

## The Fresco of Mater Admirabilis

Trinita dei Monti, Rome.

In 1828, the monastery, Trinita dei Monti, founded in the fifteenth century, due to the generosity of the Kings of France, by St. Francis de Paul, General of the Order of the Minims, was offered to the Religious of the Sacred Heart according to the expressed desire of Leo XII which was confirmed by His Majesty, Charles X. The Trinita dei Monti became a centre of education for youth that radiated devotion to the Sacred Heart. Another mission and still another grace were reserved for it, however, that of becoming a Marian sanctuary where many souls would find a wealth of spiritual treasure.

In 1844, a young French girl, Pauline Perdrau, (who later became a Religious of the Sacred Heart) expressed to Reverend Mother Coriolis, Superior of the house, her desire "to paint Our Lady" in a niche located along a corridor that opened on the cloister. The Superior was hesitant. While she knew the talent of the youthful artist, she also knew her ignorance of fresco techniques. In spite of these obstacles, the desire of Pauline Perdrau was strengthened in prayer, and finally she was granted the coveted permission. She gave herself wholeheartedly to the task, consecrating to it the six or seven hours each day during which the colors may be applied to the prepared surface of the wall. The day on which she painted the face of the ~ladonna, however, she found that she was able to work for 13 consecutive hours, and she considered this "little miracle" a sign of the special help of Our Lady, whose aid she continually invoked. July 1st the work was finished. But the fresco with its still too vivid colors had to be hidden behind a curtain. This device allowed time to do its work, the fresco appeared in all its loveliness as we know it today. The Virgin was called the "Madonna of the Lily" until the 20th October, 1846.

On that day, Pope Pius IX who was visiting the Monastery exclaimed when he saw her "Mother Most Admirable", thus giving her the title that she bears to this day. Miracles began in November of the same year with the cure of Father Blampain, a missionary of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary. He received from Our Lady the power of speech which he had completely lost. After this grace Pius IX gave permission to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass before the miraculous picture. The sanctuary was enriched with indulgences and authorization was accorded to celebrate the feast of Mater Admirabilis on October 20th.

Since then, pilgrims in ever increasing numbers have come to kneel at the feet of the Virgin of the Temple. The grace that seems to be a special gift of Mater Admirabilis is an invitation to interior life. Near her, one understands in a new light, the depth and meaning of the angelic salutation, "Hail full of grace". "Virgin of the Invisible and the Essential", she turns and fixes our gaze on the realities of faith, on eternal values a precious lesson in our world of feverish activity that recognizes only what is tangible and immediate.

Among the innumerable priests and pilgrims of all nations who have come to the Shrine of Mater Admirabilis, one remembers especially the Saints who have prayed there: St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart, St. John Bosco, the Little Flower, St. Pius X, Blessed Pallotti, Don Orione, etc. and His Holiness Pius IX often confided to Mater Admirabilis, during the course of his many visits, the heavy cross of his pontificate.