

Cathedral Basilica of the National Shrine of **Our Lady of Aparecida, Brazil**

The Cathedral Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida is located in Aparecida, Brazil. It is the largest cathedral and second largest Catholic church in the world. She is considered as the Patroness of Brazil. The cathedral has its origins in the finding of a clay statue of Our Lady.

One day in 1717, three fishermen were trying to catch fish for a banquet in honour of the San Paulo Governor. They were known for their devotion to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. Sadly, despite their prayers, they did not get any fish! But late in the day, one of them found a statue of the Virgin Mary when he cast his net. It happened to be a statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception! They cleaned the statue and kept it safely with them. On their very next cast, they were blessed with so much fish that their boat nearly capsized. The statue was then placed in the house of Felipe Pedroso, the fisherman who found it. Soon people came to know and starting visiting in such large numbers that the family built a small chapel to house the statue.

Over the years, the

small chapel was replaced by a larger one, then a basilica and finally work started on the current basilica. On July 1980, Pope John Paul II consecrated the sanctuary with the name of **Our Lady of Aparecida** and its feast is celebrated on October 12.

FACTS

- ✦ Aparecida is the traditional name of the Immaculate Conception that was given to this clay statue.
- ✦ This statue is believed to have been the work of Father Agostino de Jesus, a monk who resided in São Paulo, Brazil.
- ✦ The basilica was declared the largest Marian Temple in the world in 1984.
- ✦ Has received **golden rose** three times (by Pope Paul VI in 1967; by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007; by Pope Francis in 2017). Golden rose is a gold ornament blessed by the Pope usually on the fourth Sunday of Lent and symbolises reverence or affection.
- ✦ An intruder attempted to steal the statue of Our Lady of Aparecida in 1978. Unfortunately for him, the statue slipped and broke to pieces when he was caught. It was then expertly put together by a group of talented artists and artisans ◦

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