



**THE APPEALS
OF OUR LADY**
APPARITIONS
AND
MARIAN SHRINES
IN THE WORLD

Apparition of the Virgin Mary at VAILANKANNI



INDIA, XVI CENTURY



Along the coast of the Bay of Bengal, 250 km south of the city of Madras, there is Vailankanni, a small town of just five thousand inhabitants, where every year over twenty million pilgrims arrive, from every corner of India and other countries of the world. They come devoutly every year to visit and to pray in this place, known and venerated as the "Lourdes of the East".

There are three officially recognized apparitions at Vailankanni. The first one dates to the beginning of the sixteenth century. Towards dawn a Hindu boy was going from Vailankanni to Nagapattinam to deliver the milk to his master, as he did every morning. Taken by an unusual drowsiness he took a nap and upon reawakening he saw a Lady of remarkable beauty, who was carrying in her arms a child of divine appearance. The boy was surprised when the Lady asked him for some milk for her child. With reverence and fear, the youth offered his full container and when he reached his master, he apologized for his tardiness and for the shortage of milk. At that moment there were also other people present listening to the story, when suddenly, amid everyone's general astonishment, milk began to flow out spontaneously from the container. Thus the boy and his master, a Hindu also himself, returned to the small lake of the first apparition and Our Lady appeared again. The event became known among the nearby Catholic community who called that lake "Matha Kalum", meaning the "Little Lake of Our Lady".

Towards the end of the 1500s the second apparition of the Virgin Mary occurred to a twelve-year old Tamil boy, lame since birth, son of a poor widow who sold butter in Vailankanni. The relatives of the boy had sought help to cure his infirmity from a wealthy benefactor, who however never decided to take action. On the day of the apparition the boy saw a very clear light appear in front of him and, in the light, he saw a Lady of incomparable grace with a beautiful Child in her arms. The Virgin asked him for some butter for her Child, and the boy gave it to her. Then Our Lady requested him to tell what happened to the wealthy Hindu man of the nearby town, Nagapattinam, asking him to build a chapel in the place of her apparition. The boy did not immediately realize that while the Lady was talking, his legs were healing. He got up immediately and went running very fast to that man to accomplish the task. That man too had a vision the day before, in which the Virgin Mary asked him to build a chapel for her. Soon afterwards, they went together to the place of the apparition. The Hindu benefactor was also cured of the dropsy from which he suffered; later he converted to Catholicism. Afterwards the chapel became a place of devotion to Our Lady called "Arokia Matha", meaning "Mother of Good Health".

The third miracle, which occurred in the XVII century, involves some Portuguese merchants who were on a journey from China to Ceylon, when they encountered a violent storm and invoked the protection of the Star of the Sea: the Virgin Mary. During the storm they made a vow: if they were saved they would build a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, wherever they would reach shore. The stormy sea became calm. Their ship docked near Vailankanni, later they were led by local fishermen to the chapel, that was still a hut. They transformed the chapel into a stone structure, dedicating the church to "Our Lady of Health".



Image of Our Lady of Vailankanni



Adoration Center



Basilica of Vailankanni



Interior views

In September of 1771, Vailankanni is elevated to the rank of parish. Around the small chapel is built a large church, consecrated in 1926 and that Pope John XXIII elevated to the dignity of Basilica on November 3, 1962, under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Thanjavur



Images depicting episodes of the first apparition in which the boy offers some milk to Our Lady

Representations of the second apparition in which Our Lady heals the lame boy

In the third apparition the Portuguese merchants are saved thanks to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, whose appearance reassures them. As a sign of their gratitude the merchants build a shrine in honor of Our Lady