

<http://www.ncregister.com/blog/mfenelon/a-visit-to-the-first-marian-apparition-site-in-the-u.s>

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MIRACLES STILL REPORTED AT THE SITE OF THE FIRST MARIAN APPARITION IN THE U.S.

AT THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GOOD HELP, MIRACLES OF CONVERSION (AND EVEN PHYSICAL MIRACLES) ARE PLENTIFUL.

Marge Fenelon

My visit to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help is the first of nine journeys as part of Marian Pilgrimage: Discovering Mary Across the USA. You can learn more about this project [here](#). You can follow my future journeys and send your prayer intentions [here](#).

I'd first visited the National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help in 2010, several weeks after the Marian apparition that had occurred there was approved by Green Bay Diocese Bishop David R. Ricken. Back then, you might have driven right past the shrine if you didn't know it was there. Nestled in the midst of farmland, the shrine was completely inconspicuous.

It still is today, as I experienced during a recent visit there.

That's one thing that both baffles and entices me about this amazing place where our Lady appeared to a young Belgian woman named Adele Brise in 1859. The property, the shrine, and even the Apparition Oratory itself has maintained an aura of peace and simplicity throughout the years. Locals tell me it's been that way since the apparitions themselves occurred.

Peace and simplicity.

And yet, this grace-filled place has been attracting visitors from all over the world. It's not unusual for an entire busload of pilgrims to arrive, pray in the shrine, tour the grounds, and overnight in hotels in the neighboring vacation spot called Door County, a Wisconsin peninsula of the Great Lakes. While at the shrine, they'll learn the history of the apparition and take in presentations from expert docents and Mariological experts. If they're Catholic, they'll receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and participate in holy Mass (The shrine is administered by the Fathers of Mercy). According to shrine staff, upwards of 150,000 pilgrims visit each year. No matter how many pilgrims converge at this holy place, the peace and simplicity are never disturbed.

Never.

Events and Communications Coordinator Corrie Campbell has been coming to the shrine since she was five years old. One of her favorite places to go, the shrine became a part of her. Now she's become a part of the shrine.

"Regardless of how many people are here, there's always a sense of peace," she said. "When people come, they feel a sense of peace. When they leave, they feel a sense of hope."

That sense of hope is instilled, in large part, by the shrine's mission – the same mission given to Adele Brise when our Blessed Mother appeared to her on three separate occasions in the Fall of 1859. During the first two apparitions, Mary said nothing. On the third, however, she urged Adele to pray and offer holy Communion for the conversion of sinners.



ABOVE: Inside the Shrine where liturgical celebrations are held and confessions heard. It is directly above the crypt. BELOW: (1) Shrine parking lot/entrance; (2) the graves of Sr. Adele and two of her fellow sisters; (3) entrance of the Apparition Oratory; (4) inside the Apparition Oratory, a crypt that lies beneath the spot upon which Mary appeared to Adele Brise.

"If they do not convert and do penance, my Son will be obliged to punish them," she said.

She gently admonished Adele by asking her, "What are you doing here in idleness, while your companions are working in the Vineyard of my Son?"

Confused, Adele asked her, "What more can I do, dear Lady?"

"Gather the children in this wild country and teach them what they should know for salvation," our Lady said.

"But how shall I teach them who know so little myself?" Adele asked in return.

"Teach them their catechism, how to sign themselves with the Sign of the Cross, and how to approach the sacraments; that is what I wish you to do. Go and fear nothing, I will help you."

Our Lady then lifted her hands in blessing and slowly vanished from sight.

Adele spent the rest of her life carrying out the mission given to her by the Blessed Virgin Mary. Today, those who minister at the shrine do the same.

"The importance of the sacraments, of the Rosary, of Mary's graces is always stressed here," said shrine docent Lisa Larson. "As it was in Adele's time, people today are poorly catechized. Only 30% believe in the Real Presence, and many don't receive the sacraments at all. Everything we do here helps people to know the Truth and they're excited about that."

At the National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help, miracles of conversion are plentiful. Visitors come out of curiosity or feel drawn there for no apparent reason and depart with their faith and conviction restored – some after having been away from the church for 20 to 30 years. Countless also are the spiritual, emotional, mental, and relational healings that occur.

There's no shortage of physical miracles, either, and that number seems to be annually increasing. The Apparition Oratory holds a store of crutches and other mobility devices left behind by those who no longer need them after having been healed while on pilgrimage. Additionally, chronic conditions and life-threatening diseases have been cured in great numbers. The shrine hosts healing Masses monthly, which are well attended.

At one such Mass, celebrated by Rwandan priest Father Ubald Rugirangoga, a man who had been previously incapable of walking bolted upright and ran to Fr. Ubald. He'd been completely healed and returns to the shrine for visits in thanksgiving.

"Adele's mission was seen as ordinary and mundane for the people at that time, and perhaps even for people now. But there is a palpable power and substance here," said Larson.

I agree. At the shrine, I had the distinct feeling of Mary's presence and of knowing that Mary not only was there but still *is* there now.

For more information, directions, and a schedule of events for the National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help:

- <https://www.shrineofourladyofgoodhelp.com/>

For a history of the Apparition and the shrine itself:

- The Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help: A Self-Guided Tour, by Fr. Edward Looney (\$15.38, 2012)
- A Message for Adele by Leo Winstead (\$6.09, CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2013)



