

make pilgrimages to the shrines of Our Lady starting with my earliest youth. I know very well that every people, every country, has its holy places... places of special encounter between God and human beings... places in which Christ dwells in a special way in our midst. If these places are so often dedicated to His Mother, it reveals all the more fully to us the nature of His Church."

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Prayer to Our Lady of Knock

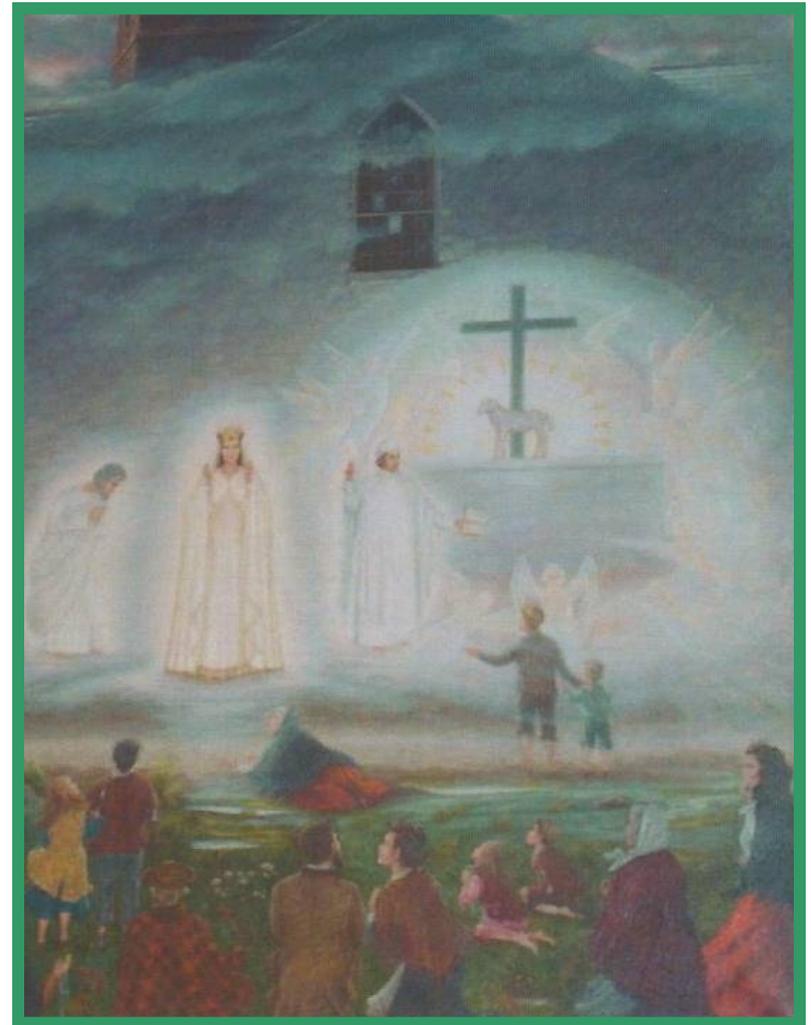
**Our Lady of Knock,
Queen of Ireland,
you gave hope to our people
in a time of distress and comforted them in sorrow.
You have inspired countless pilgrims
to pray with confidence to your divine Son,
remembering His promise:
"Ask and you shall receive, Seek and you shall find".
Help me to remember that we are all
pilgrims on the road to heaven.
Fill me with love and concern for my
brothers and sisters in Christ,
especially those who live with me.
Comfort me when I am sick or lonely or depressed.
Teach me how to take part ever more reverently
in the holy Mass.
Pray for me now, and at the hour of my death.
Amen.**



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The 1879 Apparition in Knock, Ireland

Feast Day: August 21st



*The apparition lasted over two hours...
no words were spoken or message written...*

1879 Knock, Ireland

by Bill Matthews

Around 7 o'clock on the evening of August 21, 1879, the housekeeper of the parish priest, Mary O'Loughlin, was on her way to visit the Byrne's family when she noticed the south gable of the church awash with an unusual glow, but in the driving rain she did not investigate.

About 7:30 p.m., Margaret Byrne left home to lock the parish church and saw a light at the southern end of the church, and thought she saw three large figures standing against the gable, silhouetted with light. She thought the figures were the statues purchased to replace those smashed, in a storm, the previous year.

When Mary O'Laughlin was leaving the Byrne's home, Margaret's sister, Mary offered to accompany her, and about 300 yards from the church she noticed three figures resembling those of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and St. John. The Virgin wore a white cloak which hung in folds and fastened at the neck. She also wore a large crown. St. Joseph had grey hair and a beard, and stood on the Virgin's right, while St. John was attired as a bishop and carried a book in his left hand.

Behind the figures was an altar with a cross, and a lamb. Mary ran home to tell other family members while their 18-year-old brother alerted the dozen or so families residing in the town. Many came in the driving rain, and at least 22 saw the "living" figures of the Virgin, St. Joseph, and St. John.

Some attempted to get closer, but in doing so the figures receded out of reach while still remaining in sight. The apparition lasted over two hours, and during this time no words were spoken or message written.

Not everyone is aware that the marvelous appearance on the gable of the Knock Church came on the day when the parish priest, Archdeacon Cavanagh, had finished offering, as he had promised, 100 consecutive Masses for the suffering souls in Purgatory.

Surely that extraordinary devotion to the Holy Souls had a part to play in the gift of the vision from Heaven. If such a response came to Archdeacon Cavanagh, then Our Lord and Our Lady must want to encourage all of us to remove the torment of our dead and to seek their help.

The reason the parish priest turned in this way to the holy souls, was that a secret organization resorting to violence had threatened the priest for preaching against their tactics. They resented his condemnation of violence, which prevented them from gaining recruits in Knock parish. In his distress, he turned to the suffering souls and called on his parishioners to pray for and to the souls, with 100 days of Masses. They triumphed!

A commission was appointed to investigate the event, and original documentation revealed a negative response. Nevertheless the villagers and those from surrounding districts put their trust in the witnesses and the apparition. Although there was no message, many believed it was Our Lady's way of saying: "I am with you!"

The lamb on the altar represented the "Sacrificial Lamb." Around this period, the Irish experienced many sacrifices, the starvation caused by the potato famine, the religious persecution, and the poverty which saw the break-up of families resulting in thousands being forced to emigrate to other countries. St. John in his bishop's attire, was, they say, a visual reinforcement of the role of the priest, while St. Joseph's appearance, and role, was to comfort the Irish families.

The first pilgrimage to Knock took place the following year. As these increased, the church was widened but this proved inadequate to accommodate the number of pilgrims from Ireland and overseas countries.

In 1976, a new church was built, which was essential, to accommodate the tens of thousands of pilgrims traveling to Knock each year. Pope John Paul II's visit to Ireland in 1979 gave a sense of ecclesial sanction, when he said: *"It has been my custom to*