

It is essential to situate these apparitions in their historical context. This period saw the end of the pontificate of Pius IX and the early years of Leo XIII's pontificate, the pope who was later to receive Estelle Faguet in the Vatican. These years were marked by an onslaught of rationalism, which challenged many of the traditionally held dogmas of the Church, and sought to undermine the supernatural dimension of belief. Pope Leo XIII was to fight long and hard to combat these tendencies, many of which originated in France with thinkers like Ernest Renan. The message of Pellevoisin is in complete harmony with the papal encyclicals of this period (the one on the Rosary, for example), and Leo XIII's consecration of the human race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, all of which were part of the effort to combat rationalism.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> November 1876

On All Saints Day, Estelle was trying to resist her desire to see the Blessed Virgin again, but despite herself, she felt the now familiar sign of the quickening heartbeat. This encounter was to be a silent one. Estelle was left in sadness at Our Lady's departure, wondering what it was that God wanted from her. She assured Him of her readiness to obey.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> November 1876

On this Sunday afternoon, Estelle was in her room praying the rosary. When she finished, Mary appeared. Seeing her, Estelle thought of her own unworthiness and how there were others much more capable of making known the glory of Mary than her. Mary simply said, 'I have chosen you.' Estelle was very happy. The scapular Mary was wearing was so beautiful. Mary continued saying, 'I choose the small and the weak for my glory.' She added, 'Be brave, the

time of testing is about to begin.'

#### 11<sup>th</sup> November 1876

The beauty of Our Lady's scapular with its Heart motif had made a very great impression on Estelle, and she set about making an embroidered replica. Mary appeared that afternoon and commented, 'You have not wasted your time today. You have been working for me. You must make many more.' Once more her parting words were: 'Be brave.'

#### 8<sup>th</sup> December 1876

The final apparition of the Blessed Virgin in Pellevoisin was on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. On this occasion, Mary made it clear to Estelle that this would be the last time she would see her heavenly Mother on earth. She was consoled by the assurance that Mary would remain close to her at all times, and speak to her in her heart, although she would no longer see her. It was during this final encounter that she received confirmation for the apostolate of the Sacred Heart scapular. Mary invited her to kiss the scapular she was wearing and Estelle describes this embrace as an experience of incomparable delight. She then received more detailed instructions: 'You will go yourself to the prelate and will present to him this copy that you have made. Tell him to do everything within his power to help you, and that nothing would be more pleasing to me than to see this livery on each of my children. They should all strive to make reparation for the outrages my Son is subjected to in the sacrament of His love. (N.B. Here Mary is referring to the Eucharist.) See the graces that will be poured forth on those who will wear it with confidence and help you to spread this devotion.'

It seemed to Estelle that she could see in the droplets showering down from Mary's hands the names of all

kinds of graces: piety, salvation, confidence, conversion, health... Estelle asked what design should appear on the reverse side of the scapular. She answered, 'I reserve it for myself. You will submit your idea and the Church will decide.' The Blessed Virgin now left Estelle alone to continue the apostolate, confident in Mary's promise of help.

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#### Sacred Heart scapulars as well as various publications and medals can be obtained from:

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April 2013

## OUR LADY OF PELLEVOISIN (FRANCE)

### A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE APPARITIONS



In all there were to be fifteen apparitions of the Blessed Virgin to Estelle Faguet in 1876 in Pellevoisin, France. They were grouped in three phases of five, three and seven apparitions. The first five were associated with Estelle's illness and her extraordinary recovery. The second phase, in the summer of the same year, consisted of three apparitions from July 1<sup>st</sup> to July 3<sup>rd</sup>. Then there were a further seven between September and December 1876. It was in these later visions that Estelle was to receive her "mission" from Mary.

#### 14-15<sup>th</sup> February 1876

On this night, Estelle's illness was such that she was presumed to be at the point of death. She was suffering a lot and trying to rest

when suddenly, as she describes in her account of the events, the devil appeared at the foot of her bed. She recalls: 'How I was afraid! He was horrible and pulled faces at me. I had only just caught sight of him when the Blessed Virgin appeared on the other side, at the corner of my bed. She had a veil of very white wool that fell in three folds. I can't describe her beauty! Her features were regular, her complexion pink and white, somewhat pale.' (Immediately after the first five apparitions, Estelle was ordered by her confessor, Fr. Salmon, to write down her experiences, which she did by obedience and while under oath.)

At an admonition from Our Lady, the devil turned his back and disappeared. Estelle was terrified, clinging to her bed. Mary turned to her and said, 'Fear nothing; you well know that you are my daughter.'

Estelle was reassured, remembering that since the age of fourteen she had belonged to an association called "The Children of Mary", whose members are consecrated to the Virgin Mary. The Blessed Virgin spoke again, 'Courage, be patient; my Son will be moved. You will suffer for another five days, in honour of the five wounds of my Son. On Saturday you will be dead or cured. If my Son restores your life, I want you to make my glory known.'

Estelle's reaction was: 'But how can someone like me do such a thing?' Immediately, she saw a slab of white marble that she recognized as an ex-voto (memorial plaque thanking the Virgin Mary or a saint for graces received). She asked where this expression of gratitude was to be placed, whether in the church of Our Lady of Victories in Paris, or in Pellevoisin. She did not have time to finish before the answer came: 'In Pellevoisin. There is nothing there and they need something to stir their devotion.'

Estelle promised to do whatever she could for her glory and saw nothing more than night.

#### 15-16<sup>th</sup> February 1876

Estelle saw the devil again on this occasion and once more experienced fear, but Mary was not long in coming to her aid. She said, 'Do not be afraid, I am here. This time my Son has let himself be moved to pity. He has spared your life. You will be cured on Saturday.' Estelle ventured to reply that she would be just as happy to die, now that she felt well prepared. At this, Our Lady reproached her for being ungrateful, reminding her that life is the most precious gift to man on earth, and that her life was being restored to her because she needed it. Mary told her that she would not be exempt from further suffering: it is what brings merit to a life. In fact, she said that if his Son had let himself be moved, it was because of Estelle's great resignation and patience, and that she must not lose the fruit of it now through a wrong choice. The Blessed Virgin invited her to look back over her past life. Estelle was quite abashed about the faults she had committed in her past and which, in her eyes, were slight ones. She reflects, 'Mary rebuked me gravely, and I deserved it.' As she lay on her sick bed, she was grieved and stupefied. With a kindly look, Mary disappeared.

#### 16-17<sup>th</sup> February 1876

The devil showed himself for the third time on this occasion, but kept his distance. When the Blessed Virgin appeared, Estelle was immediately reminded of the discussion of her sins the previous night, but Mary reassured her: 'All that is past; through your resignation you have redeemed your faults. I am all merciful, and hold all sway with my Son. Your few good deeds and fervent prayers to me have moved my

**motherly heart.** It was especially Estelle's devotion to and concern for her parents that had won her favour in Mary's eyes.

#### 17<sup>th</sup> February 1876

The fourth night followed much the same pattern as the preceding three, although it seemed to Estelle that the apparition lasted a shorter time. She was incapable of asking for anything, yet she understood clearly what was being said. This time the Blessed Virgin's parting words were: **'You will make my glory known.'** Foreseeing Estelle's doubts as to her abilities, the answer came: **'Do all that you can.'**

#### 18-19<sup>th</sup> February 1876

The fifth apparition, the night of Friday to Saturday that week, was quite different. Our Lady did not remain at the foot of the bed (Estelle's was the old-fashioned kind of bed with curtains), but came much closer, inside the hangings. Estelle could not help but be struck by her beauty and she experienced great happiness as a consequence. The Blessed Virgin reminded her of her promise and she saw again the white marble slab, but this time it was not blank, but decorated with a golden heart in flames pierced by a sword, crowned with roses. It was bearing the following inscription:

*I invoked Mary from the depths of my wretchedness. She obtained for me from her Son my complete cure.*

Estelle once more promised to do all that she could to make known the glory of Mary. Our Lady answered, **'If you wish to serve me, be simple and let your actions be conformed to your words.'** Estelle ventured to ask if she should change her state in life. The reply came: **'One can be saved in all conditions. Where you are, you can do much good and you can**

**make my glory known.'** After a pause she added, **'What afflicts me most is the lack of respect for my Son that people show at Holy Communion and the prayerful attitude that they adopt while their mind is really on other things. I mean this of people who make a show of piety.'** Estelle asked if she was to reveal all of this straight away. **'Yes, yes, make my glory known... but first seek the opinion of your confessor and director. You will meet opposition, people will call you a victim of an illusion, a fanatic or a madwoman, but take no notice of all that. Be faithful to me and I will help you.'**

On this occasion Estelle describes the Blessed Virgin as being surrounded by a light mist. And when the figure disappeared after the conversation, the haze remained for a little while, and then it too vanished.

#### Estelle is cured

Estelle now suffered horribly; her heart was beating so violently that she thought her chest would explode. There were pains in her stomach. She was holding her rosary in her left hand, for she could not lift her right arm. She offered these sufferings to God. Then followed a calmer period of brief rest, after which she felt completely cured of all her illness. But for the moment Estelle was still unable to lift her right arm; it remained paralysed. The following morning, Saturday, Fr. Salmon called to bring her Holy Communion. He noticed and commented on the fact that she was making the sign of the cross with her left hand. But as soon as Estelle received the sacrament, the healing process was completed through the Eucharist, and she completely recovered the use of her right arm. Her family was amazed at the speed and completeness of her recovery, "without convalescence", to use the phrase quoted later at the canonical

enquiry into the case. She was immediately able to take food and drink normally and to talk happily, neither of which she had been able to do for many weeks. She soon resumed household duties and work in the garden, experiencing no fatigue. She would often sit up late at night, hoping to see the Virgin Mary again, until her confessor forbade her to do so, a decision which she respected.

Estelle also began to experience a feeling of detachment from creatures and worldly things. She accidentally overheard an unkind remark made by her parents to the effect that she would not want them anymore, now that she was cured. She felt very hurt by this, but offered it to God, accepting to be impoverished. She resumed her habit of going daily to Mass, and helped the parish priest with various tasks. She also began to read a book entitled, *The Love of Jesus in the Eucharist*.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> July 1876

That summer evening, as Estelle was praying in her room before retiring, she saw the Blessed Virgin once again. She was surrounded by a soft light. She had her arms outstretched and it was as if rain was falling from the palms of her hands. On this occasion the message to Estelle was that she should be calm and patient (she had had further family problems with her troublesome brother-in-law). This time she was again very conscious of the proximity of Our Lady who reassured her: **'Be brave, I shall return.'**

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1876

On Sunday night, Estelle was wakened from her sleep before midnight. She got up, dressed and began to pray. Before she had finished even one *Hail Mary*, the Blessed Virgin was there, in front of her. Estelle was overcome with joy. As on the previous day,

raindrops were falling from her hands, however this time she saw Mary surrounded by a garland of fresh roses.

Mary crossed her arms over her breast and said, according to Estelle's account, **'You have already made my glory known.'** Then she told her something in confidence which she was to keep as a secret. Mary continued, **'Carry on. Through me, My Son will move the hardest hearts.'** She encouraged Estelle to speak of their meetings, and not to fear contradictions. Estelle now ventured to ask for a sign of the Blessed Virgin's power. The answer was: **'Isn't your cure one of the greatest signs of my power? It is especially for the conversion of sinners that I came.'** Mary stayed a little longer and then disappeared.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1876

This following night, the Blessed Virgin reproached Estelle for still not being sufficiently calm, and then said something that remained enigmatic for Estelle at that time: **'I came to close the celebration.'** There, in the remote village of Pellevoisin, Estelle was not aware of any celebrations. But the following day, she reported as always these nocturnal happenings to Fr. Salmon, who informed her that July 3<sup>rd</sup> had seen the crowning of Our Lady of Lourdes by Cardinal Guibert, Archbishop of Paris. In fact Estelle had herself been invited to go to Lourdes that summer, but she had no particular desire to go to Lourdes and her employers had, in any case, not given her permission.

This marked the end of the second series of apparitions.

Understandably, Estelle was impatient to see Our Lady again and she experienced a certain amount of inner torment. Whenever she prayed, she was consumed with

the desire to go down to the village, by night and without her employers' knowledge, to the house where Mary had appeared to her, in the hope of seeing her once again. She confided all of this to her confessor. In his opinion she was undergoing temptations and he warned her that she risked compromising the glory of the Blessed Virgin. Naturally, Estelle was hurt by this, but accepted the truth of what he said.

#### 9<sup>th</sup> September 1876

On this Saturday morning (the day after the feast of Our Lady's Birthday) Estelle felt her heart beating faster, as if at the approach of a loved one. She was now once more in service at Poiriers House. She desperately wanted to go down to the village, to the house where she had experienced the apparitions, but the Countess refused her permission. After lunch, however, she underwent a change of heart and allowed Estelle to go down in a carriage with the Count himself, who had an errand to do in Pellevoisin.

After spending some time praying in the room in which she had been cured, Estelle saw the Blessed Virgin who said, **'You deprived yourself of my visit on August 15<sup>th</sup>, for you were not sufficiently calm. You have the French character; they want to know everything before learning, and understand everything before knowing. I would have come yesterday, but you were also deprived of that visit. I awaited an act of submission and obedience from you.'** She continued, **'The treasures of my Son have been available for a long time. Let them pray.'**

At these words she lifted from her breast a small piece of woollen cloth that Estelle had noticed before. It had always been plain white but now it bore a red heart. Estelle concluded that this was a scapular with a Sacred Heart motif.

Holding it for Estelle to see, Mary said, **'This devotion pleases me'**, and adding after a pause, **'It is here that I shall be honoured'**.

#### 10<sup>th</sup> September 1876

The following day, Sunday, the Blessed Virgin came again very briefly in the afternoon. The message was not just a personal one for Estelle, but had a wider implication. Mary said, **'They should pray. Here is the example that I give them.'** As she said this, she joined her hands, and then disappeared. The bell for Vespers was just ringing.

#### 15<sup>th</sup> September 1876

The next apparition, at the end of that week, was to contain a specific message for the Church in France. It was again in the afternoon that Our Lady came. She spoke to Estelle, **'I will bear in mind your efforts to be calm. It is not only of you that I request these efforts, but also of the Church and of France. The Church is not as calm as I would like it to be.'** She sighed, adding, **'There is something wrong.'** She did not specify, but Estelle took this to be a reference to some discord. Once again, she insisted: **'They should pray.'** She went on to deplore the state of France: **'And France! What have I not done for her! Such warnings and yet she will not listen! I can no longer restrain my Son... France will suffer. Take courage and have confidence.'** Estelle said to herself, 'If I say all that, perhaps no one will believe me.' It was as if Mary read her thoughts for she added, **'I have paid in advance. So much the worse for those who will not believe you. They will acknowledge the truth of my words later on.'**