



2021 IACA Newsletter

PART 1

24th Annual Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni

On behalf of the Indian American Catholic Association (IACA), we invite you to join us at the 24th Annual Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni. This year, our Pilgrimage will be held on Saturday, September 11, 2021, at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C. We are honored to have Most Reverend Mario E. Dorsonville, Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of Washington D.C. as the main celebrant of the Mass.

As in the past, we will gather at the Basilica to show our love and devotion for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His Mother, our loving Mother Mary. This beautiful and solemn event starts in the Upper Church with recitation of the rosary, litany, procession, liturgical dance and culminates with Holy Mass; followed by the blessing and dedication of the children and novena in the Crypt Church. Priests will be available from 12.30 PM to 1.30 PM in the Upper Church to hear confessions for those interested.

The Program highlights for September 11, 2021, are as follows:

- 12:30 PM - Confessions – Upper Church
- 1:00 PM – Rosary – Upper Church
- 1:40 PM – Procession – Upper Church
- 2:00 PM – Holy Mass – Upper Church
- 3:30 PM – Blessing of Children – Crypt Church
- 4:00 PM – Novena to Our Lady of Vailankanni – Crypt Church
- 5:00 PM – Community Reception – Caldwell Hall (Catholic University of America)

Since the inauguration of the Oratory in 1997, our Pilgrimage attracts devotees from various parts of the country, especially the East Coast. This is evidence of Our Lady's healing power and the success of IACA's activities, commitment, and increased visibility over the past 25 years. IACA is an umbrella organization representing several Catholic Communities from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and its main mission is to help South Asian Catholics to gather in the name of the Lord to share their common spiritual heritage and to seek the intercession of Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni for all their needs.

In this COVID-19 pandemic year, the Pilgrimage is even more meaningful because the Holy Father has marked the year 2020-2021 as the year dedicated to St. Joseph. Thus, we will get to celebrate the occasion in thanksgiving to our Blessed Mother and the Holy Family.

Planning for the 25th Anniversary Pilgrimage to be held on September 10, 2022 is underway.

PART 2

Message from the IACA President

Dear IACA Friends,

Greetings! I trust this comes to you at a time of peace and hope that you and your loved ones are safe and well by the grace of the Almighty.

I am pleased to announce that we are getting ready to host our 24th Annual Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni on Saturday, September 11, 2021. This event will be the first, post-pandemic Pilgrimage at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington DC after many months of shutdowns and social distancing. Therefore, the Shrine is expecting a large number of devotees from our member communities to participate in the Pilgrimage. The theme for the 24th Annual Pilgrimage is “Thanksgiving”. I invite each one of you to join us with your family to offer our thanks, seek our Blessed Mother’s intercessions, and make this year’s Annual Pilgrimage a memorable one.

During the past 17 months, despite our best intentions, we could not meet in person and IACA’s usual activities and events were either scaled back or had to be canceled. However, as we pondered and continued to explore opportunities, our young-at-heart and enthusiastic leaders came up with creative ideas to do events and programs inexpensively via the Email, Zoom, and YouTube platforms. I take this opportunity to thank each one of our volunteers who gave their time and talents cheerfully.

This Newsletter provides an overview of the challenges we overcame and how we successfully utilized the virtual framework over the past seven months to gather in the name of our Lord to pray for each other. Interestingly, while we are now focused on in-person events, virtual events are gradually becoming a new normal. We welcome your ideas and suggestions to help us do both the in-person and virtual programs in the future.

IACA has been blessed to conduct the annual Pilgrimages and other programs or support other charitable initiatives every year solely through the services of our volunteers and generous financial donations from our supporters. The need to do what IACA was established for more than 25 years ago is being felt more now than ever before. I ask you to help us by volunteering your time and talent and please make a financial donation.

May God bless you all and I look forward to seeing you at the 24th Annual Pilgrimage on Saturday, September 11, 2021

Agnelo Gonsalves
President, IACA

DEVOTION TO OUR LADY OF GOOD HEALTH VAILANKANNI AT THE BASILICA



- Transitioned to in-person church attendance beginning from August 7, 2021
- When: First Saturday of every month
- Time: Starts at 4:30 PM
- Program: Rosary, Holy Mass, and Novena to Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni
- Location: Crypt Church, Lower Level, Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC.

PART 3 **Events held during 2021 (till date)**

IACA is a non-profit charitable organization registered in the Nation's capital supporting religious and charitable causes important to our communities. During the past year IACA was actively involved in the following events:

1. **Remembering the Year 2020 and our 23rd Annual Pilgrimage** - The planning for the 23rd Pilgrimage (to be held in 2020) began early in 2019. A group of individuals comprising of the IACA President, John Whittle, Executive Committee members and leaders from the Bangladesh community met with the Chittagong, Bangladesh Archbishop Moses D'Costa in June 2019 in Silver Spring, MD to invite him to be the main celebrant at the 23rd Annual Pilgrimage on September 12, 2020. Archbishop Moses D'Costa accepted the invitation, and the Bangla Community began preparing for and was looking forward to celebrating the year 2020 pilgrimage with their own Archbishop with pride and festivities. However, soon after the onset of Covid-19 across the globe, not only was travel out of Bangladesh impossible, but Archbishop Moses D'Costa also became a victim of the virus and passed away on July 13, 2020. Thus, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and local social distancing mandates, the 23rd Annual Pilgrimage on September 12, 2020, was scaled back and only 50 persons were allowed in the Shrine. Msgr. Walter Rossi was the main celebrant; he remembered and prayed for Archbishop Moses D'Costa.

2. **Online Zoom Masses** – Since the National Shrine was closed due to cautionary health mandates, IACA utilized Zoom to hold monthly Rosary, Mass, Novena, and Executive Committee meetings. The first of such events was held on January 23, 2021, from 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM under the leadership of Carol Figueira and Faustina Archer and the guidance of Rev. Chris Arockiaraj. PowerPoint slides were provided by Sheryl Nazareth and the slide display was managed on Zoom by Andreas H. Gomez and Johnlee Figueira.
3. **St. Joseph’s Feast Day celebrations** – IACA celebrated two feast days of St. Joseph - on March 19, 2021, and May 1, 2021, via Zoom. These included Holy Mass followed by Novena and Litany to St. Joseph.



4. **33-Day Program of Consecration to St. Joseph** to mark the importance of dedicating this Year 2020-2021 to St. Joseph. A small group of individuals named “*Joseph’s Helpers*” led by Sheryl Nazareth was tasked to organize a program of 33 days of consecration to St. Joseph. The group prepared prayers and meditations to St. Joseph and sent them via Email and Facebook posts to all participants, starting from May 03, 2021 and ending on July 16, 2021.

Consecration to St. Joseph was a process to learn more about this saint and the head of the Holy Family household in a lively and engaged manner. This Consecration had two parts: first, the devotion to St. Joseph through prayer and meditation; second, to learn the virtues of this saint as portrayed in the scripture and imitate these virtues and attributes in our daily lives. The fruit of this consecration was to develop a closer relationship with St. Joseph, to understand his role in God’s Plan for our salvation, and to have a greater faith in the Divine Providence of God.

5. **Asian & Pacific Island Pilgrimage** - This year, as in years past, IACA members actively assisted in organizing and participating in the 18th Annual Asian and Pacific Island Catholics Marian Pilgrimage on May 1, 2021, at St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church in Silver Spring, MD. Due to COVID-19 safety measures, the pilgrimage this year was held on a smaller scale, with about 120 participants at the church wearing masks and sitting socially distanced in alternate church pews. The pilgrimage’s Call to Prayer and Mass were also livestreamed, with participants joining in from all over the United States, and also from the Philippines! IACA’s Jennifer Gonsalves read the Intercessions, while Raymond Arul, Joy Joseph, Savio Raymond, and Mariaselvam Chinnappan led one decade of the rosary in Tamil. It was the very first time the Pilgrimage was not held at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, where the Call to Prayer and liturgical dances are very colorful.
6. **Mothers’ Day Pilgrimage** – IACA organized the annual Mothers’ Day Pilgrimage on May 16, 2021, at the National Shrine of the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in Emmitsburg, MD. This event included meditation at the Lourdes Grotto, Rosary in the Rosary Lane and Holy Mass at the St. Mary’s Chapel. This was followed by a luncheon/picnic attended by more than 30 individuals at the nearby Cunningham Falls State Park. Admission to the picnic was free. Food and drinks were provided by Gabriel Francis and Philip Furtado provided onsite cooking and

chai. Next year, the Mother's Day Pilgrimage in Emmitsburg, MD is tentatively scheduled for May 15, 2022.

7. **Online Nine days of Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succor from June 18, 2021 to June 26, 2021, followed by the Feast Day celebration** on Sunday June 27, 2021, via Zoom. The Novena service was organized by Carol Figueira and Novena prayers were led by Faustina Archer.
8. **Online Prayers and Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succor** are organized every Wednesday from 7:45 PM to 8:45 PM, via Zoom. This ongoing online Prayers and Novena service was initiated and organized by Robert Nathan; the Zoom service is conducted by Carol Figueira and the prayers are led by Faustina Archer. Recurring Zoom Meeting link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81103986742> , Meeting ID: 811 0398 6742
9. We also plan to zoom the Daily **Nine days of Novena to Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni from the Shrine in Vailankanni, Chennai** beginning on August 30, 2021, from 7.45 Pm to 8.45 PM. Recurring Zoom Meeting link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81103986742> Meeting ID: 811 0398 6742



10. **First Indian Christian Day** – The first (virtual) Indian Christian Day was held on July 3, 2021, to celebrate nearly 2000 years of Christianity in India and the feast of Saint Thomas the Apostle, often regarded as the Patron Saint of India. The theme of the event highlighted the unique purpose and virtue deeply rooted in the Christian faith – that is to “Love,

Serve and Celebrate”. The event was designed to stress that Christianity is not a foreign religion in India, and in fact many Christians in Tamil Nadu and Kerala are called Saint Thomas Christians. The Catholic Church joined other Christian denominations in India in celebrating Indian Christian Day (*Yeshu Bhakti Divas*) and honoring Saint Thomas who came to India in 52 AD and brought the message of Jesus. It is historically accepted that Saint Thomas was martyred near Chennai, in Tamil Nadu in 72 AD.

During the IACA's monthly first Saturday Zoom Mass that day, Rev. Chris Arockiaraj did a beautiful PowerPoint presentation explaining that this is a grass-roots initiative bringing together Christians from various churches not just in India but in the Indian diaspora as well. He encouraged us to celebrate our catholic faith by serving our community.

IACA and the Indian diaspora experienced genuine and touching connection to the event as the principal catholic members of the organizing team comprised of Cardinals and Archbishops from India who were the main celebrants at our annual Pilgrimages at the National Shrine in Washington DC within the past eight years. His Eminence Cardinal Oswald Gracias gave the inaugural invocation and message.

11. **Charity works** – This year, as in every year for over 15 years, IACA continued the tradition of charitable giving. One of the initiatives is the donation of non-perishable items to “Gift of Peace” – a nursing home in Washington, DC run by the Missionaries of Charity. Due to COVID-19 safety restrictions this year, IACA members could not personally volunteer at the nursing home, and at the same time, the need for assistance was much greater. In response to the need, Rita Nathan – Chair of the Charity Committee successfully organized three fund drives and shopping expeditions for very hard to find cleaning supplies and non-perishable items like canned food and cereal, and arranged for deliveries to the nursing home. The nuns were very appreciative of our donations and IACA will continue this wonderful tradition of helping those less fortunate. IACA thanks Rita Nathan, her band of volunteers, and all those who donated generously to this worthy cause.

12. **Rev. Chris Arockiaraj, P.S.S. - 25th Anniversary Felicitation** - Rev. Chris Arockiaraj has been an invaluable source of support and guidance to IACA since he joined the Theological College in 2017. In 2019, Rev. Arockiaraj invited IACA to join in the celebration of the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, to be hosted by the Society of Saint Sulpice, in April of 2020. In lieu of any celebratory gifts to him personally, Rev. Arockiaraj requested support for a Water Wells project at the St. Anthony Seminary run by the Sulpicians in Malawi, in southeastern Africa. Due to the pandemic, the felicitation was postponed to April 12, 2021 to be held in Washington, DC.

IACA raised money for the Wells Project and handed over a donation of \$5,001 to the Superior of the Sulpicians Society at the event. Another IACA member organization donated a similar amount to the Superior at the event. IACA was represented by seven Executive Committee members who joined Rev. Arockiaraj (who was the main celebrant) and over 20 concelebrants at the Mass, followed by a felicitation dinner. Robert Nathan and Agnelo Gonsalves spoke at the occasion to express our gratitude for the guidance and support of Rev. Arockiaraj.

Rev. Arockiaraj is currently the Vice-Rector and Director of Pastoral Formation at Theological College in Washington, DC. He is also a Lecturer in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at Catholic University and Coordinator of the Basic Supervised Ministry Program at Catholic University. Despite his busy schedule and the passing away of both his parents earlier this year, Rev. Arockiaraj has always been available to assist IACA during these challenging times. He was recently nominated by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as Spiritual Director for IACA, and IACA plans to appoint him IACA’s Spiritual Director.

13. **Statue of Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni at the Lourdes Grotto in Emmitsburg, MD** - IACA is actively pursuing efforts to install a statute of Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni at the National Shrine Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in Emmitsburg, Maryland. After a considerable delay due the pandemic, the Grotto management has assigned a spot for Our Lady’s statue in the Corpus Christi Lane at the Grotto Shrine. IACA is now looking forward to secure an agreement with the Grotto Shrine to restart our fund-raising efforts. We are seeing sustained support for this initiative from the IACA community, and the statue designated money raised so far is \$34,000.

14. IACA's website and social media presence – IACA's website (<http://www.iacausa.org/>) has been managed by Bob Nathan with the active assistance of Jefreena Millan. We request you to check out our social media presence on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IACAUSA/> To be added to IACA's **WhatsApp** Group, please contact Sheryl Nazareth at sherylnaz1021@gmail.com

OBITUARY

In Memory of Pushparajan Arokiaswamy

The late Mr. Pushparajan Arokiaswamy was IACA's President from 2003 to 2004. Besides his other work for IACA over the years, he was the Chair of the Pilgrimage Committee and one of the main contacts with the Basilica of the National Shrine, ever since the installation of the Oratory in 1997. He handled this task very effectively till the last Pilgrimage in 2020. His work was highlighted and remembered by Rev. Michael Weston in a joint meeting with the Shrine management in early August this year, at which time everyone present prayed for the repose of his soul. IACA is very grateful to Pushparajan Arokiaswamy for his long years of dedication and service and may he be blessed with eternal peace and happiness in Heaven. His cheering attitude and happy disposition will be sorely missed, and on behalf of all the IACA members we convey our deepest sympathies to his wife Pauline and their children Priya and Arun.

PART 4 Appeal For Donations

Dear IACA Supporter,

IACA is a charitable, non-profit organization run by volunteers and all costs including the cost for holding the annual Pilgrimage are covered by the generous donations from people like you. We are blessed to have hundreds of Catholics of South Asian origin from all over the country participate in the Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni.

Besides paying stipends to the main celebrant, the concelebrants, and Basilica staff, IACA caters a reception for the pilgrims and pays for the food, hall rental and insurance, in addition to several other miscellaneous expenses. We also pay stipends to the priests who celebrate the monthly Novena Masses at the Shrine and other Masses, via Zoom.

IACA's operating costs are covered only by your generous donations and the annual membership fees. To run this Association, it takes many hands and financial help. We rely on your support both as a volunteer and as a donor. Please be generous and visit our website (www.iacausa.org) to donate

by using your credit card. You could also make your contribution in person at the Caldwell Hall when you come for the reception following the Pilgrimage at our membership/donation desk.

Thank you for your generous contribution and please be assured that your money will be put to very good use. All donations are tax deductible as allowed by law. If you have a prayer request, please do mention it at our Prayer Request tab on our website (www.iacausa.org) and we will add it to the special intentions during our monthly Mass at the Crypt Church. God bless you for your generosity.

- Website: <http://www.iacausa.org/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IACAUSA/>
- WhatsApp Group: Contact Sheryl at sherylnaz1021@gmail.com
- Donation link: <http://www.iacausa.org/donate/> or mail your check to:
Indian American Catholic Association
C/O John Whittle
2211 Stanley Ave
Rockville, MD 20851

PART 5

Outlook For The Future

1. **IACA Membership:** We request you to consider becoming a member of IACA.
 - IACA is an umbrella organization representing the members of immigrant Catholic communities of the Indian Subcontinent settled in USA. Member Communities comprise Tamilian, Keralite, Bangladeshi, Bengali, Goan, Mangalorean, East Indian, Anglo-Indian, Andhrite, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan Catholic communities who are signatories to the original organizing documents of IACA.
 - Our organization promotes religious devotions practiced in South Asia, in communion with the church in the U.S.
 - IACA does charity work both within the U.S. and overseas, in collaboration with Catholic Charities USA (the overseas charitable arm of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops) and other Organizations.
 - The youth and young adult members of IACA are active in evangelization through community and charity work.
 - IACA collaborates with Asian and Pacific Islander communities on a variety of policy and social justice issues in coordination with the USCCB, Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Catholic Church.
 - **Please fill in the membership/volunteer form and be a part of a rewarding spiritual journey by joining IACA**
 - Membership link: <http://www.iacausa.org/become-a-member/>
 - Volunteer link: <http://www.iacausa.org/become-a-member/>

2. **Upcoming Events:**

- Preparation for the Silver Jubilee (25th Anniversary) of the inauguration of the Oratory of Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, to be held on September 10, 2022.
- Actively assist the Executive Committee to engage with the Emmitsburg, Maryland Grotto Shrine and Diocese and help to raise additional funds to support the installation of the Vailankanni Statue at the Emmitsburg Shrine. A retreat at the Shrine is being planned in the near future.
- We will soon be sharing more details about our future events such as **IACA Sports Day, Retreat in Emmitsburg, Emmitsburg Project update, 2021 Christmas Party, and the 25th Anniversary Pilgrimage program, and other New Year 2022 programs, Stay tuned!**



Thank you and we wish you the blessings of Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni.
