

was the Queen of Heaven, attended by angelic spirits.

Amazed by what he was witnessing, the Bishop was not too awestruck to notice that the angels made a slight alteration in the prayers. Instead of the words: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," the angels substituted: "Blessed be the Son of Mary, who has come down to this place; who reigns world without end."

At the completion of the ceremony, when the heavenly visitors departed, the Bishop remained in an ecstasy. When the clerical dignitaries were gathering for the ceremony, the Bishop informed them of the vision he had seen during the night and advised them that the church was already consecrated. Nevertheless, he was persuaded to vest and take his place in the procession. When the first words of the consecration were about to be uttered, a voice was distinctly heard by all present: "Cease, for the church has been divinely consecrated." Thus the reality of the vision was proved beyond a doubt.

Unfortunately, the building which was graced by heavenly consecration was destroyed by fire in 1028. The flames spared nothing. When the church was rebuilt, a triple ceremony took place: the solemn consecration, the canonization of Meinrad by Pope Benedict IX, and the solemn translation of St. Meinrad's remains from Reichenau to Einsiedeln, the place of his martyrdom.

It is remarkable that in each of the five fires which reduced the church to ashes, only the holy chapel which enshrined the miraculous statue escaped injury. These fires occurred in 1028, 1214, 1465, 1509 and 1577. The church containing the chapel of St. Meinrad and the miraculous statue of the Virgin always remained a place of popular pilgrimage. Throughout the centuries, miracles of every nature have been performed through the intercession of Our Lady of Einsiedeln; but the shrine claims as the most striking those graces which have invigorated faith and devotion.

In 1854 a group of religious from Einsiedeln were sent as missionaries to the United States. The first settlement established by them is well known as St. Meinrad's Abbey in Southern Indiana.

The miraculous statue of Our Lady remains today in the little chapel and continues to attract pilgrims, as it has since its origin over a thousand years ago.

*(excerpted from: *Miraculous Images of Our Lady*)

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Our Lady of Einsiedeln

Einsiedeln, Switzerland

853 A.D.



At the point when it seemed all was lost,
Our Lady appeared with great light.
We all know persons who seem so far from God,
many who once were fervent.
Our Lady will rescue them if we trust in her.
As Our Lady told Sr. Josefa:

"I am the Refuge of Sinners, That soul will not be lost."

Let us continue to keep our hands and hearts on Our Lady,
and unceasingly beseech her to rescue those most in need.

Our Lady of Einsiedeln

*The history of this miraculous statue begins with St. Meinrad, who was about 25 years old when he received the Benedictine habit at the monastery of Reichenau. The monks there enjoyed a great reputation for sanctity and learning, but after five or six years Meinrad felt called to a life of more complete seclusion. With the permission of his superiors, he left the monastery during the year 840 and took with him only a few pious books. He eventually settled in an isolated place on Mt. Etzel. There he built a cell and lived a hermit's life—until his retreat was discovered by the curious. He then left to establish a hermitage in the depths of a pine forest a short distance from Lake Lucerne. Here in the Dark Forest, he spent his days in prayer and penance. The historian, Northcote reports in his history of the shrine that a monk from Reichenau discovered Meinrad's retreat and was occasionally permitted to visit him. One night, he saw a brilliant light proceeding from the hermit's little chapel. Looking in he saw Meinrad reciting the night office while a young child, surrounded by brilliant rays, supported the book and recited with him the alternate verses. The monk did not enter, but returned to his monastery and made known to his fellow monks that Meinrad's retreat was visited by angels.

It is reported that Meinrad tamed and adopted two crows. It is also said that he was discovered by a woodcutter. Once his location was known, many people journeyed to him for spiritual instruction. Because of the great number of people who were visiting the hermitage, it was considered necessary that a chapel be provided for the celebration of Holy Mass and the administration of the Sacraments. During the year 853 a chapel was built adjoining the Saint's cell.

There are two accounts regarding Meinrad's acquisition of the miraculous statue. One tells that when he left Reichenau, he took not only his books, but the monastery's statue as well; another account reveals that he was given the statue after the chapel was built. Historians do agree, however, that the statue was the gift of Abbess Hildegard of Zurich, who might also have arranged for the building of the chapel since she was able to provide the necessary funds from her father, Emperor Louis.

The statue of Our Lady holding on her left arm the Divine Child is carved in wood and is three feet, four inches in height. The features are described as being regular, gracious and serene. Its color is now perfectly black; but whether this is the original color of the wood or the result of great age and long exposure to the smoke of burning tapers, it is impossible to determine.

This precious statue was placed by St. Meinrad over the simple altar of his little chapel. People flocked to pray there, and soon extraordinary graces

were manifested. Because of these marvels, pilgrimages soon wended their way to the hermitage to do honor to Our Lady of Einsiedeln.

Two thieves named Richard and Peter eventually heard that crowds of people were visiting the isolated chapel. Thinking that the people were donating jewels and valuables in return for the benefits they derived from praying there, the thieves visited the hermitage one winter's day in the year 863. We are told that the Saint was informed by supernatural means of their coming and their intent; nevertheless, St. Meinrad welcomed them kindly and offered them the hospitality of his humble dwelling. It is uncertain whether the thieves attacked the Saint before they searched for treasure, or whether they killed him from disappointment at finding nothing of value. It is told, however, that after the scoundrels placed St. Meinrad's body on his bed of leaves, two candles standing nearby were mysteriously lighted. Frightened at this marvel, they hastily left, but the two crows belonging to the Saint followed them to Zurich. Their sharp cries and flapping wings attracted the attention of many, including the woodcutter who identified the birds as those which lived near the Saint. Suspecting that some danger had befallen his friend, the woodcutter hurried to the chapel and discovered the body. Burial of the Saint took place at the Abby of Reichenau.

It is said that the two crows hovered over the scaffold the day the two thieves were brought to justice. Northcote tell us that there exists no reason for doubting the truth of this account about the crows, "which need not necessarily be regarded as in any way miraculous." In addition to many reproductions of the crows in sculpture and illuminations found in Swiss churches, the abbey of Einsiedeln bears the likeness of two crows on its armorial shield, and for many years an inn in Zurich was known as the Inn of the Two Faithful Crows.

After St. Meinrad's death the chapel was seldom visited, but in 903 Benno, a canon of Strasburg, made a pilgrimage there. He assembled a community of hermits. Later a community of Benedictine monks was established, and a church was erected. When the church was completed in 948 and its consecration was planned for September 14, a most astounding miracle occurred. Conrad, the Bishop of Constance, who was to perform the consecration, spent part of the night in prayer before the miraculous image. Shortly after midnight a bright light illuminated the sanctuary, while heavenly voices began to sing. He saw two choirs of angels chanting hymns. He then beheld Our Lord Himself standing at the high altar, arrayed in pontifical vestments and preparing to celebrate the rite of dedication. Bishop Conrad identified St. Stephen, who served as deacon, and St. Lawrence, who assisted as subdeacon. St. Peter, St. Gregory and St. Augustine stood around the altar. Seated nearby on a throne of light