

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila



SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 4481

Introduced by Honorable Ma. Georgina P. De Venecia

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Our Lady of Manaoag is one of the most venerated Marian images in the country. Its glorious history can be traced back to 1600's when the image was finally brought in the Philippines by a Spanish priest named Padre Juan de San Jacinto. From then on, the Lady of Manaoag has served to become a refuge to many devotees who have wished to establish a deeper and more personal relationship with the Lady; thus, making the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary of Manaoag, located in Manaoag, Pangasinan, as an emblem of Filipino Catholicism. For many centuries, the image of the Our Lady of Manaoag has remained intact and undamaged after having survived a series of threat ranging from mere pressure from non-Catholics to complete church destruction due to revolutions—a mystery considered by many of its followers. There were also narratives of miracles encountered by a significant number of the Marian devotees.

In recognition of its special role in fostering and in shaping Catholicism in the Philippines, on June 21, 2011, Pope Benedict XVI approved the granting of the special bond of spiritual affinity in perpetuity affiliating the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome to the Shrine of Our Lady of Manaoag—the very first in the Philippines. This gives its pilgrims the assurance of the same plenary indulgence equal to that received when visiting a papal basilica in Rome. Shortly after, on July 22, 2011, the shrine was elevated into a Minor Basilica thereby calling it the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Manaoag.

Our Lady of Manaoag is often called as the pilgrim center of the north and its feast is among the most highly celebrated events in the Philippines. Millions of pilgrims visit the Basilica every year with its number continuously growing as more witness the glory it brings to those who humble their hearts. The shrine also continues to entice visitors not just from our country but from the many parts of the world making it one of the most visited places in the Philippines. However, as a result, the flow of people became highly dynamic. This augments the need to adopt policies and measures that would protect the historical significance of the area while ensuring accessibility and security to pilgrims.

This bill, therefore, aims to declare the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Manaoag in the province of Pangasinan as a pilgrimage site and tourist destination mandating the Department of Tourism and its attached agencies, in coordination with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and in consultation with the local government units of Manaoag, to come up with a comprehensive development plan for the improvement of the Manaoag Shrine, all areas attached to it, and all roads leading to and from it.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


GINA P. DE VENECIA
4th District, Pangasinan

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AN ACT
DECLARING THE BASILICA OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY OF
MANAOAG IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MANAOAG, PROVINCE OF
PANGASINAN AS A PILGRIMAGE SITE AND TOURIST DESTINATION,
PROVIDING FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR

Be it enacted by Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. The Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Manaoag is hereby declared a pilgrimage site and a tourist destination. As such, it shall be accorded with priority development by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and other concerned agencies subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of pilgrimage site and tourist destinations.

SEC. 2. The Department of Tourism, in coordination with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and other concerned agencies of the government shall, immediately after the approval of this Act, prepare a development plan involving the construction, installation and maintenance of such appropriate facilities and infrastructure that shall improve the overall feature of the area thereby ensuring the accessibility and security of the pilgrims and tourists: *Provided*, That the said development plan shall ensure the preservation and conservation of the historical significance of the area.

SEC. 3. The Department of Tourism and its attached agencies shall take immediate steps in implementing the tourism development plan that will suit the needs of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Manaoag and shall incorporate the same in its overall development plans and programs for national implementation.

SEC. 4. The Department of Tourism, in consultation with the local government unit of Manaoag, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act.

SEC. 5. The Secretary of the Department of Tourism shall include in the Department's program the implementation of this Act and shall allocate an initial funding of Two Hundred Million Pesos (P 200,000,000.00) which shall be charged against the Department's budget under the General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 6. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,