



**The University of the West Indies  
St. Augustine Campus  
Faculty of Humanities and Education  
Caribbean Studies Project  
HUMN 3099**

Student Name: PATRICE PERSAD

Student ID no.: 816023648

Degree Program: BA THEOLOGY

Supervisor: Rev. David Khan

Title of Thesis:

**SACRED JOURNEYS AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE: A THEOLOGICAL  
ANALYSIS OF PILGRIMAGE AT MIRIAM SHRINES TRINIDAD LAVENTILLE- AND  
SIPARIA**

Word count: 6906

**Declaration**

1. I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.
2. I authorise The University of the West Indies to make a physical or digital copy of my thesis/research paper/project report for its preservation, for public reference, and for the purpose of inter-library loan.

Signature of Student: Patrice Persad      Date: \_\_ 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

The Office of the Board for Undergraduate Studies

**INDIVIDUAL PLAGIARISM DECLARATION**

This declaration is being made in accordance with the University Regulations on Plagiarism (First Degrees, Diplomas and Certificate) and should be attached to all work submitted by a student to be assessed as part of or/the entire requirement of the course, other than work submitted in an invigilated examination.

**Statement**

1. have read the Plagiarism Regulations as set out in the Faculty Handbook and University websites related to the submission of coursework for assessment.
2. I declare that I understand that plagiarism is the use of another's work pretending that it is one's own and that it is a serious academic offence for which the University may impose severe penalties.
3. I declare that the submitted work indicated below is my own work, except where duly acknowledged and referenced.
4. I also declare that this paper has not been previously submitted for credit either in its entirety or in part within the UWI or elsewhere.
5. I understand that I may be required to submit the work in electronic form and accept that the University may check the originality of the work using a computer-based plagiarism detection service.
- 6.

Title of Assignment: Sacred Journeys and Spiritual Significance: A Theological Analysis of Pilgrimage at Miriam Shrines Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia.

Course Code: HUMN 3099

Course Title: CARIBBEAN STUDIES PROJECT

Student ID: **816023648**

By signing this declaration, you are confirming that the work you are submitting is original and does not contain any plagiarised material.

I confirm that this assignment is my own work, and that the work of other persons has been fully acknowledged.

SIGNATURE: Patrice Persad

DATE: 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

## **Acknowledgement**

Firstly, I would like to thank God the Father, Jesus Christ his Son, the Holy Spirit, and Mary, my beloved spiritual mother, for unceasing prayer and intercession, which are the cornerstones of my scholarly endeavour in theology.

I am eternally grateful to my esteemed supervisor, Rev. David Khan, for his valuable advice and overwhelming support in writing this thesis. I also extend my profound gratitude for the invaluable knowledge he unselfishly imparted and the significant time he dedicated to guiding me throughout this research.

I want to thank Fr. Jason for his unwavering encouragement and steadfast commitment to my academic growth. His guidance has been instrumental in my studies' successful completion. Furthermore, I want to extend my appreciation to the distinguished faculty and dedicated staff of the Seminary of St. John Vianney and the Ugandan Martyrs Theological Institute for their selflessness, dedication, and support during my studies at the Institute.

I extend my deepest appreciation to Fr. Arnold Francis, whose rigorous academic standards and challenging approach have been instrumental in unlocking my potential. These standards have fuelled my determination and grounded me in my faith.

Furthermore, I sincerely thank Dr. Adanna, Ms. Sherette, and Ms. Kyler. Their invaluable support has significantly shaped my intellectual journey, and their contributions to my academic growth and scholarly pursuits have been indispensable.

I thank the University of the West Indies' esteemed faculty, dedicated staff, and lecturers. Your direct and indirect contributions have been instrumental in achieving this significant milestone.

May God richly bless all of you who contributed to my achievement in some way or another.

## **Abstract**

Employing a qualitative analysis methodology, this research explores the spiritual significance of Miriam Shrines and Pilgrimages in the culturally diverse areas of Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia. The study investigates the spiritual importance of these sacred journeys, which involve distinct rituals, one of which is the contemplative recitation of the rosary, and how they facilitate an encounter with the Divine. The study scrutinises the noteworthy theological aspects that have emerged, such as the traditions, customs, and beliefs associated with these sacred sites. The study also examines the unique elements of traditional Roman Catholic Church practices in spiritual journeys, such as embodying divine presence and grace through the sacrament of the Eucharist, highlighting the significance of sacred journeys that transcend the physical journey. This work encompasses perspectives that shed light on the shrines' cultural insights, historical relevance, holy symbols, and the blending of cultural expressions. The historical importance of these shrines' dates back to colonial times, as evidenced by their enduring devotion despite challenges posed by natural disasters. Theological realisations: a pilgrimage is more than a physical journey. The sacraments of the Eucharist, reconciliation, listening to the word of God, and prayer all reinforce the significance of these spiritual journeys. The pilgrim's return serves as a reminder to be witnesses to salvation. This study's implications extend to understanding religious observances and their impact on cultural identity formation in heterogeneous societies. This research has the potential to augment knowledge of pilgrimages to Miriam shrines.

**Key Words:** Miriam Shrines, Pilgrimage, Miriam Devotions, Religious Practices, Theological Significance, Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia, Sacred Journeys, Devotional Symbols, Spiritual Landmarks.

## Table of Contents

|                                                                                                              |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Acknowledgement                                                                                              | iii |
| Abstract                                                                                                     | iv  |
| List of Figures                                                                                              | vi  |
| List of Appendices                                                                                           | vii |
| <b>Introduction</b>                                                                                          | 4   |
| Rationale                                                                                                    | 7   |
| Thesis Statement                                                                                             | 8   |
| Parameters                                                                                                   | 8   |
| Objectives                                                                                                   | 8   |
| Methodology                                                                                                  | 8   |
| Chapter Outline                                                                                              | 9   |
| Literature Review                                                                                            | 9   |
| <b>Chapter I: Literature Review</b>                                                                          | 10  |
| <b>Chapter II: Sacred Journeys: Unveiling the Theological Significance of Miriam Shrines and Pilgrimages</b> | 18  |
| <b>Chapter III: Analysis of Findings</b>                                                                     | 23  |
| Conclusion                                                                                                   | 26  |
| Work Cited                                                                                                   | 28  |
| Appendix A                                                                                                   | 31  |
| Appendix B                                                                                                   | 32  |
| Appendix C                                                                                                   | 33  |
| Appendix D                                                                                                   | 35  |

|            |    |
|------------|----|
| Appendix E | 36 |
| Appendix F | 37 |
| Appendix G | 38 |

## **List of Figures**

**Figure 1:** Image of Our Lady of Laventille.

**Figure 2:** Image of the Black Madonna (Siparee Mai).

**Figure 3:** Image of Our Lady of Laventille Church and Image of the church La Divina Pastora, Siparia.

**Figure 4:** Image of Our Lady of Laventille Church; Image of La Divina Pastora Church, Siparia.

**Figure 5:** Image of the La Divina Novena Prayer Book.

## **List of Appendices**

**Appendix A:** Map of Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia study area and landmarks

**Appendix B:** Image overlooking the church cemetery in Laventille

**Appendix C:** Image of Archbishop Gonin, Image of His Excellency Most Reverend Manuel Monteiro de Castro, Apostolic Pro-Nuncio. Image of Fr. Aidan Kennedy, O.P. (on the left) Image of Fr. Austin Milner (on the right).

**Appendix D:** Image of the Black Madonna procession in 1984.

**Appendix E:** Image of President Ellis Clarke: Acceptance of Invitation to Centenary

**Appendix F:** Image of Archbishop Anthony Pantin at La Divina Pastora Church, Siparia

**Appendix G:** Image of Archbishop Pantin at the Laventille devotions in 1990.

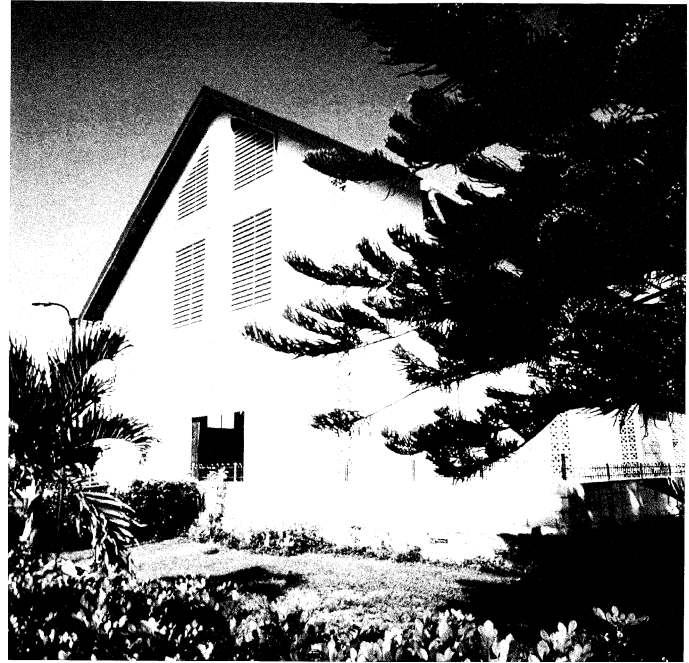




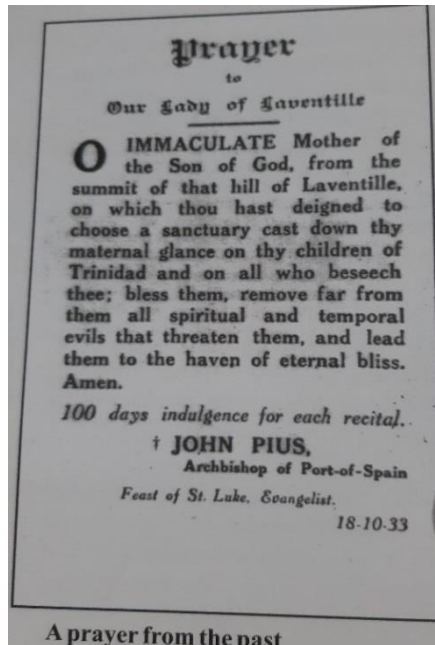
**Fig. 1:** Image of Our Lady of Laventille.



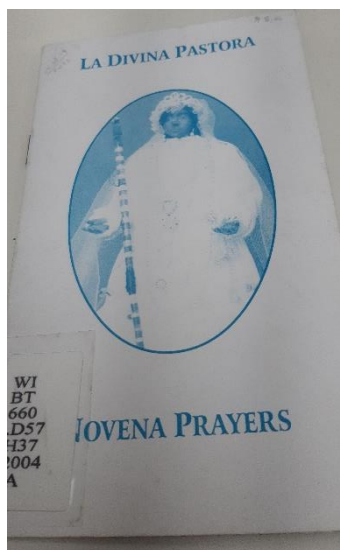
**Fig. 2:** Image of The Black Madonna: (Siparee Mai).



**Fig. 3:** Image of Our Lady of Laventille Church (on left) and Image of the church La Divina Pastora, Siparia (on right).



**Fig. 4:** Image of Our Lady of Laventille Prayer.



**Fig. 5:** Image of La Divina Prayer Book Novena Prayers

## Introduction

Let the shrines get up and cry out, “We exist. We exist and have a role. An integral role.”<sup>1</sup> Miriam Shrines hold immense significance as essential locations for Miriam's veneration. These words from Binz emphasize their significance: “At the shrines, pilgrims enact rituals that put them in touch with the event of divine encounter at that location, and they perform rites that continue the accumulated worship of their spiritual ancestors through the ages” (Binz, 1). Binz's words illuminate their significance, “At these sacred places, where God is believed to have encountered people in transforming ways, shrines have been constructed to mark and honour the place” (Binz, 1). Centuries of history and traditions contribute to contemplating God’s beauty revealed in Mary. Today, Roman Catholic traditions predominantly see Mary’s centrality in institutional spirituality.

These unique places of pilgrimage appeal to the sons and daughters of Mary to journey towards the heart of the salvation mystery of God in Christ, wherein the spiritual annals of a society profoundly entwined in devotion weave together. According to the editors of *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage*, “the idea of pilgrimage is rooted in the Old Testament, and the Old Testament is rooted in the land of Israel; pilgrimage, therefore, expresses a strong attachment to a place” (Bartholomew and Hughes 2004, 17). Additionally, according to the editors of the book, “the particularity of Israel’s story undergirds its pilgrimages; the structure of the Old Testament worship presupposes a strong notion of holy space, a pattern replicated throughout the ancient world, in which places of worship are, literally, houses of the God” (Bartholomew and Hughes 2004, 21).

In the heart of Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia, the shrines symbolize centuries of pilgrimage and devotion in the culturally diverse districts of Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia, serving as

---

<sup>1</sup>Thompson, Thomas. “Pilgrimages and Shrines: A Recognition Long Delayed.” *Marian Studies*, vol.51, no.1 Jan.2000.

centres to foster cultural development, search for God, and witness waves of devotion. The transformation of the Laventille Shrine into a place of worship in 1875 initiated the shrine's significance as a critical location for pilgrimages and cultural preservation. For over a hundred years,<sup>2</sup> Laventille Shrine has been a place of worship for those seeking communion with the Divine. In 1986, President Ellis Clarke<sup>3</sup> accepted the invitation to celebrate the centenary of laying the foundation stone in this unbroken line of devotion. His Grace, Count Finbar Ryan, officially dedicated Our Lady of Laventille as the National Shrine of Our Lady on the Feast of Assumption in 1943. The shrine is our mother's home, a meeting place for brothers and sisters to rediscover their vocations and build up a civilization of love.

La Divina Pastora is a Roman Catholic patron saint. History has it that the Roman Catholic Church was built in honour of the saint.<sup>4</sup> According to O'Callaghan,<sup>5</sup> La Divina is just a "Trini title." Hindus call her Mother-Durga-Soparee Mai. Catholic and Hindu believers regard the Miriam Shrine as the Black Madonna, or La Divina, Pastora, as a symbolic location in Siparia. Spiritual significance reflects the impact of a variety of cultures. Central to festive occasions, the Black Madonna statue inspires individuals of many religious affiliations to engage in collective gestures of devotion. Fr. John T. Harricharan described the statue as short, with long black hair, copper-coloured skin, small cheeks, kind eyes, and a tiny nose.<sup>6</sup> This devotion developed over the years. As spiritual head of the Roman Catholic Church in Trinidad, the Archbishop of Port of Spain reiterates the church's official position on the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Chapter 8 of the

---

<sup>2</sup> "In the year of grace 1886, The Sovereign Pontiff being Leo X111, Queen Victoria, Monsignor Gonin Archbishop of Port of Spain.... the first stone laid."

<sup>3</sup> President Ellis Clarke, "I am happy to accept the invitation.... how tremendous are the changes that have occurred since the 21<sup>st</sup> day of March 1886."

<sup>4</sup> The Express: Newspapers 23 April 1985.

<sup>5</sup> A Critical Assessment of the Divina Pastora/ Suparee Ke Mai celebrations as a space for dialogue, inculturation and evangelisation. -2004, *Thesis*.

<sup>6</sup> John T. Harricharan, "The Catholic Church in Trinidad: 1498-1852.

Dogmatic Constitution of the Church expresses this teaching. In essence, it unites with Christ, who reveals the mystery of salvation. In this context, the Roman Catholic Church has devotions to the Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia Miriam Shrines. However, this has been influenced by people having a particular historical, sociological, and cultural heritage.

The Miriam Shrines serve as timeless representations of pilgrimage and religion. Sacred monuments that have been revered for ages intricately interlace a fabric of profound spiritual tales ingrained in the ethos of society. This study investigates the Miriam Shrines in Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia. It is suggested that these significant spiritual landmarks and pilgrimage sites affect religious observances and integrate spirituality into the socio-cultural fabric of the area, creating a unique religious identity that combines spirituality, history, and culture. Pilgrims engage in practices and rituals such as the rosary prayer,<sup>7</sup> eucharist, and reconciliation<sup>8</sup> within their sacred spaces.

This research investigates these Shrines' cultural milieu's theological, historical, and cultural aspects. Intentionally restricting the scope of this research to specific locations guarantees a further comprehension of the shrine's influence on its local populations. The study utilizes a qualitative method to understand the role of Miriam Shrines. This methodology acknowledges the inherent constraints imposed by the geographical scope of this research. In addition to their religious importance, the Miriam Shrines have emerged as centres for social gatherings and Miriam observations, serving as symbols of the Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia communities' profound cultural history and spirituality.

---

<sup>7</sup> The term rosary derives from the Latin *rosarium* (rose garden), which consists of reciting fifteen decades of Hail Marys, each introduced by the Lord's Prayer and concluded with the Doxology. The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> The sacrament of reconciliation is the ritual of the Christian community, under the leadership of the bishop or priest, in which sinners are reconciled to God and the Church. The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism, 1995.

## **Rationale**

Trinidad and Tobago's Miriam Shrines at Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia transcend physical structures; they hold generations of cultural, historical, and spiritual stories. Theological research provides insights that may illuminate these shrines' symbolically rich beliefs and values. It can decipher symbolic meanings, rituals, and traditions to illustrate how they affect the community's spiritual life and religious beliefs. Since religion shapes societal norms, attitudes, and relationships, understanding these shrines' rituals and beliefs may assist the local community. Community members' appreciation of their cultural and religious history may boost pride and identity. As individuals learn about these traditions, they may become more tolerant and respectful of other faiths and cultures. Additionally, it may help preserve these traditions for future generations, ensuring that these essential cultural and religious activities are not lost. Scholarly narratives, local newspapers, articles, reports, and church documents will be investigated for information about the spiritual significance attributed to these shrines.

This study seeks to answer the following questions: What are the roles of the Miriam Shrines, and how do they influence religious observances in Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia? How do these Shrines integrate spirituality into the socio-cultural fabric of the community? The findings of this research could have significant implications for our understanding of religious practices in Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia. They could also promote respect for other faiths and cultures in the region.

## **Thesis Statement**

This study investigates the Miriam Shrines located in Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia, positing that these significant spiritual landmarks and pilgrimage sites influence religious observances and

integrate spirituality into the socio-cultural fabric of the region, thereby contributing to the unique religious identity that fuses spirituality, history, and culture.

### **Parameters**

The geographical scope of this study is confined to the regions of Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia, with a particular focus on the locations affiliated with the Miriam Shrines. This study aims to identify these shrines as spiritual landmarks, significant pilgrimage sites, and cultural heritage repositories and emphasise their roles as pilgrimage sites. The research will analyse the evolution of shrines and practices over time, transcending temporal boundaries. Specifically, it will focus on changes in religious practices and shifts in the significance of the Shrines.

### **Objectives**

The primary objective of this study is to analyse the Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia Miriam Shrines, emphasising their spiritual, cultural, and historical significance. This analysis aims to understand the Shrines' roles in shaping their respective regions' cultural and communal landscapes. By exploring these functions, the study seeks to enhance the theological understanding of the Miriam Shrines. Ultimately, this study intends to provide insights into the intricate functions of the Miriam Shrines, thereby highlighting and emphasising the existing body of knowledge in the field.

### **Methodology**

This investigation employs a qualitative approach by utilising data gathered from primary and secondary sources. These sources include published books and articles from Vatican websites, the Alma Jordan and West Indiana Libraries, the National Library, the Regional Seminary of St. John Vianney Uganda Martyrs Memorial Library, and the Catholic Newspaper Trinidad and Tobago archives. The research framework integrates religious and cultural anthropology elements, and the



study incorporates aspects of historiography, providing a multidisciplinary perspective. The anonymity and privacy of any people referenced in the sources shall be respected throughout the research process. All relevant sources from which material is extracted will be appropriately cited.

### **Chapter Outline**

The research is comprised of three chapters. The first chapter, titled “Literature Review,” examines how Pope Francis and other writers have discussed the notion of “the shrine.” It explores the designation of shrines as sacred locations, privileged sites of devotion, authentic sites of evangelisation, and the value of adoration. The chapter will examine the spiritual, cultural, and theological dimensions of shrines and pilgrimages via a survey of the relevant literature.

The second chapter will delve into the theological significance of the Miriam Shrines, unravelling their spiritual importance and roles, and exploring how these sacred sites symbolise communion with the eternal God. The insights from this chapter lay the groundwork for subsequent data analysis, aiming to enhance their multifaceted roles and significance.

The third chapter will present the results of the study questions and their goals. It establishes correlations between the religious notions examined in the literature review, analyses the findings discussed in Chapter 11, and concludes with recommendations and a conclusion.

## Chapter I- Literature Review

### Understanding Shrines and Pilgrimages: A Theological Perspective.

In a letter disseminated through the Pontifical Council for *Pastoral Care for Migrants and Itinerant People* on February 11, 2017, Pope Francis delved into the intricate relationship between the concept of pilgrimage and that of the shrine. The document entitled “*The Shrine*” (Memory, Presence, and Prophecy of the Living God) characterizes shrines as “*the visible goal of a pilgrim journey.*”<sup>9</sup> (2). Moreover, these places depict “*a meeting with the living God that can occur through the life-giving experience of the mystery that is proclaimed, celebrated, and lived*” (3).

Pope Francis portrays the role of Shrines “*as milestones that guide the journey of the children of God on earth.*” (4). They foster the “*experience of gathering and encounter and the building up of the ecclesial community.*” (5). The document underscores that “*a shrine is, first of all, a place of memory, the memory of God’s powerful activity in history, which is the origin of the People of the Covenant and the faith of each believer.*” (8).

The Holy Father further articulates, “*Marian Shrines in particular, “not only for individuals or local groups but sometimes for whole nations and societies, even whole continents, seek to meet the mother of the Lord, the one who is blessed because she believed.*” (59). Pope Francis presents a nuanced understanding of Shrines and Pilgrimages, emphasizing their role in spiritual journeys, community building, history, and inclusivity.

This document contributes to the study of a nuanced understanding of Shrines and Pilgrimages, emphasizing their roles in spiritual journeys, community building, history, and inclusivity. It also provides a theological perspective on the significance of Miriam Shrines and places where encounters with the living God can occur.

---

<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis. *The Shrine. Memory, Presence and Prophecy of the Living God.*

In his letter presented at the Second World Congress on the *Pastoral Care of Pilgrimages and Shrines* on September 8, 2010, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI expounded on the significance of pilgrimage as a means to encounter God where He has revealed Himself (Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People). Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI emphasizes that “*pilgrimages to the Shrines are a manifestation of Christian life and a space for evangelisation.*”<sup>10</sup> He highlighted the importance of shrines as physical destinations that facilitate spiritual encounters. He notes that pilgrimages and shrines offer opportunities for evangelisation, particularly “*the growing number of pilgrims and religious tourists, some of whom are in complicated human and spiritual situations, somewhat distant from the faith and with a weak ecclesial affiliation.*” His reference to the pilgrimage to the tomb of the Apostle Saint James reinforces this, expressing that “*in these historical moments, he mentions we are called to evangelise the world, the riches offered to us by the pilgrimage to the shrines.*” Through these insights, Pope Benedict XVI underscores the importance of encounters with God and fostering inclusivity through the role of saints and pilgrimages. This document offers a theological perspective on the significance of the pilgrimage as a means to encounter God and the role of Shrines in evangelisation.

In his Apostolic Letter *Sanctuarium in Ecclesia*, Pope Francis highlights the role of popular piety as “*a true expression of the spontaneous missionary activity of the People of God*” (2). He underscores the shrine as a privileged place to express the fine tradition of prayer, devotion, and trust in God’s mercy (3). He further emphasizes that “*shrines in every part of the world are a*

---

<sup>10</sup> Pope Benedict XVI. *Letter on the Occasion of the Second World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Pilgrimages and Shrines*.

*distinctive sign of the humble faith of believers, providing an experience of true spirituality that one should never underestimate” (2).*

According to Pope Francis, “*Shrines in every part of the world are a distinctive sign of the humble faith of believers, who find in these holy places profoundly, “experience the closeness of God, the tenderness of the Virgin Mary, and the company of the saints.”* He highlights how these sacred places provide an experience of true spirituality that one should never underestimate.” (2).

Pope Francis also emphasizes the tradition of pilgrimage, which was seen “*primarily as going to the places where Jesus Christ had lived.*” Despite the crisis of faith, shrines are “*still perceived as sacred places to which pilgrims go to find a moment of rest, silence, and contemplation.*”

This document offers a theological perspective on the role of popular piety and shrines' spiritual significance. It emphasizes the importance of shrines as sanctuaries for prayer, devotion, and expressions of God’s mercy. Furthermore, it illuminates and highlights the tradition of pilgrimage and the perception of shrines as sacred places.

Craig Bartholomew and Fred Hughes's book “*Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage*”, provides an in-depth examination of the theological aspects of Christian pilgrimage. It outlines the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, thoroughly engages with the Old and New Testaments, and presents an interfaith understanding model. The book sheds light on the theological underpinnings of Christian pilgrimage and elucidates how pilgrimage sites, specifically Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia, can shape religious practices and cultural heritage.

In the article '*Laventille Rich History*' by the News Desk of the Trinidad Guardian on September 27, 2019,<sup>11</sup> the Laventille Shrine is highlighted as a significant landmark. The National Shrine of Our Lady was rechristened in 1943 and formally established as the Our Lady of Fatima RC Church in 1952. It has a rich history deeply interwoven with the Laventille community. Over the years, it has served as a focal point for Marian devotions and religious activities. Beyond its role as a place of worship, the shrine symbolizes a cultural heritage within the community.

The document delves into the rich history and significance of the Laventille Shrine. It emphasizes its role as a central hub for Miriam's devotions and religious activities, symbolizing the cultural heritage ingrained within the Laventille community.

### **Historical and Cultural Significance of the Shrines**

In her article "*Our Lady on the Hill*," Leslie Paul shared her insights. This piece was featured in Trinidad *and* Tobago Newsday on September 20, 2022. Paul provides a detailed account of the history and significance of the Laventille Roman Catholic Church and its statue, Our Lady of Fatima. The statue, a gift from France that arrived in Trinidad in 1878, stands over the capital city and the communities, serving as a landmark icon and a beacon of faith for the congregation. The article also provides a historical account of the chapel's construction, dedicated to St. Thomas Aquinas, and highlights its long-standing role as a spiritual hub. This role is further exemplified by the Portuguese community's historical pilgrimage to Laventille. As early as 1885, they have been commemorating the Feast of Nossa de Monte (Our Lady of the Mount, the patron saint of Madeira). These pilgrimages suggest that the church facilitates sacred journeys and spiritual exploration for a diverse group of pilgrims.

---

<sup>11</sup> News Desk of the Trinidad Guardian. *Laventille Rich History*. Trinidad Guardian, 27 September 2019.

The article “*Pilgrims Brave Dangerous Neighbourhoods to Pray at Trinidad Shrine*,<sup>12</sup>” published by the News Desk of the Trinidad Guardian on May 17, 2018, offers an insightful account of the pilgrimage to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Laventille. From May to October, hundreds of pilgrims endure varying weather conditions—from heavy rains to scorching heat to partake in the Miriam Devotions at the Shrine. The shrine, which houses the image of Our Lady of Fatima, serves as a significant religious site and a beacon of faith for the local community. The shrine, observable from various locations within the city, symbolizes the community’s profound spiritual connection and dependence on divine guidance. The pilgrims' offerings at the shrine, which include prayers for personal needs, further underscore the shrine’s role in facilitating sacred journeys and spiritual exploration.

This document delves into the pilgrimage practices at the Laventille Shrine, highlighting its significance as a religious site and a symbol of the community’s spiritual interconnectedness and reliance on divine insight.

### **Spiritual Significance of the Shrines**

In his book, “*The Work of the East Indians in Trinidad During the Period of Indentureship*, John T. Haricharan<sup>13</sup> observes that non-Christian Indians in Trinidad have traditionally been drawn to pilgrimage sites associated with the Roman Catholic Church, such as the Church in Siparia, which houses a revered image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, affectionately referred to as “Siparia Mai.” This site continues to be a place of devotion for these individuals, who offer oil, bracelets, and petitions in response to their needs. The image, believed to have been introduced to the location by the Spanish monks from the Capuchin order around 1730, serves as a significant

---

<sup>12</sup> Pope Francis. *Sanctuarium in Ecclesia*. Apostolic Letter, The Holy See, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> John T. Haricharan. *The Work of the East Indians in Trinidad During the Period of Indentureship*.

religious symbol and a beacon of faith for the local community. The Church's elaborate rituals hold a particular attraction for most Hindus, further underscoring its role in facilitating sacred journeys and spiritual exploration.

The book offers an insightful account of the shrine's appeal to non-Christian Indians, its rich tapestry of religious symbols, and its pivotal role in facilitating sacred journeys.

In their booklet, *"The Feast of La Divina Pastora Holy Shepherdess; Its Origin, Historical Development, and Future Perspectives."*<sup>14</sup> Haricharan and Fr. Power provides a historical, spiritual, and cultural account of Siparia, a place dedicated to the Virgin Mary under La Divina Pastora. The authors highlight that the shrine in Siparia attracts Christians, Hindus, Muslims, and other Christian denominations. This suggests that the shrine holds a significant place in the religious and cultural landscape of the area, transcending religious boundaries and serving as a unifying symbol for the community. The shrine thus facilitates sacred journeys and spiritual exploration for a diverse group of pilgrims. The booklet also offers insights into the origins of the holy feast, further underscoring the shrine's role in the community's religious practices.

This source elucidates the multifaceted role of the community's religious practices, encompassing historical, spiritual, and cultural aspects. It serves as a unifying symbol for the community, significantly facilitating sacred journeys for diverse pilgrims.

Stephen J. Binz's book *"Holy Land Pilgrimage"*<sup>15</sup> provides valuable insights into the broader concept of pilgrimage, establishing a foundation for comprehending the theological dimensions of

---

<sup>14</sup> Fr. Haricharan and Fr. Power. *The Feast of La Divina Pastora Holy Shepherdess. Its Origin, Historical Development and Future Perspectives.*

<sup>15</sup> Stephen J. Binz. *Holy Land Pilgrimage.*

sacred journeys. While Bing primarily focuses on the Holy Land, the parallels between his insights and the Miriam Shrines in Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia enrich the exploration of pilgrimage as a transformative spiritual practice. Bing highlighted the transformative nature of pilgrimage, illustrating how individuals who embark on these journeys deepen their spiritual connection and gain a profound understanding of their faith. This perspective aligns with the notion that pilgrimage is not merely a physical journey but a spiritual quest that can lead to personal and communal transformation.

As the Miriam Shrines hold a significant place as spiritual landmarks in Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia, this literature review examines how pilgrimage at these shrines contributes to the spiritual growth of the pilgrims and the broader community. The Miriam Shrines, as portrayed in Binz's book, transcend mere physical locations; they are living symbols of religious devotion and cultural identity. These understandings position pilgrimage at the Miriam Shrines in Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia as an integral aspect of the local culture, shaping spiritual practices and preserving cultural heritage.

The book explores the expansive concept of pilgrimage and its transformative impact on spiritual growth, religious devotion, cultural identity, and cultural heritage.

In the article "*History of Laventille*,"<sup>16</sup> Angelo Bissessarsingh in the Trinidad and Tobago Guardian provides valuable historical insights into the development of the Laventille Shrine, a significant landmark. In 1875, the Laventille Shrine became the devotional centre for a religious society dedicated to Miriam's devotions. This event marked the beginning of the shrine's role as a pivotal site of pilgrimage and cultural heritage.

---

<sup>16</sup> Bisserssarsingh, Angelo. *History of Laventille*. Trinidad and Tobago Guardian.



By 1943, the Laventille Shrine became known as “The National Shrine of Our Lady.” This designation further underscores the Shrine’s importance in the religious landscape of Trinidad and Tobago and its influence on Miriam's devotions. These historical milestones contribute to our understanding of the Miriam Shrine in Laventille as a significant spiritual landmark and a pivotal sign of pilgrimage and cultural heritage.

The document delves into historical insights into the development of the Laventille Shrine, which plays a crucial role in the Pilgrimage cultural and religious landscape.

The article *The Miracle Mother*, published by Discover Trinidad and Tobago on April 13, 2017, provides a comprehensive overview of the Siparia Shrine, also known as La Divina Pastora, Siparee/Supari Mai, or the Black Madonna, located in Trinidad and Tobago. The article delves into the shrine’s historical and cultural significance, which makes it a distinctive cross-symbol of cross-cultural practices.

The author discusses the diverse cultural influences and interpretations reflected by each name the statue is known by. The statue, believed to have miraculous powers, is the centre of a unique celebration that brings together people of different faiths in a shared act of devotion. The article also highlights that Trinidad is one of the only countries with active veneration of Black Madonna Virgin statues, further emphasizing the region's unique cultural and religious landscape.

This document overviews the Siparia Shrine and its role as a cross-symbol of cross-cultural practices. It brings together people of different faiths in a shared devotion, highlighting its unique position in Trinidad and Tobago's cultural and religious landscape.

## Chapter II

### Sacred Journeys: Unveiling the Theological Significance of Miriam Shrines and Pilgrimages

The concept of pilgrimage<sup>17</sup> started with Abram's divine command to “leave your land.”<sup>18</sup> Over the centuries, this sacred practice has extended across cultures. According to the Letter of the Hebrews,<sup>19</sup> Abraham left his country, relatives, and land guided by faith, trust, and hope. In the context of the Great Jubilee, a document titled “The Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee” indicated that the exodic pilgrimage would ensue from the land of the pharaohs.” However, as the narrative progresses, “Jesus enters history as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, uniting himself with humanity.” Jesus also made pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the sacred feasts of Israel. The Gospel of Luke describes the journey or travels of the family of Jesus as well as how the family went every year for the feast (Lk. 2:41). Document *Adiutricem* underscores that faith serves as the foundation and source of God's gifts, by which man is raised above the order of nature and endowed with the requisites for life eternal. Amidst this theological insight, we are bound to recognize the hidden influence of Mary, who brought the author of faith into the world. In other words, it is her faith-based solidarity with the human race. “Behold, Mary, you shall conceive in your womb and bear a child, and he shall be called the Son of the Highest” (Lk. 1:31-32). The Church has traditionally and, in modernity, perennially maintained that Luke is teaching us the truth about the reality of faith in the historical Mary. That is to say, veiledly, of the reality of the existence of the Son of

---

<sup>17</sup> Pilgrimages have always been a significant part of the faithful, assuming different cultural forms in other ages. A pilgrimage evokes the believer's journey in the footsteps of the Redeemer: it is an exercise of practical asceticism, of repentance for human weakness, of constant vigilance over one's frailty, of interior preparation for a change of heart. Through vigils, fasting, and prayer, the pilgrim processes along the path of Christian perfection, striving to attain, with the support of God's grace, “the state of the perfect man, to the measure of full maturity of Christ” (Eph.4:13); John Paul II, *Incarnationis Mysterium; Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000*.

<sup>18</sup> Gen. 12:1

<sup>19</sup> Heb. 11:8-10

God, who is conceived in her womb, of the Holy Spirit, the God of Israel, who sent His Son into the world as a descendant of David.

As previously mentioned, Binz's pilgrimage is a liturgical experience. For him, shrines have been constructed to mark and honour these sacred places where God is believed to have encountered people in transforming ways. The church's public worship is an integral part of the pilgrimage experience. Many rituals commence with rituals held before and after the pilgrimage, generally initiated with benediction. The priest, vested in sacred attire, initiates prayers and traces the sign of the cross, and the faithful are sprinkled with holy water. He was kneeling in front of the altar and imparting blessings. Worship is essential to maintaining spiritual readiness during the pilgrimage through prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and religious songs sung. This devotion culminates in the celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>20</sup> More immediately, supernatural effects can also affect the soul profoundly, as when we experience the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, it is given to us to contemplate spiritually the presence of Christ under the veil of faith.

The teachings of ecumenical councils, the Church Fathers, and magisterial teachings are all sources of tradition connected to the Sacred Scriptures. The Scriptures give a written witness to the direct encounter with God as expressed in revelation. In light of the holy gospel and of Catholic tradition, “it appears that the spiritual motherhood of Mary transcends space and time and belongs to the universal history of the Church since she has always been present in the Church with her maternal assistance (Paul VI, *Signum Magnum*). The human person appears in secular history as a *homo viato*—a traveller thirsty for new horizons, hungry for justice and peace, searching for truth, longing for love, and open to the absolute and the infinite (The Pilgrimage in the Great

---

<sup>20</sup> The Eucharist (Gk., “thanksgiving”) is the sacramental celebration of the Paschal Mystery (i.e., Christ dying and rising for humankind) in a context of praise and thanks for all that God has done and continues to do. During the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit is called down on the assembly that it might become the Body of Christ, the People of God. The Harper Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism. Harper Collins 1995.

Jubilee-Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People). Leo X<sup>111</sup> encyclical *Octobri Mense* notes that it is essential that the Catholic voice also call to God with unwearied instance,” without ceasing,” that the faithful should not only pray in their homes but in public, gathered together under a sacred roof; that they should beseech urgently the all-foreseeing God .... to bring back the troubled nations to good sense and reason.” Within this context, it is significant for the roles of shrines and pilgrimages, where Christians need to turn to Mary to find Jesus and seek salvation and a transcendent source of life.

Christian pilgrims embark on sacred journeys guided by the presence of Mary (*Theotokos*),<sup>21</sup> the mother of Jesus,<sup>22</sup> whose womb was the first shrine, along the roads and join Elisabeth, Mary’s cousin,<sup>23</sup> who typifies the sisters and brothers in the world with whom a bond of faith is established. Only a clear understanding of the role of Mary in salvation history can guarantee proper consideration of the hypostatic union. In particular, the dogma of the Theotokos is adequately understood and guards against *de facto* heretical conceptions of Christ, e.g., Nestorianism and Monophysitism. Agreement on Mary will entail agreement in thought and expression on the most important dogma of our faith, the Incarnation.

Following the encyclical (*Adiutricem*), magnificent temples were erected in her august name in the pilgrimages undertaken by throngs of devout souls to her most revered shrines. Even more, pilgrimages, a sign of the condition of the disciples of Christ in the world,<sup>24</sup> have always held an essential place in the lives of Christians. The upcoming 2025 Jubilee, commencing on December 24<sup>th</sup> and concluding on January 6, 2026, heralds a holy period. Pilgrims will embark on spiritual

---

<sup>21</sup> “The mightiest helper of the Christian people, and the most merciful, is the Virgin Mother of God.” (Encyclical *Adiutricem* Pope Leo X<sup>111</sup>).

<sup>22</sup> Lk. 1:26-36

<sup>23</sup> Lk.1:39-45

<sup>24</sup> John Paul II. “The Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee.” 25 Apr. 1998.

journeys, seeking renewal and reflection, and believers will be invited to experience grace through the Holy Doors of St. Peter Basilica and other locations. John Paul's 11 encyclical *Mysterium Incarnation* states that among the signs that attest to faith and the fostering of devotion is the notion of pilgrimage, a Christian goal, a place considered holy. According to him, pilgrimages and shrines have received some ecclesial and theological recognition as part of popular devotion and are noted for their importance in catechesis and evangelization (MI).

The pilgrimage experience unfolds in distinct stages, each with a spiritual significance. Departure reveals the decisions of pilgrims to go forward up to the destination and achieve the spiritual objectives of their baptismal vocation; walking leads them to solidarity with their brothers and sisters and the necessary preparation for the meeting of the Lord; and visits to the shrine<sup>25</sup> invite them to listen to the Word of God and sacramental celebration; the return in the end, reminds them of their mission in the world, as witnesses of salvation and builders of peace ( The Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee-Pontifical Council for the pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People). It is essential that acts of worship, whether performed in groups or on an individual basis, set apart these stages of a pilgrimage and reveal their true nature.

Indeed, a proper increase in reverence for the Mother of the Lord follows every genuine development of Christian worship. Additionally, papal encouragement of Rosary devotion created a conducive environment for Marian devotion.<sup>26</sup> John Paul 11 states that the Rosary, though Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer. It has all the depth of the Gospel message;

---

<sup>25</sup> The term shrine is understood as a church or other sacred place to which numerous faithful members make pilgrimage for a particular reason of piety, with the approval of the local ordinary. For a shrine to be called a national shrine, the Conference of bishops must give its approval; for it to be called an international shrine, the approval of the Holy See is required. The local ordinary is competent to approve the statues of a diocesan shrine; The Conference of Bishops is responsible for statues of national shrines, and the Holy See is responsible for statues of international shrines. John Paul 11, *Incarnationis Mysterium: Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee Year 2000*, November 1998. (#1230-1232.)

<sup>26</sup> John Paul 11, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, The Holy See.

it echoes the prayer of Mary, her perennial Magnificat, for the work of the redemptive Incarnation, which began in her virginal womb. Through the Rosary, the faithful receive abundant grace from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer. Moreover, “the richness of this traditional prayer, which has the simplicity of a popular devotion but also the theological depth of prayer suited to those who feel the need for deeper contemplation” (RVM, John Paul 11).

According to the document, *Adiutricem*, our predecessors, took special care in spreading the devotion throughout the countries. Eugene IV, Innocent XI, and Clement XI. In peril, the church invoked Mary as their protector (Ripperger and Ripperger). Moreover, history shows how “the various forms of devotion towards the mother of God that the Church has approved within the limits of wholesome and orthodox doctrine” have developed harmonious subordination to Christ's worship (Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*). Paul VI, in the encyclical *Mense Maio*, wrote, may she who experienced the cares and hardships of earthly life, the weariness of daily toil, the difficulties, and the sorrows of Calvary, come to aid the needs of the Church and the human race. Catholic theology can safely treat the Most Holy Rosary as a trustworthy *locus theologiae*, or the theological source of reflection, if we understand it as an expression of the supernatural *sensus fidei* of the whole people of God, meditating upon the Gospel collectively in faith, down through the ages.

## **Chapter III**

### **An Analysis of Findings**

From its earliest days, the Roman Catholic Church had given an important place to venerate the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Miram shrines and pilgrimages have become significant in the Church. Within this sacred tradition, shrines and pilgrimages have emerged as vital sources of faith and devotion. Analyzing the roles and significance of shrines and pilgrimages requires considering spiritual, cultural, and historical factors. Pilgrimages to local Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia shrines have not been entirely ignored, but their attention is overshadowed by less good documentation. For understandable reasons, pilgrims travelling far from their homes for substantial periods were in great need, which tends to conflate a screen with the radical absence of the modern distinction between the contemporary, secular, and sacred.

Tracing the genesis of these shrines and pilgrimages is centuries of unbroken devotion by pilgrims. These sacred places originated from undeveloped landmarks and the pious concerns of a few faithful pilgrims seeking to escape the uncertainty of life's trials and disappointments. However, there is a saintly concern for their salvation, which local pilgrimages tend to emphasise. Nevertheless, one can trace the movements in the history of piety. Indeed, many pilgrims braved weather conditions, climbing rough hills, wet roads, and traffic congestion, made a pilgrimage of thanksgiving, and offered sacrifices to the Virgin, accompanied by material gestures. This marks a ritual framework rather than faith beliefs.

As often as not, information on local pilgrimages is limited to the writings of religious enthusiasts, local historians, and even folklorists. Whatever the sources of pilgrimage shrine accounts, they must be considered more spiritual than mere legendary or historical documentation. Typically, the statue's origin is miraculous; it is taken to the parish church, and after several

attempts, a chapel is built, followed by numerous stories. Miraculous soon became associated with the statue. Such foundational legends help to validate and, in a sense, construct the sacrality of the landscape. Through these means, inscribing a local pilgrimage into a sacred landscape constructs an understanding of regional identity. Such legends cannot be taken in a historical sense, but a connection must remain between the devotional practices typically practiced in these local shrines. Historical studies serve as a tool for theologians. When scholarship conflicts with the truths of worship, it loses out since its scope is limited to natural, historical science. The scholarship provides insights into Divine Providence and the importance of symbolism.

The implications for studying local pilgrimages and shrines are particularly fruitful. Greater precision can be given to the social and cultural dimension of Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia shrines and pilgrimage practices from their early-modern and contemporary continuation. At the local level, socio-cultural bonds are often forged and maintained through group pilgrimages. The liminal qualities were affected by the circumscribed geography of the individual communities. Within this totality, it is understandable that the Virgin is widely invoked for illness and protection, particularly in the Siparia shrine. Local pilgrimage shrines respond to both communal and individual needs. On the other hand, pandemics and environmental disasters or threats often provoke a communal response.

The influence of Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia shrines and pilgrimages runs more profoundly, and pilgrims' joint journeys and worship have bolstered a sense of unity for those participating. Interpretations of the broader meaning have only recently begun, allowing pilgrims to participate personally in these sacred events from the past. Modern historians, students, scholars, and theologians should not view pilgrimages and shrines as a subcategory but recognise their central role in enhancing understanding. It is an opportunity to witness the variation of liturgical practices,



often divergent from their local parishes' practices and uniqueness. Finally, from my perspective, crossing a geographical or mental border is a constitutive element of pilgrimage, and as a result, travelling to a shrine is also an inextricable component of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is, in the first place, a transitional rite of passage to approach, enter, and experience the sacred.

## Conclusion

In summation, the veneration of the Virgin Mary within the Roman Catholic Church, manifested through shrines and pilgrimages, is a multifaceted tradition that intersects spiritual, cultural, and historical dimensions. In this tradition, shrines serve as tangible expressions, and spiritual journeys are focal points for the faithful. Whilst culturally, pilgrimages and shrines shape the identity of communities, and historically, the power of religious practices inspires and uplifts. However, this tradition is not without its complexities, encompassing both positive and negative aspects that warrant further exploration.

Highlighting the positive aspects, the tradition of venerating the Virgin Mary has been a source of profound faith and devotion for countless believers throughout history. Shrines and pilgrimages provide tangible focal points for spiritual journeys, engendering unity among pilgrims and fortifying communal bonds. They serve as sacred spaces where individuals seek solace, healing, and protection, reflecting a deep-seated human yearning for connection with the divine. Additionally, the historical continuity of these practices underscores the enduring power of religious traditions to inspire and uplift.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to consider the negative aspects. The overshadowing of local shrines and pilgrimages, such as those in Trinidad-Laventille and Siparia, by more well-documented sites highlights disparities in attention and resources within the church. Moreover, the tendency to conflate spiritual devotion with material rituals and legendary narratives may obscure the underlying faith and beliefs and diminish the authenticity of religious experiences. Additionally, the limitations of historical scholarship's limitations in capturing the full richness of pilgrimage practices risk overlooking the deeper spiritual significance.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the study of shrines and pilgrimages offers valuable insights into the diverse expressions of religious devotion and the dynamic interplay between faith, culture, and society. By recognising the centrality of pilgrimage in understanding religious experiences, scholars and theologians can contribute to a more nuanced appreciation of the sacred and its transformative power in the lives of believers. Ultimately, pilgrimage emerges as a transcendent journey, bridging the physical and spiritual realms and inviting participants to encounter the divine in profound and meaningful ways.

## WORKS CITED

- Bartholomew, Craig, and Fred Hughes, editors. *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage*. Routledge, .2004.
- Benedict XV1. *Letter on the Occasion of the Second World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Pilgrimages and Shrines*. 8 Sept. 2010, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).
- Binz, Stephen J., *Holy Land Pilgrimage*. Liturgical Press, 2020.
- Bissessarsingh, Angelo. "History of Laventille." *Trinidad Guardian*, 27 Jul.2019, [www.guardian.co.tt/article-6.2.361735.dadd49dd88](http://www.guardian.co.tt/article-6.2.361735.dadd49dd88).Accessed 18 Nov. 2023.
- Code of Canon Law-Book IV-Function of the Church; Part III: Sacred Places and Times* (Cann.1205-1243). [www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-cononici/eng/documents/cic\\_lib4-cann1205-1243\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-cononici/eng/documents/cic_lib4-cann1205-1243_en.html).
- Coogan, Michael D. edit. et al. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible. New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*. Oxford University Press 2010.
- De Verteuil. *Temples of Trinidad*. Litho Press, 2004.
- Haricharan, John T, *The Work of the East Indians in Trinidad During Indentureship, 1845-1917*. 1976, pp.16–20.
- Haricharan, John T., and Power.Fr., *The Feast of La Divina Pastora Holy Shepherdess: Its Origin, Historical Development, and Future Perspectives.*, N.p.,1981.
- Kim, Min-Hwi. *Pilgrimage in Service of Mission in the Context of the Contemporary Korean Church*. 2018, <https://core.ac.uk/download/215442434.pdf>. Accessed 18 Nov. 2023.
- King, Christine. "Shrines and Pilgrimages Before the Reformation." *History Today*, vol.29, no. 10, October 1979. <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/shrines-and-pilgrimages-reformation>. Accessed 15 Dec. 2023.

Leo X111 *Adiutricem* 5 Sept. 1895, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Leo X111 *Octobri Mense* 22 Sept. 1891, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)Mc

McBrien, Richard P., editor. *The Harper Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*. Harper Collins, 1995.

Monteiro de Castro, Manuel *Church of Our Lady of Laventille: Centenary of the Laying of the Foundation Stone, 1886-1986*. Laventille Press, 1986.

News Desk. “Laventille Rich History.” *Trinidad Guardian*, 29 Sept. 2019, [www.trinidadguardian.com/Laventille-rich-history](http://www.trinidadguardian.com/Laventille-rich-history). Accessed 18 Oct. 2023.

Noel, Theresa. *La Divina Pastora: The Spirit of Siparia- Siparia Fete- A Brief History of Siparia*, 1984.

Paul 11. *Mysterium Incarnationis: Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000* 29 Nov.1998, [www.Vatican.Va](http://www.Vatican.Va). Accessed 6 Mar. 2024.

Paul 11. *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* 15 Oct.2002, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Accessed 6 Mar. 2024.

Paul 11. *The Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee-Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People* 25 Apr. 1998, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Accessed 6 Mar.2024.

Paul V1. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 8 Dec.1975, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Accessed 6 Mar.2024.

Paul V1. *Signum Magnum* 11 May. 1967, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Accessed 6 Mar.2024.

Paul V1 *Mense Maio* 29 April, 1965, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

Paul, Leslie-Ann. “Our Lady on the Hill”. *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*, 22 Sept. 2020, [www.newsday.co.tt/2020/09/22/our-lady-on-the-hill/](http://www.newsday.co.tt/2020/09/22/our-lady-on-the-hill/). Accessed 19 Oct. 2023.

Phillips, Laura Ann. “Pilgrims Brave Dangerous Neighbourhoods to Pray at Trinidad Shrine.” *Crux Now*, 16 May 2018, [www.cruxnow.com/global-church/2018/05/pilgrims-brave-dangerous-neighbourhoods-to-pray-at-trinidad-shrine](http://www.cruxnow.com/global-church/2018/05/pilgrims-brave-dangerous-neighbourhoods-to-pray-at-trinidad-shrine). Accessed 13 Oct. 2023.

Pope Francis. *Apostolic Letter Motu Proprio* 11 Feb. 2017, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Pope Francis. Letter of the Holy Father to H.E.Msgr. Rino Fisichella for the Jubilee 2025 11 Feb.2022, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Pope Francis. *Sanctuarium In Ecclesia*, 11 Feb.2017, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Ripperger, Chad, and Chad A. Ripperger *Prayers of the Auxillium Christianorum*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. 2017.

Saint John Paul II. *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 11 Oct.2002, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Accessed 6 Mar. 2024.

Saint John Paul II. *Redemptoris Mater*, 25 Mar. 1987, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Accessed 6 Mar.2024.

Second Vatican Council. *Lumen Gentium*. 21 Nov. 1964. [www.Vatican.va/](http://www.Vatican.va/).

. “The Miracle Mother- La Divina Pastora, Siparee/Supari Mai, the Black Madonna” *Discover Trinidad and Tobago*. 13. Apr. 2017, [www.discovertnt.com/articles/trinidad/miracle-mother-siparee-mai-black-madonna](http://www.discovertnt.com/articles/trinidad/miracle-mother-siparee-mai-black-madonna). Accessed 18 Nov. 2023

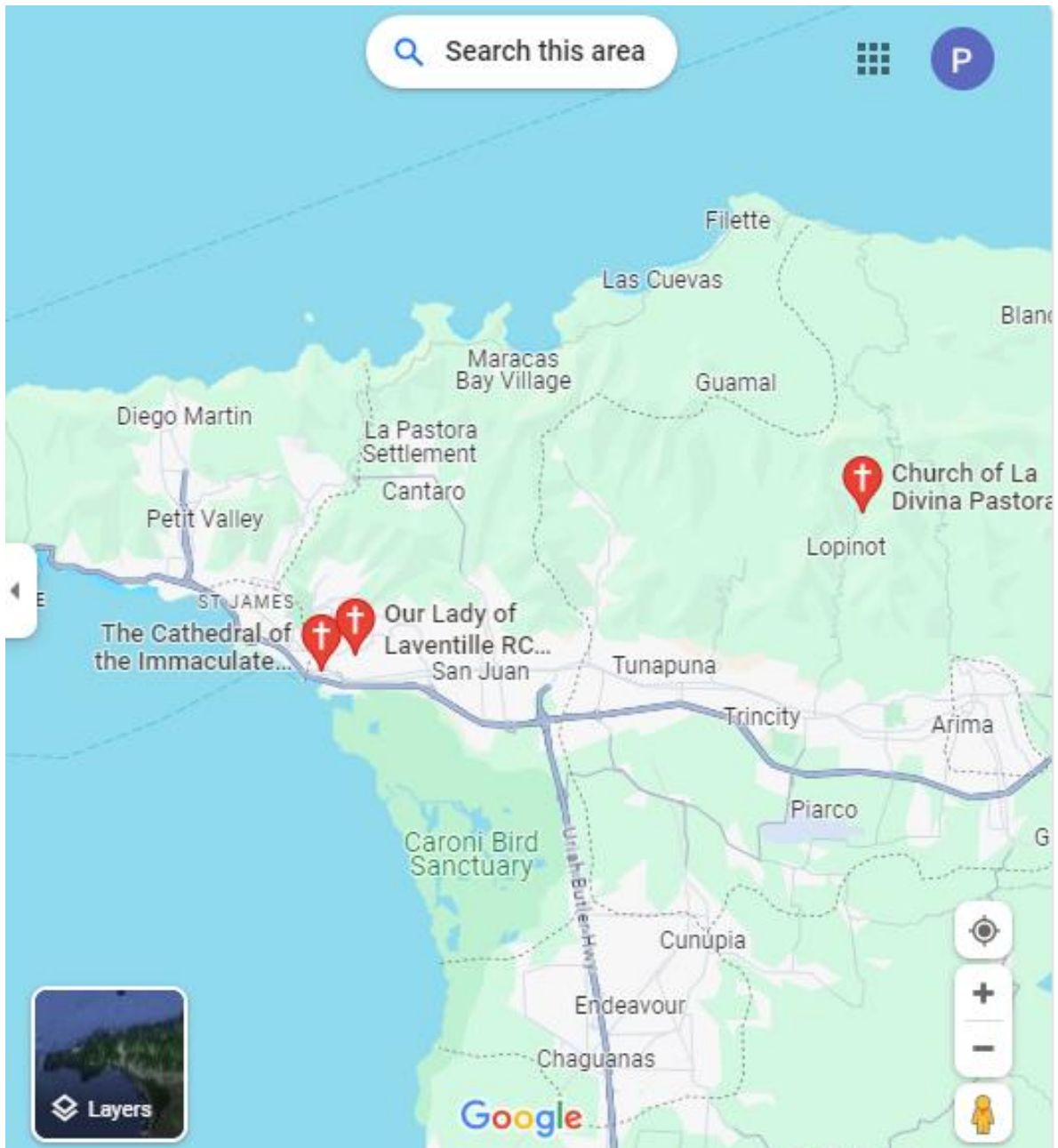
Thompson, Thomas A. “*Pilgrimages and Shrines: A Recognition Long Delayed.*” *Marian Studies*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2000, article 9. Accessed 23 Feb.2024.

#### UNPUBLISHED THESIS

Haynes, Carl. “A Critical Assessment of the Divina Pastora/Suparee Ke Mai Celebrations as a Space for Dialogue, Inculturation and Evangelisation. -2004.

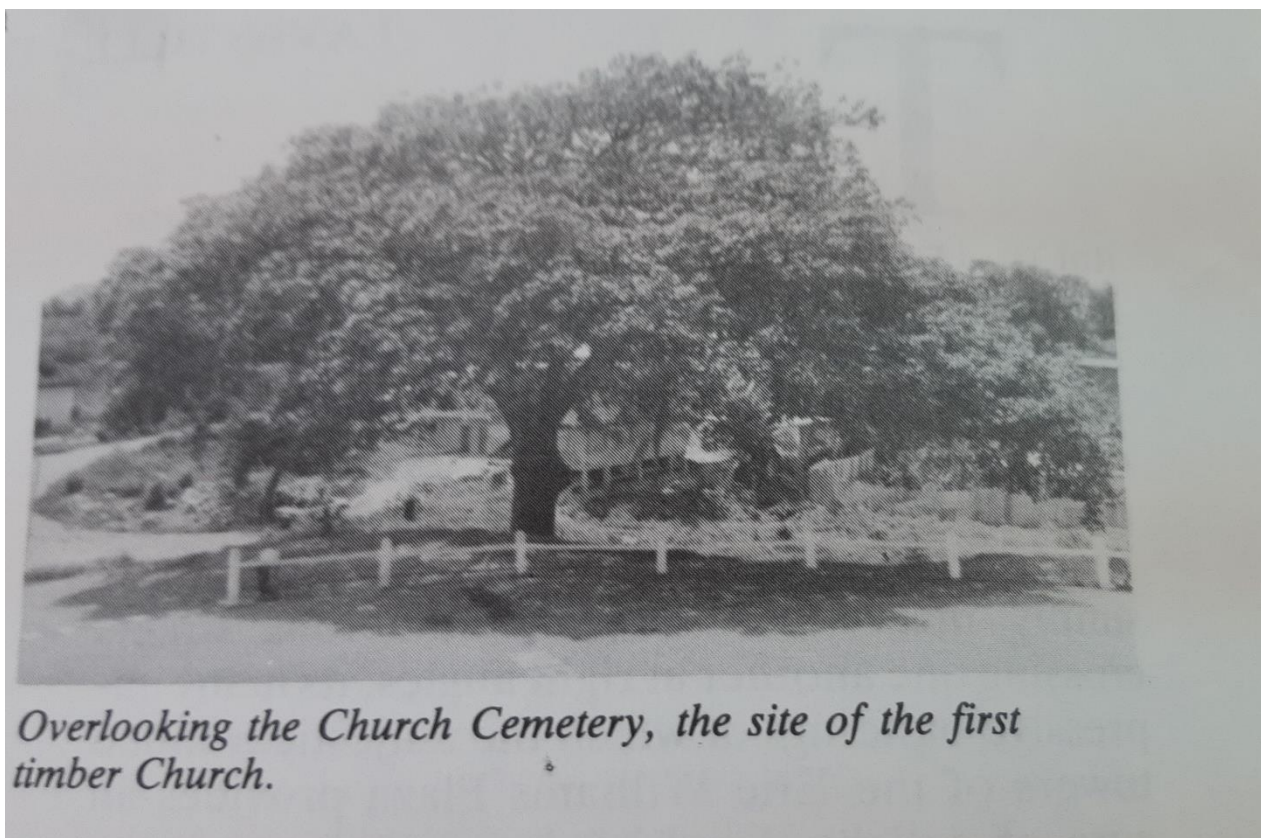
HUMM 3099 Caribbean Studies Project. University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago. Thesis

## Appendix A



Map of Trinidad- Laventille and Shrines

## Appendix B



*Overlooking the Church Cemetery, the site of the first timber Church.*

Image overlooking the church cemetery in Laventille



## Appendix C

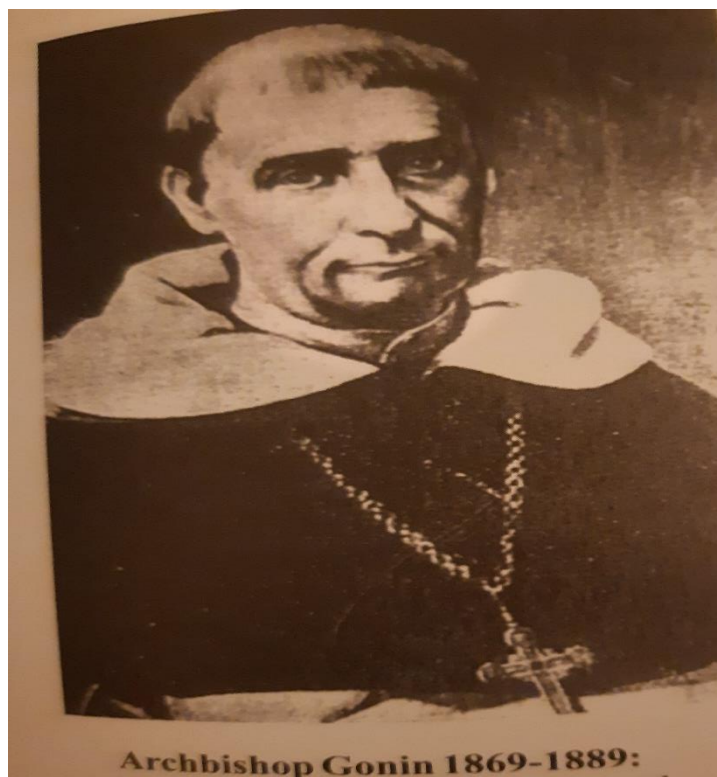


Image of Archbishop Gonin.

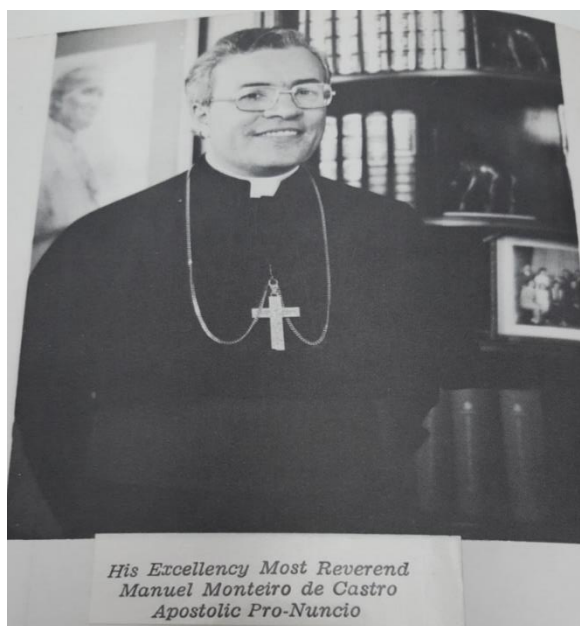


Image of His Excellency Most Reverend Manuel Monteiro de Castro, Apostolic Pro-Nuncio.

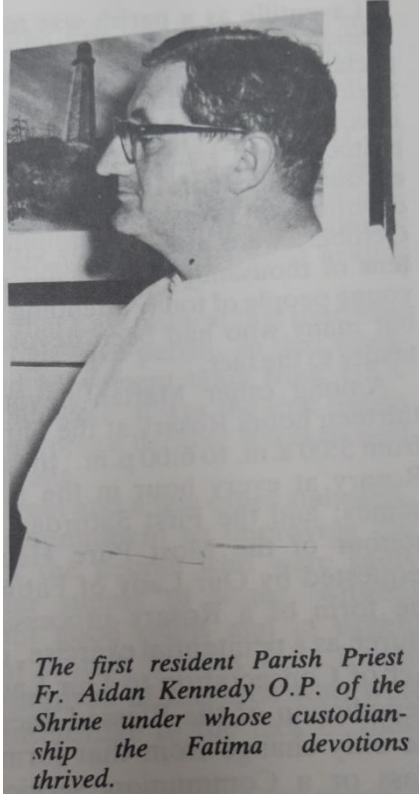
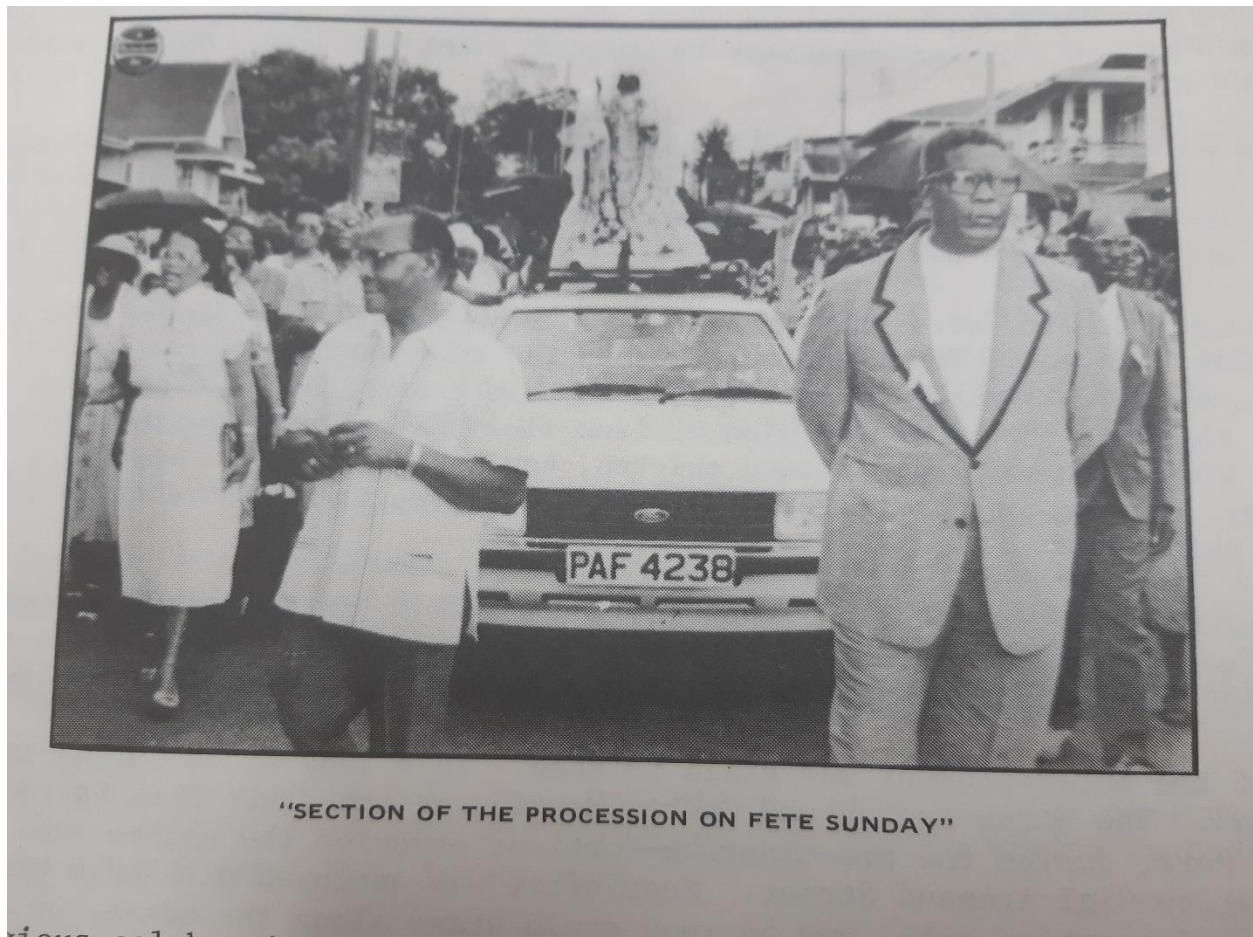


Image of Fr. Aidan Kennedy O.P (on the left) and Image of Fr. Austin Milner (on the right).

## Appendix D



"SECTION OF THE PROCESSION ON FETE SUNDAY"

Image of the Black Madonna procession in 1984.

## Appendix E

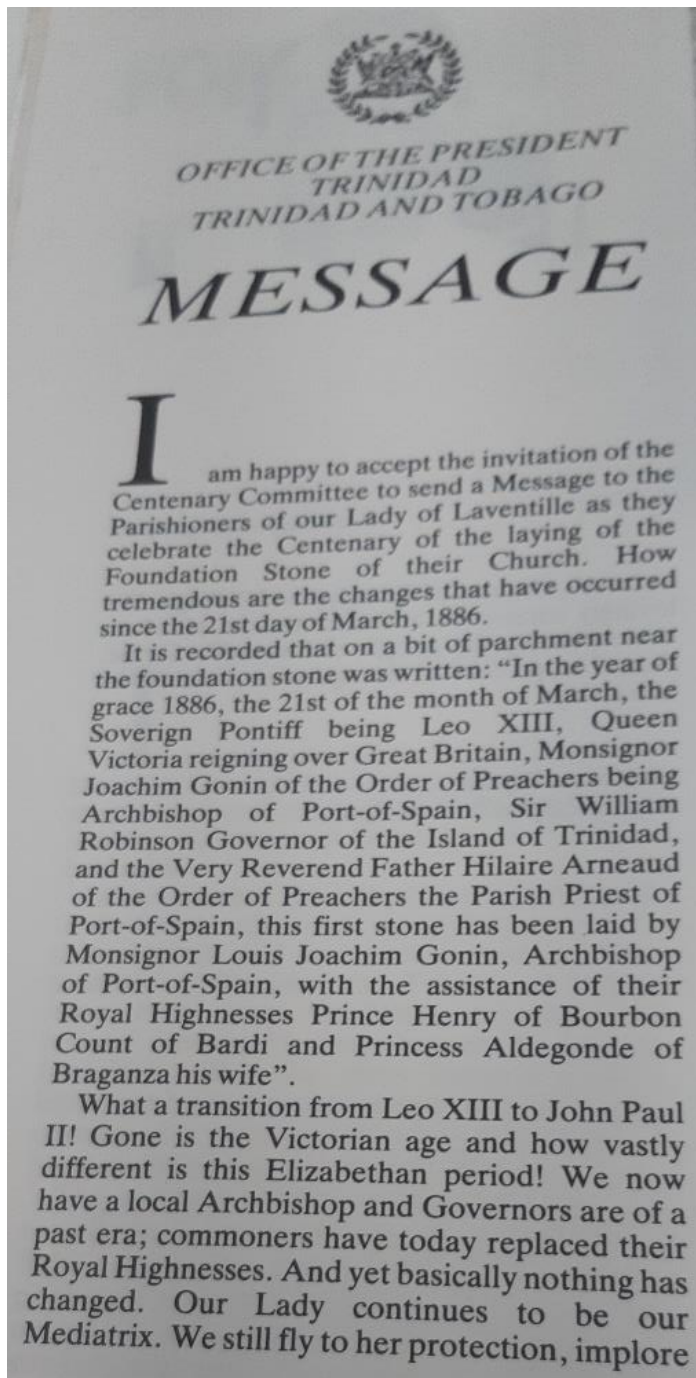


Image of President Ellis Clarke: Acceptance of Invitation to Centenary

## Appendix F

### LA DIVINA PASTORA, SIPARIA

painted. Real hair was used, in keeping with the usual practice for statues of women. The figure is in fact a half figure, supported by struts of wood, as was customary with Spanish Baroque-dressed statues. La Divina Pastora of Siparia has a large wardrobe for feast days. Specially appointed ladies undressed her and clothed her in private, behind closed doors. Over the years, pious pilgrims have presented her with a very large assortment of jewelry. Some of the jewelry was eventually sold in order to build a larger and more suitable church.

The small chapel served the people of the small village and on the days of pilgrimage the thousands of pilgrims who came had perforce to sleep under the night sky and assisted at Mass in the open air. Three or four ajoupas sold provisions and drinks, including rum, and were kept open day and night. Inevitably, in addition to the true religious fervour on the part of the devotees, there were and are abuses of one sort or another, to be expected where large crowds gather.

As the population of the village grew, Father John Baptiste Osenda, an Italian (ex-Franciscan) priest who had arrived in Trinidad in 1893, rebuilt the wooden church so that it accommodated four hundred worshippers in 1906. The old church, reconstructed many times over, was levelled, and the present church was built from the foundations by Fathers Kieran Lennon and Eugene Delahunt between 1958 and 1963. It holds one thousand people, but more pack into it on pilgrimage days.

#### **Archbishop Pantin preaching:**

On the feast day to a huge crowd. The church has no aisles or clerestory, but is well ventilated, being aligned in a north-south direction to avail of the prevailing breeze. A strong and spacious choir-loft accommodates a large number of pilgrims of every class and colour and from all over Trinidad. *Catholic News*



111

Image of Archbishop Anthony Pantin at La Divina Pastora Church, Siparia



## Appendix G

### OUR LADY OF LAVENTILLE

But the priest in charge of the Laventille area seized eagerly upon the money and employed it in building up the primary school at Rose Hill and improving the church at Success Village Laventille!

However, Archbishop Finbar Ryan put new life into the pilgrimages through his own devotion to Our Lady of Fatima. On the Feast of the Assumption 1943 Laventille hill was first named officially the *National shrine of Our Lady*. Some 5,000 people assembled at the shrine as the Archbishop consecrated the Archdiocese of Port of Spain to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Pilgrimages were held from May to October on the 13<sup>th</sup> of the month to commemorate Our Lady of Fatima.

Devotion to our Lady of Laventille has defeated the whims and plans of the Pastors of the shrine. In 1947 the present statue was donated by the Gonzalez family and erected by the firm of Ash and Watson Limited. Laventille was created a parish in 1950 with Father Aidan Kennedy O.P. as Parish Priest. He always referred to himself as 'Custodian of the Shrine'; and in his pastorate of fifteen years and with the encouragement of Archbishop Finbar Ryan, the Fatima Devotions from May 13<sup>th</sup> to October 13<sup>th</sup> attracted huge crowds. Though the popularity of the Laventille pilgrimages has somewhat diminished with the passing of the years, the shrine still remains the centre of devotion to Our Lady for many Catholics, especially in north Trinidad.

#### Archbishop Pantin preaching

In the 1990s, at the Fatima devotions, Laventille. *Catholic News*



149

Image of Archbishop Pantin at the Laventille devotions in 1990.