

*Information Sheet: Background to the Marsabit pictures*

The Mfariji Shrine House of Prayer is situated on a hill adjacent to Mt. Marsabit in northern Kenya. The corner stone was laid in 2002 and after two years (2004) the first phase was opened and that included the chapel. They later opened the remainder in 2008. A retired Catholic bishop, Rt. Rev Ambrose Ravasi, was the man who initiated the Shrine House project and instigated it.

His predecessor Bishop Charles Cavellera found his work in Marsabit challenged by Islam and African traditional religions and with a pastoralist community who did not stay permanently in one place and the catechists and priests found it hard in this context to preach and teach the Christian.

So, Bishop Ravasi came up with the idea to build Shrine House as a house of prayer then later established it as a Walk of Faith with the intention of deepening believer's faith and also attracting non-believers to Christianity.

He also initiated a program to have a number of pictures from Bible stories running from Genesis to the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The idea behind the pictures was to help those visiting Shrine House for prayers to see the pictures, learn the Bible stories and spread the same Good News to their friends. He saw this as a means to strengthen each other's faith and a tool for evangelizing and deepening their faith.

*The pictures show the creation story and the history of salvation.*

In Italy, Bishop Ravasi's home, they had shrines and not, as in Kenya, parishes and that is why Bishop Ravasi came up with the idea of the Shrine in Marsabit. He included the pictures as tools of evangelism with the financial help from shrines in Italy and Bishop Ravasi directed the artistes to paint everyone in the pictures in this African context of the Shrine itself.

There are 43 pictures, all the drawings/painting, with one exception, were completed in Nairobi Langata. Just one was painted in Italy. There were seven artists and it took them 2 years to finish the work. Three artists were hired to do the first set of paintings:

- Annalisa Vigna, who was the only Italian artist
- Peter Nderitu, a Kikuyu from Kenya
- Valerian Atieno, a Kenyan woman whose father was Italian and her mother a Kenyan.

Bishop Ravasi later hired four more artists to boost the number of artists to seven in order to accelerate the painting work which took them two years to complete the work. The artists added were:

- Simon Ndonge, a Kamba from Kenya
- Benedicta de la Roncière, a French artist
- Leonard Kateete, a Ugandan artist
- Francesca Fogliaco, another Italian artist whose father was the architect at the Shrine House - Jiam Franco Fogliaco

