



# MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

2150 Hermitage Lane Mesa, Idaho 83643-5005

Website: [www.marymount-hermitage.org](http://www.marymount-hermitage.org)

Tel. (208) 256-4354

NEW E-mail: [SisterBeverly@marymount-hermitage.org](mailto:SisterBeverly@marymount-hermitage.org)

Volume 40, No. 2 (No newsletter was published in February, 2023.)

March, 2023

## OUR LADY: ALIVE IN MEXICO

*By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM*

It has been a lifelong dream of mine to visit the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. From February 15-21, 2023, I was finally able to do so. I traveled with 21 Catholics, including two priests, all from Idaho, and with my sister, Lucille Dungan, from Colorado. To those of you who knew of this pilgrimage and were praying for me, I thank you. I needed your prayers because it was physically arduous. I had to overcome daily challenges like altitude sickness. I did not know that the Valley and Mexico City are at a height of 7,350 ft. with surrounding higher mountains and active volcanoes. Pollution from the city of over 25 million people was visibly bad and these two realities made it hard for me to breathe because I have asthma. The standing and walking almost all day every day was exhausting. However, the graces of the pilgrimage were abundant, overwhelming and totally worth the effort.

People have asked me: "What was it like?" I could only answer that question by talking for hours. There is so much to tell and I am interested in it all: history, geography, archaeology, anthropology, food, culture, language, and architecture. I had a new journal in which to write the daily events, graces and impressions but, alas, I was too tired every night. Since being home on the evening of February 22, I have made a preliminary list of graces and I am currently on #20! In this article, I will try to relate only the greatest of the graces I received, as I understand them now, two weeks later. Hopefully, this will be an encouragement to you in your relationship with Jesus and Mary.

The first day of the pilgrimage began with a visit to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. The city "square" contains the church where Juan Diego and his wife were baptized in 1524. Franciscans had accompanied the Spanish Conquistadores, but understandably, due to the extreme clash of cultures taking

place since 1519, conversions to Christianity were rare. Juan Diego was not Aztec, as you often see stated in brochures and write-ups about him. He was from the small Chichimecan tribe/nation, which had been conquered by the Aztecs. Standing next to the tall, stone, baptismal basin was a grace in itself, thinking of the whole of Juan Diego's life, his extraordinary experiences with Our Lady and realizing that he and I share the same vocation as hermits in the Church. He has been more in my awareness since that moment. How can he accompany me, so that I may be humble and faithful as he was? The square also contains Tepeyac hill, where Juan Diego encountered Our Lady four times beginning on December 9, 1531. She introduced herself as "the perfect ever-virgin Mary, Mother of the only God through whom everything lives." On this historic hill, he heard the message that she wanted him to bring to the Bishop of Mexico City, Zumarraga, a Franciscan friar, her request for a chapel to be built on the spot where she was first standing.



The old basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe (to the far right of the above photo), which housed the miraculous tilma for centuries after the original chapel was abandoned, is structurally unstable. Mexico City was built on a man-made island in the middle of a

Continued on page 2

## OUR LADY: ALIVE IN MEXICO

(Continued from page 1)

large lake in the Valley of Mexico. The subsoil on which the old basilica was built does not support the weight of the church and it is sinking. Buildings in Venice or the leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy will give you good images of what this means. It is actually quite daunting to enter a building like this! The front of the church is significantly lower than the back of the church where the high altar is. It gives you a disorienting feeling. However the basilica is beautiful, antique and awesome in a Baroque style. In 1974, the Archbishop of Mexico City decided to build the new Basilica to adequately house Juan Diego's tilma with the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe and to accommodate what is currently about 2 million visitors a year. (See photo page one by Lucille Dungan.)



The new Basilica is immense. It was built to properly receive the millions of visitors who visit Our Lady year after year. It is the largest and most frequently visited Catholic shrine in the world, receiving more people yearly than the Vatican. Tens of thousands of people were there the day we first visited and it was not even a Marian feast day. Rivers of people can flow in and out and around the church in an orderly way and yet from everywhere in the church you can see Our Lady of Guadalupe's image.

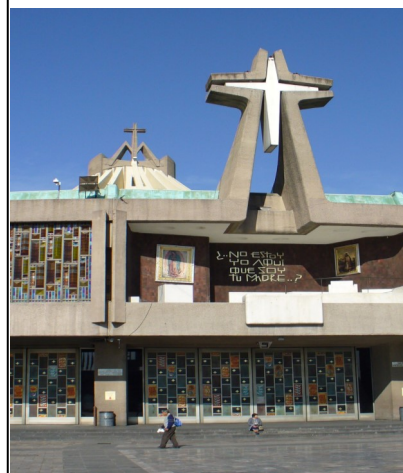
I thought when I was close to the tilma, I would see something of the agave fiber of the fabric, which normally would have deteriorated in 20 years or less. Yet there it is, intact after 500 years! But I did not see anything of the fabric. As a matter of fact, it looks like every image I have ever seen before in any church, which has a faithful photographic copy and is the same size as the original image. In that sense, seeing it was a shock to me because I was so familiar with it! I have since wondered if this was part of the first grace which Our Lady herself wanted to give to me, but not spoken in words: "You have known me." This is very touching.

After seeing the image, we were able to have a private Mass at 10:30 AM in a small chapel with our two Idaho priests, Father Julio Vincente and Father Joseph Lustig. It was actually quite emotional having Jesus so close and present, He whom His Mother is carrying in her womb in the miraculous image. Fr. Lustig made the remark in his homily that this was not a vacation. It was a pilgrimage, and one consequence of that is that we should not return home the same. This coincided with my prayer and hope that I would receive a grace of conversion and truly be different after this. I hope it is true that I did receive such a grace and I will be faithful in living it out.

After seeing Our Lady and having Mass, we were free for the rest of the day to visit all the special places I mentioned already. By late afternoon, with great regret, I chose not to climb Tepeyac hill because I was too tired to do so and it would give me time to pray in the new Basilica, which I did for two hours. The time was too short. I was sitting in a pew close to the front entrance of the church, far from the high altar, but I could still see the image high above that on the back wall. Our Lady is visible from everywhere. My Bishop and priest friends had told me that they felt her eyes were always on them wherever they were in the church. I, of course, was hoping that I would have the same experience, but I did not. Her eyes are cast down modestly and her hands folded in prayer. So I settled myself to pray with my eyes closed, as I always do. I was actually thinking, somewhat bemused: "You came thousands miles to see Our Lady of Guadalupe and now that you are here, you are closing your eyes?!" But there were so many Mexican pilgrims there that day, that I wanted to stay focused on prayer and not be watching what everyone was doing. My most special grace of the day, and of the entire pilgrimage, is that I really did feel like our Lady was living and present to me personally in that place during that time of prayer. There was no distance between us. I cannot say that we even spoke

to each other in words, but her personal presence, the effect of her vibrant love and touching attention, I will never forget. She is truly, most of all, Our Mother.

Mary said to Juan Diego: "Am I not here as your Mother...?" These are the words in Spanish over the front doors of the new Basilica. She came to minister



Photos on page 2 by Sister Charlene Herinckx, SSMO



## OUR LADY: ALIVE IN MEXICO

(Continued from page 2)

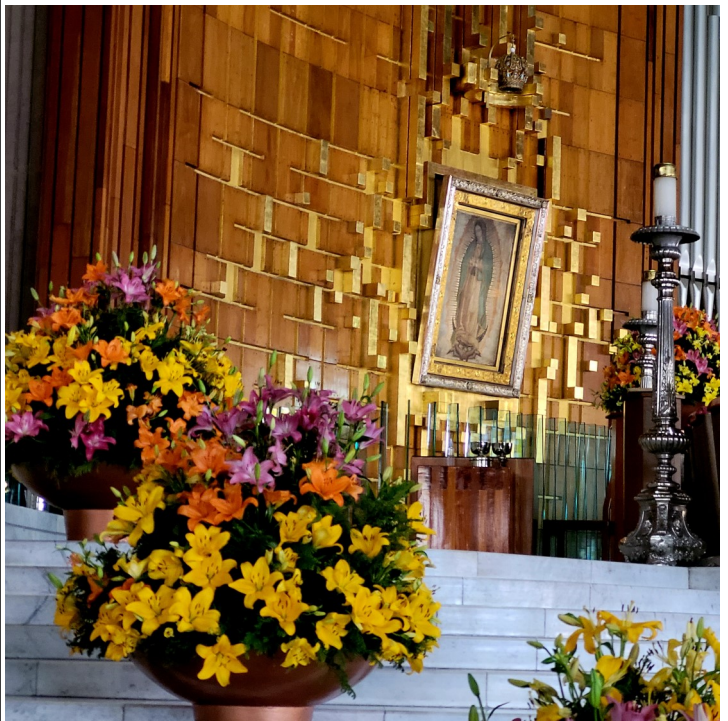
to the Spaniards and Amerindians with the love and tenderness of a mother communicating that it was God who sent her and who loved them even more. The role of a mother is to communicate. How does Our Lady of Guadalupe communicate with us? One corollary grace I received throughout the days of the pilgrimage was my understanding of the time, culture and religion of the Aztecs and the smaller Indian tribes and nations, whom they had conquered. What struck me in a most elemental way is how tied the Amerindians were to nature: the sun, moon, stars, earth, rivers and rain water, fields and corn, the staple food of life. They understood that human blood was the source of human life and they lifted it in human sacrifice to request the sun god to give them what they needed for life: fertile earth and abundant crops, rain in season. Mountains, rivers, flowers, bird songs were gifts from the gods. They even had a myth of one goddess, who had a virgin birth, and gave to them her divine son, who was important to their nation.



These Aztec religious ideas were used by God when He sent His Mother to evangelize the Aztecs and other Amerindians of Mexico. He clothed her with garments which would speak to them. She was like a book written in a language they all could read. Her black hair is parted in the middle, which means she is a young virgin, perhaps 14 or 15 years of age. She has a black sash about her waist, which means she is pregnant. They immediately recognized and

accepted her as a virgin-mother.

The Lady's mantle is the color of the heavens and her tunic that of the earth. The stars on her mantle are the way the constellations would have been on December 12, 1531. That was the day when Juan Diego opened his tilma to give the miraculous Castilian roses to the Bishop as the Lady's sign, and at that moment her image appeared on the fabric of his cloak. The earth, as it is throughout the U.S. Southwest, is rose-colored. The "flowers" we see on her tunic are in fact pictographs, which the Aztecs saw as their geography, a map of their mountains and rivers, the whole expression of what natural life meant to them. The small four-petaled flower right under her sash is the jasmine in bloom. It was their symbol for life. They understood that she is bearing life within her and her unborn Son comes to bring them Life.



The Virgin-Mother is standing in front of the sun, so she is greater than their main god. She is standing on the black, crescent moon, so she is above their second greatest god. Yet, with her eyes modestly cast down and her hands folded in prayer, she is humbly and serenely pointing to someone greater, who must indeed be THE great God, her unborn Son. Behind the rayed sun, the clouds of the sky show that she has come from the heavens. She is the messenger of the true God, the Creator of all.

The Lady has noticeably dark skin. Her look can be described as "mestiza": mixed race, Indian and white. The Mexicans, now the same mixed race of people, affectionately call her "Morena", the dark one, or more intimately, "Morenita", which is the diminutive form, like the language she first used in speaking to Juan Diego, "Juanito"

Continued on page 4



## OUR LADY: ALIVE IN MEXICO

(Continued from page 3)

Diegoito...” as if to say, “my little one, my beloved child”.

The Lady’s tunic is bunched up at her feet. It would be too long for her to walk around in it. That is the whole point, which spoke powerfully to the Aztecs. They recognized that she was royalty. In their culture, those of the royal family, like this “princess”, were carried in public. They never walked. Certainly, when the Aztecs were drawn by the Holy Spirit to accept Christianity, they would easily understand Mary’s title of “Queen of heaven and earth”. Her royal robes proclaimed that well.



OLG photos on page 3 and above here are by John Connolly

Below the moon on which the Lady is standing, we “see” an “angel”. However, Aztecs saw the two symbols differently. The rainbow-colored wings behind the small person are the symbol for the eagle. This was the founding myth of Mexico City. The Aztecs, when looking for a place to build their city about the year 1350 A.D., were told in a prophecy that when they saw an eagle on top of a prickly pear cactus, holding a serpent, that would be the chosen place. Now this Virgin-Mother has come standing above this symbol. The face in front of the eagle’s

wings is that of an older man; his hairline is receding. This is actually a representation of Juan Diego himself, whose name, Cuauhtlatoatzin, in his native Nahuatl language, means, “the Eagle speaks”. Juan Diego has given the Amerindians of his day a greater message than the original eagle, which spoke to the Aztec founders of Tenochtitlan, later Mexico City under the Spaniards. A new foundation, a new era has begun. It can be called “a civilization of Love”.

I was moved by how exquisitely eloquent God was through His Mother in speaking to the Aztecs in their own language and culture. This great evangelization event was more successful than any other effort, in any other nation, by anyone else, in any other age before or after December 12, 1531. In 10 years, 10 million Amerindians asked for baptism. The Franciscan priests consistently reported that what they did all day every day was be in church to receive those who wanted to be baptized as Christians. It was a divine intervention, not the result of their own work.

I was viscerally moved and unbidden tears flowed down my face when I realized that one Indian family

was my Mexican ancestors. My maternal grandmother’s family was from Ciudad Juarez, across the Rio Grande river from El Paso, TX. We also know that a Basque man named Echeveste came from Spain to New Spain in the 1500’s. This was the name of my maternal grandfather from Guanajuato, Mexico. I was totally overwhelmed with gratitude that my ancestors had been evangelized by Our Lady of Guadalupe and it was thanks to her and to them that I was raised in the true faith. Is there any gift greater than this?



Sister Mary Beverly (L) with my sister, (R) Lucille Dungan, in front of a copy of the original image of Our Lady of Guadalupe outside the new Basilica for the purpose of photos. Truthfully, I could not have made the trip without Lucille.

The last grace I will relate to you is one that came to me in one church we visited. I cannot recall which one or where it was. It was Baroque, ornate, beautiful with gold leaf everywhere and totally overwhelming. I just sat in a pew and looked around at the abundance of statues adorning the high altar, side altars and walls of the church. I started recognizing saints with their symbols all from before the 1500’s. The Franciscans had installed the statues to tell the newly

Continued on pg. 5



# OUR LADY: ALIVE IN MEXICO

(Continued from page 4)

baptized Indians that we belong to the communion of saints. Icons of many of these saints are in the new library at Marymount Hermitage. I have spent a lifetime reading and studying the saints. The grace that came with this reflection and which reduced me to a flood of tears is this: "These are my friends", the communion of saints is the Church forever: past, present and future. The grace was to deeply experience in some new way that my ancestors and the saints have always been and always will be with me. How rich and personal our faith is! We do not worship our ancestors, but we do honor them.

I will close with one new fact I learned about the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe while I was on the pilgrimage. On that last night, we were dining together in the restaurant on the first floor of our hotel. We were each free to say what we wanted about the experience of the pilgrimage and to ask questions of the two priests. One woman mentioned something she knew which I did not. The temperature of the tilma has been measured and it is always 98.6 degrees! I take this verifiable fact to communicate to the people of our scientific age that Mary, our Mother, is always with us. She is alive, present and active in more ways than we can ask or imagine. These are the sweet words she said to Juan Diego when he was avoiding her and worried about his beloved uncle who was dying: "Am I not here, I who have the honor to be your Mother? Are you not in my shadow and under my protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need something more?"

I went to Mexico and met my Mexican Mother. I hope you can do so also, if not in person on pilgrimage, then certainly in prayer. She is here for us. In her image as Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mary is taking a step towards us. We can see the toe of her little shoe. Do we want to meet her more intimately? Do we trust our Mother? (Jn. 19:25-27)

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

"Am I Not Your Mother?" by Archbishop Luis Maria Martinez, Primate of Mexico; published by the *Magnificat*, 2022.

"Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mother of the Civilization of Love" by Carl Anderson and Msgr. Eduardo Chavez; pub. Doubleday, 2009; has the complete text of the apparition story from 1649; the KC's also published a poster about the image. Msgr. Chavez was the postulator for the cause of canonization of St. Juan Diego, canonized by Pope John Paul II on July 31, 2002 in the new Basilica.

"Maria of Guadalupe: Shaper of History, Shaper of Hearts" by Paul Badde; pub. Ignatius Press, 2008; has the complete text of the apparition story from 1649.



*Interior of the new Basilica. The OLG image is in the circular light glow under the cross at the back. (Photo by John Connolly)*



*Pope St. John Paul II visited Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Mexican people five times in his pontificate. You see bronze statues and images of him everywhere. This photo by Lucille Dungan is outside the old basilica at R of photo.*



*At Mass after the homily, on the last day of the pilgrimage, I renewed my hermit vows in the Church of the Holy Family. After my prayer, Fr. Julio Vincente gave me a blessing.*

*This Jesuit church was built in 1916 and has the remains of Blessed Miguel Pro, a Jesuit priest, who was martyred for the faith on Nov. 23, 1927. There was also a display of recent photographs of two Jesuit priests, who had been murdered last month in northern Mexico. This made my prayer for final perseverance more sobering!*

*(Photo by Lucille Dungan)*

*This image of John Paul II, as if he is a new Juan Diego (John James), struck me so deeply that I burst into tears, and not only once, but going in and coming out both! I will never forget this inspired bronze statue.*

*(Photo by Sheila Flock)*



The MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER is published by Marymount Hermitage, Inc., a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation in the State of Idaho. The Hermit Sisters of Mary are a canonically approved, Catholic community of women hermits, following the *Rule of St. Benedict*. The newsletter is published each month by the 15th on our website only. The purpose of the newsletter is to share the spirituality and material progress of Marymount Hermitage. Please pray that we may be faithful to our way of life in prayer and penance, solitude and silence for the sake of the Church and the world. Donations are sincerely appreciated and are tax-deductible. Thank you in advance to those who have remembered Marymount Hermitage in their wills. God bless you!

## COMMUNITY NEWS

By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM

**WELCOME:** Father Bill McCann has returned from working in the Diocese of Las Cruces, New Mexico. It is a joy and a privilege to have daily Mass again. Welcome back to the mesa, Father Bill!

**DAY OF PILGRIMAGE:** April 22, 2023 will be the first group retreat at Marymount Hermitage this year. The theme will be "Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist" from a book by that title by Dr. Brant Pitre. The presenter will be Sister M. Beverly. More information is available on the website in the *Calendar of Events*. Registration is required and limited to 30 people. Please apply early. Call Sister Beverly at 208-256-4354 to register. I thank in advance Kristin Koskella, who will be hosting the day for me, so that I will be free to focus on teaching.

**SEVERE WINTER WEATHER:** As a result of the below zero degree temperatures for a week combined with strong north winds, there were frozen and broken water pipes in two of the hermitages. By God's providence, there is a new plumbing company in Cambridge and two young plumbers were able to successfully repair and insulate underneath both buildings. The timely and professional work was greatly appreciated and needed! This emergency work was not in the budget, so if anyone is prayerfully moved to help with the cost, which was over \$4,000, we would be most grateful.

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS:** As an addendum to the feature article on page 5, I list three excellent books, all quite different, one from the other, on the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Juan Diego. If you are interested in borrowing one of these, or any other available book, please let me know. I will be happy to send it to you in the U.S. mail. It makes me happy to think that the library is serving people's spiritual and educational needs.

**VISITORS:** On January 25, a small number of parents and children from a Christian home schooling group in Council, ID visited Marymount. The children had been studying the Middle Ages in general and St. Benedict in particular. They wanted to hear me explain my life as a hermit and to visit the chapel and library. All the children checked out books, mostly the Vision books on the lives of the saints. We packed a lot of learning into one hour and it was a joy and a privilege for me to host them.

**RETREATANTS:** The calendar has openings yet for reservations for private, solitary retreats. Please prayerfully consider if the Shepherd of your soul is inviting you to spend more time with him in prayer and Scripture reading. Call Sister Beverly to ask for available dates, which you may be considering, before you apply for a retreat reservation. Thanks!

## MEMORIALS

**Roger Graefe**

by

**Heidi Gainan, Boise, ID**

and

**Michael Nourse**

by

**Suna & Bartholomew Bohn, Carmel, CA**

**QUOTE FOR LENT:** "Let us ask God to make us true in our love, to make us sacrificial beings, for it seems to me that sacrifice is only love that is put into action." *St. Elizabeth of the Trinity*

### OUR LADY AND THE HOLY EUCHARIST:

The Knights of Columbus have recently released a short documentary on the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe to St. Juan Diego. It is about 12 minutes long and can be viewed via:

<https://youtu.be/qt8wL8NsQ-o> "Our Lady of Guadalupe: Woman of the Eucharist" is the title.

May our Lent be a spiritually fruitful time of growing in our faith, renewing our devotion to Jesus, truly present in the Eucharist, and joining in our U.S. Bishops' efforts to revitalize not only the Church, but our world, so in need of God's redeeming Love.

**COMMUNICATION:** For the last several months, I have been having problems with my email server being inconsistent. Someone with a gmail account would send me an email and I could respond with no problem. Maybe I would respond and then I would immediately get a notice that it was undeliverable. The worst was when I sent a response, but the person never got it and I did not receive notice it was undeliverable. This past week, emails were sent to me and I never got them. So today, thanks to the help of my new web master and computer technician, Gamaliel Masters, I have a new server but the same address. This should resolve the problems. However, if there are still issues that you notice, please call and let me know what is happening. Thank you so much!

**FLOWER CARDS:** I have been receiving a record number of mail orders for the flower greeting cards which I make. Besides this, I was a vendor for the CCW group retreat at Holy Apostles on March 4. Income from sales of cards was unexpectedly good. It was a pleasure to meet new friends and connect with old ones. I appreciated the invitation and I am glad to know that as a vendor, with basically only one of my sale items, I can do well. Any group, who wants to invite me to their event, is welcome to do so.

*Let's pray for each other daily. Blessings!*