

On September 8th, we celebrate the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is also the feast of Our Lady of Velankanni. In the 16th century, a young Hindu boy was carrying a large jar of fresh buttermilk from Velankanni to his master in a neighboring village, when he stopped to rest along the road under a banyan tree. A beautiful woman appeared to him, holding a child, and she asked for some milk for her son. The boy had a difficult choice to make – be generous with the milk that did not belong to him, offering refreshment to this lovely lady's child, or be faithful to his earthly master.

Upon reaching his master, he apologized for his tardiness, and that the jar was not full, relating the story of what had taken place to him on the way. His master was incredulous, but then he looked inside the jar and it was full again. He insisted on seeing the place, and when they arrived our Blessed Mother appeared again to the boy, though the master could only see an emanation of light.

A few years later, a boy who was lame was sitting by the side of the road under a banyan tree selling buttermilk to support him and his mother. A lady holding a child emerged from a bright light in front of him. She asked for some milk for her child, and of course she wasn't intending on paying for it. Once again, a choice. Generosity, or hold onto that which was precious and dear and paid for his own food and that of his widowed mother.

After her son had his drink, the lady instructed him to go to the same neighboring town as the previous boy and find a certain wealthy Catholic man, and request a chapel be built in the place near Velankanni. It was quite a distance to travel for someone who was lame. Except he no longer was. The man, having had his own dream the night before of a lady, accepted the boy's request in faith, and thus the first chapel was built dedicated to Our Lady of Good Health. It has been rebuilt several times over the years, including by some Portuguese sailors in the 17th century who vowed to build a chapel wherever they landed if they were delivered from the storm which threatened their ship. 20+ million visitors each year, of all faiths, seek the maternal protection and assistance of the Mother of God (who brings us Jesus). The devotion was approved by the Vatican on August 1, 2024.

This weekend St. Joseph is having their annual parish picnic celebration at Pickering Barn on Sunday, September 7th at noon. We will celebrate Our Lady of Velankanni on Saturday the 13th at the 5PM Mass at Mary, Queen of Peace, with a feast to follow. Our Lady of Sorrows will have their patronal celebration next weekend as well, with the International Festival after the 1PM Mass on September 14th. We have much to celebrate and give thanks for in the love of God with and for us.