Apparition of the Virgin Mary in KALLIKULAM

INDIA, 1939

The Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Kallikulam is one of the most important in India. It is found in the district of Trivandrum, in the state of Travancore. In recent years, it had become famous in India because of the vision and apparition of Our Lady, who manifested herself in Kallikulam in 1939. The origin of the shrine, however, is related to several previous missionary priests. In 1899, the inhabitants of the village of Kallikulam and the Jesuits indeed decided to construct a new church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. They were ushered upon the mountain and location of the church and therefore they beseeched Our Lady to illuminate them with a sign. One day, on a hot summer morning, they found a plot of land completely covered in dew, so much so that it seemed covered with snow. They marveled at this unusual event and understood it to be related to the miraculous intercession of Our Lady who indicated the site on which to make the church emerge. More than half a century later, on the 26th of March 1939, around 6:30 in the evening, Mary appeared on a hill near the church of Kallikulam, enrobed in a luminous white light. With her white veil, she was turned toward the church and was praying with her hands joined. At her feet flowed a cascade of water. Six young men (Grama Athikaram, M. P. John, M. G. Thomas, D. Thasan, R. Thasan, M. A. Thasan) were present at the apparition for several seconds, because shortly thereafter she disappeared. The following morning, they proceeded to the hill of the apparition and they found a pair of human imprints on the rock, where the apparition took place. They left a mark indicating the imprints and informed the Rev. Father Mariano, prior of the parish, in addition to the schoolteacher Laxman Iyer and the villagers. Initially, Fr. Mariano and the people of the village did not want to believe them. The teacher of the school said that she would have believed the apparition only if she had seen a real waterfall on the hill. It was a period of drought, and not rain for 13 years in the arid area of Kallikulam. That day, after midday, around three, it began to rain optimally for an hour and a half, in Kallikulam and in the vicinity, thus, on the top of the hill, where the apparition occurred, a cascade of water formed. After that sign of nature, everyone began to believe in the apparition and on the site was constructed a Pandal (a temporary structure) with coconut leaves. Also erected was a cross of stone. Every evening a lantern was lit at the place of the apparition. One day, the lantern fell and rolled down the hill all the way to its slope, where it was found by the people, in its correct position, intact and lit. After some time, a young man from the village of Singampainu went up the hill to be cured from his infertility. He had all of his fingers bent and was not able to perform any labor. He poured some oil into the imprints, at the apparition site, and it rubbed it on the palm of his hands and on his fingers. Suddenly his fingers unfolded. He was very happy and, filled with gratitude, he reported the miracle to the inhabitants of the village, showing them his fingers. In 1940, the construction began of a staircase that went to the apparition site. At the time 2.5 rupees per step were needed to dig out the staircase on the apparition hill, which is why many people wired funds via money order for the fulfillment of the project. World War II was underway, most of the Money Order donations were executed by the soldiers. Thanks to those donations and to other offerings of the inhabitants of the village, the staircase and the lateral plinths of support were built for the apparition site on the hill. In 1941, the Bishop of Trivandrum, God Victoria, came on a visit to the hill, he blessed it and placed a commemorative plaque. Subsequently a gruta was constructed on the hill in commemoration of the apparition of Our Lady. Ever since, the faithful of the parish and of the surrounding areas gather together each Saturday in that location. The prayers are held every Saturday evening. Each year, there is also celebrated a 10-day fast during which Mass is and Novena said. The people coming from various areas of India visit the hill of the apparition mostly on the first Saturday of each month, as requested by Our Lady in Fatima. Catholics are not the only ones to visit the Shrine in great numbers during the whole year but so do the non-Christians. Each year hundreds of miraculous healings are registered. Here, Our Lady of the Snows is commonly known as Panimatha which is a Tamil word that means ‘Pani-Shau’ and ‘Matha-Mother’.