

## Our Lady of El Cisne

Our custom is to honor the patroness of each country in Latin America and Spain at this Hispanic Mass. But we know that in each country there may be a different number of images of the Blessed Virgin Mary that are the object of devotion by individuals. The veneration of different representations of Virgin Mary are advocations to the same Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ and of the Church who lives in the Kingdom of God. Today we are blessed in a special way because in today's procession, the picture of the image of Our Lady of the Presentation of El Quinche will be accompanied by an image of the Virgin of El Cisne, another Marian avocation that is popular in many regions of Ecuador.

The Virgin Mary of El Cisne receives its name as part of the tradition that began in Europe with members of the so-called 'Order of the Knights of El Cisne' who raised temples in honor of the Virgin Mary on the top of the mountains especially in France, Germany and Spain, under the care of the Franciscan fathers. It was the Franciscan fathers who accompanied Alonso de Mercadillo in the founding of Loja, so they created the cult of the Virgin in El Cisne.

Indigenous people from the village of El Cisne traveled to the city of Quito with the purpose of requesting Diego de Robles to make an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe similar to the one venerated in the church of Guápulo. However, Diego de Robles carved the image of a virgin venerated in the sanctuary of the Province of Cáceres in Spain.

In 1594, shortly after settling with the image in this town, the region was hit by a severe drought and Don Diego Zorrilla, Auditor of the Royal Court of Quito, ordered all the inhabitants of El Cisne to move to another site; the Indians obeyed but took with them the venerated image of the Virgin. The Indians thought the drought was a curse of the Virgin for having taken her out of El Cisne, so they returned to their land despite the opposition of the authorities, who finally understood that God did not allow El Cisne to be abandoned and the image to be moved from its place.

That same year, the indigenous people built a sanctuary to the Virgin, which was the first one and then came others until 1934, when the one that is maintained to this day was built under the care of the Mission of the Oblate Fathers, founded by Father Matovelle.

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In 1927 the Decree of the "Canonical Coronation of the Image" was issued, a sublime act that took effect on September 8, 1930. Because of the canonical coronation, the need and task of providing the Image of the "Queen of El Cisne" with a new temple was undertaken. The first stone was laid in 1934 and the construction of the work began under the direction of Fr. Ricardo Fernández, a diocesan priest and native of El Cisne. In 1944, the Community of Oblate Fathers took charge of the construction and continued with it until its completion and consecration in 1979. The Community of Oblate Fathers left the Sanctuary in 2001 and since then the Diocese of Loja has been in charge. Finally, John Paul II elevated the Sanctuary to the category of Minor Basilica in 1980.

Taken and translated from <http://santuariodeelcisne.org/el-cisne/historia>