

OUR LADY OF GOOD HEALTH **Vailankanni, India1580**

THE FIRST APPARITION AT VAILANKANNI

LOCATED on the shore of the Bay of Bengal, on the east coast of India, the magnificent church dedicated to Our Mother of Good Health came into being because of three apparitions. The first involves a young boy who was on his way to sell milk in a nearby village, but who stopped to rest under a banyan tree near a large pond. Suddenly

Our Lady appeared to him, holding a beautiful baby. She asked the boy if she might have

some of the milk for Her Son. After giving her some of the milk, he proceeded to his customer's home and apologized for being late and for not having the full amount of milk that had been expected. Yet, the pot of milk was full. After telling the Hindu man about the appearance of the Lady, the man followed the boy to the place of the apparition.

When they reached the pond, the Lady appeared once again. When news of the apparition reached the ears of the Catholic community they were ecstatic and dedicated the place, naming it Our Lady's Pond. Thereafter, they journeyed there in procession to submit their prayers to the Lady who had graciously visited them.



THE SECOND APPARITION

The second apparition took place at the pond where a crippled boy sat on the shore selling buttermilk. Once again the Blessed Mother and Child appeared and once again she asked for some milk for her Child. He gave her some without hesitation. Then the apparition asked the boy to tell of the vision to a certain wealthy Catholic man in the nearby village. The boy jumped up and ran to fulfill the Lady's request, not realizing at

first that his leg had been cured. The man who had been named by the Lady had had a vision the previous night in which Our Lady asked him to build a chapel for her. Together the man and the once-crippled boy returned to the site of the miracle. The Lady appeared to both of them and, soon after, a small chapel was built in honor of the Mother of Good Health.

THE THIRD APPARITION

The third apparition took place a few years later when wealthy Portuguese merchants experienced a violent storm at sea that wrecked their ship. Imploring the help of the Blessed Virgin, they safely reached the shore of Vailankanni and were taken to the chapel to give thanks to the Mother of Good Health. In gratitude for their miraculous rescue, they built a permanent chapel which was dedicated on September 8, the feast of the Nativity of Mary and the date of their safe return.

FESTIVALS, PILGRIMAGES, AND MIRACLES

Presently, an annual festival lasting nine days draws more than a million pilgrims, many of whom are of different faiths and languages. The large number of pilgrimages is likened to Lourdes which also receives countless devotees of Our Lady.

As time passed, the many cures and answers to prayers at the shrine necessitated a larger one. Through the years, the shrine developed with numerous enlargements and additions into the magnificent church that stands today. Above the main altar is a statue depicting the Mother of Good Health, a popular attraction. Numerous priests have ministered at the shrine and succeeding bishops and archbishops have approved the tradition, consecrated the various chapels that replaced former chapels, and granted numerous indulgences for all who worshiped there. An Apostolic brief of Pope John XXIII, dated 1962, elevated the Shrine of Vailankanni to a minor basilica.