, the "Parce Domine" was sung. The most Blessed Virgin, sad and recollected, seemed to pray with the crowd.

APPARITION DE NOTRE-DAME DE PONTMAIN

17 JANVIER 1871 — 4^{ème} Phase —

Suddenly a star left from beneath her feet and, riding towards the left, went through the blue circle and lit the candle which was at the height of her knees, and up to the second at shoulder height. The same star, crossing over the head of the Blessed Virgin, passed to the right side and lit the other two candles. Then, it climbed back up again, again crossed through the blue circle and took a position above the head of the Lady, remaining suspended there.

XX

The silent and recollected crowd prayed constantly. Sister Mary Edward sang the hymn "Ave, Maris Stella". As she did so, the red crucifix disappeared. The Lady, extending her arms, again took the pose of the Immaculate Conception. On each of her shoulders appeared a little white cross, about twenty centimeters high.

"These crosses," said the children, "were planted on the shoulders of the Blessed Virgin."

The Mother of God smiled again at the children who cried out again in a fullness of joy:

"Look, she is smiling... Look, she is smiling!"

It was about 8:30 P. M.

XXI

"My dear friends," said the pastor, "we are going to say together our evening prayer."

APPARITION DE NOTRE-DAME DE PONTMILIN

17 JANVIER 1871 — 5^{ème} Phase —

Everybody knelt down.

Towards the examination of conscience the children, whose eyes never left the celestial vision, announced that a great white veil beginning from beneath her feet was slowly rising up and covering her to the waist. Then, it rose little by little until it enveloped her to the throat.²⁴

The children now saw only the face--of a completely celestial beauty--of the Lady who continued to smile upon them.

Soon her face, too, became veiled; only the crown remained visible with the stars about it. Finally everything disappeared including the great blue circle. The four candles remained burning around it to the end.

The pastor, from the back of the barn where he was sitting, called the children. . .

"Do you still see?" he asked them.

And all together:

"No, Father, all has disappeared. It is over."

It was a quarter to nine,

The crowd left little by little, preoccupied by happenings so extraordinary and which had brought to them an impression full of sweetness, profound and unforgettable.

XXII

News of this marvelous event spread with the ra-

pidity of lightning. And in all the parish one does not find a single incredulous person.

"We believe the children," they say; "they are not capable of inventing something like that."

Each evening, from the town of Pontmain and from all the surrounding villages, the faithful come to the church which is too small to contain the pious crowd. The rosary is recited, some of the hymns of the day of the apparition are sung which were heard in the barn on the day of the apparition. Only those who have witnessed this devotion can have any idea of the ardent faith and the profound piety of all who participate. We ourselves were moved to tears.

In leaving the church, each one glances at the skies with the hope that the celebrated vision might suddenly once again appear.

Some pilgrims come from neighboring dioceses, and others from far away. Arriving each day in the village, they visit the barn, see and question the fortunate children. And despite the fatigue which this obviously causes them, they respond with good grace to all that is asked.

Many persons at first unbelieving, or drawn to Pontmain by a simple feeling of curiosity, become struck by the sincerity and candor of the children and the marvels of which they were the witnesses. They

return convinced of their truthfulness and of the reality of the consoling apparition.²⁵

The diocese of Laval, so profoundly religious, considers itself fortunate in the thought that the Blessed Virgin chose it for this manifestation of her maternal goodness, of the merciful designs of her Divine Son upon our unhappy and guilty country.

May we respond to this great favor by an ever more tender devotion to the Mother of God!

PART II

Miraculous Effect of Pontmain

I

The Great Miracle

At the feet of the vision of Our Lady were traced the sky the words: "But pray my children, God will war you in a short time."

And a short time afterwards, indeed only ten days later, the armistice was signed on January 28th. It was the prelude to forty years of peace.

But much more is evident if one consults the records of the German high-command, official records which state that exactly from the evening of January 27th, 1871, the enemy troops did not take a single further step towards the west of France. Indeed, these are the exact words from those records of the German high-command:

"The advance upon Laval of the 20th Division (which we have noted was decided upon and ordered) was not carried out because on the night of January 17-18, the Supreme Commander made it known that it was not planned to proceed further towards the west with the Second Army."

Then, on the date of the 18th, we read: "The pursuit of the adversary (that is to say of the French) by the detachment of General Schmidt thus came to an end because of these proscriptions."

Following the orders of the commanding general of the 10th Corps, General Schmidt had to draw back on January 18th upon Vaiges and its surroundings.

As a result, after having reassembled his detachment on the main road, General Schmidt returned to Vaiges and established his troops there.

"General Schmidt (the famed document adds on January 20th) regretted very much that he was not permitted to take Laval which would have given him possession of the Mayenne line."²⁶

There are two amazing conclusions:

1) BEFORE THE EVENING OF JANUARY 17th, the Prussians wished absolutely to march upon Laval. It has been proved beyond doubt that the German Commander-in-Chief spoke the following words to the

Bishop of Le Mans precisely on the evening of January 17th:

"This evening, my troops are in Laval."

2) AFTER THE EVENING OF JANUARY 17th, during the very night which followed, a formal and unexpected order prevented General Schmidt from taking Laval. And then, the 17th, the Prussian troops were at the pool of Barbe, only a mile from Laval, and the next day they were at Vaiges, twelve miles back from Laval!

Humanly speaking, this fact is inexplicable. No fort defends Laval. It was protected only by a few feeble troops. Divinely speaking, it IS explicable: On the very evening of January 17th, the Blessed Virgin smiled upon France from the Heaven of Pontmain, promising that God would hear the prayers and "in a short time".

It is not the only one, but it is the great miracle of Pontmain.

II

Remarkable Coincidences

1. At Saint-Brieuc

At Saint-Brieuc, a society of prayer under the title of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Hope was founded in the year 1848 for the salvation of the Church and of France. And there was composed the canticle

repeated during the apparition of Pontmain: "Mother of Hope".

During the war, Saint-Brieuc was the center of ardent prayers. The disasters and defeats mounted, and the Prussians advanced upon Brittany. Vowing to do violence upon Heaven, a solemn vow was made to Our Lady of Hope.

Precisely on January 17th, in the evening, at half past five, a request for the vow was presented by four Christian women. The vow was immediately pronounced, and during all of this evening until 9:00 P. M. , solemn prayers were recited in the pious sanctuary of Our Lady of Hope.

JANUARY 17, HALF PAST FIVE UNTIL NINE O'CLOCK:

It is the day of the apparition of Pontmain. These are the very hours of the arrival and departure of the heavenly Liberatrix. And let's not forget that at Pontmain, during the war, Our Lady of Hope was invoked ceaselessly and her hymn was sung. This hymn was repeated during the vision, and at the very time that it was sung the Blessed Virgin assumed the very pose she has on the tower of the chapel at Saint-Brieuc, smiled in a manner which cannot be described, and moved her fingers to accompany the singing.

This admirable coincidence filled the heart of the

venerable founder of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Hope of Saint-Brieuc with joyful thanksgiving.

2. At Our Lady of Victories

Another coincidence even more marvelous took place in Paris.

At the moment of the apparition, a priest announced in the church of Our Lady of Victories that at this very hour that he spoke, the Blessed Virgin was saving France.

On the evening of January 17, 1871, IN THE CHAPEL OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, solemn prayers had been begun which were to end on the 28th of the month in order to obtain through Mary the cessation of the war and the deliverance of Paris. And on this very evening the following letter was written by a serious witness to Father Amodru to express with joy the sentiments of hope which his words had caused:

Paris, January 17, 1871

Dear Father Amodru:

"I have just come back from Our Lady of Victories, profoundly moved by the words which, in an evidently inspired improvisation, you spoke this evening to the numerous faithful united at the feet of the altar of Mary.

"You said that at that moment a thought presented itself to your spirit. We are all going to publicly and

solemnly beg the most Blessed Virgin to come to our aid and we will not cross the threshold of this holy temple consecrated to her glory without having no less solemnly PROMISED TO OFFER TO HER A SILVER HEART, WHICH WILL RECALL TO FUTURE GENERATIONS THAT TODAY, BETWEEN EIGHT AND NINE O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING, AN ENTIRE NATION IS PROSTRATE AT THE FEET OF OUR LADY OF VICTORIES AND HAS BEEN SAVED BY HER!"

"Please, etc. . . . , etc. . . .

Martel."

17 of January, 8:00 in the evening! It was the day and the hour when, a hundred leagues away, just ahead of the hordes of the invader, a corner of the curtain was lifted upon the infinite; the hour when, across the starry world, a mysterious visitor, herself covered with the stars of Heaven, came down with a smile towards little children. It was the hour of hope and deliverance, hour of the golden heart of Mary who is called Our Lady of Pontmain, sublime in the midst of the stars and terrible as an army arranged in battle: Our Lady of Pontmain, Patroness of the Invaded. "But pray my children, God will hear you in a short time:

MY SON PERMITS HIMSELF TO BE MOVED."

Yes, IN A SHORT TIME! BECAUSE ON JANU-

ARY 28TH, THE VERY EVENING WHEN THE PRAYERS OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY WERE BEING TERMINATED AT MIDNIGHT, THE ARMISTICE WAS SIGNED.

3. The National Vow

It was on January 11th, just a few days before the apparition, that the formula of the National Vow, prepared by M. Legentil and Rev. Ramiere, approved by Bishop Pie (printed since the end of December of 1870) was first released to the public.

This National Vow was for the building of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the Hill of the Martyrs (Montmartre) overlooking Paris. The basilica was a direct result of the requests and promises made by

Footnote by the Translator:

Only the crypt of the great basilica had been built. And here, at this very time, Saint Therese made her own consecration to the Sacred Heart just after having received the second greatest favor of her life from Our Lady in the Church of Our Lady of Victories where, through a direct command from Our Lady, the Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary had been established under most extraordinary circumstances. Then, approved by Rome, the Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary spread rapidly through all of France, and through the world, followed by a great wave of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus--previously delayed despite His poignant appeal to St. Margaret Mary.

It is also noteworthy that it was at this very same time that St. Joseph had just been proclaimed the Patron of the Catholic Church (December 8, 1870) and in an old monastery in the south of France Our Lady came to take straight to Heaven the beloved soul of St. Anthony Mary Claret, former Archbishop of Cuba, founder of the Claretian Fathers, and a great modern apostle of the Blessed Sacrament and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

In 1971, the world celebrates the centenary of all these "coincidences" of Divine Mercy.

the Sacred Heart in the apparitions of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque many years before, but which had been neglected by the French nation.

It is against this background that, on January 17th, the Heart of our Divine Mother--moved by this supplication to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a supplication which was now to become National--takes and leaves as a promise of encouragement, a testament of hope, those blessed words:

"My Son permits Himself to be moved."

During that very year, the ardent propagators of the National Vow multiplied its requests and its efforts beyond counting, sometimes in the face of contradiction, often helped by approbation, but more often hindered by hesitation. And it was on the day after the first anniversary of the apparition of Pontmain--mainly, the 18th of January, 1872, that Bishop Guibert finally gave official approbation to the report of M. Legentil and made possible the beginning of the realization of the vow.

It is true: The Heart of Jesus permitted Himself to be moved. Pontmain announced Montmartre.

III

THE EPISCOPAL JUDGMENT

Bishop Wicart, the first Bishop of Laval, in his

The Basilica of Pontmain. The statue in front is thought to be just beneath where Our Lady appeared.



mandate of February 2, 1875, said:

"We judge that the Immaculate Mary, Mother of God, has truly appeared on January 17, 1871, to Eugene Barbedette, Joseph Barbedette, Françoise Richer and Jeanne-Marie Lebosse, in the hamlet of Pontmain. We submit in all humility and obedience this judgment to the supreme judgment of the Apostolic Holy See, Center of Unity and infallible organ of truth in the entire Church."

THE BASILICA

Begun in 1872, a splendid church now lifts two slender, gothic towers over the rolling countryside of Pontmain.

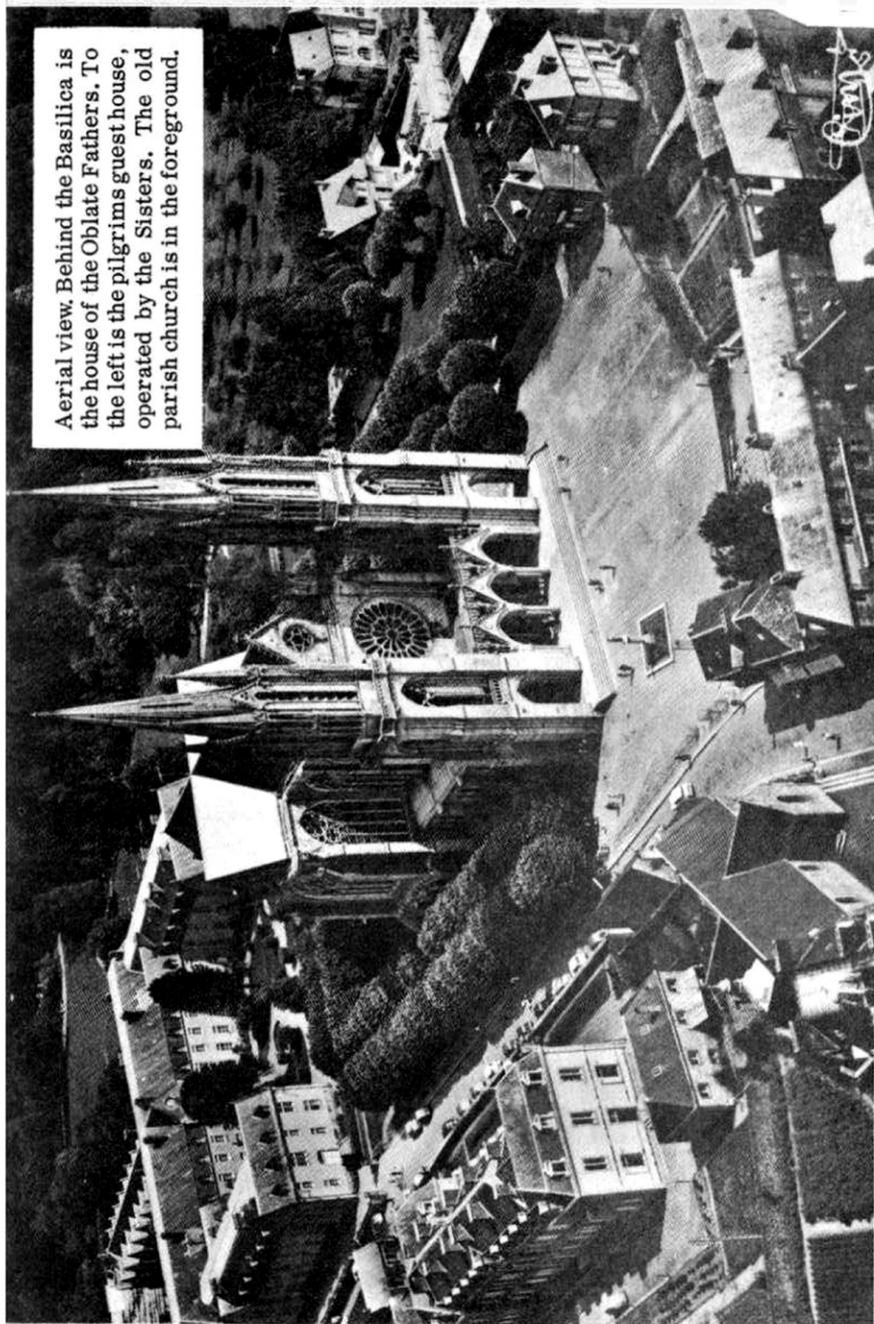
It is the thanksgiving gift of the provinces of the west, preserved by Our Lady from the enemy invasion. The church was consecrated on October 15th, 1900. It was raised by Saint Pius X to the rank of a minor basilica.

The service to pilgrims in the basilica is provided by several chaplains belonging to the clergy of the diocese of Laval. Any needs or requests can be addressed to them simply at the Sanctuaire Notre-Dame de Pontmain. And pilgrims will find the house of the Chaplains just to your right as you face the basilica.

ARCHCONFRATERNITY

An Association of Prayer was established in 1872 by Bishop Wicart and was elevated by Pope Pius IX, in

Aerial view. Behind the Basilica is the house of the Oblate Fathers. To the left is the pilgrims guest house, operated by the Sisters. The old parish church is in the foreground.



1877, to the rank of an Archconfraternity under the title of Our Lady of Hope, title which in 1897 was changed by Leo XIII to that of OUR LADY OF PRAYER.

The indulgences of the Archconfraternity are obtained by being inscribed, and then by reciting each day a Hail Mary and the ejaculation: "Our Lady of Pontmain, pray for us, for the Church, and for the nation."

The Association of Children of Our Lady of Pontmain

This association was founded to organize children who wish to love Our Lady of Pontmain in a special way and to recall the great lessons of her apparition, especially fidelity to Jesus Crucified. It already has many thousands of members.

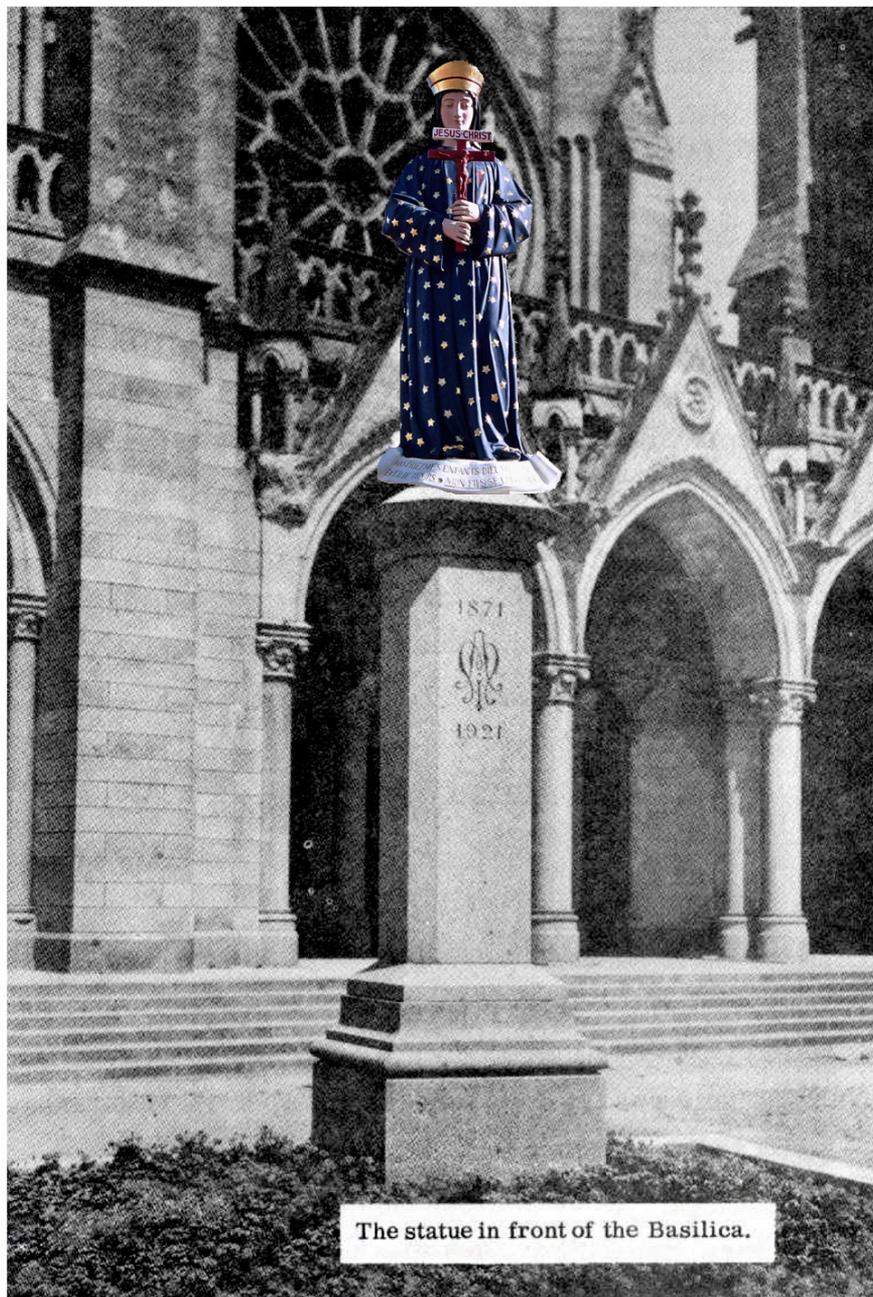
The conditions are: 1) to be inscribed and 2) as much as possible, to recite each day the invocation: Our Lady of Pontmain, protect the little children.

SPECIAL LITURGY

For these three associations, the only ones established in the Basilica of Pontmain, a subscription can be made through the Superior of the Chaplains .

Pope Pius XI granted to the diocese of Laval an entire special liturgy, with historic lessons for the anniversary of the apparition of January 17th.

Pilgrim priests are permitted to celebrate the



The statue in front of the Basilica.

Votive Mass of the apparition every day except on the major feasts.

PRAYERS AND HYMNS USED IN THE BARN
ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 1871, DURING THE
APPARITIONS

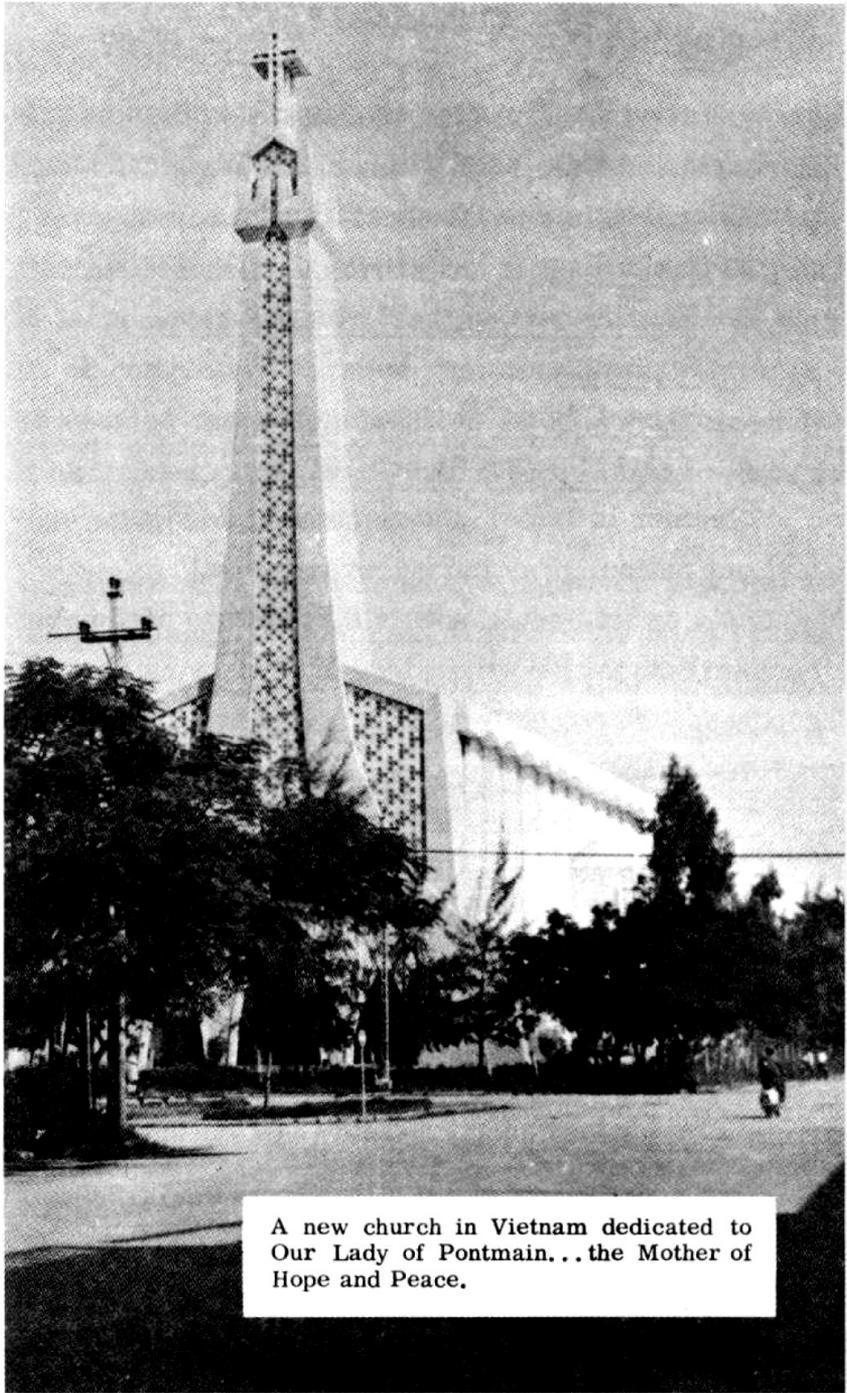
1. The Little Crown of the Japanese Martyrs.

This symbolic crown, or little rosary, was approved by Pope Pius IX when he canonized the Japanese Martyrs. It is said to beg the protection of the martyrs upon the Church, and for the conversion of Japan and of the Far East. It is recited in the following manner:

- a) On the cross, acts of faith, hope and charity;
- b) On each of the small beads, the following invocations: SWEET HEART OF MARY, BE MY SALVATION;
- c) MY JESUS MERCY!
- d) On the large beads, one adds to these two invocations the following:

"Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ in reparation for my sins, and for the needs of Holy Mother Church."

This rosary does not need any special benediction. The indulgences were attached to the specific invocations used. Nevertheless, many persons at Pontmain buy, as one of the many pious objects for sale in the little stores there, "the little red rosary" of the Jap-



A new church in Vietnam dedicated to Our Lady of Pontmain...the Mother of Hope and Peace.

anese Martyrs as a remembrance of the pilgrimage to Pontmain and to be used with greater piety and devotion since the time of the apparition.

2. Magnificat.
3. The Litanies of the Blessed Virgin.
4. Inviolata.
5. Salve Regina.
6. The Following Hymns:

"Mother of Hope, whose name is so sweet, protect our nation, pray for us, pray for us!"

"My sweet Jesus, now is the time to pardon our penitent hearts; we will no longer offend your Supreme goodness, Oh sweet Jesus!"

7. Parce Domine:

Parce Domine, parce populo tuo,
Ne in aeternum irasceris nobis

8. Ave, Maris Stella

We do not give here the complete text of the above mentioned prayers and hymns because they can be found in any number of manuals and prayerbooks.

VISIT OF PONTMAIN

One hundred and eighty miles from Paris (300 km), and only twenty-seven miles south of the world famous medieval shrine of Saint Michael (le Mont St. Michel), is the village of Pontmain. It is a short distance from the border of the French provinces of Normandy and

Brittany. Circle tours from Paris and Chartres to include the shrine towns of St. Therese (Alencon and Lisieux) and of St. Michael easily sweep through Pontmain. But like Lourdes and La Salette and Fatima, it is removed from the paths of wars. In World War II, it completely escaped the devastation which accompanied the allied invasion of nearby Normandy. It is indeed, as Canon Poulain says in the preface to this book, a "Harbor of Peace."

If possible pilgrims should endeavor to spend at least one night at Pontmain to absorb the spirit of this remarkable Sanctuary. There are excellent pilgrim facilities available under the care of the Sisters and the direction of the Oblate Fathers.

The time of the pilgrims can be easily filled not only by their prayers in the beautiful basilica, before the crowned Virgin, but by a tour of the parish church, of the barn of the apparition, of the park of the Oblate Fathers, of the Calvary of Pardon, and finally, of the very interesting and rich Marian Museum.

For many, Pontmain is an ideal place for a major retreat.

Note: For pilgrimages, write to: Pere Superieur, Maison des Chapelains, 53 Pont-Main, For Accomodations: Soeur Superieure EVRON, 53 Pont-Main, or, Peres Oblats de Marie, 53 Pont-Main.

The Two Crosses

(Added by the translator for the A. M. I. edition.)

As Bishop Paul Richaud said in his preface to *What Happened at Pontmain?* “An entire spirituality unfolds from the apparition of Pontmain which is inexhaustible.”

There is an intimate connection between Pontmain and the beginning of devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. First there is the extraordinary prophecy pronounced before the statue of the Immaculate Heart in Paris at the very time of the Apparition, followed by the vow, and finally the spreading of the Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart throughout France and the world.

There is the immediate fruit of the “national vow” in France, honoring the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

There is the liaison with St. Therese, messenger of the new spirituality.

But above all there is the iconography . . . or picture lesson . . . of Pontmain, by which Our Lady shows that her mission is to bring the love and salvation of Jesus Crucified to the whole world, and with it both joy and peace. (“She smiles! She smiles!”)

We have spoken of all these things but riot of the two white crosses which, in the fifth phase of the vision, appeared on Our Lady’s shoulders.

Since Pontmain parallels Fatima (only 53 years apart, with identical purpose and basis) we can look to the fuller message of Fatima for an explanation.

At Pontmain Our Lady brought peace. At Fatima she brought a double promise: Peace and the conversion of Russia.

For a thousand years the Christian Church has been divided East from West. The healing of this East-West schism is probably the key to all Christian unity.

In the Vision of Pontmain—where Our Lady stood with her shoulders to East and West—the East-West crosses are united on her who holds forth to all men: Jesus Crucified.

Not only is this affirmed at Fatima with a promise of the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart, but just six months before the centenary of Pontmain, something extraordinary happened at Fatima.

In June, 1970, the Blue Army of our Lady . . . a circle around the world illuminated by fulfillment of Her four shining conditions for unity and peace . . . acquired the holiest Icon of Russia: the Icon of Our Lady of Kazan.

Honored as “Liberatrix and Protectress” of Holy Mother Russia, the Icon had been confiscated by the Soviets in 1917 and its basilica turned into an atheist museum.

Laden with jewels and valued for as much as three million dollars, the Icon was sold to help finance the atheist revolution. But in 1970, the Blue Army, composed mostly of Roman Catholics . . . redeemed it . . . to give it back to Russia. The Icon arrived at Fatima on July 21 st, Feast of Our Lady of Kazan, and the following day began a week of study (at the Blue Army International Centre at Fatima) of the Byzantine Liturgy in which prelates of East and West participated.

From Rome came Bishop Katkoff, Apostolic Visitor to the Russian Churches; and from Constantinople: Patriarch Emilianos, Delegate of Patriarch Athenagoras.

Meeting daily in the presence of the Miraculous Icon of Kazan . . . at the very place where Our Lady promised peace and conversion through the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart . . . the priests and prelates and laity of East and West felt a unity of love which made an agony of their inability to participate in the same Communion. At the end they declared:

“We wish to declare that we have found that the Orthodox Church of the East and the Roman Catholic Church have substantially the same liturgical and spiritual theology. We have found in this domain only differences of a secondary nature.”

The last picture of Pontmain was of Our Lady's Crown . . . while her blue aura, with burning candles, remained.

Is it just a coincidence that 1971, Centenary of Pontmain, is also the silver jubilee of the crowning of Our Lady as Queen of the World (by Pope Pius XII) and that the coronation of Our Lady will be commemorated this year simultaneously by Bishops on all six continents?

The Queenship of Mary—which has been emphasized by the Church especially in these last days—is important because to acknowledge Mary as our Queen is to acknowledge that we belong to Her. And when the world acknowledges Her Queenship, it is by that very acknowledgement intimately consecrated to Her Immaculate Heart.

For this reason, in his encyclical (*Ad Coeli Reginam*) instituting the feast of the Queenship of Mary (now celebrated Aug. 22nd, formerly Feast of the Immaculate Heart) the Pope requested that every year, on this Feast of Her Queenship, all should renew the act of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

This exhortation of Pope Pius XII was forgotten by . many, but in 1970 . . . in a “blue aura” flight around the world to all six continents . . . the Blue Army carried CROWNS blessed by Pope Paul to be used in the world-wide coronation ceremonies on May 13, 1971, 25th anniversary of the “Queen of the World” Coronation by Pope Pius XII.

Many ceremonies and gestures are ephemeral—and, like the news of the day, soon forgotten. But not a coronation.

By crowning a sovereign WE BEGIN A REIGN.

And so we trust that 1971, centenary of Pontmain and silver jubilee of the “Queen of the World” will be the beginning of the reign of the Immaculate Heart of Mary over all the earth.

The “crowning” by Pius XII was made by means of the statue of Our Lady of Fatima which, in his subsequent encyclical (*Ad Coeli Reginam*) the Pope called: “The MESSENGER OF HER ROYALTY”, Because

the year after the coronation (1947) another statue left Fatima as a “pilgrim”—and the favors along the way were so great that the same Pope (Pius XII) exclaimed that “it seemed as though she had gone forth to claim her dominion.”

Now there are “official” pilgrims in some fifty countries around the world . . . and it is these messengers of her royalty which were chosen for the world-wide, simultaneous crowning on May 13, 1971. [Note: Pontmain was chosen for coronation of the National Pilgrim Virgin of France on May 13, 1971, and a French Cardinal was chosen to celebrate the Pontifical Mass at Fatima itself on this historic day of Mary’s Queenship.]

Now may there begin the final phase of the Virgin of Hope, the Virgin of Prayer, the Virgin of Power who smiles upon the world to which she holds down Jesus Crucified. Now may there begin the reign of the Immaculate Heart of Mary who said at Fatima:

“In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph, Russia will be converted and an era of peace will be granted to mankind.”

APPENDIX II*

Pontmain in the Light of Fatim

(Added by the translator for A. M. I. edition.)

Our Lady appeared in blue. Her “message” was conveyed through gradual movements and modifications, and finally by words which appeared across the sky at her feet.

At this point, the invading armies were only miles away and people fleeing through the village were exhorting all to run for their lives. But transfixed by the ecstasy of the children and by a sense of the supernatural, several villagers said: “If the enemy were here now, we would not fear!”

As the Rosary was finished, a white band began to unroll across the sky and upon it, letter after letter, were spelled out the words:

“But pray my children. God will soon hear you. My Son is moved.” (Mon fils se laisse toucher could also be translated “My Son permits Himself to be touched”).

Meanwhile there had been a change in the stars in the sky. Three bright stars were seen by the entire crowd to form a great triangle. This caused all who saw it to believe. Then the children saw forty stars gather beneath the vision, and the red cross became a red Crucifix which Our Lady took into her hands and held down towards the world. On top of it, in red letters, appeared the words JESUS CHRIST. Then a star shot up from beneath Our Lady’s feet to light four candles in the great blue oval around her. Finally, as the star returned to a spot above Our Lady’s head, she dropped her hands.

That night, the enemy troops were to have pushed forward, but the final command never came. Within ten days the war was over. It was followed by a peace which lasted forty years.

What was the meaning of the four candles? What, indeed, was the meaning of the entire vision? What was the star which rose from Our Lady’s

feet, lit the candles, then shone like a crown above her as she dropped her hands to rain graces upon the earth?

Since the forty stars beneath the vision have been universally understood to signify the forty years of peace which followed, it is presumed that the single star which lit the candles, as well as the entire vision, must necessarily have a bearing upon peace.

However, no satisfactory explanation of the star or the candles was ever presented until fifty years later when again France was invaded. Again Paris was being bombarded. And Our Lady appeared again, this time at Fatima, with a bright star shining at her feet. She again promised to end the war, but at the same time she made a terrible yet wonderful prophecy concerning peace: "The war will soon end, and the soldiers will return to their homes." However, she said that if her four requests were not heard that another and a more terrible world war would begin within the reign of the next Pope, and that if her requests then still remained unfulfilled, "Error will spread from an atheist Russia throughout the entire world, fomenting further wars . . . several entire nations will be annihilated."

The symbol of "atheist Russia!" is a red star. And the power of the red star rose from Russia to dominate half the population of the earth. It continues to foment further wars even up to this present moment, with the ever possible threat of atomic destruction upon entire nations.

In 1947, a rather ordinary parish priest in a medium-sized town in the United States rose in his pulpit and said:

"We must fulfill the conditions of Our Lady of Fatima for peace. I ask everyone in this parish to fulfill those four conditions and to wear something blue as a testimony that they are doing what Our Lady has asked. We in this parish will be the Blue Army of Our Lady against the Red Army of atheism."

From that parish, the idea of a "Blue Army" caught on around the world until by 1970 it numbered over twenty-million members in 57 nations!

During all this time, no explanation had ever been given for the bright star which shone just above Our Lady's feet in the vision of Fatima. It

was merely thought that perhaps because Our Lady at Fatima had promised the ultimate conversion of Russia and world peace after her requests are heard that the red star will become “a bright star at Our Lady’s feet”.

But literally because of the red star, the four requests of Our Lady of Fatima have now been lighted around the entire world. And the fulfillment of those requests bear not only a promise of peace for forty years, but to use her own words:

“In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph; Russia will be converted and an era of peace will be conceded to mankind.”

A commission of six experts appointed by the Bishop of Fatima to interpret the Fatima message has given the opinion that the era of peace promised by Our Lady implies a true “reign of Christ” on the earth, because there could be no other meaning of the word “peace” on the lips of the Mother of Christ, and no other meaning to her words: “My Immaculate Heart will triumph”.

The present Rector of the sanctuary of Pontmain agrees that this may well be the ultimate meaning of the vision of Pontmain,

And what of the four candles in the blue oval?

In 1946, the sole survivor of the three children who saw Our Lady of Fatima labored to condense the requests of Our Lady into a simple promise which could be fulfilled by anyone, from the simplest child to the most sophisticated adult. The formula contains four points, and this became the basic “pledge” or condition of membership in the Blue Army of Our Lady. These four “candles” which the Red Star caused the Blue Army members to light in their own lives and in the world are:

1) The morning offering; 2) A Living Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by the Scapular; 3) Full use of the Rosary; 4) Renewal of the offering in moments of temptation. They wear some outward sign of blue as a testimony of this fourfold pledge.

The late Father Pio, of San Giovanni Rotondo, said: “Russia will be converted when there is a Blue Army member for every Communist.” On

another occasion, the saintly priest, whose cause for beatification is now in progress said: "What will save us is the Madonna, and zealous souls. The Madonna has such power that, in time, she will succeed in turning away from us the anger of God. "

Eugene Cardinal Tisserant, Dean of the Cardinals of the Catholic Church, said: "Today more than ever Christ wills that we have everything from Him through His Mother, according to the words of Saint Bernard recalled recently by the Sovereign Pontiff.. the Blue Army is a response to the (four) demands of the Blessed Virgin of Fatima . . .

"Is it not necessary," the first Cardinal of the Church continued, "that all Catholics who still enjoy liberty should arrange themselves LIKE AN ARMY AROUND OUR LADY, stronger against evil than an army arranged in battle, yet tender like the most tender of mothers, if they wish mercy to be poured forth abundantly upon all sinners? Therefore with all my strength I appeal for a more and more widespread and more popular imploration of Our Lady, certain that only the intervention of the most Blessed Virgin Mary will obtain the necessary graces of conversion and re-awaken an authentic sense of unity in Christ and in the Church for a TRUE WORLD PEACE."

APPENDIX III

The Pastor of Pontmain

(from a website)

Pontmain was made a parish in its own right in 1840. From 1836, Father Michael (*Michel*) Guerin was appointed to Pontmain by Bishop Bouvier of Le Mans. For thirty-five years (before the apparition at Pontmain) this pious pastor labored for his flock of some five hundred souls.

By his faith, his confident prayer and his love of neighbor, he transformed a parish which he built. He held it close to his heart until his last breath. His last words were “Stay good Christians... Oh! that the parish should always remain as it does now” (May 29, 1872).

After the turmoil of the French Revolution of the 1790s, the parishes of France found themselves beset with numerous difficulties. The churches were in ruins, the interiors destroyed, or run down. This was the situation facing the small rural chapel of Pontmain which was later to become a church. The roof leaked, the altar and the pews were worm eaten, there was no linen, no ornaments nor sacred vessels.

Father Michael Guerin was a priest in the parish of Saint-Ellier of Maine. He knew of the miseries of Pontmain. He went to Mans to beg his Bishop to entrust to him this small hamlet abandoned in the middle of the countryside. He arrived at Pontmain on the evening of 24th November 1836. As there was no presbytery (rectory), he was satisfied with a furnished room in a modest thatched cottage. In a letter to his Bishop this is how he described one of his first Masses there: “Yes, your Excellency, I celebrated Mass on an altar stone laid on a pile of wooden planks. My fellow-priests and I preached from a workbench”. (Letter of 15th October 1844).

He got to work right away. With the help of his new parishioners he repaired the roof and made new pews. The women made linen for the altar and ornaments. Then came other projects; new roads, the restoration of the chapel, which was later to become the parish church. and

the building of a co-ed school. He even opened a shop selling tobacco (he himself took snuff) It also sold revenue stamps which saved the need to travel great distances to obtain them). He had a practical bent. He gave his all. By dealing with the material needs of his poor people, he won them for Jesus Christ. It did not take long for him to turn Pontmain into a lively and devout parish.

As mentioned in the introduction, no one worked on Sunday, and the Lord's name was held in reverence. Children were taught to be respectful of God and man. Father Guerin attached great importance to prayer and devotion to the Virgin Mary and arranged to have a statue placed in every household. From this time onward every family prayed the rosary daily.

Father Guerin had numerous crosses erected along the roadsides. He placed a statue of Mary in the bell-tower. From 8th December 1854 (the day of the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception) four candles were lit on the altar of Our Lady at every parish service. In 1860, he had the church vault painted sky blue, with a scattering of stars. The visionaries beheld our Lady in the sky surrounded by stars and four candles. It was an obvious "tip of the hat" to their wonderful pastor.

He was mischievously called by some "the good Virgin's priest." June 1, 2013 marked the opening of the process for the beatification of Michel Guerin by Mgr Thierry Scherrer, Bishop of Laval, with Mgr Yves Saux, Bishop of Mans, in the Basilica of Pontmain.

PRAYER NEXT PAGE

Prayer for the Intercession of the
Servant of God, Father Michel Guerin

Lord our God,

You chose Michel Guerin to be pastor of Pontmain, who with a burning heart, gathered together the poor people of that parish to form them into a fervent community of faith, hope and love.

Bound to his parishioners in life and death, it was through his filial and unconditional obedience to the Virgin Mary that he drew strength for his priestly ministry.

May the example and holiness of Father Michel Guerin be recognized soon, so as to intensify in our Church an appreciation of the power of prayer and of confidence in God and the Virgin Mary, Mother of Hope, who appeared in Pontmain,

And, by the intercession of your radiant servant this good priest, grants us, heavenly Father, the grace that we now in confidence ask. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Footnotes

(Well worth reading!)

- 1 . Maker of wooden shoes commonly used at that time in Brittany.
2. “You are too wicked,” a priest said to this ten year old boy in front of us, “I cannot believe that you have seen the Blessed Virgin.” — “Very well!” said he, quickly, “you are like St. Thomas.”— “But, continued the priest, “St. Thomas was a great Saint.”— “Yes,” said Joseph, “but not when he didn’t believe.”
3. According to our calculations, it was the Milky Way.
4. The blue, said the children, was dark and brilliant like the indigo pellets used for laundry.
5. The equivalent of 20 centimeters is 7.87 inches.
6. Never, said the children, had one seen the like in person or in pictures.
7. One called buckles, in this part of the country, a knot of ribbon, as well as a bow made with shoelaces. We showed the children shoes with silver buckles: “Oh! that,” they said, “it is nothing at all like that.” And one of the little girls pointing to the bow formed by the ribbons from her hat said that “they were buckles like this, but quite round and very well made.,
8. This is the name given in the country to the mallet used for pounding the bush stems.
9. Their maid.
10. We can only give the time approximately. The children and those around them, deeply moved, were little occupied with, the question of time. Moreover, the church clock, stopped by the rigor of the cold, did not sound the hours.
11. Sister Vitaline is one meter 65 centimeters tall or 5 feet and about 5 inches tall.
12. This little child was small and very delicate. “You have seen the

Blessed Virgin, my little Eugene?” — Oh! yes, Sir . . . “What did you say to her? . . . “Oh, I said nothing to her, and she said nothing to me.” He remained no more than ten minutes. His grandmother gave him to his aunt to take back because it was so cold.

13. At that time it was customary to use a black silk handkerchief for watching an eclipse of the sun and Mr. Guidecoq thought that the apparition might be a phenomenon of this nature.

14. The children thus distinguished ordinary stars from those which they saw on Our Lady’s dress, They said these stars had five points, like the stars on the ceiling of the church, What were these stars of the atmosphere? We do not know, Only the children saw them in a number of about forty, The other persons saw only the three stars of which we have spoken.

15. In the grand tone of Brittany, said the children afterwards.

16. It extended on the roof of the Guidecoq house from one chimney to the other,

17. These interruptions were frequent and more or less prolonged during the prayers and the singing. One stopped to question or to listen to the children.

18. News of the occupation of Laval by the Prussians had spread through all of Brittany. They were not more than a mile from the city and all of the inhabitants, justifiably frightened, expected them to enter at dawn.

The Blessed Virgin protected the city where so many of her devotees invoked her in the old sanctuary of Avenieres. The National Vow, to which France attributes its preservation was made in this church on the 20th of January by the Most Reverend Bishop surrounded by a large number of the clergy and an immense crowd of the faithful.

19. We would like to insert here, in this footnote, a fact which took place but was not included in the first edition of this book because all of the circumstances were not sufficiently known at that time:

The wife of Augustine Guidecoq, who had come to the barn at the same

time as the pastor, had returned to her house during the Magnificat because she couldn't see anything and she was cold. Pressed by curiosity, she returned during the singing of the litanies to where the children were. Their statements, though precise and so perfectly in accord, and their consoling words which they read in the sky, the emotion and the faith of the crowd, nothing could convince her of the reality of the apparition.

"The pastor does not see," she said to herself. "The Sisters do not see either. The children say that it is on our house, and I see nothing either. Certainly their sight is troubled. There is nothing."

And she left the barn, crossed the road and was continuing through the area which separates her house from that of the Barbedette's.

On arriving in front of the fence which, from this area, gives access to the little square of the church, she strained her eyes to the spot over the roof of her house.

"There is nothing," she murmured,

She wanted to go ahead, but her legs bent and she fell upon her knees on the icy snow-covered ground.

"Oh, the good God punishes me," she thought.

Crying, she recited three or four Our Fathers and Hail Marys in honor of the Blessed Virgin. Then she was able to get up and she entered the house, quickly went through it and came out into her garden in the hope of seeing the vision from that side. Vain hope! She did not see the beautiful Lady! She at once went back into the house and returned to the barn where she continued to pray, shedding tears of regret for having been incredulous.

20. After the second repetition, God will hear you in a short time, one can easily imagine the joy of the crowd in receiving this merciful promise. We asked Eugene for what intentions he had been praying. "I prayed," he answered, "that my brother would not receive a mortal wound, to obtain peace, the departure of the Prussians, and the return of tranquili-

ty. “And he felt then that his prayers were heard. Everyone around said: “The war is going to end; we are going to have peace.” “Yes,” said the child, “but pray. And he made everyone understand the sense of the word but which until then had appeared quite ordinary.

Several days after the happening, the Sisters of Pontmain took the children to Fougères, to the mother house of their congregation.

The superior questioned the little children.

“The Blessed Virgin,” she said to them, “knows grammar. She could not have begun a sentence with the word but.

Jeanne-Marie Lebosse quickly answered:

“Sister Vitaline also knows grammar. Well! when she has had enough of seeing that one does not work, she gives a good kick on the step and says: “But, study then!”

21. (Translator’s Note:) In French, the word for “permit oneself” and “to worry oneself” are both similar. The word to permit oneself (*laisse*) is very similar to worry oneself (*lasse*).

22. (Translator’s Note:) This phrase does not translate easily into English. In French, it is extremely concise, but the meaning is clearly that despite the punishment deserved by the world, Our Lord is in a sense permitting His mercy to circumvent the rigors of justice.

23. “One would like to have jumped right up to her,” said the little children. And Eugene added: “Oh, if only I had had wings!”

24. Eugene said it was as though she were entering into a pocket.

25. They added that the words of the children, even though reproduced with difficulty, could not convey all of their ways of surprise, of spontaneity, of lively even extraordinary expression in their looks, their gestures, and their voices.

26. This account is taken from the pursuit after the battle of Mans by the detachment of General Schmidt, from the 13th to the 17th of January 1871. German account edited under the auspices and according to the archives of the German high-command, published by E. Moreau.



Our Lady of Pontmain

Our Lady of Hope

Notre Dame d'Espérance de Pontmain,



**PRAY MY CHILDREN, GOD WILL SOON GRANT YOUR REQUEST,
MY SON WILL BE MOVED BY YOUR PRAYER.**

Apparition of Our Lady at Pont-Main, the 17 January 1871

