



ASIA OCEANIA MARIAN ACADEMY

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ASIA OCEANIA MARIAN ACADEMY

Message from the President - PAMI



PONTIFICIA ACADEMIA MARIANA INTERNATIONALIS

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Fr. Stefano Cecchin, President

Dear friends, men and women scholars in Mariology, members of the AOMA, who serve in the great continents of Asia and Oceania,

May the Lord give you peace!

I express my joy and heartiest gratitude for what you are doing so that the presence of Mary may be a reason for the encounter between cultures and peoples. Pope Francis has already told us that «the *Pontifical International Marian Academy* has accompanied the universal Magisterium of the Church with the research and coordination of Mariological studies; with the International Mariological-Marian Congresses, collaborating with various ecclesiastical and lay study centers; and, finally, through cooperation with various academic institutions. These commitments are a clear testimony on how Mariology is a necessary presence of dialogue between cultures, capable of nourishing fraternity and peace». This is what we are doing together! Because you too, dear members of the AOMA, are the Academy, that is, we are like Mary's house, a place where Jesus grew up in age, wisdom and grace with the love of a mother and father «as was Joseph»: that is a family! This family must be the Church in every church, every house, every religious community, every center of study and prayer.

Pope Francis also reminds us that «the figure of Mary must always be a point of reference for a culture capable of overcoming the barriers that can create division».

This Christmas I would like to remember the «swaddling clothes» with which Mary wrapped the baby Jesus as a sign of fraternal, human love, that the Son of God wanted to experience. May this love enlighten and rejuvenate our life and our theological and Mariological research. Today we must be scholars of the inculturated Marian mystery, yet without love, we would remain only scholars of ancient things and not evangelical witnesses of the living presence of Jesus and Mary.

Dear members of the AOMA, while wishing you a happy Christmas, our Academy reassures you that it is always available to listen to your proposals and to support all your projects.

Warm wishes with a blessing so that you can realize what the Lord inspires you in your hearts.



Message from the President of AOMA

Fr. Denis Kulandaisamy OSM



The Asia Oceania Marian Academy is proud of publishing its first Newsletter before Christmas 2021. This Academy of Asia-Oceania region, which was started in 2000, received official recognition from the part of the Pontifical International Marian Academy in 2017. The origin of this innovative idea towards the Academy was from Sr. Milagros (a Salesian sister from Philippines), who was teaching Mariology at the Pontifical Faculty of Education (Auxilium), Rome. This innovative idea was realized during the PAMI Mariological Congress of 2002 through the collaboration of Sr. Isabell Naumann ISSM, Sr. Celia Chua MIC. After a few years, while still young, God called Sr. Milagros to His Heavenly Abode.

During a meeting of Asia-Oceania Mariologists held in Rome (23-25 November 2017), under the guidance of Fr. Stefano Cecchin, the President of PAMI, the idea of revitalizing the AOMA was taken prime consideration. After a three-day long discussion and orientation, on 27 November 2017, Fr. Denis Kulandaisamy OSM, Sr. Luca Maria Ritsuko Oka SFMI, Sr. Celia Chua MIC, Sr. Isabell Naumann ISSM, Fr. David Fleming SM, Fr. Arokiam John OFM, and Sr. Jincy Kurian Vallipparambil SABS made a request to PAMI's President and the council to formally approve the establishment of the AOMA. From then on, the AOMA has been trying to work on some initiatives – though not many – in order to promote Mariology in Asia Oceania context. Mariological Congresses were organized in Philippines and Taiwan. We, the members of AOMA, owe gratitude towards Fr. Stefano Cecchin, President of PAMI, for his constant guidance, concern and support.

Now the AOMA had decided to start a Newsletter to create a network among the Mariologists of the Asia-Oceanic Region and to make it known to the world. This is an awesome initiative put forward by Sr. Luca Maria Ritsuko Oka SFMI and Fr. Arokiam John OFM. As we thank Fr. Arokiam for serving as Editor of AOMA Newsletter, we heartily congratulate him for having successfully completed his Doctorate in Mariology at the “Marianum” Pontifical Faculty of Theology, Rome. We also congratulate Sr. Isabell Naumann for her new appointment as Member of the Pontifical International Theological Commission. Our congratulations to Sr. Kim Kyoung bee (Mary Michaela), from South Korea, for her service as the Mother General of her Congregation.



Christmas is a time of blessings. The Son of God made man comes to visit us. He is Son of Mother Mary. In the mystery of Incarnation, Mary plays a unique and exceptional role. Mary with Jesus brings us Joy and Peace. With my greetings and warm wishes, I wish you all A Merry Christmas.



Announcement:

Next AOMA Online Conference

Date: Friday, 22 April 2022

Time: 11.00 am – 1.00 pm CET. Please find out your local time.

Theme: Mary and Synodal Church in Asia-Oceania

For more information please contact - 2000aoma@gmail.com



Fr. Arokiam John OFM
Editor of AOMA NEWS



AOMA NEWS: The New Marian Newsletter

The decision to launch the Newsletter of Asia Oceania Marian Academy (AOMA) before Christmas 2021, highlights the connection between the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the history of salvation. It also throws light, that there is a bond between our life of faith and the Christological title *Theotokos*, the Mother of God. It is not only true that the title of the Divine maternity of Mary first refers to Jesus Christ, but it also reminds that His Mother awakens Jesus in those who have forgotten Him and she sparks the joy in believers to celebrate the birth (Christmas) and all the mysteries of Christ with profound renewal and enrichment of their faith in the Triune God and in the Eucharist, the summit of the paschal mystery of Christ.

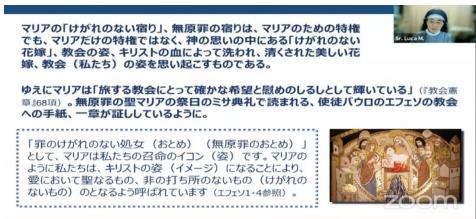
In his Apostolic Letter, *Admirabile Signum*, on the meaning and importance of the Nativity Scene, Pope Francis has recognized the Franciscan origin of the Christmas crèche at Greccio, near Rieti in Italy in the Christmas of 1223 by its founder, Francis of Assisi. The Holy Father also points out that the “Poor man of Assisi” was most probably influenced by his visit to Bethlehem and by «the mosaics in the Roman Basilica of Saint Mary Major depicting the birth of Jesus, close to the place where, according to an ancient tradition, the wooden panels of the manger are preserved» (*Admirabile Signum* 2).

As the Christmas crèche helps to pass on the faith in the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary, AOMA NEWS is envisioned as an aid to highlight Marian and Mariological aspects in Asia and Oceania. We are profoundly grateful to Fr. Stefano Cecchin OFM, the President of PAMI, for his keen interest to nurture Marian-Mariological initiatives in Asia-Oceania, to Fr. Denis Kulandaisamy OSM, the President of AOMA, for his leadership, encouragement and support to take forward AOMA NEWS as one of the regular activities of AOMA, and to Sr. Luca Maria Ritsuko Oka SFMI, the Secretary of AOMA for her zeal to serve AOMA. A note of sincere gratitude to Sr. Sharon Baracho FHIC for creatively coming up with the emblem and the Newsletter Header of AOMA and for her collaboration for this Newsletter. We owe immense gratitude to Fr. Nathaniel Turkey OFM for his generous service as the layout designer of AOMA NEWS. We also extend special thanks to all the contributors of this first edition of AOMA NEWS, and gladly invite not only the specialists in Marian theology but all who are interested in our desire to love and make known the love of Jesus and His Mother by our contribution to AOMA NEWS regularly.

May the synodal journey opened by Pope Francis help us to walk together with Mary, the Mother of Jesus to a new encounter with new opportunities of listening to and sharing with each other as the Spirit guides the people in the multi-cultural and cultural pluralistic contexts of our continents.

Wishing You All A Very Happy Christmas And A Blessed New Year !!!





Sr. Luca Maria, who is in charge of teaching Mariology at the Major Seminary in Fukuoka (Japan), has given the series of lectures titled “Mariology Online Course” in Japanese, together with the volunteering staff since September 2020. The course is held nine times a year and lasts two hours at each time. Around 150 people are at present participating in the course. Also, since May 2020, she has been delivering video lectures titled “Mini Videos of Mary”, monthly via *YouTube*. The aim of these projects is to introduce the true image of Our Lady to as many people as possible.

Yumi Watanabe, who works for Tohoku Gakuin University in Sendai, is expected to give a talk in the fall of 2022 at the Institute for Research in European Culture. The topic will be on her PhD dissertation, “Filippo Lippi’s Apse Fresco at Spoleto Cathedral: Its Iconographical Programme and Patronage.” The audience in general will be the people residing in the area, so it will be a mixture of general introduction to Marian veneration as well on the Marian frescoes in Umbria. She hopes to explain the background connotation of the Immaculate Conception in the *coro* fresco.



The Hidden Paradise of Dolores, Quezon, Philippines National Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows

Sr. Mary Norlina T. Dalumpines OSM

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows is a church located at Dolores, Quezon. It was declared as a national shrine on 15th of June 2017, the patron of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). The Canonical Coronation of Our Lady of Sorrows was held on March 25, 2021. Since the establishment of the Shrine, countless miracles were attributed to Our Lady of Sorrows, attracting both natives and pilgrims finding solace in her bosom, invoking her intercession in dealing with world issues, life's crises, family problems and daily struggles.

Indeed, she is a mother who understands the sorrows and pain of her children. Her tears are expression of perfect union with the agony of God's people. Every sword that pierced her heart is the same piercing sword that struck her children's heart through countless crosses and struggles encountered. The truth is discovered by the one who seeks Jesus through Mary. In Mary's heart, lies the hidden treasure; the paradise that anyone longed for - **a blissful life with God!**

News from South Korea

The Korean Catholic Church celebrated a Jubilee (2020.11.29~2021.11.27) commemorating bicentenary celebration for the birth of St. Andrew Kim Dae-geon (1821-1846), first Korean priest and martyr. He was beheaded in Seoul on September 16th 1846, during the period of persecutions launched by the Joseon dynasty. Saint Andrew is one of the 103 Korean martyrs canonized on 6th May 1984 by St. John Paul II. During this Jubilee, all the faithful prayed for the unification of the Korean peninsula and tried to get an indulgence offered by Pope Francis. (On May 13th 2021, we prayed to Our Lady of Fatima in Fatima Peace Shrine located near DMZ for the unity of Korean people).



Merry Christmas! The baby Jesus is the one who can open our hearts illumined by our faith, sustained by our patient waiting in hope, and learning how to relate to one another in genuine love that he learned from his Mother Mary. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus we wish His Joy and Hope may fill the entire world, our communities, and ministries, especially those who suffer from Covid-19. We ask a great love and humility, pray for us to contemplate the mystery of Incarnation in our life. **Happy New Year!**

Promoting Evangelization and Marian aspect in Thailand

Mother Mary is the Star of Evangelization. Our Lady plays a role in the life of missionaries to proclaim the birth of Christ. Mother Mary is a mediator for binding humanity to God. Mother Mary conceived and gave birth to Jesus by the Holy Spirit, the Church imitates her by giving birth to new Christians through Baptism. Let us put our efforts in evangelization and proclaim the Gospel to people of different faiths, especially in Thailand, with a very small Catholic population. We often focus our attention on the Church; to give pastoral care for a very small group of Catholics, but not on the Kingdom of God which is very vast. The Kingdom that includes people of all nations and faiths living around our churches and in our schools. They are also children of God and are beloved to our Blessed Mother Mary.

Fr. Anuch Joseph, a Priest of Bangkok Diocese



MARY, "TUAN MA", QUEEN OF LARANTUKA

(Marian Devotion & Identity in Eastern Indonesian Archipelago)

The people of Larantuka, in East Flores Indonesia has taken as their «spiritual Mother», the Queen who always protects and cares for them. The local people call her «Tuan Ma» (*Mater Dolorosa*). The «Semana Santa» devotion to Mary plays a central part within the Larantuka community.

Larantuka is a small town on the island of Flores in the eastern Trian archipelago. Today, Larantuka is the capital of East Flores Regency. During the period of Evangelization, the Dominican missionaries brought in Faith amongst the people. Larantuka has been the first Catholic Center of the Dominican missionaries in 1556 during the Portuguese colonization. Barbara Watson Andaya, a professor in the Asian Studies Program at the University of Hawaii and former Director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies says: «Larantuka has a unique reputation in Indonesia because the local culture, religious beliefs and language ... reflect a dynamic interaction among indigenous Lamaholot traditions, Malay trading connections, and the Portuguese heritage».

A unique traditional celebration is carried out by the people in Larantuka on Good Friday. The faithful have a procession of the statue «Tuan Ma» around the city. This tradition started 500 years ago through the Portuguese Dominican missionaries. Bernard Tukan, a local culturalist says that the Marian statue occupy a central place in their religious experience which is made visible in the celebration of the «Semana Santa». This event is considered as a fruitful moment to contemplate the Passion of Christ and to honor His Mother, Mary.

Fr. Fidelis Wotan SMM





Uniqueness of Our Lady of Velankanni

“Henceforth all generation will call me blessed” (Lk 1:48)



Fr. Alex Suresh SDB

Our Lady of Velankanni is also known as Our Lady of Good Health. As the name suggests, Mother Mary has been portrayed or appeared to number of people and have given good health, thus she has been titled as Our Lady of Velankanni. One of the main uniqueness of this church is that People of all faith and language flock here. To enumerate some of the unique way our Mother appeared and did miracles are enlisted below. The first and second apparition that seems to have taken place according to the tradition (crippled boy and milk delivery lad) are just simple events how Our Lady works wonders to the people who are in dire need and how the name of God has to be proclaimed through all the earth.

The uniqueness of Our Lady of Velankanni is spelt out in the museum that has been erected years back which portrays a number of miracles Our Lady has done through her son Jesus. As per the statistics about 50,000 people visit this museum every day.

Tsunami struck the shrine of Velankanni in the year 2004 and with Mother Mary’s protection nothing happened to the people who were inside this beautiful and miraculous Church of Our Lady. Velankanni Church is added to Delhi government’s free pilgrimage scheme for senior citizens. Let’s pray to Our Lady of Good Health during this pandemic that she may work wonders through and with her son Jesus Christ.

EARTHBAG GROTTO FOR THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The people of Tokou village on the island of Ovalau in the Fiji Islands got together to build an earth-bag grotto for the Blessed Virgin Mary. The building is made out of compressed earth following earthbag architecture. The grotto project is pioneering for motivating and training the villagers in building safe, durable, low cost and eco-friendly housing. Earthbag building is also hurricane-proof, fire-proof, and have withstood earthquakes in some places of the world. Fiji is prone to hurricanes and earthbag building can be the solution for rural and poor communities.

The grotto will house Our Lady of Victories, donated by a Carmelite nun in New Zealand, who is originally from the village. The grotto directly faces east towards the rising sun, greeting the first rays of the dawn. The morning star is a title given to Mary or *I Vola Siga* in the local language. The *I Vola Siga* the morning star announces the coming of the day and is well known by seafarers and fishermen of the village. Mary the morning star appears at the horizon of Hope before the birth of her son, the rising sun of Salvation. With the grotto now in place, the villagers feel assured and confident of protection and intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary from any natural disasters and misfortunes.

Fr. Donato Kivi SM





OUR LADY OF LAVANG IN THE VIETNAMESE HEART

Sr. M. Anna Le Thi An Binh FMI

The shrine of Our Lady of La Vang was built in memory of the apparition of the Virgin and Child, which took place over two centuries ago, in 1798 at the “Cây Lá Vằng” forest (The trees of La Vang), in the province of Quảng Trị (today the territory of the archdiocese of Hue). A statue of the Virgin and Child, dressed in traditional Vietnamese clothes, stands on a stone and concrete sculpture in the form of a copse of trees.

At the end of the 18th century, an edict by Emperor Cảnh Thịnh banned Catholicism from Vietnam, initiating a period of fierce persecution. The Virgin Mary appeared to a group of Vietnamese Catholics who had fled to the forest. Our Lady assured them of comfort and the end of the persecution, indicating a herb ("La Vang") to treat diseases.

The history of La Vang is intertwined with that of the country and the Church of Vietnam. The church built on the site of the apparition of the Virgin was destroyed during period of persecution (1830-1885). At the end of the 19th century a new chapel arose, to which Pope John XXIII conferred the title of minor basilica (1961). In 1998, Pope John Paul II expressed the desire that on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the apparition of the Virgin, the sanctuary could be rebuilt. The devotion to Mother Mary is expressed in a rich and diverse manner according to the cultural traditions of the Vietnamese people such as offering flowers, procession and praying the rosary. No matter where or what we do, Our Lady of Lavang will forever be alive in the hearts of Vietnamese people. During this pandemic, we are asking Our Lady for help and protection. For Our Lady of La Vang represents hope, faith and promise to Vietnamese Catholics around the world.

Miraculous Picture of Our Lady in Australia

There is a miraculous picture of Our Lady of Good Counsel at the Monastery of Newnorcia in Western Australia. This painting was given to the Benedictine in 1845 by Saint Vincent Pallotti when they were leaving Rome to start missions in Western Australia. In December 1847 a terrible bushfire was raging and threatened to destroy the monastery. The sacred image was placed against the raging fire, the wind blew in the opposite direction carrying the flames away from the mission where everything was already burned black. The fire soon died away. The native people who witnessed were amazed. On another occasion the mourners in a funeral procession were in danger of bush fires that hemmed them on all sides. Dom Salvador seeing this at a distance got the picture from the church and ran with it towards the flaming fire and prayed to Our Lady to save the people. The wind changed its direction and the people were out of danger. The devotion to Our Lady of Good Counsel increased since then and now thousands visit this Shrine from all over the world touched by this sacred picturesque of the Benedictine monastery. Currently, there are many Catholic Schools and parishes in Australia which are titled with the name of our Lady of Good Counsel and the powerful image inspire all to trust in her and pray constantly for healing protection and to watch over during this time of pandemic and natural disasters such as floods and bushfires.



Sr. Zita Mary Joseph OSM



Our Lady Shedding Blood in Tears (Loihkam)

Myanmar (also known as Burma) is known for the faith of its people and for the continuous religious vocations. The Blessed Virgin Mary has contributed to the Catholic faith of people in extraordinary ways in the nations' sixteen Dioceses. Recently, that is, on 7th October 2016 a Marian miracle is said to have occurred at Christ the King Church in Loihkam (Lashio) North Shan State of Myanmar. While two religious Sisters and boarding students were reciting the Rosary around 6 pm, they saw a miracle and were amazed. First, it was seen by the students so they were eager to see more closely and touch the statue of Our Lady, but only Sister Catherine Paing (Institute of the Sisters of Reparation) touched the blood flowing from the eyes of Our Lady and showed her community sisters. They trembled, cried aloud and asked pardon for their sins. Then they spread this holy "miracle" to the villagers. Since the Parish priest was out due to the annual retreat in the Diocese, parish leaders and all the villagers gathered together and prayed the rosary in tears all through the night.

At that time, the people in Shan State were cruelly affected by civil war and they felt that through this miracle Mother Mary was with them in their sorrows. Later, they built a beautiful grotto in that place and many believers and even non-believers came to pay homage to Our Lady. On 16th November 2016 the local Bishop Philip Za Hawng offered Mass with many faithful and blessed the Marian grotto. On that same day, the Bishop declared this place as the new Marian pilgrimage centre.

Sr. Sheila Kai Mary OSM

About AOMA NEWSLETTER

AOMA NEWS is the online and offline Newsletter of the members of the Asia Oceania Marian Academy spread all over the world. It is published twice a year in July and December.

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