



Leaving our slippers outside, we stepped into the sacred Madhu Shrine. There is a sense of serenity here. At the centre, devotees kneeled in prayer were quietly making their way towards the altar, across the length of the Church to where the revered statue of Our Lady is placed. Some, however, chose to offer their prayers at the pew at the back. It is not for us, the visitors, to fathom their silent pleas or offers of thanks to the Heavenly Mother. Yet, for the believers of the faith, the miraculous Statue of Our Lady of Madhu, has for years, offered solace, refuge and answers.

Words Madhushala Senaratne Photographs Menaka Aravinda | Mahesh Bandara

Considered to be the most sacred Shrine for Catholics in Sri Lanka, Madhu is located in Mannar District. Leaving Colombo in the wee hours of the morning, we travelled along the Puttalam-Mannar road, which took us through the Wilpattu National Park, knowing well we could return home by night. A solemn structure, painted white and light blue stands at the turn off to the Shrine with the crowned image of Our Lady and infant Jesus at its centre. A signboard, at the feet of the edifice, reaches out to the traveller and the pilgrim in welcome and details that they are just 12 km away from the place of worship.

With a history spanning over 400 years, Madhu Shrine has been known for its miraculous healing powers. Having survived destruction, Our Lady of Madhu continues to offer hope and inspiration, not just to Catholics, but to those of all faiths.

A journey...

In the 16th Century, a number of Churches were set up when Catholicism was introduced to ancient Ceylon. One such Church was situated in Mantai, a village around six miles away from Mannar and is believed to have housed the statue of Our Lady of Good Health.

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