



OUR LADY OF CHARITY, PATRONESS OF CUBA

Early in the 17th century, three sailors left the Bay of Nipe to collect salt. Their vessel was small, so that when a storm arose, they were drifting and rocked violently on the roaring ocean. When the storm cleared, the men saw something they could not immediately identify coming across the water.

This is the testimony of one of the men, Juan Moreno, regarding this incident, taken in 1687:

“Having camped in the French Key, which is in the middle of the Bay of Nipe, waiting for a good time to leave for the salt mines, being a morning of calm seas, they left the French Keys, before daybreak. The aforementioned Juan y Rodrigo de Hoyos and I embarked in a canoe, headed for the salt mines, and far from the French Key we saw something white above the foam of the water, which we couldn't distinguish. As we got closer, birds and dry branches appeared. The aforementioned Indians said, ‘It looks like a girl.’ While they were discussing this among themselves, they saw an image of Our Lady, the Holy Virgin, on top of a small wooden plank, holding the baby Jesus in her arms. On this small tablet, was written in large letters, which read, ‘I am the Virgin of Charity.’ Looking at her clothes, they realized that they were not wet.”

Upon returning home, the men revealed what they had discovered and told the story of what had happened to them. A government official, Don Francisco Sanchez de Moya, had a small chapel built in her honor.

The Village of Cobre, where the shrine is, is surrounded by high hills that roll back to the Sierra Maestra Mountains. The village is named Cobre because of the rich deposits of copper. A lamp of copper is kept burning before the statue of Our Lady.

In 1801, the king of Spain, Charles IV, freed Cuban slaves from the El Cobre copper mines – it was the first time that slaves were freed in Cuba, when still no one would think about that. And in 1916, at the petition of the war veterans, Pope Benedict XV declared Our Lady of Charity the patroness of Cuba.

In 1936, after the completion of a beautiful church in honor of Our Lady of Charity, the statue was solemnly crowned amid great rejoicing and religious festivity. On January 24, in 1998, Pope John Paul II, personally crowned the Virgin as Queen and Patroness of Cuba in the province of Santiago de Cuba. The sick, the poor, the military, and the Cuban people in general go to Our Lady looking for protection. Nuestra Señora de la Caridad represents hope and salvation in the face of misfortune for Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Each year, several thousand Cubans make a pilgrimage to the site with particular attention paid on September 8, the feast day of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



*OUR LADY OF CHARITY,
PRAY FOR US!*