

Father K. Maria Arulappan

Greetings and good wishes from Fr. K. Maria Arulappan. Here, I wish to give you a little explanation about the church we have built here in Serchhip, India in honor of our Blessed Mother. What I give is a brief history of it.

Serchhip parish was erected in the year 1976. There was a small chapel built in 1972 with wood and asbestos sheets. Over the years this little chapel was subject to many hostile elements like white ants, storms and hailstones. So the church was slowly moving towards disintegration. At last in 1989, there was a severe cyclonic storm which completely destroyed the church. Since then we were begging for funds for a new concrete church. At last in 1993, MISSIO responded to our cry. So we got partial help. But the price of things shot up so high that we could not reach anywhere.

The construction work was started on July 17, 1992 and completed on Dec. 10, 1994. During this time we had to undergo so many hurdles. But we experienced the hand of God all through and the concrete intervention of our Blessed Mother.

First of all we wanted a small church to be built. But actually we laid foundation for a bigger church. This was in view of the growth in the Catholic population. In the same year we got over 100 new members to the church. Then as we proceeded with the works, we found that things were going out of control, as if someone else was guiding the whole affair. Accordingly at every stage I was getting dreams of the building and how to go ahead. So I used to tell the mason how to do it. There was no drawn plan. As it was coming to me it was communicated to the mason. All what we wanted was that this church should become a place of worship and a meeting place of God and His people.

Accordingly, the front portion of what you see (in the photo of the church), I myself did not imagine that it would be this way. It appeared to me in the dream this way. People when they look at it they get so many inspirations and explanations. It is Our Lady of Assumption Church. So you see the clouds below the statue of our Lady.

Rainbow: You see a rainbow above the statue of our Lady. What does it signify? In the Bible we see God using the rainbow



as a sign of a covenant that He made with Noah. (Gen. 9:12-17) The covenant is Yaweh's promise that He will not again reduce the world to chaos (by a flood), even for the sins of man. Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant. She is the Mother of the Saviour and thus mother of all creation. She is the woman mentioned in the book of Genesis. (Gen. 3:15) God promised enmity between her and Satan. In these final days of Satan she stands as a sign of hope to all Christians. The rainbow is the symbol of hope. It reminds everyone of the role of Mary in salvation history. So we can say that the rainbow is God's presence and His covenant with mankind.

Side Pillars: They represent the two great pillars of the Church upon which the church is fastened. They are the Eucharist and Mary. This was the vision that St. John Bosco received in the year 1864. He saw a big ship being tossed by a storm in the ocean. The pope and the cardinal were standing on the ship. Suddenly there appeared many small boats in the ocean. They started attacking the ship and the pope from the small boats. The pope received a bullet and he fell down, but did not die. He got up, and the war continued. At last the pope received another bullet and he died. Suddenly two great pillars appeared in the ship and chains came out of the pillars and tied the ship. The ocean became calm and the small boats disappeared. The Eucharist appeared on one pillar and on the other Our Blessed Mother as Mary Help of Christians. The message was that the Church will be saved only by the Eucharist and Our Blessed Mother. We did not plan this, but it came to be that way.

The decorations there symbolize the Trinity and the cup of Salvation. You will see the Angels adoring. This shows the Eucharistic presence in the church.



Coming below you see the **Main Door**. It is of two parts carved on teak wood. On one side Mary's image is carved. On the other side the Eucharist is carved. This again symbolizes St. John Bosco's vision.

Specialty of the main door: This was carved by a Hindu, named Ganesan. I did not give any design. I asked my brother to get a door made in South

India. He told his factory owner, who has got a lot of influence in this field. He is also a Hindu. It was he who was inspired to select this model and get the door made in just 9 days, which is a record. We were expecting a plain door. But when the parcel was opened, we could just not believe our eyes.

Steps: The writings that you see in the steps is Ten Commandments. When we started the work, I wanted ten steps. People should climb ten steps to stand before the Lord or to come to His presence. But I did not know then why ten steps. Later it was revealed to

me by the Mother that they represent the ten commandments of God. One has to obey them to be worthy to stand before the Lord. Let us now get into the church.

Altar: You see the lamb of sacrifice on fire. Christ is the true Lamb of Sacrifice Who is sacrificed every day on this altar. This symbol helps the Protestants to understand the Holy Mass better.



Sanctuary: Sacred Heart of Jesus, with the Crucifix in the center and the Tabernacle at the right side of the Heart, where the blood drips from the wound to the Tabernacle.



When I was thinking and praying for a model for the sanctuary, the Sacred Heart bleeding into the Tabernacle was coming to my mind and in my dreams. So I was looking for some one to make it. I could not find one. So I wanted to change the model. But I could not do that. At last I found one old artist. I did not tell him anything about the plan in my mind. I just asked him to make a design for the sanctuary. He made four designs. But nothing could please me. So one day as he was sleeping at about 3:00 a.m. he had a dream and he saw a heart bleeding. So he got up and drew his dream and showed me in the morning. To my surprise, it was the same as what I too saw. So I told him to work on it.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Arulappan K. Maria - PARISH PRIEST

Fr. K. Maria Arulappan, P.P.