

TRANSLATION

FROM VERAPOLY ARCHDIOCESE

The Holy Abode Where the Holy Spirit and Holy Mary Reign Together

Bishop Antony Valungal

Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Verapoly

Although the glories of Vallarpadam Basilica can be described for many reasons, one aspect of paramount importance in the grand description of the basilica is that Vallarpadam Basilica unites two sanctuaries: that of the Holy Spirit and that of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It was in 1524 that Portuguese missionaries brought and installed the sacred image of the Holy Mother of God in the Church of the Holy Spirit, which already existed in Vallarpadam. During this same period, the Marian-devoted Portuguese also established churches in Pallippuram (Our Lady of Snows), Vypin (Our Lady of Hope), Mattancherry (Our Lady of Life), and Saudi (Our Lady of Health). The Marian image installed at the Vallarpadam church was invoked by them as Our Lady of Ransom (*Vimochaka Natha*). Among these, the distinctive feature of Vallarpadam is that it unites the intercession of the Holy Spirit and the intercession of Holy Mary in the church of Vallarpadam.

The Church of the Holy Spirit is bound to the Eastern tradition. The structural architecture of Vallarpadam Basilica and the stone cross (*Kalkurish*) in front of it stand as a continuation of this tradition. It is believed that this parish, having participated in the Synod of Diamper (Udayamperoor) in 1599, adopted the Latin faith tradition from that point onward. Although Mar Abraham, who was in charge of the Archdiocese of Angamaly from 1556 to 1597, held Nestorian tendencies, he reconciled with the Portuguese missionaries. He implemented the liturgical reforms of the Council of Trent and priestly celibacy in our land, and by establishing the Vypincotta Seminary in 1587 under the leadership of Portuguese missionaries, he guided the Kerala Church through the true Christian faith. It is inferred that it was through his initiative that the Vallarpadam parish came to confirm the Latin rite.

Shortly before His death, Jesus promised His disciples that it was good for Him to go away, and that after His departure, He would send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit (John 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7).

In the 19th chapter of the Gospel of Saint John, we read that at the moment of death, Jesus bowed His head and yielded up His Spirit (John 19:30). Subsequently, after the Resurrection, He appeared to the Apostles, breathed on them, and said, "Receive the

Holy Spirit" (20:22). If the Holy Spirit is thus a gift at the time of Jesus's death, the Blessed Mother of God is another gift promised by Jesus to the disciples at the hour of His death.

In the Gospel of Saint John, when Jesus on the Cross saw His Holy Mother beside John, Jesus said to His Mother: "Woman, behold your son". Then He said to John: "Behold your mother". From that hour, the disciple took her into his own home (John 19:26–27).

It was this Blessed Mother who kept the Apostles together and, through maternal love, prepared them to receive the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is the embodiment of love proceeding from the Father and the Son. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us, after the earthly life of Jesus, to enter into relationship with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit leads us into the fullness of knowledge concerning the Father and the Son. Thus, as children of God, the Holy Spirit empowers us to receive the salvific graces of Christ, lead a truly Christ-centred life, and abide forever in the experience of God the Father's love. My time as parish priest at the Church of the Holy Spirit helped me to strengthen this bond in the Holy Spirit. I have witnessed many children who entered there grow in this spiritual bliss, particularly in connection with the Feast of Pentecost. I have understood it to be a mark of glory for Vallarpadam Basilica that a church dedicated to the Holy Spirit in Central Kerala exists at Vallarpadam.

Our Lord Jesus gave us His Mother to be our Mother at the hour of His death. Underlying this revelation, it can be understood that Jesus desires those who believe in Him to make their own His experience that Mary is the most fitting Mother for one who is a child of God to grow up under.

Our earthly mothers are with us only for a limited time. However, our Lord promises us a Mother who remains with us throughout our entire life through the words, "Behold your mother". Furthermore, earthly mothers are naturally subject to human frailties. It was also to bestow a healing maternal experience upon children wounded by the limitations of such mothers that Jesus, whilst hanging upon the Cross, gave us His Mother as our own.

The Blessed Virgin Mary possesses the capacity to guide us in the right direction as a mother in our relationship with the Triune God. Thus, the distinctiveness of Vallarpadam Basilica lies in the fact that the facility to fully realise these dual relationships, which enable the proper guidance of a Christian's spiritual journey, is readily available at Vallarpadam Basilica.