

WORLD DAY OF MARIANIST PRAYER



October 10, 2021

OUR LADY OF SUBUKIA,
NAKURU-KENYA (EASTERN AFRICA)

Introduction

Roman Catholicism was first brought to Kenya in the fifteenth century by the Portuguese, and was spread rapidly during the 20th century by missionaries. The first Christians to visit East Africa were Vasco da Gama and his crew, including Roman Catholic missionaries, in 1498. Today approximately 70% of Kenyans are Christians (38% Protestant, 28% Catholic); about 25% indigenous religions; 6% Muslim, (3% others).

The Village of Mary

Subukia Shrine or Village of Mary Mother of God, is a National Marian Shrine. The Shrine is under the Kenya Episcopal Conference and is entrusted to the care of Conventual Franciscan Friars. It is a place of prayer, peace, reconciliation, healing and rest.

Subukia is a small town 40 km from the Kenya's fourth largest town of Nakuru, which is about 211 km from Nairobi.

"Subukia" is a Maasai word pronounced "isupuku," for "higher grounds." It aptly describes this location. It is indeed high. It is also a meeting place of two hemispheres, north and south. The equator runs through the town of Subukia.

The prayerful environment and the serene nature of the place helps in deep relationship with God. A new chapel is under construction and on completion it will hold a capacity of about 5,000 people. It is designed to resemble the image of the Crown of Mary with twelve pillars representing the twelve apostles. It is a beautiful House of God.

At the foot of the hill as you approach the shrine, is a big white cross that can be seen easily as one approaches Subukia Valley. And buried at the foot of the cross is a piece of rock from the Grotto at Lourdes in France, a stone from River Jordan in Israel and another from the Marian Shrine at Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

History of the Shrine

After the visit of the late Pope St. John Paul II to Kenya in May 1980, and again in August 1985 at the time of the Eucharistic Congress, the Episcopal Conference of Kenya decided that there should be a national shrine dedicated to Mary Mother of God in the country. The Episcopal Conference requested the diocese of Nakuru, being in the centre of the country and accessible from all parts, to work on the project.

There had been various reports of visions of Our Lady in some parts of the country in the early 80's. There was a lot of confusion and even strange devotions had begun to develop.

Between August 29 and September 28, 1984, visions of Our Lady were reported at the parish of St. John the Evangelist in Subukia, Nakuru diocese. Whether these visions were true or not, there was certainly a great growth in devotion to Our Lady in the parish and especially the praying of the rosary.



The new chapel

Not all, those present but a few claimed to have seen visions of Mary. From the scriptures we learn that it was similar to what occurred when Jesus had risen from the dead and was seen only by a few people. The others believed without seeing.

The parish priest then began to visit the small Christian communities and presented the Catholic teachings on Our Lady, giving the relevant scriptural references. A small statue of Our Lady from Ireland was brought and placed in the parish substation of Munanda in 1985.

THE MARIAN YEAR

Bishop Peter Kairo of Murangá diocese was the main celebrant at the opening ceremony of the Marian year on the 15th August 1987. He blessed the site at Munanda where many people attended the function and received the sacraments of reconciliation and the Holy communion.

The closing of the Marian year on the 15th August 1988, was marked with a big celebration at Munanda, and faithfuls from the whole diocese attended. Bishop Ndingi Mwana a Nzeki of Nakuru diocese was the shepherd during the closing ceremony. The bishop saw it as a fulfilment of the mandate he had earlier been given by the Catholic bishops, of the possibility of having a national shrine of Mary the mother of God in Nakuru diocese.

NEW SITE FOR THE SHRINE

A special committee was selected in May 1989 to help look after the affairs of the shrine. The committee members felt that the site at Munanda was too small with only 12 acres of land. So, a larger site was proposed. An offer of 50 acres free of charge was made with the condition of buying 200 acres, and this was seen as divine providence.

Bishop Ndingi's representatives examined the piece of land at the new site and found it to be very suitable. On the 27th October 1989 the decision was made to purchase the land which had been offered at a generously low price. The title deeds were issued on the feast of St. Joseph, 19th March 1991.

The work of clearing the bush, fencing and the building of storage facilities immediately commenced.

The Conventual Franciscan Friars were then approached by Archbishop Kairo who was by then the bishop of Nakuru. Archbishop Kairo, on behalf of the Episcopal Conference asked the Conventual Franciscan Friars in Kenya to take charge of the shrine.

There has always been a significant number of priests to serve the many pilgrims who frequent the shrine. The services offered involve directing the pilgrims, celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation, spiritual direction, adoration and the celebration of the Eucharist. The shrine unites people from all over the country into one large family of Mother Mary. Even non-Catholics come to the shrine to deepen their religious beliefs and to seek solace.



The grotto a top hill

Prayer to St. Joseph

*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.
Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy, and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.*

SPRING OF WATER



On the eve of the feast of Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the 8th Dec. 1991, while clearing the thick bush on the hill, the headman of the workers, Mr. Henry Muthuku, came upon a wet patch of ground which had a small spring of clear water in it. When he scratched the top soil, water started flowing out and has never stopped flowing ever since.

The finding of this spring, on the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Conception is seen as very significant in the history of the shrine and resembles the request of Our Lady to Bernadette at Lourdes to scrape back the soil, from where water has flowed to this day.

The first national celebration, on this new site was on the feast of Mary Mother of God, 1st January 1992 and bishop Cornelius Koroir of Eldoret celebrated mass. On that day he blessed the water from the spring. It was a year marked by general election tensions, and there had been advice against any celebration at the shrine but approximately 2,500 people turned up for the occasion.

Water reminds us of the baptism we received, the cleansing of our sins, the symbol of new life. The spring water of the Subukia shrine is regarded holy and pilgrims drink or wash their hands and feet with it for healing. Some fetch the water in containers for future use.

MIRACLES

Just like there have been miracles at other Marian shrines of Lourdes in France and Fatima in Portugal, Many people are always curious to know whether miracles do take place at the Subukia shrine. The Church is very careful in making any such claims but there is no doubt that the shrine is perceived by many to be a holy place where God does make his presence felt in wonderful ways. However, many people who have visited the shrine have claimed healings and interventions of the Blessed Virgin Mary in their lives. Prayers offered in faith to God have been granted through the intercession of Our Lady of Subukia.

One miracle that is talked about most is the cure experienced by Mr. Helmut Mang, a German architect who worked at the Comboni polytechnic in Gilgil. He is the one who designed the white cross that dominates the valley in the shrine.

In mid-2000, He had visited the shrine of Mary with his wife. His left hand was beginning to wither from what he described as a hereditary disease that affects the fingers. He is a violinist, and he was beginning to worry about his future with regard to the instrument he loved to play so much. He tells of how he dipped the whole arm in the spring water and asked Mary to intercede for him, and after that he began to feel better and better and, now, he is in perfect health. He expresses his immense joy for the healing and thanks Our Lady for intervening.

THE MARIANISTS OF EASTERN AFRICA AND THE SHRINE

The shrine is open every day to all people, and the Marianists like other pilgrims can make visit to the Village of Mary any day or even hold an annual retreat there, as it was the case in 2019. It was a very special retreat directed by Bro. Jack Ventura and Fr. George Cerniglia of the US Province.

All the feasts of Mary are especially celebrated with a particular emphasis on January 1, the Solemnity of Mary Mother of God.

A National pilgrimage is held annually on the first Saturday of October. The year 2020 was different due to the pandemic. There was no gathering for the National Shrine Day. This year it is also not clear what will happen.



The white cross

PRAYER INTENSTIONS

Through the intercession of our Lady of Subukia let us pray:

The response is: *Lord listen to our prayers through the intercession of Our Lady of Subukia.*

a) For the care of our common home

God of all creation, praise you for the gift of Nature which accommodates us and leads us to contemplate the beauty and the magnificence of your creation. Mother Nature, you clothe us in your ecological splendour; you strengthen our deep spiritual communion with God, with our brothers and sisters and within ourselves. Merciful God, forgive us for having failed to take care of our common home which is being affected by global warming, loss of biodiversity, conflicts and poverty. Holy Spirit, you who enlighten our human hearts, help us members of the Marianist family to work for a sincere and practical human, spiritual and ecological conversion for the benefit of our common home. Our Lady of Subukia, exalted in the midst of this beautiful biodiverse forest, help us to be involved daily in the protection of the environment and for a perfect universal communion. Blessed Chaminade, Blessed Adèle, and all the Saints of the Marianist Family, walk alongside us as we work to make our home a more welcoming for the future. *We pray to the Lord...*

b) In solidarity with the victims of covid-19

Dear Lord, give us the strength and courage to accompany and support all those who suffer the loss of loved ones, those who have lost jobs, the hungry and the homeless. Be merciful to the souls of those who have died from covid-19. May we continue to advocate for justice for all and to be in solidarity with the victims of injustice which is brought by the pandemic. Encourage and strengthen all the care givers and health workers in their tireless effort to restore life.

We pray to the Lord...

C) For peace in Eastern Africa and in the whole world

We pray for the growth of the Region of Eastern Africa, for the leadership and for the ministry to the poor and the vulnerable. For our hurting and broken world, for those who have lost their loved ones through violence and war. Lord, you came that the world may have peace. May your peace and presence cover us. You are our peace and our refuge. May Mary Queen of peace intercede for us. *We pray to the Lord...*

D) For vocation in the Family of Mary

Lord you call each one of us by name and ask us to follow you. Inspire us as we strive to know you, and open our hearts to heed your call. The work is great but the labourers are few. Bring more labourers into the Marianist Family. *We pray to the Lord...*



MAY

THE FATHER, AND THE SON,
AND THE HOLY SPIRIT
BE GLORIFIED IN ALL PLACES
THROUGH THE
IMMACULATE VIRGIN MARY.
AMEN!