



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
OF CHARLESTON
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This month, our *Via Fidelis* activity is “Learn about a particular Marian apparition, such as at Lourdes or Fatima.” As Catholics, we believe that Mary has appeared to many believers over the centuries after her glorious assumption into heaven. She continues to share messages that are meant to correct, encourage and lead us, as her spiritual children, to her son Jesus Christ.

While there are myriad examples we could study together, I want to share a surprisingly little-known fact for many Catholics. We have an approved Marian apparition that took place in the United States. *WOW!*

In 1859, Belgium immigrant Adele Brice encountered Mary while in the forest near present day Champion, Wisconsin. Our Lady encouraged Adele to receive the sacraments for the reparation of sins and teach the catechism to children. Adele began to travel as far as 50 miles on a regular basis to honor Mary’s request, and soon after became an integral part of founding a convent for other faithful women in the region.

During the deadliest fire recorded in American history — the Great Peshtigo Fire, which began the same day as the Great Chicago Fire, Oct. 8, 1871 — Adele and her companions called upon Our Lady of Champion for help, raising her statue in procession and leading others in the rosary as they took refuge in the church. On Oct. 10, the fire was extinguished by a change in weather and heavy rainstorms. In fact, the convent, school, chapel and five acres of land that were dedicated to Mary all survived the fire, when very few things did.

The story of Our Lady of Champion reminds us that we can always call upon our Immaculate Mother when we are faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges or threats to our spiritual or physical safety. I encourage you to share such stories with those around you, to uplift your brothers and sisters. Please read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (paragraphs 963-975) to learn more about Mary’s role in the salvific life of the Church, with the knowledge that we are loved deeply by God and the woman he chose to alter the course of history through her cooperation.

“Go and fear nothing, I will help you” (Our Lady of Champion).

In Christ’s love,

Most Rev. Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS
Bishop of Charleston