

WORLD DAY OF  
MARIANIST  
PRAYER



*October 11  
2020*

“Our Lady of El Salto”

(The Pearl of Great Price of Tacunga)

Latacunga – Ecuador



Diocesan Marian  
Shrine



## Introduction to Christianity in Ecuador and to the geographical location of the Diocesan Marian Shrine of *Nuestra Señora de El Salto*

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Christianity began in Ecuador with the arrival of the Spanish in Latin America, who colonized it from 1492 into the 19th century, when the era of independence began in the different cities of the country and the continent.

Thus, at the national level, in terms of their religious belief, the majority of the people are Catholic Christians (approx. 79%), characterized by a very marked popular and Marian religiosity throughout the country and especially in the Ecuadorian mountains in churches and Marian shrines with long years of history.

The Sanctuary of *Nuestra Señora de El Salto* is located in the city of Latacunga in the center - north of the Inter - Andean Region of Ecuador in South America. Latacunga belongs to the Province of Cotopaxi near the volcano that bears that name. It is a city subject to earthquakes, at an altitude of 2,750 meters [9,022 feet] above sea level and with an Andean cold climate averaging 12°C [54° F].



## History of the Diocesan Marian Shrine of *Nuestra Señora de El Salto* (The Pilgrim of El Salto. The Pearl of Great Price of Tacunga)

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At the beginning of the 17th century, Father Bedón, Provincial of the Dominicans, with the desire to spread the gospel and venerate the Virgin of the Rosary, in 1618 created on a stone a beautiful painting of the Mother of God “sitting on a chair holding the Child Jesus and stroking the hair of John the Baptist, who was next to a lamb, all at the bottom of the Cotopaxi Volcano.” He called her the “Virgin at Rest.”

In the following years, the central region of Ecuador, where the city of Latacunga is located, on several occasions experienced earthquakes causing great damage and human loss. In 1698, the stone of the image of the “Virgin at Rest” disappeared. After 70 years it reappeared and gave rise to a tradition jealously guarded by our ancestors. Among the existing versions is the one that says, that in order to cross the Yanayacu River that flows through part of the city, the neighbors crossed in a *leap*, and for security they placed a flat stone as a bridge. Someone wishing to steady the stone that served as a bridge removed it, noting the presence of a beautiful painting on the obverse of it.



After the event was reported, the devotees moved the stone with the painting of the Virgin to a nearby place and built a chapel in its honor, calling it "The Pilgrim of El Salto. The Pearl of Great Price of Tacunga."

The year after the earthquake of January 21, 1797, the locals swore an oath "for an Advocate of earthquakes," offering each February 4 a feast in her memory, in reverence and recognition of her having been the intercessor to appease the wrath of Divine Justice." They restarted the construction of the church on the same site called "El Salto."

Years passed and in later earthquakes or eruptions of the Cotopaxi volcano, the city of Latacunga received the protection and shelter of the "Virgen del Salto," "Their Patron Saint against earthquakes," thus manifesting her maternal protection by supporting each of her children just as she holds Jesus with one arm and John the Baptist with the other.

Until today, many of her sons and daughters visit her in her Shrine, silently offering candles and asking for the intercession of the Mother to receive some special grace or, in turn, giving thanks for having already received it.



### **Marianist presence in Latacunga - Ecuador and in the Diocesan Marian Shrine "Our Lady of El Salto"**



On November 23, 1979, the Marianist Brothers arrived, at the call and request of Bishop Mario Ruiz Navas of the Diocese of Latacunga, to take over the newly founded Diocesan *Colegio Hermano Miguel*, and in turn assumed the parish named *November 11 - The Victory*. After a few years, at the request of the Diocese they assumed the ecclesiastical parish of *Nuestra Señora de El Salto*, which functioned fundamentally as a parish, without specific attention to its Marian identity. But gradually coming to know the history and importance of the Image painted on the stone, they began as Marianists to accompany spiritually the parish community to where the faithful welcomed with faith and enthusiasm the presence of our Blessed Mother in her dedication as *Nuestra Señora de El Salto*. At the same time, Bishop Ruiz, in tune with the celebration of the Marian Year (1987-1988) in the universal Church, declared it a DIOCESAN MARIAN SHRINE.

The Virgin Mary, from her Shrine, was the mother and protector of the great crowd of people who, every day, and especially on holy days, filled the platforms of the square in front of her Shrine. She inspired, since 1983, the project to set up the *Casa Campesina*, located a few blocks from the Shrine, to welcome the indigenous people, porters, beggars, who spent their nights on the platforms, trying to protect themselves from the cold of the nights under their ponchos. Pope Saint John Paul II was promised that it would be built to commemorate his historic meeting on January 31, 1985, with the indigenous nationalities of Ecuador. It was inaugurated in August 1988. After approximately ten years of service in the Marian shrine, the Marianists withdrew, leaving it in the hands of the diocesan priests until today.

Currently, the Marianist Brothers continue in the *Casa Campesina*, as well as in their work with the Marianist Family in the *Colegio Hermano Miguel* with the presence of the Marianist Sisters and members of a Lay Marianist Community.

Finally, a group of former catechists (who are now a MLC) from "El Salto," who collaborated as young people with the Marianists, were entrusted, in 2016, with the responsibility for the Shrine, and returned there feeling a special call to service to Our Lady of El Salto with their Marianist spirituality making this dedication known again not only in the Diocese of Latacunga, where several families have taken pictures of the Image into their homes with the prayer of the Holy Rosary, but also to different parts of the country and the world, rescuing people from natural disasters through her maternal presence and protection, thus returning to her being "the Pilgrim of the Leap: The Patron Saint against earthquakes".



## Prayer Intentions

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*Through the intercession of Our Lady of El Salto let us pray for:*

### a) Situations of natural disasters and the care of our common home

"Because all creatures are connected, each one must be valued with affection and admiration" (Pope Francis)

"The entire material universe is a language of God's love, of his unlimited affection for us"

(Pope Francis)

**Petition:** We ask you that we might become aware of our actions and their negative effects, especially for our common home, and that we might assume our collaboration in creative work. We also ask you to take care and protect all of our countries from natural disasters. **We pray to the Lord.**

**All respond:** "Glory to you, Virgin of 'El Salto,' glory to you, Mother of God, intercede for us and guide us to Christ."

### b) For Latin America and for peace throughout the world

"We will not be able to tackle environmental degradation unless we pay attention to causes that have to do with human and social degradation" (Pope Francis)

**Petition:** We ask your forgiveness for the harm done to our brothers and sisters and for forgetting the precious gift of peace that is your gift to be lived and shared; we entrust to you in a special way Latin America for the situations experienced in this last year and for peace in the world in the face of the different conflict situations that we are suffering. **Let us pray to the Lord.**

**All respond:** "Glory to you, Virgin of 'El Salto,' glory to you, Mother of God, intercede for us and guide us to Christ."

### c) The life of faith of the Marianist Family

"A Christian without the Virgin is an orphan. Also a Christian without the Church is an orphan. A Christian needs these two women, two women mothers, two virgin women: the Church and the Mother of God "(Pope Francis)

"Always be united with the Blessed Virgin" (Fr. Chaminade)

**Petition:** We thank you for the beautiful gift of Mary, our Mother; grant that we might be formed by her into the likeness of her Son and we ask you for the grace to work as one Family, making Jesus known, loved and served in all corners of the world, in pilgrimage together with Mary who helps us in our own Leap of Faith. **We pray to the Lord**

**All respond:** "Glory to you, Virgin of 'El Salto,' glory to you, Mother of God, intercede for us and guide us to Christ."

### d) For vocations to the Marianist Family

"Let us fill our lamps with oil so as not to be caught unexpectedly, and follow the Bridegroom with love and promptness as soon as he arrives" (M. Adèle)

**Petition:** We ask that you raise abundant and holy vocations for the branches of the Marianist Family, where each one, upon discovering his or her state of life, can respond with love and promptness to the call of the Lord in union with Mary. **We pray to the Lord**

**All respond:** "Glory to you, Virgin of 'El Salto,' glory to you, Mother of God, intercede for us and guide us to Christ."



### Prayer to "Nuestra Señora de El Salto"

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Mary, Virgin and Mother,  
who hast made God present  
in the midst of us,  
look upon us with kindness,  
help us in our needs,  
deliver us from selfishness,  
transform us into the image of your son Jesus,  
to build here on earth  
God's kingdom  
in justice, in fraternity, and in peace. Amen.  
May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit  
be glorified in all places  
through the Immaculate Virgin Mary. Amen

