



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE of ORANGE

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Our Lady of La Vang Shrine, testament to the journey of the Vietnamese-American people, to be unveiled at Christ Cathedral on July 17

GARDEN GROVE, Calif. (June 25, 2021) — On the second anniversary of Christ Cathedral’s dedication as the Catholic cathedral of the Diocese of Orange, the Most Rev. Kevin Vann, Bishop of Orange, and Fr. Christopher Smith, Rector and Episcopal Vicar of Christ Cathedral, will be unveiling a new shrine on July 17 that serves as a testament to the remarkable journey of the Vietnamese-American people — from war and persecution to a new reality where faith and community are vibrant and ascendant.

The centerpiece of the [Our Lady of La Vang Shrine](#) is a statue of the Virgin Mary as she is believed to have appeared before a group of persecuted Vietnamese Catholics in 1798. During that historic Marian apparition, which took place in a remote rainforest region in Vietnam, the Blessed Mother offered the desperate parishioners hope and guidance. In the centuries since, Our Lady of La Vang, as the apparition has since been named, has represented hope, faith and promise to Vietnamese Catholics around the world.

The July 17 Solemn Blessing Day is open to the public. Between 5,000 to 8,000 of the faithful are expected to attend. A special invite-only Media Day will be July 14.

“This shrine to Our Lady of La Vang is not only another example of how beauty draws to God, but it is a testimony to the faith of our Vietnamese brothers and sisters who have contributed so much to the life of our parishes here in Orange County, and which then points us all to the Mother of God and her protection,” said Bishop Kevin Vann.

The shrine represents both that historic apparition and honors the important contributions of the Vietnamese-Catholic diaspora in Orange County, which is home to the world’s largest population of Vietnamese outside of Vietnam. An estimated 100,000 Vietnamese Catholics live in the county.

“The Vietnamese community in Orange County and I are very excited to have this shrine of Our Lady of La Vang to be solemnly blessed,” said Bishop Thanh Thai Nguyen. “Remembering the blessings received from her intercessions, we desire to honor her with a special place to express our deep appreciation to her past accompaniment and to petition her to continue journeying with us in our pilgrimage of life. Our hearts are filled with joy and gratitude as we look forward to seeing Our Lady of La Vang here on our beautiful Christ Cathedral campus.”

Weighing an estimated 16,000 pounds, the 12-foot-tall statue was carved from white marble extracted from a quarry in Carrara, Italy. It took one and a half years to sculpt.

More than 5,000 donors — many giving small amounts — have contributed to the \$12.6-million shrine, located in the northeast corner of the Christ Cathedral campus.

Standing on a cloud, Mary is depicted wearing a traditional Vietnamese áo dài dress and khăn đống hat. She has a Eurasian face and holds the Baby Jesus. Behind her are three supporting poles that hold up the canopy-like structure, which itself symbolizes the rainforest setting of the 1798 Marian apparition. The poles resemble the three banyan trees that were behind the Virgin Mary during the apparition.

The shrine also contains donor names and the names of 117 Catholics who were martyred for their religious beliefs in Vietnam. The names detail how and when each person died.

The shrine will be the primary draw of Christ Cathedral's planned Marian Court, where the Diocese of Orange intends to install other shrines honoring the Virgin Mary.

In addition to the Blessed Mother statue, the Our Lady of La Vang Shrine will contain rosary gardens, which are still under construction. A basalt medallion around the statue will also be added, as will a waterfall feature by the martyr wall.

Aaron Torrence of Culver City-based Torrence Architects is the project's architect of record, and Trần Quốc Trung of Global Solution Development is the design architect.

"The project touches many people in different ways — the volunteers, the donors, the faithful, the local media, the builders," said Elysabeth Nguyen, project manager for the Our Lady of La Vang Diocesan committee. "This shrine is the result of the faithful and the community coming together. I was fortunate to witness it and grow with it. I am eternally thankful to be part of the journey for the last five years and I look forward to seeing many others visit and make it part of their journey of faith."

The shrine, modern in design like Christ Cathedral in front of it, features an alpha-shaped ribbon of stainless steel panels under a glass-paned roof.

Photos and videos are available at www.christcathedralcalifornia.org/ollvshrine

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Suggested Interviews for Media Day, Wednesday, July 14

Major Diocese leaders, including Bishop Vann and Bishop Nguyen, are not expected to be available on Solemn Blessing Day (July 17) for interviews, only on Media Day. Please plan accordingly.

The Most Rev. Kevin Vann, Bishop of Orange

The Most Rev. Bishop Thanh Thai Nguyen, Auxiliary Bishop of Orange

Fr. Christopher Smith, Rector and Episcopal Vicar of Christ Cathedral

Fr. Vincent Pham, Director of the Vietnamese Catholic Center

Elysabeth Nguyen, Our Lady of La Vang Diocesan committee Lead

Aaron Torrence, Architect of Record from Culver City-based Torrence Architects

Donation Details

The Orange Catholic Foundation accepts donations for the Our Lady of La Vang Shrine. To donate, visit www.orangecatholicfoundation.org/give-now/olly. The foundation also accepts cash donations in person at its headquarters, located at the Diocese of Orange Pastoral Center, 13280 Chapman Ave., Suite 430 Garden Grove, CA 92840

For more information, email info@orangecatholicfoundation.org or call (714) 282-3021.

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Media Day Details – Wednesday, July 14 - [Click here for a campus map](#)

What: Invited media will be able to view the shrine site up close and have select interviewees available to them. See suggested interviews section. Phone, in-person or zoom interviews may also be arranged ahead of time, schedules permitting. **Major Diocese leaders, including the Most Rev. Kevin Vann and the Most Rev. Thanh Thai Nguyen, are not expected to be available on Solemn Blessing Day (July 17) for interviews, only on Media Day. Please plan accordingly.**

When: 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesday, July 14

Where: Christ Cathedral campus, 13280 Chapman Ave., Garden Grove

RSVPs required: Please email Bradley Zint and Christina Montes - bzint@rcbo.org; cmontes@rcbo.org. Media passes will be distributed on Media Day and on Solemn Blessing Day to those who have RSVPed.

For more information: Contact Bradley Zint at (714) 282-6052 or email bzint@rcbo.org

Day-of media contact: Bradley Zint at (657) 390-3914. Vietnamese speakers will also be onsite to help attending Vietnamese-language media

Parking: Lots P1 and P2. Enter from Gate 2 off Chapman Avenue

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Solemn Blessing Day Details – Saturday, July 17 – [Click here for a campus map](#)

What: The public is invited to attend the Diocese of Orange’s unveiling of the Our Lady of La Vang Shrine, a contemporary outdoor display that serves as a testament to the remarkable journey of the Vietnamese-American people — from war and persecution to a new reality where faith and community are vibrant and ascendant. The 12-foot tall Virgin Mary statue resembles how she is believed to have appeared before a group of persecuted Vietnamese Catholics in 1798 in a rainforest of Vietnam. Since then, Our Lady of La Vang has represented hope, faith and promise to Vietnamese Catholics around the world.

Visuals:

- Modern outdoor Our Lady of La Vang Shrine (featuring carved Italian white marble Virgin Mary statue, 12 feet tall, weighing an estimated 16,000 pounds)
- An estimated 5,000 to 8,000 people at the Solemn Blessing Day. Major Diocesan leadership, including the Most Rev. Kevin Vann, Bishop of Orange
- 223-member dance group (representing 223 years since the 1798 Our Lady of La Vang Marian apparition) and 450-person choir
- Musical prelude with drummers and a colorful procession

- **Major Diocese leaders, including the Most Rev. Kevin Vann and the Most Rev. Thanh Thai Nguyen, are not expected to be available on Solemn Blessing Day (July 17) for interviews, only on Media Day (July 14). Please plan accordingly.**

When: 3 p.m. to 10 p.m., July 17. Musical prelude goes from **3 p.m. to 4 p.m.** Shrine blessing is from **4 p.m. to 5 p.m.**, following by an outdoor Mass. Evening entertainment is scheduled to begin at 7:30 p.m. Because of thousands of attendees expected, high amounts of street traffic are anticipated, so media is urged to arrive early.

Where: Christ Cathedral campus, 13280 Chapman Ave., Garden Grove

Livestream: Solemn blessing ceremony and Mass will be livestreamed on the Diocese's YouTube and Facebook channels, with live commentary in both English and Vietnamese

RSVP and media passes are required: Please email Bradley Zint and Christina Montes - bzint@rcbo.org; cmontes@rcbo.org. Media passes will be distributed on Media Day and on Solemn Blessing Day to those who have RSVPed. There will be a media check-in tent near the campus' Crean Tower.

For more information: Contact Bradley Zint at (714) 282-6052 or email bzint@rcbo.org

Day-of media contact: For English, Bradley Zint at (657) 390-3914

Media parking: Media parking is across the street from Christ Cathedral at the Kaiser facility, 200 S. Lewis St., Orange. Attending media is advised to arrive early in anticipation of traffic delays. **Broadcast television trucks with power outlet needs can enter the Christ Cathedral campus from Gate 1 off Chapman Avenue and stage behind the campus' Cultural Center, near Lots P3 and P4.**

Still photographer information: Media will be staged between 50 yards and 100 yards away from the shrine site and are not expected to be able to get very close to the shrine and blessing area. Please use the appropriate lenses to photograph from that distance. **Close-up shots should be taken on Media Day, July 14.**

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Fast Facts of the Our Lady of La Vang Shrine

— The carved Italian white marble statue of Our Lady of Vang stands 12 feet tall and weighs an estimated 16,000 pounds. Below her is an altar and cloud that together are 6 feet tall.

— The statue was co-designed by a priest board headed by Monsignor Tuan Pham of Saint Columban Catholic Church and Nghi Dinh Pham, with approval of the Diocese Sacred Arts Committee and Bishop Kevin Vann. It was sculpted by Andrea Ceccarelli of the Italian Marble Company, which is based in Carrara, Italy. The company is a fifth-generation artisan marble business that was founded in 1897.

— About 400 steel panels are incorporated into the shrine structure.

— There are 80 skylight glass panels in the shrine.

— The footprint of the shrine site, which includes the rosary gardens, is 21,200 square feet, or just under a half acre.

— Approximately 300 volunteers have helped make the shrine a reality.

— Gray, the construction firm, was the general contractor.

— The shrine has cost \$12.6 million, of which approximately \$13.5 million has been raised as of June. Any unused construction funds will go toward the shrine’s ongoing maintenance needs.

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Architectural elements of the shrine that will be finished after Solemn Blessing Day

— Rosary gardens

— A waterfall feature by the martyr wall

— A medallion of basalt stone, which was sourced from Vietnam and will be on the ground around the Our Lady of La Vang statue

— Future in-ground lighting around the statue

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Important Milestone Dates

— Our Lady of La Vang project first announced by the Diocese of Orange on Dec. 7, 2016.

— Project approved for fundraising by Bishop Vann and Orange Catholic Foundation on July 27, 2017, and an official Diocese Our Lady of La Vang committee is formed.

— Future shrine site blessed by Bishop Kevin Vann on Oct. 21, 2017. The blessing attracted more than 3,000 of the faithful.

— Groundbreaking occurred on Oct. 27, 2018. More than 200 congregants attended the ceremony.

— On Dec. 18, 2018, Bishop Kevin Vann and Bishop Thanh Thai Nguyen visited the Our Lady of La Vang pilgrimage site in central Vietnam’s Quảng Trị Province.

— Construction site at Christ Cathedral blessed by Bishop Thanh Thai Nguyen in a private ceremony on Nov. 21, 2019.

— Our Lady of La Vang carved Italian marble statue, the centerpiece of the shrine, arrived from Italy to the Christ Cathedral campus on Jan. 28, 2020.

— After three days of painstaking work, the Our Lady of La Vang statue is put in place within the shrine site on June 3, 2021. Bishop Kevin Vann, Bishop Thanh Thai Nguyen and Fr. Christopher Smith bless the work of installing the statue before a small crowd of onlookers and supporters.

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Historical Background of the Our Lady of La Vang apparition

The Our Lady of La Vang Shrine is dedicated to the 1798 Marian apparition within the rainforest of La Vang, Quảng Trị Province, in the North Central Coast region of Vietnam. At the time, the Catholic people of Vietnam were suffering persecution, with many being martyred for their faith. Many fled to La Vang, where one night the apparition of a lady in a traditional Vietnamese *áo dài* dress appeared alongside two angels. She was holding a child in her arms. The apparition was interpreted to be the Virgin Mary holding the Baby Jesus.

The Blessed Mother spoke words of love and comfort to the persecuted Catholics and showed them how to make medicines from trees growing in the forest. A shrine to Our Lady of La Vang was eventually

built of rice straw and leaves at the site but was burned in 1805 during an insurgency in which many Catholics were martyred. The shrine was rebuilt in 1900 and enlarged in 1928. Pilgrims from around the world journey to the site annually and many have reported miraculous cures.