St Jude’s Shrine: A Sanctuary for Hope

Posted on



St Jude’s Shrine appears serene and steadfast

Located amidst the tranquil hamlet of Indigolla in Gampaha, the St Jude’s Shrine is a beacon of hope for the distraught and faithful. In October, the area overflows with joy and the devotion of thousands from across the island attend the Feast of St Jude’s Shrine.

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Pearly white gates open in to a verdant grounds shaded by coconut trees. Amidst the palms the Shrine of St Jude looms into view in a pastel glow. The charming architecture of the church blends seamlessly with the serene atmosphere. The hallowed grounds foster a peaceful aura that soothes worshippers who seek the comfort of the adored saint.

St Jude (Thaddaeus), believed to be a relative of Jesus Christ and one of his 12 Disciples, is the ‘Saint of the Despaired’, ‘Hope of the Hopeless’ as well as the

‘Patron Saint of the Impossible’. The statue of St Jude is placed at the entrance of the Shrine, welcoming the faithful in despair. Within the nave one feels heartened, there is an absolute stillness as worshippers gaze at the alter in silent prayer. Those absorbed in devotion for longer sit before the saint in the confession prayer room, ardently requesting his intervention in their pleas. After prayers and novenas, the faithful light a candle, in humble worship and grateful thanksgiving. Some stop by the Grotto to also request intersession from the Blessed Mother Mary.



The new church is modern with grand architecture and statues

The Beginnings

St Jude’s Shrine was established in the 1950s. Rev Father Philip Dissanayake, then Parish Priest of Gampaha, sought to build a church in Indigolla for Catholic families who had been residing in the area since 1865. Thus, in 1950, a statue of St Jude from Rome was placed at a newly built house by Jayakody Arachchige Don Manuel Appuhami, where mass was celebrated once a month. Rev Father Dissanayake had also requested Bulathsinhalage Don Poralennthina, a lady from one of the first catholic families to reside in Indigolla to recite the rosary every evening. Finally, in 1952, five acres of land was purchased to build the church that is today cherished by worshippers from across the island.

Present Day

As the congregation grew, to accommodate the thousands that gather on special occasions and feast days a new church was also built on the grounds. Modern and grand in architecture, the design draws a fusion of both Sri Lankan art as well as Christian symbolism. Before the church is a transfixing bronze-glazed statue of Jesus Christ amidst a garden of bright blooms. The entrance columns depict statues of the saints and apostles, who were instrumental in the spread of God’s Word. The doorway is embellished with carvings of angels, the walls adorned with indigenous swan and floral designs. The altar glows with a divine aura. Within the Holy Eucharist is placed in a tabernacle guarded by two divine angels, a design similar to the ‘Ark of the Covenant’. At present, liturgical services on Monday and Tuesday as well as Holy Mass on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday are celebrated at both the old and new churches.

> The entire hamlet of Indigolla rejoices and joins in the festivities. This year, the ceremonial flagstaff will be raised on the eve of Thursday, October 19 marking the start of the feast.

After visiting the churches, the worshippers usually stop by the rosary shop to purchase candles, prayer books, medals and other devotional souvenirs, sometimes as a means of taking blessings to loved ones.



The peaceful nave of the new church

The Feast of St Jude’s Shrine

Since 1952, the Feast of the Shrine of St Jude has been commemorated in October. The entire hamlet of Indigolla rejoices and joins in the festivities. This year, the ceremonial flagstaff will be raised on the eve of Thursday, October 19 marking the start of the feast. Novenas will be held every evening thereafter. On Saturday, October 28, the Vespers Service as well as the Eucharistic Procession will be held under the auspices of Rev Dr Maxwell Silva, Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo. The Festive High Mass will be celebrated by His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo on Sunday, October 29 at 8.30am. Eucharistic Celebrations will take place throughout the day. Rev Fr Jude Sharman Fernando, Parish Priest, said, thousands from many faiths are expected to gather at the feast.

Over the decades, the revered St Jude’s Shrine has stood as an example of harmony between the religions in Sri Lanka. All year long, the despaired come to the Shrine seeking solace in Christ and to pray for the intersession of the saint. They are welcomed with compassion and patience by the Shrine, which takes to heart the preaching of St Jude.




