



Our Lady of La Vang Shrine, Testament to the Journey of the Vietnamese-American People, to Be Unveiled at Christ Cathedral on July 17

Description

Garden Grove, Calif., (July 7, 2021) — On the second anniversary of Christ Cathedral's dedication as the Catholic cathedral of the Diocese of Orange, the Most Rev. Kevin Vann, Bishop of Orange, and Fr. Christopher Smith, Rector and Episcopal Vicar of Christ Cathedral, will be unveiling a new shrine on July 17 that serves as a testament to the remarkable journey of the Vietnamese-American people — from war and persecution to a new reality where faith and community are vibrant and ascendant.

The centerpiece of the Our Lady of La Vang Shrine is a statue of the Virgin Mary as she is believed to have appeared before a group of persecuted Vietnamese Catholics in 1798. During that historic Marian apparition, which took place in a remote rainforest region in Vietnam, the Blessed Mother offered the desperate parishioners hope and guidance. In the centuries since, Our Lady of La Vang, as the apparition has since been named, has represented hope, faith and promise to Vietnamese Catholics around the world.

The July 17 Solemn Blessing Day is open to the public. Between 5,000 to 8,000 of the faithful are expected to attend. A special invite-only Media Day will be July 14.

"This shrine to Our Lady of La Vang is not only another example of how beauty draws to God, but it is a testimony to the faith of our Vietnamese brothers and sisters who have contributed so much to the life of our parishes here in Orange County, and which then points us all to the Mother of God and her protection," said Bishop Kevin Vann.

The shrine represents both that historic apparition and honors the important contributions of the Vietnamese-Catholic diaspora in Orange County, which is home to the world's largest population of Vietnamese outside of Vietnam. An estimated 100,000 Vietnamese Catholics live in the county. "

The Vietnamese community in Orange County and I are very excited to have this shrine of Our Lady of La Vang to be solemnly blessed," said Bishop Thanh Thai Nguyen. "Remembering the blessings received from her intercessions, we desire to honor her with a special place to express our deep appreciation to her past accompaniment and to petition her to continue journeying with us in our

pilgrimage of life. Our hearts are filled with joy and gratitude as we look forward to seeing Our Lady of La Vang here on our beautiful Christ Cathedral campus.”

Weighing an estimated 16,000 pounds, the 12-foot-tall statue was carved from white marble extracted from a quarry in Carrara, Italy. It took one and a half years to sculpt. More than 5,000 donors — many giving small amounts — have contributed to the \$12.6-million shrine, located in the northeast corner of the Christ Cathedral campus.

Standing on a cloud, Mary is depicted wearing a traditional Vietnamese áo dài dress and khăn rằn hat. She has a Eurasian face and holds the Baby Jesus. Behind her are three supporting poles that hold up the canopy-like structure, which itself symbolizes the rainforest setting of the 1798 Marian apparition. The poles resemble the three banyan trees that were behind the Virgin Mary during the apparition.

The shrine also contains donor names and the names of 117 Catholics who were martyred for their religious beliefs in Vietnam. The names detail how and when each person died.

The shrine will be the primary draw of Christ Cathedral’s planned Marian Court, where the Diocese of Orange intends to install other shrines honoring the Virgin Mary.

In addition to the Blessed Mother statue, the Our Lady of La Vang Shrine will contain rosary gardens, which are still under construction. A basalt medallion around the statue will also be added, as will a waterfall feature by the martyr wall.

Aaron Torrence of Culver City-based Torrence Architects is the project’s architect of record, and Trần Trung of Global Solution Development is the design architect.

“The project touches many people in different ways — the volunteers, the donors, the faithful, the local media, the builders,” said Elysabeth Nguyen, project manager for the Our Lady of La Vang Diocesan committee. “This shrine is the result of the faithful and the community coming together. I was fortunate to witness it and grow with it. I am eternally thankful to be part of the journey for the last five years and I look forward to seeing many others visit and make it part of their journey of faith.”

The shrine, modern in design like Christ Cathedral in front of it, features an alpha-shaped ribbon of stainless steel panels under a glass-paned roof. Photos and videos are available at www.christcathedralcalifornia.org/ollvshrine.

About the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange

With 1.3 million Catholics, 57 parishes, five Catholic Centers, and 36 schools, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange is one of the largest, most diverse faith communities in the United States. The Diocese empowers Catholics across Orange County to have an active life of faith that is integrated and woven into the fabric of their daily lives through the community and sacramental life of the Church. Under the leadership of Bishop Kevin Vann, the Diocese works to establish and support dynamic, vibrant parishes and schools, and welcome all to live the Gospel with faith, joy, charity and unity. Christ Cathedral, the spiritual home of the Diocese, was dedicated in July 2019. Learn more about the Diocese of Orange at www.rcbo.org

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Date Created

July 7, 2021