



It was the first Sunday of August 2016. The weather forecast was promising reasonable good weather for the day with sunny periods. We were up bright and early and settled in the car for a drive out to regional village of Castlemaine.

Castlemaine is a very small city in the goldfields region of Victoria, which is about 120 kilometers northwest by road from Melbourne City and situated about 40 kilometers from the major provincial center of Bendigo. The history teaches us that it was in 1851 when Castlemaine began as a gold rush boomtown and then was named a City in 1965 although saw population on the decline since then.

Before you reach Castlemaine you come pass towns namely Diggers Rest, Gisborne, Woodend and Kyneton. They once again relate to the history of gold rush era and the events. As the drive from South Eastern suburbs exceed two

and a half hours it has been the practice that we rest half way through the journey. This offers the opportunity for a stretch, a breath of fresh air and some morning tea.

Exit the Free-Way at Castlemaine, there is a long trek of narrow, winding road. Either side of this road pictures vast and long-stretched farmlands where cattle,

## Road to Heavenly Help

sheep and horses graze, and farmhouses fitted with large green water tanks to hold the water when the heavens open. Occasional passing of a truck or a car or a motorbike often disturbs the serene atmosphere and the peaceful drive. Reduced road-speed signs hint nearing the City with the expectation of hustle and bustle, though Castlemaine remains very quiet even around the late morning to early noon hours of the day.

Turn to the partly gravel Blanket Gully Road, Campbells Creek, Castlemaine one can see the landmark of three white

The chapel is constantly lit by the candlelight. As you walk past a few rows of wooden benches for seating a large statue of Mother Mary is visible, garlanded heavily with rosaries. These are the burdens, the sorrows and even the joys of those who visit Her seeking heavenly help. Around the statue stand bouquets of flowers in vases giving much needed liveliness in the lonely, tiny chapel. A framed photo hangs behind the statue is blurry to the common eye. In that there is a man seeing the vision of Mother Mary. This is believed to have



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crosses rising high above the ground immediately remembering the death of Jesus on Calvary. The road continues to lead to a raggedy and rusty old gate which opens to an enormously spread of green land on which a few buildings are visible. Research reveals that this was a Paddock at Campbells Creek on the outskirts of Castlemaine on which lived a Greek family Christoforos and Despina Pavlou with their son and daughter.

Despina Pavlou had seen apparitions of the Virgin Mary and after series of 'Holy Visions' the family had set up a water tank outside their home on the farm as precisely as Despina had instructed. This tank was declared open as 'Holy Tank' at a ceremony in August 1982 with a record crowd of pilgrims flocking to the Paddock. At this ceremony the sick and the disabled were blessed with the water from this Holy Tank. Ever since, I believe miracles have happened and on that land now stands a brick-layered Greek-Orthodox church next to the Holy Tank and a chapel behind the church in a small shed attracting not only Greek-Orthodox pilgrims but many others who come to pray for Mary's intervention.

happened right outside the chapel where a huge eucalyptus tree stands tall and strong.

Regardless of their faith people flock around, those who once visited came again with more crowds. The believers prayed for non-believers or people of different faith and the prayers had been answered quite miraculously, at times. I was fortunate to have been able to experience and witness the wonders of prayers here.

Our morning was now almost done following the devotions in the chapel. You have to make your way out to create room for those who came after you. The tiny chapel could be fairly crowded on a first Sunday of the month. Settling back into the car for the drive home would give a feeling of fullness though the vast stretches of bush land beyond the premises of this paddock that nourishes wild kangaroos bear a total emptiness.

As we exit out of the raggedy gate we already had the next trip thought of. We depart until next time we come finding solace in the comfort of Mary's presence.