

# Champion

*Apparitions, Catechetical Mission,  
and Ecclesial Judgment*

Adele Brise, the documentary strata,  
the 1871 preservation, and the Church's reception

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# 1 What the Church Has Judged—and What This Study Is Doing

## Governing thesis

Champion is not chiefly a story about a protected building. It is a source-layered account of a laywoman summoned to help children know the Christian faith, pray, receive the sacraments, and turn to Christ. The competent bishop's 2010 judgment gives the reported apparitions a real but non-obligatory credibility. That judgment neither enlarges public Revelation nor converts every later narrative detail, favor, healing, or memory of the 1871 fire into a declared miracle.

The received story is easily compressed into a misleading sequence: the Virgin appeared, gave Adele Brise a message, and later saved her chapel from the Peshtigo Fire. Each clause needs qualification. The fullest dialogue is preserved in a later local narrative, not in a contemporaneous transcript. The earliest published witnesses preserve a shorter catechetical commission and disagree with the later account on chronology and visual detail. Peter Pernin's 1874 appendix is early evidence for the site's preservation, but he was not present at Champion during the fire and expressly refused to pronounce the preservation miraculous. Bishop David L. Ricken's decree of 8 December 2010 positively judged the events, apparitions, and locutions given to Adele in October 1859; its operative clause did not separately declare the fire, any healing, or any favor a miracle.

Those distinctions do not empty the tradition. They make it possible to hear its durable center without pretending that all evidence has the same weight.

## 1.1 The conclusion in advance

Champion's most stable historical core is also its least sensational: a laywoman understood herself to be commissioned to gather children, teach them what they needed for salvation, help them make the Sign of the Cross, and prepare them for the sacraments. She then spent decades enacting that commission through travel, instruction, a school, a religious household, and dependence upon ordinary ecclesial life. The later fuller message intensifies the same pattern with prayer for conversion, confession, Communion, penance, and trust in Mary's help.

Three contrary readings fail. A *maximalist* reading makes every later detail equally early and every preservation a declared miracle. A *reductive* reading treats documentary mediation as proof that no authentic religious event can have occurred. A *sentimental* reading admires the apparition while neglecting the difficult work it commanded. The disciplined reading is both more modest and more demanding: honor the positive judgment, preserve the source differences, and let the apparition point beyond itself to Christ and to the catechetical labor of the Church.

# 2 Adele Brise and the Belgian Catholic Frontier

Apparitions do not occur in an abstract devotional landscape. Champion belongs to the migration of Belgian Catholics into the forests of northeastern Wisconsin, to the uneven pastoral reach of a young American Church, and to one woman's sustained response among families for whom distance, labor, language, and poverty could make regular instruction difficult.

## 2.1 From Brabant to Wisconsin

Adele Brise was born in 1831 in Belgium and emigrated with her family to Wisconsin in 1855. English-language sources vary in the spelling of her surname—Brice, Brise, and Brisse all occur. This study preserves *Brise* when identifying the spelling in the 2010 apparition decree and uses *Brice* for the current cause, whose official decree and materials adopt that form. The Shrine's current presentation usefully prints "Adele Brice (Brise)." Orthographic variation is not evidence for different persons.

Later biographies remember a youthful desire or promise to serve in religious life and the counsel of a confessor before emigration. Such material belongs chiefly to the retrospective biographical stratum. It illuminates how the

community interpreted her vocation; it cannot, without an early independent record, be used as a contemporaneous diary of her interior life.

A childhood accident left Adele with an impaired eye. The fact matters because later narration can turn a bodily difference into picturesque shorthand. Her disability neither verifies nor discredits her report. More importantly, it did not prevent long travel on foot, household visitation, teaching, fundraising, or leadership. The history is one of agency exercised with a disability, not of sanctity inferred from it.

## 2.2 A Church still taking institutional shape

The Diocese of Green Bay was established from territory of the Diocese of Milwaukee in 1868, nine years after the reported apparitions. The local ordinary in 1859 was therefore the Bishop of Milwaukee, not a not-yet-existent Bishop of Green Bay. Priests served dispersed communities; immigrant families brought inherited Catholic practices into circumstances where schools and regular catechesis could be difficult to sustain. The first large Belgian migration to northeastern Wisconsin began in the 1850s; it was largely francophone and Catholic and formed rural communities in Brown, Door, and Kewaunee Counties.

“Frontier” should name those institutional and geographic conditions, not an empty land awaiting settlers. The Menominee Nation locates its origin at the mouth of the Menominee River and describes an ancestral territory extending across what is now Wisconsin and Upper Michigan; its land base was sharply diminished through treaties and other pressures. The Oneida Nation had established its present northeastern-Wisconsin reservation boundaries by treaty in 1838. These sovereign peoples and their histories did not disappear when Belgian farms and Catholic chapels developed. This study cannot reconstruct the exact title history of the Shrine parcel from the sources inspected, and therefore does not pretend to identify a particular cession as the parcel’s direct chain of title. It does insist on the narrower historical truth: immigrant hardship and initiative must be narrated without converting Indigenous homelands into vacancy.

The later message’s concern that children did not know what was required for salvation identifies a pastoral gap in this setting. Meeting it demanded cooperation among parents, priests, and a lay catechist.

**Witness:** Eliza Allen Starr, writing in 1871 after meeting Adele during a fundraising journey.

**What it establishes:** By that date Adele and a younger companion were seeking support for a free school, chapel, and home; Starr saw a clerical letter commending their work and printed a short account of a catechetical commission.

**What it cannot establish alone:** Starr did not witness the 1859 events, wrote in a devotional literary setting, and gives no stenographic transcript of Adele’s first report.

## 2.3 Lay vocation rather than private prestige

In the stable core of the tradition, the alleged apparition does not confer an esoteric office. Adele is sent to do recognizable ecclesial work. She is to find children, instruct them, connect doctrine to sacramental practice, and rely on divine help. Her authority is charismatic in the modest Catholic sense: a grace for service, discerned by its conformity to faith and its fruit, not a jurisdiction parallel to the bishop or pastor.

This pattern guards against two distortions. One would clericalize the story until Adele becomes only a passive instrument awaiting permission for each footstep. The other would detach her from ecclesial obedience and make private experience sufficient authority. The sources instead depict initiative under sacramental and pastoral bonds. In the later narrative a priest advises her how to respond if the figure appears again. In Starr’s 1871 encounter a priest’s letter accompanies the fundraising journey. The work develops as a school, chapel, and community within Catholic life.

| Dimension | Historical expression                                                        | Theological significance                                          |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Personal  | Prayer, travel, perseverance, and an alleged encounter received by one woman | A vocation is given to a person but tested by the good it serves. |

| Dimension        | Historical expression                                                                   | Theological significance                                                          |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Domestic</b>  | Adele seeks children through homes and depends upon families and benefactors            | Catechesis ordinarily requires parents, households, and durable relationships.    |
| <b>Ecclesial</b> | Priestly counsel, sacramental preparation, chapel, school, and later diocesan oversight | Charism belongs inside the Body of Christ and cannot replace sacrament or office. |
| <b>Social</b>    | Free instruction, food and lodging needs, fundraising, and women's common labor         | Teaching the faith has material conditions; mercy cannot remain an abstraction.   |

## 2.4 The name “Sister” and the women’s community

Adele came to be called Sister Adele, and women joined her work. Sources describe a Third Order Franciscan association or community, but the precise canonical form and its changes over time require care. “Sister” in local Catholic usage does not by itself prove membership in a pontifical religious institute or perpetual public vows as later canon law defines them. One can affirm a recognizable common life of prayer, service, dress, and teaching without manufacturing a canonical status that the cited records do not establish.

The distinction strengthens rather than diminishes her vocation. The Church’s mission has always depended on forms of consecration and association that do not all fit one juridical category. What matters for this study is the public shape of the response: other women shared the labor, the school became durable, and Adele’s reported commission ceased to be merely private experience.

## 2.5 Character as evidence—and its limit

The 2010 decree treats Adele’s personal character and decades of service as relevant to discernment. Integrity, obedience, sacrifice, and consistency can make fraud or self-exaltation less plausible. They cannot logically prove every remembered word or make a visionary immune from ordinary limits of perception and memory. Holiness is not stenography.

The sound historical inference is cumulative. A short, Christ-centered commission appears early in print; visible institutions embody it; Adele does not construct a speculative doctrine around herself; and competent authority later judges the available whole positively. The sound theological inference is still more focused: whatever one concludes about peripheral details, her life asks whether received grace becomes patient service.

# 3 From Adele’s Report to the Received Narrative

No known contemporaneous 1859 deposition, diary, or verbatim transcript survives. The story reaches the present through several witnesses with different kinds of access. “Earliest” does not mean “eyewitness,” “official” does not mean “contemporaneous,” and “detailed” does not mean “independent.” A serious study therefore lets the sources stand beside one another before synthesizing them.

## 3.1 The four principal strata

| Stratum                                          | Representative witness                                                     | Distinct contribution                                                                                                                              | Principal limit                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Near-contemporary devotional report, 1871</b> | Eliza Allen Starr                                                          | Personal meeting with Adele; earliest located printed narrative; free school and catechetical commission already visible                           | Written twelve years later, in English through mediation, by a sympathetic author who did not witness 1859.                    |
| <b>Early historical-devotional report, 1874</b>  | Peter Pernin                                                               | Short apparition account; institutional history; substantial early narrative of the 1871 preservation; explicit caution about miracle and judgment | Not an eyewitness to the apparitions or to events at Champion during the fire; reports what others told him.                   |
| <b>Developed local narrative</b>                 | Shrine history drawing on M. Dominica and local archival/oral transmission | Full dialogue, October chronology, gristmill setting, appearance, companions, and richer biographical sequence                                     | Retrospective composite; not every detail has been independently collated here against the 1955 book or an earlier manuscript. |
| <b>Ecclesial act, 2010</b>                       | Bishop David L. Ricken and diocesan inquiry                                | Exact object and force of competent judgment; selected historical recitals; doctrinal and pastoral assessment                                      | A decree adjudicates credibility; it does not erase source dates or turn its recitals into contemporaneous transcripts.        |

The repository research record separately identifies access, checks, and quotation boundaries. What follows is the reader-facing consequence: the source strata overlap substantially on mission and fruit, while differing materially on sequence, season, visual form, and wording.

### 3.2 Starr: the earliest located printed encounter

Eliza Allen Starr’s account was first published in 1871 and reprinted in her *Patron Saints* collection. Starr says that she met Adele and a younger interpreter as they sought alms. She describes a priest’s French letter and a project for a free school, chapel, and home. Her apparition narrative is already retrospective, openly devotional, and translated or mediated across language.

Starr places a first sighting on a summer day as Adele returned from Mass. A few weeks later Adele sees the figure while going to Mass, and the third encounter occurs on the return that afternoon. The visual comparison is relatively simple: a white-veiled figure like an image of the Immaculate Conception. The reported command is likewise concise. Adele is to gather neglected children, teach them what they need for salvation, teach the catechism and the Sign of the Cross, and lead them toward the sacraments.

That early catechetical core deserves greater evidentiary weight than details appearing only much later. But Starr’s confidence—she writes as a devotional advocate—is not itself ecclesial judgment. Her value lies in proximity, personal contact, and the already public shape of Adele’s work.

### 3.3 Pernin: early caution within a providential narrative

Father Peter Pernin published *The Finger of God Is There!* in 1874. The main body recounts his own survival of the Peshtigo catastrophe. An appendix turns to the chapel and school near Green Bay. Pernin did not claim to have witnessed the apparition, and his Champion fire narrative depends on reports from that community.

His apparition chronology differs from Starr and the later shrine narrative. He places the first appearance on a return from Mass, the next a week later on another return, and a third on the following Sunday in the presence of others who did not see the figure. He says a long conversation occurred but preserves only a subset germane to Adele’s mission: concern for children lacking religious instruction and First Communion, a command to teach them, and the assurance, “Go, and fear nothing; I will help you.”

Pernin is especially important because he refuses to force the evidence. After describing the preservation, he says he does not intend to pronounce it miraculous, does not base the case on the tabernacle, and does not forestall ecclesiastical judgment concerning the apparition. Such restraint is not skepticism opposed to devotion. It is an early model of Catholic source discipline.

### 3.4 The fuller shrine narrative

The present shrine history gives the familiar October sequence. Adele first sees a luminous woman near a gristmill while carrying grain. On a Sunday commonly identified with 9 October, she sees the figure while going to Mass. A priest tells her to ask, in God's name, who the visitor is and what she desires. On the return journey, with companions present, Adele sees the figure again and asks the instructed question.

This stratum supplies the crown of stars, white garments, yellow sash, flowing golden hair, and the extended dialogue concerning prayer for conversion, Communion, general confession, penance, companions who cannot see, the Lord's vineyard, neglected children, catechism, the Sign of the Cross, the sacraments, and promised help. The 2010 decree quotes an abbreviated version of this fuller message in its recitals. That official use makes the narrative relevant to the inquiry. It still does not change the date of the underlying transmission.

### 3.5 A comparison that should not be harmonized away

| Question                        | Starr, 1871                                                                     | Pernin, 1874                                                             | Developed shrine narrative                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Season and interval</b>      | Summer; then a few weeks; two sightings on one later day                        | First return from Mass; next week return; third following Sunday         | October; initial gristmill encounter; going to Mass and returning on a later Sunday commonly dated 9 October |
| <b>First context Appearance</b> | Returning from Mass<br>White-veiled; compared to an Immaculate Conception image | Returning from Mass<br>A beautiful woman in white                        | Carrying grain near a gristmill<br>White dress, yellow sash, crown of stars, golden hair, luminous presence  |
| <b>Audibility</b>               | Adele receives a command                                                        | Long conversation, only partly reported                                  | Extended question-and-answer dialogue                                                                        |
| <b>Stable commission</b>        | Gather children; teach salvation, catechism, Sign of Cross, sacraments          | Teach children lacking religious knowledge and preparation for Communion | Gather children; teach what they need for salvation, catechism, Sign of Cross, and sacramental approach      |
| <b>Additional material</b>      | Not reported                                                                    | Assurance of help                                                        | Conversion, confession, Communion, penance, vineyard, companions, beatitude, assurance of help               |

These are real variations, not merely three paraphrases of an identical outline. The wrong response is to invent an itinerary that makes every interval simultaneously true. The better response is graded confidence:

- **High confidence within the transmitted historical core:** Adele reported repeated encounters; at least one occurred in connection with Sunday Mass; companions were associated with a later encounter; the command centered on children's religious instruction and sacramental preparation; Adele built her life around that work.
- **Received but later-documented material:** the October 9 synthesis, gristmill setting, full appearance, priest's exact instruction, and extended dialogue.
- **Unwarranted claim:** that the surviving evidence supplies a word-for-word 1859 transcript or permits every chronological difference to be solved.

### 3.6 Memory, translation, and genre

Adele was a francophone Belgian immigrant. The principal printed accounts are English-language devotional prose. Translation can preserve meaning while changing diction; oral retelling can stabilize a memorable core while expanding scenery; authors select what advances their purposes. Starr writes saints' lives and devotional portraits. Pernin writes a providential disaster memoir. A shrine history serves pilgrims. A decree makes a juridical-pastoral judgment. None should be read as though it were the same genre.

These human processes do not decide whether grace was active. Catholic theology does not require a visionary to become a passive recording device. They do decide what a historian may claim. The responsible synthesis distinguishes the substance the bishop judged from the literary form in which that substance reached him and us.

#### **Interpretive key: Agreement without flattening**

The early sources and later narrative converge most strongly where the message is most ecclesial: children must be taught the faith and led toward Christ in the sacraments. Later language about conversion and penance deepens that center rather than replacing it. Chronological and visual differences remain part of the record; acknowledging them is fidelity to the witnesses, not an argument against the decree.

### 3.7 An unresolved Pauline LaPlante source chain

Some present-day retellings connect Sister Pauline LaPlante directly to Adele as an oral informant, while the Shrine timeline records a 1902 assignment to the Chapel. That assignment date is not an arrival date. The Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross report that Pauline had returned from Racine to Bay Settlement by 1868; Adele lived until 1896. Their lives therefore overlapped in the same wider Belgian Catholic region, and direct contact was possible.

Possibility is not proof. No writing by Pauline, dated interview, archival deposition, or documented chain tying a particular sentence of the fuller dialogue to her testimony was located for this study. The 1902 assignment cannot prove she never met Adele, but geographic and chronological overlap cannot prove that she did or establish what she heard. The fuller narrative accordingly remains a later custodial synthesis until its individual transmission lines can be documented.

The lesson is general. A source chronology must distinguish a person's presence in a region from a later institutional assignment, and it must distinguish possible contact from demonstrated transmission. Correcting one overstatement should neither discredit the whole tradition nor excuse an unsupported oral chain.

## 4 The Three Encounters and the Complete Received Message

The fullest Champion narrative is a received reconstruction, not a discovered transcript. It should nevertheless be presented as a whole, because selective quotation can alter its structure. The message moves from identity and intercession to conversion, from sacramental life to mission, and from mission to promised assistance. Its center of gravity is not a private consolation for Adele but a work entrusted to her for others.

### 4.1 First encounter: recognition without dialogue

In the developed account, Adele is carrying wheat to a gristmill when she sees a woman clothed in white, standing between trees and surrounded by light. A yellow sash encircles her waist; a crown of stars and long light-colored hair complete the later visual description. Frightened, Adele stops; the figure disappears, and she continues on her errand.

Starr's earliest printed narrative instead places the first sighting on a return from Mass in summer and gives only a white-veiled figure resembling an Immaculate Conception image. Pernin also begins on a return from Mass. The prudent historical statement is therefore narrower than the familiar scene: Adele reported an initial silent sighting of a woman in white, but the surviving witnesses do not agree on its date or setting.



## 4.2 Second encounter: the question prepared

In the later chronology, Adele sees the figure again while walking to Sunday Mass with her sister and another woman. Her companions see Adele's reaction but do not see the figure. Adele consults a priest after Mass. He advises that, if the figure returns, she ask in God's name who the visitor is and what she wants.

The detail is theologically apt even before one considers historicity. Discernment does not begin with curiosity about secrets. It invokes God, seeks identity and purpose, and brings the experience to pastoral counsel. Yet the exact exchange with the priest is documented in the later stratum and should remain so labeled.

## 4.3 Third encounter: a commission received in company

On the return journey the figure appears again. Adele asks the prepared question. Her companions still do not see the figure, although the developed narrative associates them with the exchange and their reactions. The apparition identifies herself in royal and heavenly language and describes her intercession for sinners. Adele is then drawn into a sequence that can be mapped without pretending to reproduce every sentence verbatim.

| Movement of the received dialogue       | Content                                                                                                                                  | Gospel and ecclesial horizon                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Identity</b>                         | The visitor identifies herself as the Queen of Heaven who prays for sinners                                                              | Mary's queenship is participation in Christ's kingship; her intercession is creaturely and dependent.                        |
| <b>Personal sacramental preparation</b> | Adele's reception of Communion that morning is acknowledged; she is told to make a general confession and offer Communion for conversion | Grace leads toward Christ in sacrament and repentance, not toward visionary self-sufficiency.                                |
| <b>Conditional warning</b>              | Humanity's refusal of conversion and penance is linked to divine judgment                                                                | Biblical warning summons free response; it is not permission to date catastrophes or identify victims as worse sinners.      |
| <b>Companions and faith</b>             | Adele asks what the unseen companions should do; a beatitude is applied to those who believe without seeing                              | Sight is not the measure of holiness, but prudent belief still differs from credulity.                                       |
| <b>The vineyard</b>                     | Adele is asked what she is doing in idleness while work remains in the Lord's vineyard                                                   | The image transfers attention from apparition to apostolate.                                                                 |
| <b>The children</b>                     | Adele is commanded to gather children in the region and teach them what they need to know for salvation                                  | Catechesis serves communion with Christ; children are subjects of the Church's care, not props in an apparition story.       |
| <b>Method</b>                           | She is to teach the catechism, the Sign of the Cross, and how to approach the sacraments                                                 | Doctrine, embodied prayer, and sacramental participation belong together.                                                    |
| <b>Assurance</b>                        | Adele is sent without fear and promised help                                                                                             | Assistance does not abolish labor; the promise is fulfilled narratively through perseverance, collaborators, and providence. |

## 4.4 "Queen of Heaven" within Catholic grammar

The title can be misunderstood if detached from Catholic Christology. It does not make Mary a goddess, a fourth person of the Trinity, or an independent sovereign. The Church calls her queen because the crucified and risen Christ is king, because she is his mother according to the flesh, and because her unique cooperation is wholly the fruit of grace. Her intercession is neither a rival mediation nor a source beside Christ. As *Lumen gentium* teaches, Mary's

maternal role depends entirely upon Christ's mediation, draws all its power from it, and fosters the immediate union of believers with him.

The received self-identification is therefore interpreted by the rule of faith, not the rule of faith by the apparition. The phrase can be received where it means a glorified creature praying in Christ; it would have to be rejected if made to mean an autonomous divinity.

#### **4.5 Communion, confession, and conversion**

The fuller dialogue first turns Adele herself toward sacramental repentance. A "general confession" in Catholic pastoral usage is a review of one's life or a substantial period, ordinarily made for spiritual benefit; it is not a magical repetition of validly absolved sins or a suggestion that ordinary confession is inadequate. Its advisability depends on sound pastoral guidance, especially where anxiety or scrupulosity is present.

Offering Communion for the conversion of sinners likewise presupposes the Eucharist as Christ's act and gift. A communicant may unite an intercessory intention to participation in the Mass and reception of Communion. She does not own the sacrifice, coerce another's will, or convert sacramental reception into a devotional technique. Worthy reception, ecclesial discipline, and freedom remain intact.

The order matters. Before Adele is told to teach, she is called to conversion and sacramental communion. Christian mission is never the export of correction by someone presumed finished. The catechist remains a penitent and recipient of mercy.

#### **4.6 The warning: moral urgency without catastrophe arithmetic**

The received warning joins refusal of conversion and penance to the prospect of chastisement. Biblical revelation supplies the grammar: sin is serious; judgment is real; divine patience seeks repentance; and prophetic warnings are often conditional appeals meant to change conduct. The warning does not grant a timetable, identify a particular future fire, or authorize a devotee to explain another person's suffering as punishment.

Nothing in the 1859 corpus explicitly names the 1871 fires. Joining the two as a fulfilled prediction is a later inference, not part of the locution as transmitted. The twelve-year interval, the date traditionally assigned to the later encounters, and the dramatic preservation may make the association emotionally powerful. They do not make it textually explicit or ecclesially declared.

Christ's own teaching blocks a cruel use of the warning. Those killed by Pilate and by the falling tower were not thereby shown worse sinners; the man born blind was not a specimen for assigning personal blame. The right response to a warning is one's own repentance and compassionate service, never satisfaction at another's disaster.

#### **4.7 The companions and the limits of sight**

The fuller story places a Johannine beatitude on the lips of the apparition in response to companions who do not see. This should not be turned into the proposition that believing every apparition claim is more blessed than asking questions. In John 20, faith rests on the risen Christ and apostolic testimony. In ecclesial discernment, those who lack a visionary perception may act prudently, await evidence, or decline a private devotion without moral fault.

The companions nevertheless serve an important narrative function. The encounter is private in perception but not socially sealed. Adele's bodily response, subsequent report, and commission enter a community where they can be tested. The story never makes visionary sight a sacrament or a rank within the Church.

#### **4.8 The vineyard as the hinge of the message**

The question about labor in the Lord's vineyard is the structural hinge. Before it stand identity, intercession, repentance, and warning; after it stand children, catechesis, sacrament, and help. The vision's credibility is thus narrated through a transfer from extraordinary experience to ordinary fidelity.

“Gather the children” cannot mean possess them, isolate them from parents, or claim exemption from safeguarding because a heavenly command is alleged. In the nineteenth-century setting it generated household visitation, school, and sacramental preparation. In current pastoral practice it must be received within parental rights, diocesan safe-environment norms, screening, supervision, reporting duties, and the dignity of each child.

## **4.9 What the message does not contain**

The bounded Champion corpus contains no entrusted geopolitical secret, apocalyptic calendar, new dogma, novel sacramental formula, or promise that shrine pilgrims will be spared temporal suffering. It does not claim that every sick visitor will be healed or that lack of healing shows deficient faith. It does not establish a general obligation to use one Marian title.

Such absences are spiritually important. Champion’s demand cannot be satisfied by decoding. It asks for prayer, repentance, catechetical competence, sacramental life, and sustained service—tasks less dramatic than speculation and much harder to counterfeit over decades.

## **5 “Teach Them What They Should Know for Salvation”**

The most probative interpretation of Adele’s reported commission is her response. By 1871, before the fire tradition had become the dominant public image, Starr encountered a visible catechetical project. Pernin in 1874 likewise describes land, buildings, instruction, collaborators, and pilgrimage. The mission is therefore not a moral appended by a later shrine to an otherwise empty wonder; it appears in the earliest located printed evidence.

### **5.1 From the road to the household**

Later accounts describe Adele traveling from home to home, sometimes over considerable distances, to teach children and persuade families to support religious instruction. The work required access, trust, food, lodging, books, space, and cooperation. “Gather” thus took practical forms before it took architectural form.

Household visitation resists two reductions of catechesis. First, children are not isolated minds into which facts are deposited; their religious life is embedded in family and community. Second, faith cannot be reduced to domestic inheritance without ecclesial teaching and sacramental incorporation. Adele’s apostolate moves between home and Church.

### **5.2 The early institutional fruit**

Starr’s 1871 narrative records a free school and a fundraising journey for a school, chapel, and home. Pernin’s 1874 appendix describes the site and the women who assisted the work. These institutions matter historically because they existed close enough to the reported event to establish sustained enactment. They matter theologically because charisms are tested in service and endurance rather than intensity of recollection.

Fruit is evidence, not a mechanical proof. A useful institution can grow around a mistaken origin story, and genuine grace can pass through fragile institutions. The 2010 discernment therefore considers fruit together with doctrine, character, testimony, and the absence of evident manipulation. The school cannot prove the apparition alone; it can show what Adele understood the apparition to require.

### **5.3 The fourfold pedagogy**

The received command contains a compact program of Christian initiation:

| Element                             | What is taught                                                                                        | What it resists                                             | Mature form                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>What is needed for salvation</b> | The saving work of the Triune God, faith, conversion, commandments, grace, prayer, and Christian life | Vague uplift with no account of Christ or response          | A coherent proclamation ordered to communion with God, proportioned to the learner |
| <b>The catechism</b>                | An ecclesially received synthesis of doctrine                                                         | Private invention and disconnected religious impressions    | Teaching that uses the Church's current catechetical norms and sound texts         |
| <b>The Sign of the Cross</b>        | A bodily confession of Trinity and Paschal mystery                                                    | A split between ideas and prayer                            | Reverent practice whose words are understood and lived                             |
| <b>Approach to the sacraments</b>   | Preparation for encounter with Christ in the Church, especially Penance and Eucharist in this story   | Treating sacraments as rewards, magic, or social milestones | Faith, repentance, proper disposition, mystagogy, and continuing participation     |

The list is not exhaustive, but its integration is notable. Doctrine without prayer becomes abstraction. Gesture without doctrine becomes habit emptied of reference. Sacramental access without conversion becomes formalism. Zeal without ecclesial content makes the catechist the measure of truth. Champion holds the elements together.

## 5.4 Salvation is Christ, not an examination syllabus

The phrase “what they should know for salvation” could be misheard as though heaven supplied a minimum-answer test. Catholic catechesis is intellectual because truth matters, but salvation is not information alone. It is the gracious communion with God opened by Christ, received in faith, expressed in love, and nourished sacramentally. Necessary knowledge is relational and practical: Who is God? What has Christ done? What does conversion require? How does one pray and live as a member of his Body?

The Church's catechetical directories and tradition describe catechesis as more than classroom instruction. It initiates into knowledge of faith, liturgical life, moral formation, prayer, community, and mission. Champion's early vocabulary is simpler, but the trajectory is compatible: children are led from elementary gesture and teaching toward sacramental belonging and a life shaped by the Gospel.

## 5.5 Parents, pastors, and the catechist

Parents possess a primary responsibility for their children's Christian education. Pastors have responsibilities arising from ecclesial office. Lay catechists participate by baptism, competence, commissioning, and service. Adele's story should not be used to pit these vocations against one another. Her work responds to a gap by engaging families and orienting children toward the sacraments administered in the Church.

Nor does an alleged private command dispense with formation. Contemporary catechists should know Scripture and doctrine, understand human development, learn sound pedagogy, honor disability and cultural difference, and follow safeguarding norms. Zeal can begin a journey; it cannot substitute for competence where children's welfare is entrusted to someone.

## 5.6 The Sign of the Cross as miniature catechesis

The Sign of the Cross condenses Champion's theological center. Its words confess Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Its gesture traces the instrument of Christ's self-giving. It is received in baptismal culture and repeated at prayer and liturgy. Teaching a child to make it well can therefore unite memory, body, doctrine, and belonging.

The sign is not a protective charm. Christian use does not promise immunity from fire, illness, or grief. It marks the person with the Paschal mystery: the victory of love is revealed through, not around, the Cross.

## 5.7 Adele's poverty and the economy of collaboration

Fundraising appears in the earliest printed witness. This prevents an over-spiritualized portrait. A free school still needs land, fuel, food, maintenance, teachers, and shelter. Dependence on alms can manifest trust, but it can also expose a work to instability. Adele's mission becomes sustainable through benefactors, companions, clergy, families, and eventually institutional stewardship.

The assurance of help is thus not narrated as freedom from means. Providence arrives through human generosity and disciplined labor. That pattern supplies a criterion for authentic reception today: prayer for help should increase responsibility, transparent stewardship, and collaboration, not evade them.

## 5.8 Women as agents of transmission

The narrative's central human actor is a lay immigrant woman; its earliest public work is shared with other women; many of its first learners were children beyond the easy reach of institutions. This does not create a theory of ecclesial office from an apparition. It does reveal something already grounded in baptism: women are indispensable bearers, teachers, organizers, and witnesses of the faith.

Adele's authority grows by service rather than self-advertisement. Her model is neither silent passivity nor domination clothed as charisma. It is durable, relational agency ordered to another's good.

### **Interpretive key: The apparition interpreted by its fruit**

Champion's catechetical fruit does not relieve the historian of source criticism. It tells the theologian where to look for the message's meaning. The extraordinary claim is ordered toward the ordinary means by which Christ forms a people: proclamation, patient teaching, repentance, sacrament, prayer, family, and works of mercy.

# 6 The Fires of 1871: Preservation, Memory, and Restraint

On the night of 8–9 October 1871 destructive fires swept parts of Wisconsin. Peshtigo's catastrophe and the fire affecting the Belgian settlement around Champion occurred in the same regional crisis, but the sites were not one continuous enclosure. Pernin distinguishes the Champion-area fire as separated from Peshtigo by Green Bay and a substantial distance. The phrase "Peshtigo Fire miracle" is therefore convenient devotional shorthand, not a precise description of geography or ecclesial judgment.

## 6.1 What Pernin actually reports

Pernin's 1874 appendix is the earliest substantial printed narrative checked for this study. Its actual subject is narrower than some later retellings: he says that Adele's "pious girls," seeing the danger, hastened to the chapel, carried a statue of Mary in procession, and prayed. He then describes the chapel, school, enclosure, and fence after the fire, with surrounding houses and fences destroyed. His vivid image is an island of green amid ashes. He does not, in the checked passage, supply the later scene of a general refugee population arriving with possessions and livestock or enumerate everyone inside the enclosure.

The current Shrine narrative supplies that wider communal scene: people from the countryside flee to the chapel, those present process and pray, and a later rain brings relief. It is legitimate to report this as the later custodial tradition, but not to move its crowd, possessions, livestock, or rain backward into Pernin's text. Pernin himself says the women waited for a lull or turned in another direction when wind and flame blocked them.

The fences should not be described as wholly untouched: Pernin says they were charred in several places. That small detail matters. Repeating a sharpened version in which flame could not mark the boundary replaces an early witness with a more spectacular claim.

Pernin also does not present himself as an on-site eyewitness at Champion that night. His eyewitness authority belongs to his own Peshtigo experience; his appendix transmits what he learned about the other community. Early publication and geographic knowledge make him valuable, but they do not convert report into direct observation.

**Witness:** Peter Pernin, priest and survivor of the Peshtigo catastrophe, publishing in 1874.  
**What it establishes:** An early account of Adele’s women collaborators praying and processing with a Marian statue, together with the contrasting burned and green terrain and charred portions of fence.  
**What it cannot establish alone:** Direct sensory observation of events at the Champion enclosure; a scientific reconstruction of fire behavior; or a competent declaration of miracle.

## 6.2 Pernin’s explicit refusal to declare a miracle

After recounting the preservation, Pernin carefully limits his conclusion. He says he has no intention of pronouncing it a miracle. He also declines to rest an argument on the tabernacle and refuses to prejudge the ecclesiastical authority concerning Adele’s reported vision. His phrase “Go, and fear nothing; I will help you” belongs to his apparition account; he does not turn it into a judicial finding about the fire.

This restraint should govern later retelling. One may call the survival remarkable, providential, or a cherished preservation tradition. One may note that the community prayed and gave thanks. One may investigate natural conditions without assuming that a natural mechanism excludes providence. One may not cite Pernin as though he certified a miracle he explicitly declined to certify.

## 6.3 The later rain motif

Current shrine retellings include rain arriving after the danger. No corresponding “downpour” sentence was located in the checked 1874 appendix before its description of the next morning. Rain may belong to later local memory or to evidence not examined here. It should not be placed in quotation marks as Pernin’s testimony without a cited edition and page.

The distinction is not pedantry. Weather is potentially relevant to a natural history of any fire. Moving a later motif into an early witness makes both historical and physical analysis less reliable.

## 6.4 How the 2010 decree uses the episode

The decree recounts the 1871 preservation in its historical recital and places it within a longer pattern of devotion, favors, and confidence associated with the site. It also states that, among reported healings and favors, none had been officially declared a miracle. The operative clause at the decree’s end concerns the events, apparitions, and locutions given to Adele in October 1859.

The anatomy of the document therefore matters:

| Part of decree                | Function                                                                               | Fire-related consequence                                                      |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Historical recitals</b>    | Narrate Adele’s life, message, apostolate, preservation, devotion, and reported favors | The fire belongs to evidence considered and to the shrine’s received history. |
| <b>Discernment discussion</b> | Weights doctrinal soundness, testimony, character, fruit, and expert advice            | Preservation may contribute to a cumulative pastoral assessment.              |
| <b>Operative clause</b>       | States exactly what the bishop judges and approves                                     | It does not separately pronounce the 1871 event a miracle.                    |

## 6.5 No prophecy-fulfillment shortcut

The fuller 1859 message contains a conditional warning about refusal of conversion and penance. It does not name Champion, Peshtigo, fire, 1871, or a twelve-year period. The traditional date of the later encounters and the date of the fire are close on the calendar, which naturally invites typological memory. But resemblance and anniversary do not constitute an explicit prediction.

Calling the fire a fulfillment can also distort the warning morally. It tempts the reader to sort the dead and survivors into punished and favored populations. Neither the message nor the decree authorizes that judgment. Christian repentance begins with oneself; Christian response to disaster begins with rescue, mourning, solidarity, and truthful remembrance.

## 6.6 Providence and natural causality

Catholic belief in providence does not require a gap in physical causality. Wind shifts, cleared land, fuel, moisture, construction, human action, and other conditions may help explain why one place survives. If a complete natural account became available, the community could still thank God, whose providence works through created causes and human cooperation. Conversely, lack of a complete physical explanation would not by itself establish a miracle.

No competent act declaring the fire preservation miraculous was located. The 2010 decree does not perform that act, and an editor cannot supply it merely because the surviving physical explanation is incomplete.

## 6.7 The victims are not a theological contrast class

Any account of preservation must remember those who died, were injured, lost family, homes, livelihoods, and communities. They are not narrative scenery against which a favored shrine shines more brightly. Jesus rejects the inference that victims of public violence or a falling tower were therefore greater sinners. The Book of Job rejects easy arithmetic between suffering and guilt. At the Cross, apparent abandonment becomes the place of divine solidarity.

Theologically responsible gratitude says: those at the chapel survived, they prayed, and they interpreted their survival within providence. It does not say: those elsewhere lacked prayer, Marian favor, or moral worth. A devotion that weakens solidarity with disaster victims has contradicted the catechetical mission it claims to honor.

## 6.8 Pastoral rules for recounting the fire

- Say *preservation tradition* or *reported providential preservation* unless discussing a formally declared miracle.
- Identify Pernin as an early reporter, not a Champion eyewitness, and retain his disclaimer.
- State that portions of the fence were charred and that surrounding land burned.
- Do not collapse Peshtigo and Champion into one continuous fire front across Green Bay.
- Do not turn the 1859 warning into a dated fire prediction.
- Do not use prayer as a substitute for evacuation orders, emergency services, defensible-space practices, insurance, or care for victims.
- Let thanksgiving issue in preparedness and mercy.

### **Interpretive key: A sign that remains under the Cross**

The preservation can be received as a providential sign without being advertised as a declared miracle. Its Christian meaning is not immunity for devotees. It is gratitude joined to humility: life is gift, created means matter, suffering does not map moral worth, and survivors acquire obligations toward those who did not survive.

## 7 The Diocesan Inquiry and the Decree of 2010

The Church's judgment is not inferred from a shrine's popularity or from a press description. It is located in a signed act of the competent diocesan bishop. Reading that act closely requires separating its historical recitals, evaluative reasoning, and operative clause.

## 7.1 Why a judgment came late

The apparitions were reported in 1859; the Diocese of Green Bay was erected in 1868; the positive decree came in 2010. The long interval does not itself prove either official neglect or continuous formal investigation. The site developed, devotional practice continued, and Adele's apostolate became part of local Catholic memory. Formal discernment under Bishop David L. Ricken addressed a received tradition more than a century old and a documentary corpus acknowledged to be sparse.

This is important when claims are made about "approval" before 2010. Clergy could assist, Mass could be offered, a chapel could function, bishops could tolerate or encourage devotion, and pilgrims could come without a formal positive judgment on the supernatural character of the originating events. Cultic reception and apparition judgment are related but distinct acts.

## 7.2 Evidence and criteria named in the decree

The decree reports that three experts in Mariology examined the history and the content of the apparitions. It notes the paucity of primary historical documentation, evaluates the received message as free from doctrinal error, considers Adele's personal qualities and obedience, and surveys enduring spiritual fruit. It also recounts the school, community, fire preservation, and favors associated with the site.

These considerations form a cumulative discernment:

| Criterion                    | Positive consideration                                                                    | Built-in limit                                                | Why it matters                                      |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Historical testimony</b>  | A stable tradition, early printed witnesses, place, persons, and embodied response        | No contemporaneous transcript; material narrative development | Credibility is historical, not merely affective.    |
| <b>Doctrinal content</b>     | Conversion, penance, prayer, catechesis, confession, Eucharist, and sacramental formation | Sound content alone does not prove supernatural origin        | God cannot authenticate contradiction of the faith. |
| <b>Visionary's character</b> | Simplicity, sincerity, obedience, sacrifice, perseverance, and lack of self-enrichment    | Good character does not guarantee perfect memory              | Motive and conduct bear upon human credibility.     |
| <b>Spiritual fruit</b>       | Instruction, vocations of service, prayer, pilgrimage, conversion, reported favors        | Fruit can be mixed and requires continuing oversight          | A purported charism should build up the Church.     |
| <b>Expert consultation</b>   | Three Marian specialists assist the bishop                                                | Experts advise; they do not replace competent authority       | The act is not a private intuition by the ordinary. |

The 1978 CDF norms then in force likewise directed the competent authority to consider the factual probability of the event, the subject's personal qualities and ecclesial docility, doctrinal soundness, healthy devotion, and durable spiritual fruit, together with specified negative criteria. They placed first-line responsibility upon the ordinary of the place while preserving intervention by the bishops' conference and Apostolic See. The 2010 decree does not cite those norms by title, so this study notes the close correspondence without inventing a procedural recital that the act itself does not contain. The norms were sent to bishops in 1978 and published with Cardinal William Levada's 2011 preface; that preface also stresses that approved private revelation is a non-obligatory aid ordered back to public Revelation.

The decree's statement that no reported healing or favor had been officially declared a miracle is part of its evidentiary honesty. The bishop does not need a canonically verified miracle in order to judge an apparition worthy of belief, and he does not manufacture one from cumulative testimony.



## 7.3 The operative clause

### Controlling language and its force

The decree's exact object is "the events, apparitions and locutions given to Adele Brise in October of 1859." It says that this object has the substance of supernatural character. The bishop then approves the apparitions as "worthy of belief"; the same clause expressly makes clear that the Christian faithful are not obliged to believe them.

Every component does work:

- **Events, apparitions, and locutions** includes more than a permission to use a title; it is a positive judgment concerning the alleged experiences and speech.
- **Given to Adele Brise** identifies the recipient and prevents the clause from becoming a blanket certification of later visionary claims at the site.
- **October 1859** supplies a temporal boundary even though the historical witnesses differ on the season and exact sequence.
- **Substance** names the level at which the decree locates supernatural character. This study infers that the word is compatible with a positive judgment of the transmitted whole without making every descriptive detail equally early or exact; the decree does not itself define a source-critical theory of "substance."
- **Supernatural character** makes the act more than a finding of harmless devotion.
- **Worthy of belief** proposes credibility; it does not impose divine and Catholic faith.
- **Not obligatory** protects the distinction between public Revelation and private revelation and the faithful's freedom.

"Substance" should not be used as a solvent that allows an editor to discard any inconvenient evidence. As an explicitly editorial interpretation, it is best read as an appropriately bounded judgment amid imperfect documentation: the bishop positively receives the apparition tradition in its essential character while the historian continues to mark the sources. Another reader should be free to distinguish the decree's words from this study's account of how they bear upon textual variation.

## 7.4 What the decree does not decide

The 2010 act does not:

- define a Marian doctrine or add a truth to the deposit of faith;
- impose belief in Champion as a condition of Catholic orthodoxy;
- certify every word of the developed dialogue as a verbatim utterance;
- reconcile Starr's, Pernin's, and the later chronology;
- declare the 1871 preservation, a healing, or any other favor miraculous;
- approve future messages attributed to Adele, Mary, or the site;
- canonize Adele or decide heroic virtue;
- establish a universal liturgical feast or a universal Marian title; or
- function as a scientific ruling on psychology, weather, or fire behavior.

These are not defects. A juridical-pastoral act is strong when it decides the question within its competence and leaves other questions to their proper processes.

## 7.5 The 2024 norms and a legacy judgment

The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith’s norms effective 19 May 2024 changed the ordinary procedure for alleged supernatural phenomena. The diocesan bishop investigates and proposes a conclusion; the Dicastery evaluates and must approve the final determination. Ordinarily the process no longer seeks a declaration that a phenomenon is supernatural. Instead it reaches one of six prudential conclusions, while the Holy Father retains the possibility of authorizing an exceptional declaration of supernaturalness.

| 2024 conclusion                            | Basic pastoral meaning                                                                                           | Positive or restrictive direction                                         | Not a synonym for Champion’s 2010 formula                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Nihil obstat</i>                        | No critical doctrinal or moral element prevents appreciation; spiritual fruit may be promoted                    | Most favorable ordinary conclusion, without declaring supernatural origin | Champion was positively judged before these norms and has not been reissued under this label. |
| <i>Prae oculis habeatur</i>                | Important positive signs coexist with confusion or possible risks requiring clarification                        | Permission with serious cautions and oversight                            | No such mixed classification appears in the 2010 decree.                                      |
| <i>Curatur</i>                             | Significant critical elements exist, but a widespread devotion with verified fruits counsels against prohibition | Restrained pastoral care, not encouragement of the alleged origin         | It would understate and alter the legacy positive act.                                        |
| <i>Sub mandato</i>                         | Phenomenon has issues tied to persons or misuse; pastoral activity is entrusted under a delegate                 | Tight governance                                                          | It is not an updated name for diocesan shrine oversight.                                      |
| <i>Prohibetur et obstruatur</i>            | Critical issues and risks require public disavowal and prevention of adherence                                   | Prohibition                                                               | Plainly not the force of the 2010 judgment.                                                   |
| <i>Declaratio de non supernaturalitate</i> | Evidence establishes that the phenomenon is not supernatural                                                     | Negative declaration                                                      | No such later declaration has been located for Champion.                                      |

The 2024 norms govern new and pending discernments according to their provisions; they do not automatically rename every historical act. A careful catalog therefore calls Champion’s decree a 2010 legacy supernatural-character and worthy-of-belief judgment. It does not call it a 2024 *Nihil obstat*, even though both permit a positive pastoral reception in different juridical frameworks.

## 7.6 Current-status check through 16 July 2026

For this study, the public indexes and competent official sources were checked through the date printed on the title page. No later Dicastery act was located that reclassifies or reverses the 2010 Champion judgment under the 2024 norms. The title change, local solemnity, shrine status, and Adele’s cause are separate developments, treated in the next section.

Absence claims must remain dated. A future act could alter discipline or classification. The correct present statement is not “Rome has issued a 2024 approval,” but “the 2010 diocesan positive judgment remains the located controlling act, with no later reclassification found through the check date.”

## 7.7 Receiving a non-obligatory positive judgment

Two forms of disrespect should be avoided. Devotional inflation disregards the bishop by claiming more than he judged. Dismissive minimization disregards him by treating a real positive judgment as mere permission to gather. Ecclesial reception occupies the exact middle: Champion may credibly nourish Christian life; it remains tested by Revelation and freely received.

The most faithful response to the decree is not repeated assertion that the apparition is “approved.” It is accurate speech about the approval’s object, force, and limit, followed by attention to what the message asks.

## 8 Shrine, Liturgy, Title, and Adele’s Cause

After 2010 several ecclesial developments increased Champion’s public visibility. They must be distinguished by object. A shrine designation concerns a sacred place and its pastoral mission. A liturgical decree concerns celebration. A title names the shrine and invocation. A cause concerns the holiness of Adele. None is an indirect amendment of the apparition decree.

### 8.1 From local chapel to national shrine

The site passed through successive chapels, school use, diocesan stewardship, and organized pilgrimage. Following the positive judgment, the USCCB granted national-shrine designation by 2016. Public official sources do not agree on the approval date: a 2024 USCCB notice says 2015, the current Shrine timeline says 19 March 2016, and the signed 2023 decree says only 2016. The underlying Conference approval act and approved statutes were not located for this study. The documentary timeline therefore records the secure outer year and the disagreement rather than selecting an unverified juridic effective date.

Canons 1230–1234 distinguish a shrine as a sacred place of pilgrimage approved by the local ordinary and require conference approval for the title “national.” The USCCB norms further address statutes, diocesan standing, doctrine, pastoral mission, liturgy, penance, governance, and site review. National designation thus concerns the place’s regulated service of prayer, sacrament, pilgrimage, and catechesis. It does not create a second supernatural judgment or oblige every American Catholic to adopt Champion as a devotion.

Claims that Champion is “the only approved Marian apparition in the United States” require category and date. The 2010 decree is a clear positive act by the competent local ordinary, and shrine and diocesan sources use a superlative description. But “approved” can refer to unlike acts—cult permission, shrine recognition, a worthy-of-belief judgment, or one of the 2024 conclusions—and no universal registry was located that resolves every historical American claim under one taxonomy. The precise claim is stronger: Champion possesses a signed 2010 diocesan decree positively judging the October 1859 events and approving the apparitions as worthy of belief.

### 8.2 The 2022 acknowledgment and 2023 decree

The signed diocesan decree of 20 April 2023 records an acknowledgment from the competent Roman dicastery dated 15 December 2022. It concerns liturgical law: an individual church may celebrate the anniversary of its dedication or its title with the rank of solemnity. On that basis, the anniversary associated with the apparition is celebrated as a solemnity on 9 October at the shrine, in accord with the norms for particular calendars.

| Act                                                 | Object                                                        | Effect                                                                                       | What it does not do                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Roman acknowl-<br/>edgment, 15<br/>Dec. 2022</b> | Application of liturgical<br>norms to an individual<br>church | Supports celebration of the<br>shrine’s proper observance at<br>solemnity rank               | Does not judge supernatural<br>origin or create a feast for the<br>whole diocese.                                                           |
| <b>Green Bay<br/>decree, 20 Apr.<br/>2023</b>       | Shrine celebration and title                                  | Establishes the local solemnity<br>and changes the shrine’s title to<br>Our Lady of Champion | Does not replace the 2010 decree<br>or add a new locution.                                                                                  |
| <b>Shrine<br/>implementation</b>                    | Calendar and public identity<br>on the grounds                | Shapes Mass, Office,<br>pilgrimage, and public naming<br>at the sanctuary                    | Does not insert 9 October into the<br>General Roman Calendar, the U.S.<br>proper calendar, or automatically<br>the whole diocesan calendar. |

The shrine’s official explanation explicitly limits the solemnity to the shrine grounds. A pilgrim may describe 9 October as Champion’s solemnity; a parish elsewhere should not announce it as a universally obligatory solemnity without separate authority.

### 8.3 Our Lady of Good Help and Our Lady of Champion

For much of its history the place was known as the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help. The 2023 decree changed the official shrine title to Our Lady of Champion and states that place-based terminology was sought for the sanctuary and celebration. It does not state that the change was made to reduce confusion; that sometimes-repeated explanation should not be supplied as the decree’s rationale. Historical sources and objects bearing the former name remain historically correct.

Title change is not message change. The apparition’s developed dialogue does not report the visitor saying “I am Our Lady of Champion.” Nor does the title make Mary a local possession. Place titles name a history of reception; the Mary invoked is the one Mother of Jesus honored throughout the universal Church.

In scholarly writing, the title should follow the date and object:

- use *Our Lady of Good Help* when quoting or identifying older institutions and documents;
- use *Our Lady of Champion* for the shrine and official title after the 2023 act;
- use *Champion apparitions* as a convenient event label, not as a quotation from Adele.

### 8.4 The cause of Adele Brice

The cause has its own precisely staged documentary history. In June 2024 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops affirmed the diocesan bishop’s intention to advance it. The official cause office reports that the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints issued its *nihil obstat* in October 2025, permitting the diocesan process to proceed. Bishop Ricken’s edict of 28 December 2025, expressly invoking no. 11(b) of the 1983 norms for episcopal inquiries in causes of saints, published the petition and requested useful information. On 30 January 2026 he promulgated the decree formally opening the cause. On 27 February the tribunal, historical commission, and other officials held the first or opening session of the diocesan inquiry and took the prescribed oaths; theological censors undertake their distinct task separately.

These are successive acts, not duplicate announcements that “the cause opened” on two dates. The 30 January decree instituted the cause; the 27 February session formally constituted the inquiry’s work. Neither adjudicated heroic virtue or a miracle.

Each phrase has a limited meaning. “Servant of God” ordinarily marks that a cause has begun; it does not mean that heroic virtues have been declared, that beatification is imminent, or that a miracle has been approved. The cause investigates Adele’s life, virtues, reputation for holiness, and intercession according to its own law. Its object is a person, not the supernatural origin of an apparition.

**Event or tradition:** Adele Brice’s life, virtues, reputation for holiness and signs, and any favors submitted in connection with her intercession.

**Ecclesial reception or judgment:** The Causes-of-Saints *nihil obstat*, opening decree, first session, and use of the procedural title Servant of God, with the U.S. bishops’ consultation and diocesan edict as preceding steps.

**Limit of that reception:** No located act through 16 July 2026 declares heroic virtue, martyrdom, beatification, canonization, or a miracle attributed to Adele’s intercession.

The separation cuts both ways. The apparition decree cannot canonize Adele; a future judgment of heroic virtue would not make every apparition detail verbatim. Holiness involves how a person responds to grace across a life, and the cause must evaluate evidence broader than the apparition tradition.

### Three uses of *nihil obstat* must not be confused

The 1978 apparition norms described a provisional permission for public devotion as *pro nunc nihil obstare*; the 2024 DDF norms use *Nihil obstat* as their most favorable ordinary pastoral conclusion without certifying supernatural origin; and the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints gives a distinct *nihil obstat* when it reports no known obstacle to opening a cause. Adele’s October 2025 cause act belongs to the third process. It neither reclassifies Champion’s apparition nor declares Adele’s virtues heroic.

## 8.5 A map of competent authority

| Question                                                                                   | Competent process represented here                                          | Controlling document or status                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Were Adele’s October 1859 apparitions credibly supernatural and worthy of belief?</b>   | Diocesan apparition discernment under the discipline applicable in 2010     | Bishop Ricken’s decree, 8 Dec. 2010                                                                    |
| <b>May the shrine celebrate its proper observance as a solemnity and under what title?</b> | Universal liturgical law, Roman acknowledgment, and diocesan implementation | 2022 acknowledgment as recited in the signed Green Bay decree of 20 Apr. 2023                          |
| <b>What is the shrine called now?</b>                                                      | Diocesan title of the sanctuary                                             | Our Lady of Champion under the 2023 decree                                                             |
| <b>Should Adele be proposed for canonization?</b>                                          | Distinct cause of saints with diocesan and Roman phases                     | Causes <i>nihil obstat</i> in 2025; cause opened 30 Jan. 2026; first session 27 Feb.; Servant of God   |
| <b>Are alleged healings or the fire miracles?</b>                                          | Claim-specific canonical investigation and competent declaration            | None located as officially declared in the sources checked for the 2010 decree or current cause status |

## 8.6 Why liturgy is a deeper reception than publicity

When properly authorized, liturgical reception orders local memory to Christ’s Paschal mystery. Scripture is proclaimed, the Eucharist is celebrated, and Mary is honored within the Church’s prayer. This is more theologically exact than treating the apparition anniversary as a reenactment or spectacle.

Yet liturgy does not function as forensic proof. The Church celebrates many mysteries, saints, dedications, and titles on the basis appropriate to each. A local solemnity expresses regulated ecclesial reception of a place and title; the apparition’s credibility remains governed by its own decree.

## 9 A Theological Synthesis: Mercy Becomes Mission

Champion’s theological coherence lies in a sequence: Mary intercedes; the sinner is called to conversion; the disciple returns to confession and Eucharist; the vineyard demands labor; children are taught; and promised help takes form in persevering service. Every element is intelligible from public Revelation. The apparition adds no doctrine; it arranges familiar Christian realities into a local summons.

## 9.1 Christ, the one Mediator

The first doctrinal safeguard is positive, not merely defensive. Christ is the one mediator because in him God and humanity are united and because his Paschal sacrifice reconciles the world. Mary's intercession exists within the communion he creates. Like the prayer of every saint, it is participation by grace; unlike Christ's mediation, it is neither original nor sufficient of itself.

*Lumen gentium* applies this explicitly to Mary. Her maternal influence flows from the superabundance of Christ's merits, rests on his mediation, depends entirely upon it, and draws all power from it. Proper Champion devotion therefore makes recourse to Mary more Christological, sacramental, and ecclesial. If it directs practical trust away from Christ or imagines Mary restraining a Son less merciful than she is, it has misread both doctrine and the message's devotional idiom.

The warning that Christ may be "obliged" to punish should be interpreted analogically within divine freedom and justice. God is not externally compelled, nor are mercy and justice competing personalities divided between mother and son. Biblical anthropomorphic language communicates the seriousness of freely resisted grace. Mary intercedes because she is conformed to the will of the merciful and just God revealed in Christ.

## 9.2 Conversion and penance

Conversion is not panic before catastrophe. It is a grace-enabled reorientation of intellect, desire, conduct, and relationship toward God. Penance expresses that turning through confession, restitution where possible, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and patient acceptance of duties. Its purpose is communion and repair, not payment that purchases divine affection.

Champion's warning is thus medicinal. It reveals urgency so that response remains possible. Fatalism says that disaster is fixed and decoding is power. Christian prophecy says that now is the acceptable time and repentance is meaningful. The message's next movement into catechetical labor confirms that the future is not approached by speculation but by forming persons in freedom and truth.

## 9.3 Eucharistic and penitential form

Confession and Communion keep the apparition under the Church's sacramental economy. Sin is not simply lack of education; it needs mercy. Catechesis is not simply behavior management; it leads to encounter with Christ. The Eucharist is not a reward for the already complete; it is Christ's gift to those properly disposed, the source and summit of ecclesial life.

The sequence also prevents an activist interpretation. Adele must not save the region by effort alone. She receives forgiveness and communion before undertaking the vineyard. Conversely, sacramental devotion does not turn inward. Communion with Christ sends the communicant toward those who have not been taught.

## 9.4 Mary as catechist by sending a catechist

The received apparition does not replace Adele's work by miraculously instructing every child. It gives a mission and promises help. This is consistent with Mary's evangelical form in Scripture: she receives the Word, bears Christ, points servants toward obedience, prays with the Church, and magnifies God's action. Her genuine maternal care does not terminate attention on herself.

Adele's role is analogous at a creaturely and ministerial level. She receives, then transmits. She must learn enough to teach, find concrete learners, repeat elementary truths, and build conditions in which sacramental life is possible. The astonishing claim culminates in ordinary pedagogy.

## 9.5 Children: dignity, agency, and protection

Children are not important because they symbolize innocence for adults. They are persons made in God's image, capable of relationship with God, and entitled to formation appropriate to their development. Teaching "what they need for salvation" cannot be separated from protecting them from spiritual manipulation and abuse.

A contemporary reception of Adele's mission therefore includes:

- truthful doctrine presented without terrorizing imagery or coercive apparition claims;
- respect for parents' rights and for the child's questions, conscience, culture, and developmental capacity;
- inclusion of children with disabilities and accessible forms of prayer and learning;
- current safe-environment training, visibility, supervision, screening, and reporting;
- sacramental preparation that discerns readiness without humiliating or excluding; and
- formation of catechists who know the limits of their role.

No private revelation can suspend these duties. An adult who invokes Mary to demand secrecy, private access, money, obedience, or silence from a child contradicts the ecclesial mission and should be reported through the appropriate safeguarding channels.

## 9.6 "Fear nothing" and Christian courage

The assurance of help is not a prediction that Adele will encounter no danger, deprivation, failure, or misunderstanding. Her decades of effort make the opposite clear. Biblical "do not fear" language gives courage because God is present within a demanding vocation. It releases a person for responsible action; it does not confer recklessness.

The distinction is especially necessary after the fire tradition. Trust in help did not make settlement in a forest risk-free, and it cannot excuse ignoring modern emergency instructions. Courage uses prudent means without making them idols. Providence and preparedness are allies.

## 9.7 Ecclesial fruit and institutional conversion

The message addresses persons, but the response becomes institutional: a school, chapel, household, shrine, liturgical observance, catechetical programs, and works supported by pilgrims. Institutions preserve memory and extend service; they also accumulate power, money, reputational incentives, and the risk of self-preservation.

Champion's own message judges its institutions. A shrine faithful to Adele's commission should be transparent in historical claims and finances, excellent in catechesis, sacramental in orientation, safe for children and vulnerable adults, hospitable to those who do not share the devotion, and attentive to the poor. Visitor totals or buildings alone are not spiritual fruit. The vineyard is measured by fidelity and charity.

## 9.8 Apparition and *sensus fidelium*

Long devotion can be a sign of the faithful's spiritual instinct, but popularity is not identical with the *sensus fidei*. The latter is an ecclesial participation in faith, formed by Scripture, Tradition, sacraments, and communion with pastors. It cannot validate contradiction of the Gospel merely through numbers or intensity.

At Champion, popular devotion, Adele's mission, clerical accompaniment, diocesan discernment, and regulated liturgy interact. None renders the others unnecessary. This mutual testing is healthier than either top-down decree without lived fruit or enthusiasm without authority.

## 9.9 The fire beneath the theological center

The 1871 preservation may powerfully symbolize refuge, intercession, and gratitude. It should remain secondary to the catechetical commission for both documentary and theological reasons. Documentary: the mission is present in the earliest apparition accounts and the fire occurs twelve years later. Theological: Christian refuge is finally communion with God through death and resurrection, not a guarantee that a sacred perimeter will remain physically safe.

This ordering honors rather than diminishes survivors' gratitude. A temporal preservation is received best when it opens into eternal hope and service of neighbors, including those not preserved.

## 9.10 Champion in one theological sentence

### Synthesis

Within the limits of a non-obligatory positive judgment, Champion may be received as a Marian summons back to Christ: repent, receive mercy, live from the Eucharist, teach the faith patiently, protect and form children, trust grace without abandoning prudence, and let gratitude become service.

# 10 Pastoral Reception: How to Use Champion Well

An approved private revelation is not received well merely because its story is repeated often. Reception is truthful when it preserves the Church's exact judgment, points to Christ, and produces the work the message commends. Champion is especially susceptible to a reversal of emphasis: visitors may come for the extraordinary survival and leave without attending to catechesis. The pastoral task is to restore the order.

## 10.1 A rule of four fidelities

| Fidelity            | Question to ask                                            | Good practice                                                                      | Failure to avoid                                                                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| To Christ           | Does this lead into the Gospel, conversion, and sacrament? | Center preaching and pilgrimage on Christ's Paschal mystery                        | Present Mary as an alternate source of salvation or softer rival to Christ                    |
| To the sources      | Which witness establishes this detail?                     | Name Starr, Pernin, later shrine tradition, or decree according to the claim       | Blend all layers into an alleged 1859 transcript                                              |
| To the Church's act | What exactly was judged?                                   | State 2010 supernatural-character / worthy-of-belief status and non-obligation     | Call every associated favor a Church-certified miracle or relabel the act <i>Nihil obstat</i> |
| To persons          | Who bears the consequences of this telling?                | Protect children, honor victims, welcome questions, and respect devotional freedom | Coerce belief, frighten learners, blame disaster victims, or conceal safeguarding concerns    |

## 10.2 For pilgrims

A fruitful pilgrimage can include Mass, Reconciliation, Scripture, the Rosary, intercession for conversion, thanksgiving, and a concrete commitment to teach or support catechesis. The place should not become an oracle. Pilgrims need not seek new messages, private signs, precise predictions, or emotional certainty. Ordinary dryness does not mean Mary has withheld help.

Petitions for healing are legitimate. They should be joined to medical care, freedom from promises of cure, and readiness to accompany a person whatever the outcome. Crutches and ex-votos testify to gratitude; without a claim-specific decree they are not a medical or canonical registry of miracles.



### 10.3 For catechists and educators

Champion offers an examination of vocation rather than a shortcut to lesson content:

1. Am I myself living from prayer, conversion, confession, and Eucharist?
2. Do I teach Christ and the organic faith of the Church rather than my preferred apparition theories?
3. Can learners understand the words and gestures I ask them to repeat?
4. Have I received current doctrinal, pedagogical, disability, and safeguarding formation?
5. Do I cooperate with parents, pastors, and other responsible ministers?
6. Is the program materially accessible to families who lack money, transport, language access, or confidence?
7. Do I measure fruit by growing faith, hope, love, prayer, and ecclesial life rather than attendance alone?

A parish can honor Champion most directly by removing a real barrier to formation: training a catechist, providing transport, translating materials, including a learner with a disability, accompanying a parent, or helping a child approach the sacraments without shame.

### 10.4 For preachers and writers

The following wording is compact and accurate:

In 2010 the Bishop of Green Bay positively judged the events, apparitions, and locutions reported by Adele Brise in October 1859 and approved the apparitions as worthy of belief, while expressly leaving belief non-obligatory. The fuller dialogue is preserved in later shrine tradition; the earliest printed accounts preserve a shorter catechetical core. The 1871 survival is a significant providential tradition considered by the bishop, not a separately declared miracle.

Writers should cite the signed decree rather than a headline, and the early page images rather than a quotation aggregator. They should not introduce Starr's account as eyewitness testimony to 1859, Pernin's Champion appendix as his direct observation, or the current shrine history as a contemporary deposition.

### 10.5 For shrine and institutional leadership

Because official presentation shapes later memory, institutional accuracy is itself pastoral care. A mature presentation should:

- make the signed 2010 and 2023 decrees easy to locate;
- identify the source stratum of the full narrative and preserve early variants;
- distinguish favors from canonically declared miracles;
- explain that the 9 October solemnity is local to the shrine grounds;
- explain the former and current titles without implying two different devotions;
- state the exact procedural stage of Adele's cause;
- publish corrections when a chronology or oral-chain assertion proves impossible;
- maintain transparent safeguarding and financial accountability; and
- invest visibly in catechesis, especially for underserved families.

Such candor does not weaken pilgrimage. It gives pilgrims a devotion that can survive serious questions.

Safeguarding is not an abstract institutional virtue. The Diocese of Green Bay's current directions tell readers facing immediate danger to use emergency services and direct reports of suspected abuse to the appropriate civil authorities,

with diocesan reporting channels also identified. Catechists and shrine personnel must follow current civil, tribal, and diocesan requirements rather than a devotional chain of command. Because contacts and policy can change, the live diocesan “Safe Environment” and “How to Report Abuse” pages control over copied numbers in a static study. An internal incident platform is not a substitute for emergency or civil reporting.

## 10.6 Frequently confused claims

**“If it is approved, must Catholics believe it happened?”** No. The decree itself states that belief is not obligatory. Approval permits and positively commends prudent belief; theological faith remains directed to God in public Revelation.

**“Does non-obligatory mean the bishop only said the devotion was harmless?”** No. His language positively addresses supernatural character and credibility. Non-obligation identifies the kind of assent, not the absence of judgment.

**“Did the Vatican approve Champion in 2022?”** The Roman acknowledgment recited in the 2023 decree concerns liturgical celebration at an individual sanctuary. The supernatural-character judgment is Bishop Ricken’s 2010 diocesan act. The Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith have different competencies.

**“Did all three apparitions occur on 9 October 1859?”** The developed shrine narrative commonly associates the second and third encounters with that Sunday and places the sequence in October. Starr and Pernin give different intervals and settings. The decree judges an October corpus; it does not supply an exact date for each event.

**“Is the full message in the earliest sources?”** No. Starr and Pernin preserve the catechetical and sacramental core. Conversion, general confession, the fuller warning, the vineyard exchange, and several visual details appear in the developed custodial narrative and selected decree recitals.

**“Did the fire prove the warning?”** No checked message text predicts the 1871 fire, and no competent act declares a fulfillment. The association is a later devotional inference.

**“Was the property untouched?”** Pernin reports that school and chapel survived and that the enclosure remained green amid devastation, but he also says portions of the fence were charred. “Untouched” is too absolute.

**“Has the Church declared the fire or healings miraculous?”** The 2010 decree expressly says that none of the reported favors had been officially declared a miracle, and its operative clause does not separately judge the fire. A later claim-specific decree would have to be cited if the status changes.

**“Does Servant of God mean Adele is a saint?”** It marks an opened cause. It is not a declaration of heroic virtue, beatification, canonization, or miracle.

**“Can a person honor the former title?”** Yes. Our Lady of Good Help remains a historically meaningful invocation. Our Lady of Champion is the shrine’s official title under the 2023 decree. Both refer to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

# 10.7 A discernment checklist for new claims

Champion’s recognition does not create an open channel that authenticates later locutions. If someone alleges a new message connected with Adele or the shrine, ask:

1. Has the claim been submitted to the competent diocesan authority under current norms?
2. Does it conform to Scripture, doctrine, morals, and the sacramental order?
3. Does the claimant accept ecclesial oversight and correction?
4. Are money, status, sexual access, secrecy, political allegiance, or apocalyptic pressure involved?
5. Are vulnerable people being frightened or isolated from family, medicine, or ordinary pastoral care?
6. What is the original dated evidence, rather than a viral paraphrase?
7. Has any competent act actually been issued, and what exact conclusion does it state?

Until then, no one should advertise the claim as a continuation of the approved corpus. The safest devotional practice is the one Champion already points toward: Scripture, sacrament, prayer, penance, catechesis, and charity.

# 10.8 A final examen

The story ends not at the apparition site but in a question posed to every Christian community. Who nearby has not been gathered into patient knowledge of Christ? Which family cannot reach formation? Which adult has never been invited without condescension? Which child is present but not included? Which survivor carries gratitude without a way to serve, and which victim has been forgotten?

Champion deserves attention to the degree that it makes those questions harder to evade. Its most fitting memorial is a Church that teaches carefully, celebrates faithfully, protects the vulnerable, repents readily, and trusts Mary’s intercession because Mary always belongs to Christ.

# A Ecclesial Status, Corpus, and Method

## A.1 The exact ecclesial status

On 8 December 2010, after an inquiry that included three Marian experts and an examination of the available historical and spiritual evidence, the Bishop of Green Bay declared that the October 1859 events, apparitions, and locutions given to Adele “do exhibit the substance of supernatural character.” He approved the apparitions as worthy of belief, adding in the clause itself that belief is not obligatory for the Christian faithful. The decree is the controlling positive judgment for this study.

It is a legacy judgment made under the discipline then governing alleged private revelations. It is not one of the six prudential conclusions introduced by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2024, and it should not be silently relabeled a *Nihil obstat*. Nor is it a canonization, a dogmatic definition, or a decree that every reported word is an exact transcript.

| Reality                                       | Competent source or authority                            | What may be affirmed                                              | Necessary limit                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Public Revelation</b>                      | Christ, transmitted in Scripture and apostolic Tradition | God’s definitive saving self-communication, normative for faith   | No apparition completes Christ, corrects the Gospel, or supplies a new way of salvation. |
| <b>October 1859 apparitions and locutions</b> | Bishop of Green Bay, decree of 8 December 2010           | Substance of supernatural character; apparitions worthy of belief | Belief is not obligatory; the decree’s exact object must not be enlarged.                |

| Reality                                       | Competent source or authority                                               | What may be affirmed                                                                   | Necessary limit                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Received dialogue and visual narrative</b> | Adele tradition in Starr, Pernin, later shrine history, and decree recitals | A coherent received message centered on conversion, catechesis, prayer, and sacraments | No stenographic record survives; later details require source labels.                                                    |
| <b>1871 preservation and reported favors</b>  | Pernin, local memory, shrine records, and 2010 historical recitals          | A documented tradition of prayer, danger, preservation, gratitude, and pilgrimage      | No favor or healing was officially declared a miracle in the 2010 decree; the fire is not the decree's operative object. |

## A.2 The three-field dossier boundary

**Event or tradition:** Three reported encounters involving Adele Brise in northeastern Wisconsin during the autumn of 1859, together with the received locutions and the mission that followed.

**Ecclesial reception or judgment:** The 2010 diocesan decree judges the events, apparitions, and locutions given to Adele in October 1859 and approves the apparitions as worthy of belief, although not obligatory.

**Limit of that reception:** The judgment does not make every later biography, devotional expansion, image, prediction, healing, preservation claim, or institutional development part of the judged apparition corpus.

**Event or tradition:** The survival of the chapel-school enclosure and those gathered there during the fires of 8–9 October 1871, remembered through prayer and procession.

**Ecclesial reception or judgment:** The 2010 decree recounts the episode among historical signs of devotion and enduring spiritual fruit.

**Limit of that reception:** The operative clause does not declare the preservation a miracle, and Pernin's earliest substantial printed account deliberately withholds that conclusion.

**Event or tradition:** The continuing shrine, the local solemnity on the shrine grounds, the title Our Lady of Champion, and Adele's cause of beatification and canonization.

**Ecclesial reception or judgment:** These have their own competent acts: diocesan and national-shrine recognition, the 2022 liturgical acknowledgment reflected in a 2023 diocesan decree, and the later opening of Adele's cause.

**Limit of that reception:** A liturgical title, a calendar permission, a shrine designation, and a cause of canonization do not revise the supernatural judgment or prove one another.

## A.3 Public Revelation, private revelation, and assent

The Second Vatican Council teaches that the deepest truth about God and human salvation shines forth in Christ, mediator and fullness of Revelation. The Catechism therefore says that no new public revelation is to be expected before his glorious manifestation. So-called private revelations may help believers live the definitive Revelation more fully in a particular historical setting, but they do not improve, complete, or surpass it.

That ordering is visible at Champion. The received message sends Adele toward prayer, conversion, the sacraments, the Sign of the Cross, catechesis, and the salvation Christ gives. Nothing in it creates a new sacrament or a privileged route around the Church. Its proper test is whether it serves the Gospel already given.

The assent owed to an approved private revelation is consequently different from the theological faith owed to God revealing. A Catholic may judge Champion credibly and receive it with prudent human faith; a Catholic may also live the faith without adopting Champion as a personal devotion. Freedom from obligation does not mean that the ecclesial judgment is imaginary. It means that the judgment proposes a credible help while leaving consciences bound by public Revelation, not by a private claim.

## A.4 Method and vocabulary

This study distinguishes four operations:

1. **Historical attestation** asks who recorded a claim, when, with what access, and through how many layers of memory.
2. **Ecclesial judgment** asks what the competent authority actually decided, under which discipline, and about which object.
3. **Theological interpretation** asks how the received message stands under Scripture, Tradition, the sacraments, and Catholic doctrine.
4. **Devotional reception** asks how believers may respond without overstating certainty or binding others.

“Reported” marks a historical or judicial boundary. “The received message” names the narrative as transmitted in the shrine tradition and cited in the decree; it does not imply access to an audio transcript. Ordinary devotional language such as “Our Lady asked” can be fitting after that boundary has been made explicit. “Tradition” here means a transmitted local account, not apostolic Tradition. “Miracle” is reserved for a competent declaration or for theological discussion carefully separated from such a declaration.

## A.5 Source, rights, exclusions, and review

The 2010 and 2023 decrees are English originals in signed public PDFs; extracted text was checked against page images where wording is consequential. Starr’s reissue and Pernin’s 1874 English edition are public-domain page images; OCR was used only as a finding aid. Modern shrine prose was summarized rather than reproduced. Official texts and third-party sources remain outside the project’s license grant except as lawfully quoted or cited.

No anonymous apparition list, quotation image, miracle catalogue, casualty estimate, apocalyptic interpretation, or unsourced oral chain supports a published claim. Independent ecclesiastical, canonical, historical, archival, Belgian-French linguistic, meteorological, wildfire-science, medical, psychological, catechetical, safeguarding, and cause-of-saints review is not claimed.

## A.6 Use and date boundary

This source-audited Catholic study instrument was checked through 16 July 2026. It is not an act of the Magisterium, a new judgment on private revelation, a declaration that the 1871 preservation or any healing is a miracle, or a claim that any Catholic must adopt this devotion.

## B Documentary and Ecclesial Timeline

This appendix distinguishes reported events, dates of surviving publications, competent acts, and later reception. Approximate or custodial dates are identified as such rather than silently converted into contemporaneous evidence.

| Date                | Event / document                                 | Evidentiary or ecclesial significance                                                                                                  |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>30 Jan. 1831</b> | Adele Brise born in Belgium                      | Biographical starting point in current diocesan and shrine presentation; later surname spellings vary.                                 |
| <b>1855</b>         | Brice family emigrates to northeastern Wisconsin | Belgian immigrant, linguistic, economic, and missionary context for Adele’s later work.                                                |
| <b>Autumn 1859</b>  | Three appearances reported by Adele              | Stable event core; early publications and later narrative disagree on interval, setting, visual details, and exact wording.            |
| <b>October 1859</b> | Month defined by the later ecclesial judgment    | The 2010 operative clause bounds the judged events, apparitions, and locutions to October; it does not date each encounter separately. |

| Date                                | Event / document                                                                                              | Evidentiary or ecclesial significance                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>After 1859</b>                   | Household catechesis and first chapel-school work develop                                                     | Adele responds through travel, instruction, sacramental preparation, fundraising, and common work with other women. Exact institutional stages depend on later histories.           |
| <b>1859</b>                         | Region belongs to the Diocese of Milwaukee                                                                    | Bishop John Martin Henni, not a Bishop of Green Bay, is the local ordinary; no contemporaneous formal inquiry is thereby inferred.                                                  |
| <b>1868</b>                         | Diocese of Green Bay established from Milwaukee territory                                                     | Prevents anachronistic reference to a Green Bay diocesan judgment at the time of the report; later Green Bay bishops become competent local ordinaries.                             |
| <b>By 1868</b>                      | Pauline LaPlante returns from Racine to Bay Settlement                                                        | Her life overlaps Adele's until 1896, so contact is possible; no located document proves contact or ties a particular message sentence to Pauline.                                  |
| <b>1871</b>                         | Starr publishes the first located printed account                                                             | Near-contemporary mediated evidence for three appearances, the catechetical commission, and a free school; chronology differs from the later narrative.                             |
| <b>8–9 Oct. 1871</b>                | Regional Wisconsin fires; Champion enclosure preserved                                                        | Early tradition records prayer, procession, survival, charred fence, and surrounding destruction; no separate miracle decree located.                                               |
| <b>1874</b>                         | Pernin publishes <i>The Finger of God Is There!</i>                                                           | Early second apparition narrative and principal early fire account; includes express restraint about miracle and ecclesiastical judgment.                                           |
| <b>5 July 1896</b>                  | Adele dies                                                                                                    | Ends her personal enactment of the mission; later oral transmission and institutional memory require their own source chain.                                                        |
| <b>1902</b>                         | Shrine timeline places Pauline LaPlante in an assignment at the chapel                                        | An assignment date is not an arrival date and cannot disprove earlier contact; the unresolved oral chain is not used as proof.                                                      |
| <b>1955</b>                         | M. Dominica's <i>The Chapel: Our Lady of Good Help, A Shrine of Mary on the Green Bay Peninsula</i> published | Important retrospective local history behind later custodial narration; not independently collated for this study.                                                                  |
| <b>Late 20th–early 21st century</b> | Pilgrimage and diocesan pastoral oversight continue                                                           | Establishes durable reception but is not itself a formal supernatural judgment.                                                                                                     |
| <b>2009–2010</b>                    | Formal diocesan study under Bishop Ricken                                                                     | Three Marian experts examine extant sources, doctrine, Adele's character, objections, and fruit.                                                                                    |
| <b>8 Dec. 2010</b>                  | Bishop Ricken issues signed decree                                                                            | October 1859 object judged to have the substance of supernatural character; apparitions approved as worthy of belief, non-obligatorily.                                             |
| <b>By 2016</b>                      | Site receives national-shrine designation                                                                     | Official public sources give 2015, 19 Mar. 2016, or simply 2016; the underlying approval act was not reviewed, so no exact juridic date is selected. Not a new apparition judgment. |
| <b>15 Dec. 2022</b>                 | Roman liturgical acknowledgment                                                                               | As recited in the 2023 decree, concerns an individual sanctuary's proper solemnity, not supernatural classification.                                                                |
| <b>20 Apr. 2023</b>                 | Signed solemnity-and-name decree                                                                              | 9 October solemnity established on shrine grounds; official title becomes Our Lady of Champion.                                                                                     |
| <b>19 May 2024</b>                  | DDF phenomena norms take effect                                                                               | Six ordinary prudential outcomes govern current cases; the 2010 decree remains a legacy act and is not automatically relabeled.                                                     |
| <b>14 June 2024</b>                 | U.S. bishops affirm advancement of Adele's proposed cause                                                     | Required consultation supports diocesan progression; no judgment of heroic virtue or miracle.                                                                                       |
| <b>Oct. 2025</b>                    | Dicastery for the Causes of Saints issues cause <i>nihil obstat</i>                                           | No known Roman obstacle to proceeding with the cause; distinct from both an apparition judgment and the DDF's 2024 <i>Nihil obstat</i> category.                                    |
| <b>28 Dec. 2025</b>                 | Diocesan cause edict issued                                                                                   | Publishes the petition and invites relevant information under the 1983 cause norms; does not anticipate the conclusion.                                                             |

| Date                | Event / document                                       | Evidentiary or ecclesial significance                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>30 Jan. 2026</b> | Bishop Ricken promulgates decree opening Adele’s cause | Procedural designation Servant of God; apparition, virtue, and miracle questions remain distinct.                                                                     |
| <b>27 Feb. 2026</b> | First session of diocesan inquiry held                 | Tribunal, historical commission, and officials take oaths and begin their assigned work; not a virtue or miracle judgment.                                            |
| <b>16 July 2026</b> | Currentness and source audit completed                 | No later DDF act reclassifying Champion, no declared Champion fire miracle, and no cause judgment beyond the opening inquiry located in the official sources checked. |

## C References

### C.1 Public Revelation, doctrine, and discernment

1. Sacred Scripture: especially Dt 6:4–9; Ps 145; Mt 18:1–6; 28:18–20; Lk 1:26–55; 13:1–5; Jn 2:1–11; 9:1–3; 19:25–27; 20:24–29; 1 Cor 11:23–29; 12:4–27; 1 Tm 2:5; and Rev 12:1–17.
2. Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, 2–4, on Christ as mediator and fullness of Revelation: official text.
3. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, 52–69, especially 56 and 60–62 on Mary’s graced cooperation and dependence upon Christ’s unique mediation: official text.
4. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 65–67, 426–429, 849–856, 963–975, 1210–1419, 1422–1498, 1817–1821, 2221–2231, 2683–2684, and 302–314: official text.
5. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *The Message of Fatima* (26 June 2000), section on public and private revelation and Christian prophecy: official doctrinal dossier. Its general principles are used; Fátima’s particular message is not imported into Champion.
6. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Norms Regarding the Manner of Proceeding in the Discernment of Presumed Apparitions or Revelations* (approved 24 February and issued 25 February 1978), preliminary note and parts I–III: official text. The 2010 decree does not expressly cite the norms; they establish the then-current general procedural and evaluative framework.
7. William Cardinal Levada, “Preface” to the publication of the 1978 norms (14 December 2011), on their transmission to bishops, the relation of private to public Revelation, prudent adhesion, and non-obligation: official text.
8. Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena* (17 May 2024; effective 19 May), especially the presentation and arts. 17–23: official text.
9. DDF, *Mater Populi Fidelis*: Doctrinal Note on Some Marian Titles Regarding Mary’s Cooperation in the Work of Salvation (4 November 2025), especially 17–29, 45–55, and 62–70: official text.
10. DDF complete document index, checked for a later Champion classification through 16 July 2026: official index.

### C.2 Champion’s controlling ecclesial acts

1. David L. Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay, *Decree on the Authenticity of the Apparitions of 1859 at the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help* (8 December 2010), four-page signed decree. The page images were checked for the historical recitals, expert inquiry, no-declared-miracle caveat, and operative clause: signed PDF.
2. David L. Ricken, decree on the shrine solemnity and name (20 April 2023), recording the 15 December 2022 acknowledgment of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments: signed PDF.
3. National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion, “An Update from the National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help” (20 April 2023), clarifying the title and the shrine-ground scope of the solemnity: official explanation.
4. *Code of Canon Law*, canons 1230–1234, on diocesan, national, and international shrines, statutes, privileges, worship, preaching, sacramental life, and offerings: official text.
5. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Norms for the Designation of National Shrines,” approved 18 June 1992, especially norms 2, 4–8 and procedures 1–8: official conference norms. These define the title and pastoral governance; they do not create an apparition judgment.
6. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, implementing decree on calendars and propers (22 October 2021), especially 51–52 on particular calendars and Roman confirmation: official text. Used with the 2023 Green Bay decree; the unpublished 2022 acknowledgment is claimed only as that signed decree recites it.

### C.3 Early printed witnesses

1. Eliza Allen Starr, *Patron Saints*, first series (1871), checked in the 1883 reissue, printed pp. 298–301. Used for Starr’s personal meeting with Adele during fundraising, the interpreter and clerical letter, the early chronology and imagery, the catechetical commission, free school, and material needs: public-domain page images.

2. Peter Pernin, *The Finger of God Is There! or, Thrilling Episode of a Strange Event Related by an Eye-Witness* (Montreal, 1874), appendix, printed pp. 94–102. Used for the second early apparition account, school and pilgrimage, geographic distinction, Champion preservation, charred fence, and Pernin’s explicit refusal to declare a miracle or preempt Church judgment: public-domain page images.

Starr did not witness the apparitions. Pernin’s “eye-witness” title applies to the Peshtigo memoir, not to Adele’s encounters or to his presence at Champion during the fire. Their proximity and materially differing accounts are valuable only when those limits remain visible; their independence from one another has not been demonstrated.

## C.4 Custodial history and institutional context

1. National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion, *The National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion—History* (current PDF, 2023), especially pp. 1–6. Used for the full received encounter narrative and current custodial account of the fire: official shrine PDF. The PDF identifies shrine history, diocesan archival information, and oral testimony as its basis.
2. National Shrine, “Timeline,” used for custodial dates and institutional sequence, with consequential claims checked against the early and official sources above: official shrine timeline.
3. Diocese of Green Bay, “History,” for establishment of the diocese in 1868: official diocesan history.
4. Archdiocese of Milwaukee, “A Visible Church: 1843–1903,” and “Archbishop John Martin Henni,” for the Diocese of Milwaukee’s 1843 erection and the creation of Green Bay and La Crosse from Milwaukee territory in 1868: official history; official episcopal biography. The statement that Champion lay in Milwaukee in 1859 is an inference from these institutional facts.
5. Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross, “Community Founders,” for Pauline LaPlante’s return from Racine to Bay Settlement by 1868: official community history. It establishes regional chronological overlap with Adele, not demonstrated contact or transmission.
6. Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, University of Wisconsin–Madison, “Ethnic Groups in Wisconsin: Historical Background,” for the francophone Catholic migration beginning in the 1850s and concentration in Brown, Door, and Kewaunee Counties: university research resource.
7. Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, “About Us,” for the Nation’s own account of origin, ancestral territory, treaty history, survival, and sovereignty: tribal source; Wisconsin First Nations, “Oneida Nation,” for the Oneida Nation’s Wisconsin relocation and 1838 reservation boundaries: state-university education partnership. These correct an empty-land narrative without pretending to establish the Shrine parcel’s title chain.
8. M. Dominica, *The Chapel: Our Lady of Good Help, A Shrine of Mary on the Green Bay Peninsula* (De Pere: Journal Publishing Co., 1955), prepared within the Bay Settlement custodial tradition. The current Shrine identifies this as an important history. It was not independently collated for this edition; claims are therefore sourced to the checked current Shrine presentation, not silently to this volume.

## C.5 Adele Brice’s cause

1. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “U.S. Bishops Affirm Advancement of a Cause of Beatification and Canonization of Adele Brise, Lay Woman” (14 June 2024): official notice.
2. Diocese of Green Bay, edict concerning the proposed cause (28 December 2025), requesting information relevant to the inquiry: signed official PDF.
3. Congregation for the Causes of Saints, *Norms to Be Observed in Inquiries Made by Bishops in the Causes of Saints* (7 February 1983), especially 11(a)–(b) and 36: official text; and *Sanctorum Mater* (17 May 2007), especially arts. 43, 45–48, 68–70, and 86–90: official instruction. These govern the edict, Roman *nihil obstat*, officials, historical commission, and opening session.
4. Adele Brice Cause, “Press Release ‘Servant of God Adele Brice’” (2 February 2026), reporting the October 2025 Causes-of-Saints *nihil obstat* and Bishop Ricken’s 30 January opening decree: official cause release.
5. Diocese of Green Bay / *On Mission*, “Cause for Servant of God Adele Brice officials hold opening session of the diocesan inquiry” (2026), for the 27 February first session, tribunal, historical commission, and oaths: official diocesan-media report. The same report appears at pp. 15–16 of the Shrine’s 2026 magazine: official PDF.

## C.6 Catechetical interpretation

1. John Paul II, *Catechesi tradendae* (16 October 1979), especially 5 and 20, on communion with Jesus Christ and the depth of catechesis: official text.
2. Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis* (2020), especially 110–123 (catechists and vocation), 126 (parents), 130–156 (formation), 226–242 (family and children), 269–272 (persons with disabilities), and 298–303 (parish). Section mapping was checked in the USCCB’s authorized leaders’ guide: official guide. No private message is treated as a replacement directory.



## C.7 Safeguarding and reporting

1. Diocese of Green Bay, “Safe Environment” and “How to Report Abuse,” checked 16 July 2026: current diocesan hub; current reporting directions. Immediate danger belongs to emergency services; suspected abuse is reported to civil or tribal authority as current law and policy require, followed by the appropriate diocesan channel. Live directions control over copied contact details.
2. Diocese of Green Bay, *Our Promise to Protect* (current posted policy), especially printed pp. 4–5 and 12 on reporting by school and faith-formation personnel: official policy PDF. Cited only for present pastoral application, not as a historical source for 1859.

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