

THE SANCTUARY OF RETEMPPIO

PONTBOSET

Legend has it that the origin of the Retempio oratory, later transformed into a shrine, is linked to a hunting adventure.

Instead of sanctifying a public holiday with Mass, a man had gone up to the pasture above Pontboset to hunt chamois. As he spotted one, he took aim and fired. Not only did the animal not fall, despite being hit, but, swelling out of proportion, he moved towards the hunter, who, terrified, fled to hide under a rock jutting out over a precipice. The diabolical pursuer (it certainly was one), continuing his run, jumped off the cliff.

The man returned distraught to the village and immediately went to church.

He learned from the priest that prayers had been made during the church service for those who did not go to Mass, especially for him, and he owed his salvation to this. For this reason, he felt like had to dedicate a wayside shrine to Our Lady, for his narrow escape from the danger of ending up in hell that same day.

Legends aside, the Retempio shrine arose through the initiative of the Pontboset parish priest Jean Gros, a native of Fontainemore.

Coming from a country where everyone is vocationally a bricklayer, the religious person thought of building the temple with the help of the faithful, involving them in the work, regardless of the difficulties that would entail, with the ardour of his faith. All the work was carried out by the people, under the guidance and control of the parish priest, who saw the building completed and consecrated in 1835, its construction having started in 1817.

Jean Gros ended his very active existence in the odour of holiness. Our Lady of Retempio made it known to him in advance when his earthly life was to end, so that he could serenely foretell the day of his own death to his parishioners. As his funeral took place in the parish church, the bell of Retempio, although buried under a heavy snowfall, rang out on its own to bid the shrine's founder a final farewell.

Taken from: T. GATTO CHANU, *Fiabe e leggende della Valle d'Aosta*, Rome, Newton & Compton Editions, 2004