

The Fourth Apparition

The thirteen witnesses who joined Mariette on January 20 included her priest, Fr. Louis, and two journalists. The Virgin of the Poor asked Mariette to build a chapel there, and then laid her hands on the girl's head, tracing a sign of the cross. Even though Mariette waited in the snow every evening for her return, the Lady did not return until Feb. 11. The village boys made fun of Mariette, calling her "Saint Bernadette."

The Fifth Apparition

The next apparition happened, indeed, on the anniversary of the first apparition to Saint Bernadette in Lourdes: February 11. Like Bernadette, Our Lady had led Mariette to a spring of water, and at the fifth apparition she said "I have come to alleviate suffering." Padre Pio would call his hospital in San Giovanni Rotondo "The House for the Alleviation of Suffering." Mariette received her First Holy Communion from Fr. Louis the next day.

The Sixth Apparition

On February 15, again at 7pm, Mariette had a question from Fr. Louis to test Our Lady's authenticity. She answered the question and said "Believe in me and I will believe in you." Then she told Mariette a secret, which caused the girl to put her face to the ground in tears.

The Seventh Apparition

Our Lady did appear again on February 20, lasting seven minutes, the longest of her visits. Mariette was praying the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary, and the Virgin asked her to "Pray, my dear child; pray very much."

The Eighth Apparition

As at the other encounters, Mariette prayed the rosary in the backyard, waiting for Our Lady. On March 2nd, she came at the beginning of the first rosary, looking more beautiful than ever, but this time her face was very serious. "I am the Mother of the Savior," she said, "the Mother of God. Pray very much." She laid her hands on Mariette's head and blessed her with the sign of the cross. While at the previous six visits she had taken her leave with the words *au revoir* ("till we see each other again"), this time her final words were *adieu* ("until we meet in God").

Mariette would never see the Virgin of the Poor again in this life. Hitler's troops invaded Belgium on May 10, 1940, and during the war Mariette married a Dutch salesman. In 1944 an American Army chaplain found them with their 15-month old child living in the cellar of a house occupied by Allied troops.

The Fruits of Banneux

Almost immediately, the entire Beco family returned to the faith, as did much of the village. In no other apparitions did conversions happen so quickly. Many people received physical cures at the spring, and many more found the strength to believe again in God's providence. One of Banneux's more spectacular fruits is the American priest, Fr. Al Schwartz, whom the Virgin of the Poor inspired to serve the poor in Korea after the war.

Recommended reading

Fr. Al's story, *Priest and Beggar*, by Kevin Wells, is a spectacular read, but little precise information is available about Banneux itself. Some of the facts in this pamphlet are doubtless inaccurate, and the only book in English is Bob & Penny Lord's *Our Lady of Banneux*.

Our Lady of Banneux Historical Facts and Essential Messages of Our Lady in 1933



Welcome to Our Lady's Shrine here in San Francisco. In this pamphlet, prepared by our pastor, Fr. Joseph Illo, you will learn the basic facts and message of this apparition. You are encouraged to spend some time in quiet prayer and perhaps go to confession. Please keep a reverent silence in the Church, especially when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

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What: 8 Apparitions of Our Lady

Where: Banneux, Belgium

When: January 15-March 2, 1933

To Whom: Mariette Beco (age 12)

Banneux is a rural hamlet, population 245, 10 miles southeast of Liege, Belgium. In 1933, most of the inhabitants were not practicing their Catholic faith, but they felt a bit guilty about it. In 1914 the townspeople had made a vow to consecrate the village to Our Lady if the Germans left them unharmed. In fact, the soldiers never touched the poor little village, but the townspeople did not keep their promise. Most of them did not come back to God or His Holy Mother. So, on a Sunday evening in January of 1933, she came to them.

A Ball of Light

Mariette Beco had not gone to Mass that morning because her parents did not go to Mass. Her father was a lapsed Catholic, and Mariette herself did not pray the rosary or know her catechism. She had failed her First Holy Communion exam three times and stopped going to the classes altogether. Still, she was a sweet and caring child, accepting the poverty of her family and her village without sadness. On January 15, at 7pm, she was pressed up against a cold window watching the darkness deepen around the snow and ice of her backyard. Through the gathering gloom she noticed a "ball of light," gleaming like the moon, coming down through the trees toward the house. The light came to rest in their backyard, and Mariette realized it was a beautiful woman, looking straight at her and smiling. "Momma," she said, "there is a lady in the garden. It is the Holy Virgin."

Her mother, Louise, laughed at her daughter's wild imagination, but Mariette went back to the window. "She's so beautiful, and she's smiling at me." The Lady beckoned Mariette to come outside, but when Mariette ran for the door to go outside, her mother stopped her. "It's too dark and cold out there, and if you see a light it might be a witch!" The light disappeared, but Mariette went to her room and found an old rosary in a drawer. She began to pray.

When her father, Julien, came home, he laughed too: "It was the moonlight reflecting on the icicles, making weird shapes!" But on Wednesday Mariette went back to catechism class and amazed her priest, Fr. Louis Jamin, with how well she understood the lesson. She had been his worst student. Mariette summoned the courage to tell Fr. Jamin what she had seen on Sunday night, and he told her to pray to Our Lady for guidance.

The Second Apparition

At 7pm that night Mariette was in the backyard, looking for the Lady. As on Sunday, she saw a "bright ball" coming from the sky, resolving itself in the shape of a woman. The Lady's feet didn't touch the ground but rested on a sort of luminous cloud just above the snow. She looked like the Lady many poor children had reported seeing since the beginning of the 19th century.



Her robe was long and white; she wore a blue belt and rays of light shone from her head. She was a little more than five feet tall; her right foot was bare and under it a golden rose. Her hands were raised to her breast on which was a golden heart. A rosary hung from her right arm.

Mariette's father had followed his daughter, and when he saw her kneel in the snow he fetched a neighbor and his son. The three heard Mariette say "She is calling me" and followed the girl as she hurried towards the main road. She stopped at the edge of a forest and plunged her hands into a spring. The Lady had told Mariette to "put your hands in the water! This fountain is reserved for Me. Goodnight. Good-bye." With that the Lady moved away, becoming the "bright ball" again and disappearing into the sky. Her father put a coat on his daughter and led her home, and later called the priest over. Mariette described what she had seen, and all were surprised when her father made a good confession to Fr. Louis, resolving to practice the faith again.

The Third Apparition

The next day, Thursday, January 19, seventeen villagers had joined Mariette at 7pm in the backyard. The Lady returned, although only Mariette saw and heard her. The girl had been told by her priest to ask the Lady's name. "I am the Virgin of the Poor," the glowing figure said, and then led them to the spring. "This spring is reserved for all the nations, to bring comfort to the sick," she told Mariette. "I will pray for you; good bye." The Lady returned to heaven as on previous nights, by receding into a ball of light and disappearing into the sky.

