

The miraculous statue was awarded two distinctions in the year 1877: It was recognized as an historical monument by the Dutch Government, and it was given a papal coronation on the command of Pope Pius IX. During this ceremony Bishop de Paradis officiated, together with the Papal Nuncio. After witnessing the devotion of the huge crowd that attended the ceremony, the Papal Nuncio reported that he found in Roermond a devotion as great as any in Rome.

When the great Jubilee was observed in 1935, the 500th anniversary of the finding of the statue in the well, the whole city participated with the thousands of pilgrims who came from surrounding villages. The celebration was considered of such importance that even the city streets were gaily decorated.

During World War II a bomb fell just outside the church causing severe damage, but the chapel of Our Lady was unharmed. The city suffered greatly not only from air raids, but the hostile deportation of men and boys to work in German factories. Those who refused to go were executed. Finally, in January of 1945, when a total evacuation was enforced, the rector of the shrine placed the miraculous statue of Our Lady in a satin bag and took it with him. Upon reaching Germany, the statue was enshrined in the Catholic church of Leeuwarden, where devotion to Our Lady in the Sand grew to be as intense as it had been in Roermond. The following June, when the people were permitted to return to Roermond, they found the city devastated. The church was badly damaged, but usable, and the Chapel of Our Lady was preserved. Without delay the holy statue was returned to its niche. In thanksgiving for their return, and in appreciation for the hospitality given the miraculous statue in Germany, the Bishop of Roermond returned to Leeuwarden on August 3, 1947 to enthrone in the church of Leeuwarden an exact replica of Our Lady in the Sand.

Many are the cures that are still reported at the shrine and by use of the water from the well. Processions are still held on the feasts of Our Lady, and on these occasions the little statue is taken from her shrine and placed above the high altar in an elaborate shrine.

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

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Our Lady in the Sand ***Roermond, The Netherlands*** **1418**



O. L. VROUW IN 'T ZAND

**Our Lady stands while holding the Holy Child on her right arm,
her left hand supports His feet.
The Holy Child, holds an apple in His left hand
while His right arm hangs by his side.**

(They both appear to be grinning)

Our Lady in the Sand

*A small wooden chapel dedicated to Our Lady in the Sand (Onze Lieve Vrouw in 't Zand) once stood on the sandy flats outside the city of Roermond. It was much frequented by pilgrims during the early fifteenth century and was well known for its statue and the many miracles that were granted through the influence of Our Lady.

The existence of the chapel is confirmed as early as June 24, 1418, when the Mayor and council of Roermond wrote a letter in which they instructed Matheus Peuten (the parish priest of the Kerspels church) that he should assume "the care and management of the Lady Chapel in the sand outside the Zwartbruecik Gate, recently built at the insistence of the Carthusian Prior and Sir Gerard Van Vlodrop." Other writings of the time also tell of the chapel and the wonderful miracles granted there. Unfortunately, the fires of 1554 and 1665 destroyed most of the city's archives, as well as much of the documentation regarding these early cures and favors.

Our attention now turns to an apparently unbroken local tradition which relates that Wendelinus, the son of a Polish knight, while looking for work, came upon the farm of Gerard Muggengebreeck. Unable to find more elegant work, and because of his extreme need, he agreed to work for the farmer as a shepherd. The year was 1435. One day, while the sheep grazed on the flatlands, Wendelinus became enormously thirsty and went in search of water. Coming upon a well that was known to have run dry, he nevertheless tried to obtain some water and found not only a quantity of fresh water, but also a small statue of Our Lady. It was soon learned that the statue had been enshrined near the well in a tiny, primitive chapel.

When a blind girl was cured after a novena in honor of Our Lady of the Sand, the parish priest ordered that the statue be taken to the large parish church. In accordance with his wishes, the statue was carried there in a solemn procession, but the next day, when the statue was missing from the church, it was found once more by the well. It was then decided that a special chapel would be built at the place for its enshrinement.

The popularity of the shrine spread rapidly, as indicated by Fr. Luncenius, who gave the City Council a list of the offerings made by the pilgrims from 1467 to 1495.

All was not peaceful for the shrine. It had to contend with Protestant iconoclasts and certain Spanish governors. One of these governors, Blasius van Vegersheim, ordered the destruction of the chapel in 1578. The people protested, but the shrine was destroyed nonetheless. The statue, however, was rescued and found refuge in St. Christopher's

Church.

Having witnessed and experienced the special protection of Our Lady in the Sand, the Dean of the Cathedral, Heer Petrus Pollius, was inspired in 1620 to erect a new chapel for Our Lady. Three years later it proved necessary to enlarge it. For this endeavor Archduke Albert and Archduchess Isabella contributed 100 guilders.

Miraculous cures continued as before. In a declaration of Theodore John Kremers dated April 28, 1610, he tells of his miraculous cure and his promise to make a pilgrimage to Our Lady's Chapel "*in het Zand.*" Early records tell that James a Castro, the Bishop of Roermond, verified in 1613 that a woman from Heinsberg was suddenly cured at the shrine. Fr. James Wijns, a Jesuit, sent documents to Fr. Heribert Rosweide in 1623 in which he stated that the Mayor and Council vouched for seven miracles received from Our Lady in the Sand.

In addition to wonderful cures, a miracle of another kind took place in 1624 when a conflict developed between Spain and the Protestant north. When it seemed that the Protestants would prevail, the Marian Brotherhood made an urgent pilgrimage to the chapel. Almost immediately the water of the Ysel River froze to permit the crossing of a Catholic army that soon defeated the Dutch Calvinists.

The well that had figured so prominently in the recovery of the statue was enclosed within the chapel during an enlargement made in 1684. The well can still be found at the side of the altar. Measuring 26 feet deep, the top is covered with glass as a safety precaution. Because of its inconvenient location inside the chapel, a pump carries water along pipes to faucets on the outside of the chapel for the convenience of pilgrims who collect water. The well has never been known to run dry, even in the driest season, and many are the recorded cures gained from use of its water.

When Holland was occupied by French Revolutionary troops, the chapel was closed. The statue was taken to the pastor's house for safekeeping and then to a secret location. Finally on February 26, 1800, the chapel was reopened. The statue, however, was not returned until September 8, 1802.

Measuring a mere 13½ inches, Our Lady in the Sand is said to resemble the beautiful figures of the Delft school and is thought to have been made about the year 1400. Our Lady stands while holding the Holy Child on her right arm, her left hand supports His feet. The Holy Child, for His part, holds an apple in His left hand while His right arm hangs by His side. The back of the figure is rough, indicating that it was meant to stand permanently against a wall. In 1866 the statue was carefully renovated by the Dutch architect, Cuypers.