



Our Lady of the Taper

According to the legend, a statue of Our Lady and Child was found beside the River Teifi, in southwest Wales, with a burning taper (candle) in her hand. The statue was taken to the local parish church, although it was moved several times before a church was specially built to house the shrine. The present St Mary's church dates back to around 1158, making the shrine more than 800 years old

The original statue is believed to have been taken to London and destroyed at Chelsea in 1538 along with other Marian images on the orders of Thomas Cromwell, 1st Earl of Essex, chief minister of King Henry VIII.

In 1952, the Bishop of Menevia, John Edward Petit, was informed that Cardigan had once possessed a famous shrine and pilgrimage site, and a new statue was carved based on the description of the original. The new statue was blessed at Westminster Cathedral in London and taken to every parish in the Diocese of Menevia before arriving in Cardigan where it was placed in Our Lady of Sorrows church. Fourteen years later, a new church, Our Lady of the Taper, was consecrated, and the statue was placed in its current home.

A new statue was re-cast in bronze in 1986 by Sr Concordia Scott and blessed at the Cardiff Metropolitan Cathedral of St David before being taken around Wales and then installed before 4,5000 pilgrims. A candle blessed by Pope John Paul 11 in Rome was placed in the statue's hand. The shrine was re-instated by Mgr John Petit and visited by many pilgrims each year.

Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Cardigan has largely replaced that to Our Lady of Penrhys, in the Rhondda Valley of Glamorgan, documented in Welsh medieval literature because of current difficult access for crowds.