



Serving The Diocese of Green Bay

SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GOOD HELP



A BRIEF HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

Born in the town of Dion-le-Val, Brabant, Belgium, Adele Brise was known for her charming and inviting personality, fervent piety, simple religious ways, and confidence in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, despite the loss of an eye as a young child and a meager education. During her early childhood, Adele and several of her friends made a promise to the Mother of GOD to join a religious order in the town of Champion, in the adjoining province of Namur, and devote their lives to the foreign missions. While the other girls fulfilled their promise, Adele continued to live and work at home. In 1855, when Adele was 24, her parents made the decision to immigrate to America. Because of her promise to the Blessed Mother, Adele had mixed feelings about the move and discussed this with her confessor. Listening to her story, the good father counseled Adele to remain obedient to her father and mother, and join them on their move to America. He further assured her that "If God wills it, you will become a sister in America. Go, I will pray for you."

After the move to Wisconsin, Adele and her family began the arduous task of developing their homestead. In early October of 1859, while on her way to the grist mill, Adele experienced the first of three apparitions: She saw a lady clothed in dazzling white, with a yellow sash around her waist and a crown of stars around her head standing between two trees, one a maple, the other a hemlock. Adele was frightened and stood still. After several minutes, the vision slowly disappeared, leaving a white cloud.

On October 9th, the following Sunday, Adele was on her way to

attend Mass at Bay Settlement in the company of her sister Isabel and a neighbor woman when the second apparition occurred. As they came near the same set of trees, the lady in white once again appeared to Adele. After Mass, Adele met with her confessor who told her that if it were a heavenly messenger, she would see it again, and it would not harm her, and to ask in God's name who it was and what it desired of her.

The third apparition occurred as they approached the hallowed spot on the return trip home. Adele could see the beautiful lady and asked, "In God's name who are you and what do you want of me?"

"I am the Queen of Heaven who prays for the conversion of sinners, and I wish you to do the same. You received Holy Communion this morning and that is well. But you must do more. Make a general confession and offer Communion for the conversion of sinners. If they do not convert and do penance, my Son will be obliged to punish them."

"Adele, who is it?" said one of the women. "O why can't we see her as you do?" asked the other weeping.

"Kneel," said Adele, "the Lady says she is the Queen of Heaven."

Our Blessed Lady turned, looked kindly at them and said, *"Blessed are they that believe without seeing."*

The Lady continued, *"What are you doing here in idleness while your companions are working in the vineyard of my Son?"*

"What more can I do, dear Lady?" Adele said weeping.

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

"But how shall I teach them who know so little myself?" replied Adele.

"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."

The manifestation of Our Lady then lifted her hands, as though beseeching a blessing for those at her feet, and slowly vanished, leaving Adele overwhelmed and prostrate on the ground. Once the story of the apparitions got out, Adele's father built a small chapel on the site and Adele went about fulfilling the mandate she received, a mission to which she devoted herself until her death in 1896.

Throughout the 1840s and '50s, Wisconsin's population expanded rapidly. The Church, however, was unable to keep up with the growing need for pastors. When the Brise family settled in Green Bay in 1855, the nearest church was located in Bay Settlement, eleven miles away, and there was only one pastor to serve the entire northeastern part of the state. As a result, people, especially children, were not able to receive proper religious instruction. There was, therefore, a very great need for the mission that Adele had been given by the Mother of God.

With her characteristic confidence in the help of the Blessed Virgin, Adele went about catechizing the children and admonishing sinners. Teaching from house to house, and up and down the Green Bay Peninsula, she would travel as much as 50 miles on foot. Weather conditions, lack of education, fatigue, dangers of the forest and ridicule did not deter Adele's determination to fulfill her duty to Our Lady's request.

Eventually, she was joined by several young women to form a community



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of Third Order (secular) Franciscans, and St. Mary's Boarding Academy was founded next to the chapel dedicated to *Notre Dame de bon Secours* (Our Lady of Good Help) on the apparition site.

While Sister Adele and her small religious community suffered trials, persecutions and set-backs, they were also the means through which

miraculous events and healings were manifest. One of the most spectacular of these events occurred in 1871, when the Shrine's grounds and buildings were virtually untouched by the merciless fury and devastation of the Great Peshtigo Fire.

Since 1861, thousands of pilgrims have come to visit the Shrine of Our

Lady Of Good Help to honor the Mother of God and implore her assistance. And after the great fire of 1871, large crowds gather annually with the local Bishop on August 15th, the feast of the Assumption, to celebrate this day in honor of Mary, the Queen of Heaven, with a Rosary procession and outdoor Mass.

HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

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| 1831 | January 30 - Marie Adele Joseph Brise is born at Dion-le-Val, Belgium. | 1902 | Two remaining Tertiaries at the Chapel enter the community of Franciscan Sisters at Bay Settlement. Bishop Messmer entrusts the work at the Chapel to the Bay Settlement Sisters in October. Sister Pauline LaPlante, O.S.F. is assigned to the Chapel and remains as its head for the next 24 years. |
| 1855 | August 7 - Lambert and Marie Brise purchase 240 acres of land in the town of Red River, Wisconsin, U.S.A. | 1926 | March 15 - Sister Pauline dies at the Chapel at the age of 80 years. She is buried at the cemetery of the Bay Settlement Sisters. |
| 1859 | October 9 - Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Adele Brise occur. The first chapel is built by Lambert Brise; log structure 10 ft. x 12 ft. Adele Brise begins her teaching mission traveling house to house. | 1929 | The Chapel's boarding school is closed by Bishop Paul Peter Rhode of the Green Bay Diocese. Franciscan Sisters are asked to remain and care for the Chapel complex. |
| 1861 | The second Chapel is built at the shrine; wood frame construction, 24 ft. x 40 ft. Pilgrimages to the shrine begin at this time. | 1933 | The brick convent and school is remodeled as a Home for Crippled Children. |
| 1864 | Adele and her companions form a community of Third Order Franciscan and setup in a farmhouse not far from the Chapel. Later in the year a school and convent are built of wood frame construction. | 1941 | December 8 - The cornerstone of the fourth and present Chapel is laid by Bishop Rhode and the completed Chapel is dedicated the following July by the Bishop under the title of "Our Lady of Good Help." |
| 1869 | The Chapel School formally opens as Saint Mary's Boarding Academy. | 1953 | The crippled children's home is closed and the school and convent are leased to the Sisters of St. Francis and converted into a Pre-Novitiate High School. |
| 1871 | October 8 - The "Great fires of Northern Wisconsin," popularly known as the Peshtigo Fire, rage. Everything in the surrounding area is destroyed except the convent, school, chapel and five acres of land consecrated to the Virgin Mary. Pilgrimages increase and devotions on the 15th of August begin. | 1954 | The Most Reverend S. V. Bona, Bishop of Green Bay, appoints the first resident chaplain for the Chapel. |
| 1880 | The third chapel of Our Lady Of Good Help is built. First brick structure on the site. | 1968 | The Franciscan Pre-Novitiate High School is closed due to lack of vocations. The Franciscan Sisters continue on at the Shrine serving the people in the area. |
| 1885 | With money solicited by Sr. Adele, a brick residence and school is built by the Diocese to replace the wooden structures. | 1992 | The Carmelite Sisters from Grand Rapids, Michigan take possession of the Shrine complex. |
| 1890 | Death of Sr. "Maggie" (Marguerite Allard), Sr. Adele's assistant and secretary for their religious community. Sometime between 1890 and 1896, through a suggestion made by Sr. Adele, the town of Robinsonville changes its name to Champion, which in a way fulfilled the promise she made to the Blessed Mother. | 2002 | The Carmelite Sisters depart from the Chapel and the Diocese of Green Bay resumes control of the Shrine. |
| 1893 | Bishop Messmer solicits the help of the Canons of Premontre from Berne Abbey in Holland. Fr. Bernard Pennings and his group of Norbertines arrive. | 2006 | The Chapel incorporates as the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help, Inc., and elects a board of directors. |
| 1896 | July 5 - Death of Sr. Adele at the Chapel. Leadership of the Chapel and School are entrusted to her associate Sr. Madeleine. | 2009 | Bishop Ricken opens a formal Church investigation of the apparitions and appoints a commission for the task. |
| | | 2010 | December 8th - Bishop Ricken issues a formal decree approving the apparitions and establishes the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help as an official Diocesan Shrine. |

Note: This brief history is based on the Shrine's history book, *"The Chapel" Our Lady of Good Help - A Shrine of Mary on the Green Bay Peninsula* by Sr. M. Dominica, O.S.F.