

## **Lanka Maeniya- Obava Pudanemu...The Hallowed Our Lady of Madhu**

Resembling worshipping hands, the blue and white flags decorating the chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Madhu, swayed in the gentle breeze of a brilliant mid winter Queensland day.

"Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death."

The chanting of this simple prayer, mixing with the singing of birds overhead filled the valley with a serenity not often experienced in the busy lives led in the modern world. Our pilgrimage to Marian Valley had transported us to a different world- the world of Virgin Mary - the mother of Jesus.

Our Lady of Madhu is Sri Lanka's very own ( interpretation of the) mother of Jesus, worshipped and prayed, seeking guidance in times of despair by thousands of Catholic devotees worldwide. Each year, on the first Saturday in July, Sri Lankan Catholics in Queensland come together to venerate Our Lady of Madhu, a day comparable to the Madhu Festival which celebrates the day of assumption of the hallowed Virgin Mary.

As in the Madhu Church in Mannar district in Sri Lanka, in Marian Valley in the Gold Coast hinterland, the church was filled with almost 300 Catholic devotees and their non Catholic friends from Sinhala, Tamil and Burgher communities. This year too, the annual pilgrimage was organised by the SAQ Seniors. Among the 35 pilgrims who joined the bus trip organized by the seniors were individuals of diverse religious and ethnic communities - united by the fact of being Sri Lankan.

It is indeed a miracle that the hallowed Mother of Jesus, lovingly handed over to humanity, to venerate and care for as its own mother by Christ himself in his last hours on the cross, unites people helping them to breakdown man made barriers of ideology, ethnicity and religion.

Sugee Kannangara

