

24 September

Our Lady of Mercy

optional memorial



In the Chapel of the Adoration of Mende (France) this miraculous image, venerated as "Our Lady of Mercy", is kept. This is a statue of just 12 inches, of painted terracotta, depicting Mary holding the baby Jesus in her left hand and her right hand on the chest. The image comes from the French region of La Louvesc (Ardèche) and according to tradition may have belonged to St. John Francis Regis, although this is highly unlikely.

In July 1802 the Good Father accompanied Bishop de Chabot, bishop of Mende, to La Louvesc to make the transfer of the remains of St. John Francis Regis, which had been hidden during the Revolution. Accompanied by Fr. Antonio Astier, the Good Mother was also in Louvesc on pilgrimage on 7 May 1803. Hence the image was brought to Mende. The community received it

with respect and began to refer it according to the first words of the Salve Regina.

The image was placed in the chapel and soon began to work cures and favors through her mediation. Even a house on fire was extinguished in front of the image carried in procession, and the river Lot, threatening to flood the house, receded without causing any damage. The image was very popular with the occurrence of spiritual favors and miracles.

On 15 August 1894, at feast of the Assumption, the image was solemnly crowned by Cardinal Bourret, bishop of Rodez, and the bishop of Mende.

Sister Leocadia passed away on 2 January 1917 in the community, after a holy and humble life. For many years she was the caretaker of the house. The sister had distinguished herself with her Marian piety. Her last words to the superior, just before her death, were: *"Mother, Our Lady of Mercy complains that you do not pray enough; if we prayed more we would get much more graces."* These words impressed the superior and the community who decided to intensify their Marian fervor. One initiative was to establish a holiday in honor of Our Merciful Lady, which was set by the bishop, Msgr. Gely, on 24 September, a feast where the Church venerated the Virgin of Mercy.

Our communities are intimately associated with Mary, whose prayer joins ours. She is a *"model of faith in that love, precedes and accompanies us so that we can enter fully into the mission of her Son"* (Constitutions,3).