

Our Lady of the Cape

Our Lady of the Cape or “Notre Dame du Cap” in Quebec is the oldest Marian Shrine in Canada.

{cimovie}Cape.flv|Title|cape.jpg{/cimovie}

In 1652, the Jesuits established a mission there, and 9 years later the parish of Cap-de-la-Madeleine began. Soon afterwards, a rosary confraternity was started in the parish. The chapel that was constructed in 1720 -- the oldest chapel in Canada still standing today -- became the Shrine of Our Lady of the Cape at the end of the 19th century.

It was at that time that Mary came to visit the people of Quebec. In 1854, the year of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, a parishioner gave a statue of Our Lady as a gift to the church. A few years later, this Marian devotion increased as a result of two miracles in the parish.

Around the year 1870, the Church that had been built in 1720 was not big enough to accommodate all the faithful; and so the construction of a new place of worship began. By 1879, the stones that would be used to build the new Church had already been hewn and piled up on the other side of the river. Since it had been a mild winter, the river was not frozen over and so the stones could not be brought over to the construction site. Under the advice of Father Luc Désilets, the people began to pray; and on March 16th a sheet of ice began to form between the banks of the river, which was almost 2 kilometers wide. The parishioners call it the “Rosary Bridge.” Mary interceded on behalf of that small church so that it would not be destroyed.

It was in this same place that Mary performed a second miracle. On June 22nd, 1888, the tiny church dedicated to Mary became the Shrine of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary and the statue given in 1854 was placed above the central altar. One night, before three eyewitnesses -- Father Désilets, Frédéric Jansoone y Pierre Lacroix -- the statue of Mary opened its eyes. Father Jansoone described this extraordinary event: “The statue of Our Lady, whose gaze is fixed on the ground, had its eyes wide open; Our Lady was staring... her gaze was that of a living person, and she had a stern expression, with a certain sadness.”

The Canadian people recognized this miracle as a sign from heaven and pilgrimages soon began. In 1904 Pope Pius X sent a delegate to crown the statue -- the second statue in the New World, after Our Lady of Guadalupe, to receive this honour. Mary became the Queen of Canada, “The National Patroness of Canada!” The prophetic words of Father Frédéric

Jansoone during the opening ceremony of the shrine in 1888 were ultimately fulfilled: "From now on, this shrine belongs to Mary. And pilgrims will come from among all the families of the parish, from among all the faithful of the diocese, and from all the dioceses of Canada."

Gentle Mother and Mighty Queen,
humbly prostrated at your feet,
we offer you our tribute of respect and affection.

With our gaze fixed on your holy Shrine
-- the very place that you have chosen --
we turn to you with filial confidence,
certain that we will receive the graces we ask of you.