



Apparition Site Grotto

# *The Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help*

*The First and Thus Far Only Church-Approved Marian Apparition Site in the United States*

*by Larry Plachno*

Most bus and group tour planners are aware of the huge numbers of pilgrims who visit Marian apparition sites around the world every year. The best-known sites are Guadalupe, Mexico; Lourdes, France and Fatima, Portugal. What many tour planners may not know is that one of the 11 approved Marian apparition sites is located near Green Bay, Wisconsin and is easily accessible by tour coach. It makes an excellent center point or addition to a faith-based tour.

Adele Brise was born in Belgium and had plans to enter a convent but came with her

parents to the United States in 1855. They settled in what was then Robinsonville, Wisconsin, a rural area northeast of Green Bay. In 1859, one year after the 1858 apparitions of the Virgin Mary to Saint Bernadette at Lourdes, Adele three times saw a lady dressed in white. When asked who she was, the beautiful lady said: "I am the Queen of Heaven, who prays for the conversion of sinners, and I wish you to do the same." She gave Adele the mission of teaching the local children.

Adele's father built a small chapel on the site, but it proved inadequate for the visiting

pilgrims. In 1861, Adele's father built a larger church on an expanded five-acre site that had been donated.

On October 8, 1871 the famous Peshtigo Fire rolled through the area in a firestorm regarded as the worst in U.S. history. More than 1,200 lives were lost and approximately 1,875 square miles of forest were consumed. Refusing to leave the chapel, Adele Brise was joined by nearby residents who brought their families and some brought their livestock to the chapel grounds for protection. Adele organized a procession to beg the Virgin Mary for her protection. Miraculously, the

## Feature: Shrine

firestorm jumped over and went around the chapel property. The chapel, its grounds and all the people who had taken refuge there survived unharmed and the chapel property looked like a green oasis in a world that had been left devastated by fire.

Adele originally traveled the countryside while teaching children but eventually formed a community of sisters under the Third Order of Franciscans. A convent and school were built in 1885 and the current chapel was built in 1942. Virtually from the start, the chapel and property became popular with pilgrims. As with other Marian apparition sites there are numerous reports of miracles, healings and other unexplained events. Several people have left crutches, canes and other items behind after visiting the shrine apparition site.

Today the complex includes the beautiful chapel. Mass is celebrated at 11 a.m. daily. The Apparition Site is accessible from inside the Shrine church or from an outside entrance close to the gravesite of Adele and is open to the public. It has become a solemn place of prayer. Adjacent to the chapel in what was once the school is a very nice gift shop and food is available in the Schoolhouse Cafe. Next to the chapel is a small graveyard with the burial location of Sister Adele Brise, Sister Maggie from the congregation and a few children. There is large open area behind the buildings that includes the stations of the cross. In addition there is long prayer walk very popular for meditation and saying the rosary. Several statues and prayer areas are located around the site including a beautiful grouping depicting Our Lady of Fatima and the three children.

### Bus Tour Information

The Shrine is easily reached from Green Bay by coach. Take exit 185 from Interstate 43 and follow highway 57 northeast. Turn right on highway K and follow it east to the shrine. There is a fairly large parking lot that will easily accommodate buses but may be

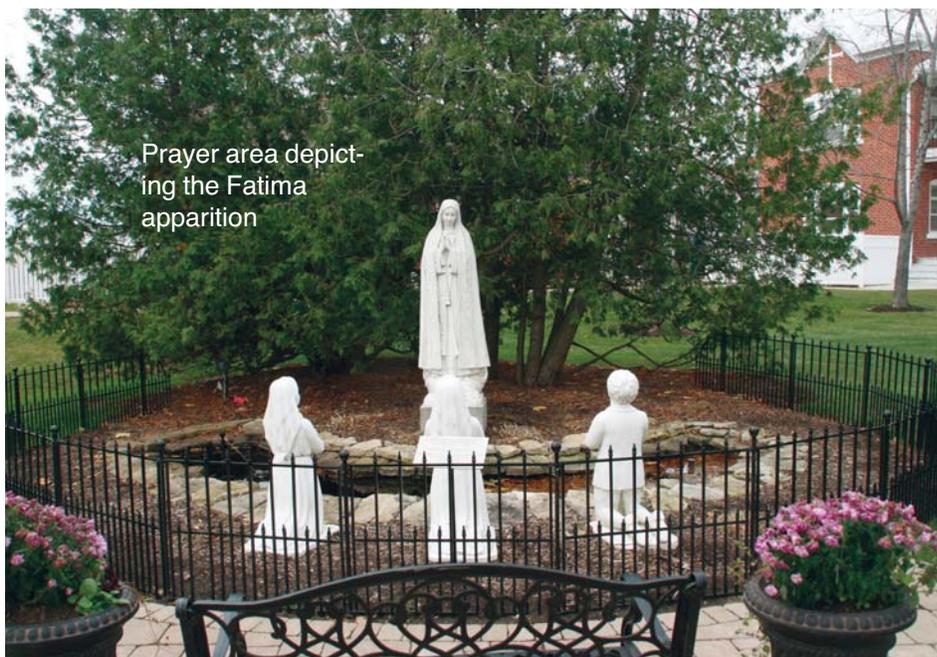


crowded on days with special events. Restrooms suitable for groups are adjacent to the parking lot. The upper Apparition Site Church is handicapped accessible, but there are stairs going down to the lower Apparition Site Grotto.

With sufficient prior notice the staff at the shrine may be able to provide guided tours. They typically break larger bus groups into two smaller groups of about 25. While seating in the Schoolhouse Cafe is limited, there are two rooms available to groups and many

groups have meals catered. Some groups come in time for the 11 a.m. Mass and then enjoy a catered lunch.

The Shrine is open year around, and the staff mentioned that some groups like to come in the winter months when things are quieter and there are fewer pilgrims. While weather may preclude going outside, the chapel, apparition site, gift shop, Schoolhouse Cafe and rooms for groups are all indoors. For current information you can phone the shrine at (920) 866-2571.



**Nearby Attractions**

The Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help is located close to major attractions in Door County, Green Bay and Manitowoc. There are other shrines and religious locations nearby that could be included in a bus tour.

On the south side of Green Bay in De Pere is St. Norbert Abbey, located on 160 acres of natural and landscaped beauty, as well as the National Shrine of St. Joseph. The Abbey, completed in 1959 is majestic and lovely. On the level below the Abbey church is the National Shrine of St. Joseph, an outgrowth of devotions to St. Joseph that started in 1888. Also located there is a museum of memorabilia and the remains of Abbot Bernard Pennings, who had a strong devotion to St. Joseph and was the first abbot for the Norbertines in the United States. There are limited restroom facilities. Groups are expected to schedule in advance by phoning (920) 337-4300 and are typically accommodated on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

St. Francis Xavier Cathedral and Green Bay Diocese Museum in downtown Green Bay is also popular with bus groups. Group tours are typically scheduled on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, and include both the church and the museum. Groups can also visit the Cathedral Book and Gift store located just behind the Cathedral. Phone (920) 435-5068 for information.

A very popular stop for pilgrimage bus groups is the Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Help of Christians at Holy Hill. It is situated on 435 beautiful acres in Hubertus, Wisconsin, just northwest of Milwaukee. More than 500,000 people visit here annually. For more information phone (262) 628-1838.

The Greater Green Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau can provide additional information on these and other popular bus and group tour locations in the area as well as nearby dining and lodging. They can be reached by phone at (920) 494-9507. □



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