

400th Anniversary of the Chapel of Our Lady of Penha

The Chapel of Our Lady of Penha is located on the top of the Penha Hill. It was originally constructed by the Augustinians in 1622, reconstructed in 1837 and 1935 respectively, and was fully renovated in 1999. Its magnificent scale we see today is attributed to Cardinal José da Costa Nunes who rebuilt the Chapel in 1935. The building next to the Chapel became the Bishop's Residence. There is a marble statue of Our Lady of Lourdes in the churchyard, with her hands folded in prayer overlooking the sea. There is a grotto down the stone steps, which was built in honour of the apparition of the Virgin Mary in Lourdes, France in 1858. In front of the grotto, there are several rows of slate benches for visitors to sit and pray.

The Chapel of Our Lady of Penha, with its unique architectural style and spire-style clock tower, not only made the Chapel one of the landmarks in the western end of Macao peninsula, but also a part of the territory's precious cultural heritage. It is listed in the category of "Buildings of architectural interest" under the Classified Immovable Properties according to the Macao Special Administrative Region Government.

The Origin of the Name "Bishop's Hill"

In 1902, D. João Paulino was appointed Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Macao. During his episcopate, he won the hearts and minds of the local people by making great contributions to the society. For instance, apart from inviting the Salesian missionaries and the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary to serve in Macao, he was also actively involved in education and welfare services. In 1918, D. João Paulino died in the Bishop's Residence at the Penha Hill. At first, he was buried at the grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes under the Chapel of Our Lady of Penha, and then his remains were moved to his hometown in Portugal for burial. In honour of D. João Paulino, the road leading to the top of the Penha Hill was named "Estrada de D. João Paulino". Since then, Penha Hill has become commonly known as "Bishop's Hill".

Since 2009, the Chapel of Our Lady of Penha has been served by the nuns from the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance. In recent years, annual religious events have been held here, such as the Procession of Our Lady of Fatima, the Corpus Christi Procession on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, and the Solemn Benediction from the churchyard on New Year's Eve by the D. Stephen Lee Bun Sang, Bishop of Macao to pray for the well-being of all in Macao.

Macao Catholic Culture Association
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