

A young girl with dark hair and bangs is laughing joyfully, her eyes closed and mouth wide open. She is wearing a colorful plaid dress with shades of blue, green, yellow, and pink. Her arms are raised in the air, and she appears to be in a sun-drenched outdoor setting, possibly a garden or park, with trees and foliage in the background. The lighting is bright and warm, creating a bokeh effect in the background.

# Our Lady of Abundance

FEAST DAY: JANUARY 5



## The Story

Nearly five hundred years ago, the region known as Puglie in Italy did not have a drop of rain for over three years. This ruined the crops, and the people of the region were desperate for the water the rain provided.

Then the women of Cursi, Italy began to pray to our Blessed Mother, Mary. They begged Mary to help them by providing rain for the crops and water for the animals and the people.

Mary heard the women's prayers, and she soon appeared to a shepherd named Baglio Natali. The first time Baglio saw Mary, he became afraid and ran away. But Mary called him back, calmed his fears, and told Baglio who she was.

She told Baglio to go and tell the parish priest to gather the people of Cursi and to bring them to the spot where she appeared. She explained that she wanted a church to be built on the spot, and that when the church was built, she would take all of the people of Cursi and the region known as Puglie under her protection. Mary also promised that by the end of the year, the crops would be so successful that every barn would be filled to overflowing.

And Mary asked one more thing. She asked Baglio to change his way of life because she wanted him to spend his life serving the people of Cursi in their new church.

Baglio told the pastor what he had seen and heard, and the pastor believed him. The pastor gathered together the people of Cursi and they processed to the spot where Mary had spoken to Baglio. They all knelt and prayed to Mary.

As they processed back to Cursi, clouds began to form overhead, and rain fell. The people, though they were soaking wet, were filled with great joy. It rained for three days!

As others heard the story, they traveled to the spot where Mary had appeared and offered their own prayers of petition and thanksgiving to Mary. And, in time, the church was built and dedicated in honor of Our Lady of Abundance. Baglio became a hermit who spent the rest of his life looking after the church and praying for its people.

Later in history, the church was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. But the people of the region remembered all that Mary had done for them. They built a new church in honor of Our Lady of Abundance. On the high altar there is an image of Our Lady holding Jesus in her arms. In their hands are sprigs of olives and ears of corn, symbols of an abundant harvest.