



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO SRI LANKA AND THE PHILIPPINES
(12-19 JANUARY 2015)

MARIAN PRAYER

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary, Madhu
Wednesday, 14 January 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are in our Mother's house. Here she welcomes us into her home. At this shrine of Our Lady of Madhu, every pilgrim can feel at home, for here Mary brings us into the presence of her Son Jesus. Here Sri Lankans, Tamil and Sinhalese alike, come as members of one family. To Mary they commend their joys and sorrows, their hopes and needs. Here, in her home, they feel safe. They know that God is very near; they feel his love; they know his tender mercy, the tender mercy of God..

There are families here today which suffered greatly in the long conflict which tore open the heart of Sri Lanka. Many people, from north and south alike, were killed in the terrible violence and bloodshed of those years. No Sri Lankan can forget the tragic events associated with this very place, or the sad day when the venerable statue of Mary, dating to the arrival of the earliest Christians in Sri Lanka, was taken away from her shrine.

But Our Lady is remaining always with you. She is the mother of every home, of every wounded family, of all who are seeking to return to a peaceful existence. Today we thank her for protecting the people of Sri Lanka from so many dangers, past and present. Mary never forgot her children on this resplendent island. Just as she never left the side of her Son on the Cross, so she never left the side of her suffering Sri Lankan children.

Today we want to thank Our Lady for that presence. In the wake of so much hatred, violence and destruction, we want to thank her for continuing to bring us Jesus, who alone has the power to heal open wounds and to restore peace to broken hearts. But we also want to ask her to implore for us the grace of God's mercy. We ask also for the grace to make reparation for our sins and for all the evil which this land has known.

It is not easy to do this. Yet only when we come to understand, in the light of the Cross, the evil we are capable of, and have even been a part of, can we experience true remorse and true repentance. Only then can we receive the grace to approach one another in true contrition, offering and seeking true forgiveness. In this difficult effort to forgive and find peace, Mary is always here to encourage us, to guide us, to lead us. Just as she forgave her Son's killers at the foot of his Cross, then held his lifeless body in her hands, so now she wants to guide Sri Lankans to greater reconciliation, so that the balm of God's pardon and mercy may bring true healing to all.

Finally, we want to ask Mother Mary to accompany with her prayers the efforts of Sri Lankans from both Tamil and Sinhalese speaking communities to rebuild the unity which was lost. Just as her statue came back to her shrine of Madhu after the war, so we pray that all her Sri Lankan sons and daughters may now come home to God in a renewed spirit of reconciliation and fellowship.

Dear brothers and sisters, I am happy to be with you in Mary's house. Let us pray for one another. Above all, let us ask that this shrine may always be a house of prayer and a haven of peace. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Madhu, may all people find here inspiration and strength to build a future of reconciliation, justice and peace for all the children of this beloved land. Amen.