



# Newsletter

# MEXICO PILGRIMAGE

8-DAY TRIP TO VISIT THE TILMA AND THE CRISTEROS

JULY 7-14, 2025



## COMMUNITY

Thirty-four pilgrims  
Three priests  
Fourteen young adults  
Three meals a day  
Family reunions

## FAITH

Morning prayer  
Daily Rosary  
Daily Mass  
Evening Prayer  
Confessions

## HISTORY

Stories of the Tilma  
Conversions of the Aztecs  
Lives of the Saints



# WHAT DO YOU HAVE THAT YOU DID NOT RECEIVE?

By Jacelyn Vo, Director of Young Adult Ministry & Evangelization

Dear Parishioners of Our Lady of Guadalupe,

I am humbled to be part of this wonderful parish and to have been called to gather and lead our pilgrims to Our Lady along with the Cristero Saints. This journey has been and will continue to be a constant reminder to me that God has placed each of us exactly where He needs us. His pursuit of our soul is personal, gentle, and unconditional. For Him, there is no sin that is unredeemable, no brokenness that He cannot transform, and no family that He leaves behind.

Reflecting on all that has happened since my initial conversation with our Evangelization Team last September about this vague idea of a parish pilgrimage to now after having completed our trip, I have full confidence that Mother Mary has been our intercessor, guide, and protectress. She interceded for our team's intention of building our family of faith here at Our Lady of Guadalupe, and has guided each pilgrim to say "Yes" like she did.

We started with 5 pilgrims in October of 2024 and wondered how we could possibly get to 20 pilgrims by April, the minimum group size to make this a private parish trip. I asked Our Lady specifically to help us get to that number by March 1, the day of our Young Adult SoCal River Run. As we were starting our race, we received a registration from our 20th pilgrim! We then opened up 10 more spots and filled them in April!



Our pilgrims at the Church of Saint James the Apostle in Sahuayo, where the remains of St. José Sánchez del Río are currently enshrined.

On our journey abroad, she poured out immense graces upon us, helping us to be more receptive to the Holy Spirit, bringing old and new friends together, creating opportunities for our young adults to learn from the wisdom of our priests and our older pilgrims, and she kept us safe! Now having returned home, she is extending those graces to our friends, family, and parish community here in La Habra.

I am reminded of St. Paul's words to the Corinthians, "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" I owe my gratitude to Our Lady, the saints, the humble service of our priests Fr. William, Fr. Gastón, and Fr. Sean Riley, our pilgrims, and our sponsors who prayed for us and supported us financially. It is true that together we are the body of Christ and that each of us has a part to play in God's plan of salvation. We have worked together to build up the kingdom of God and in return, we have gained tremendously more than what we gave.

The following pages contain reflections from our young adult pilgrims that capture the important details and graces received from this pilgrimage, made possible by your prayers and generous donations. Please know of our continued prayers for you and your family.

Sincerely,  
Jacelyn Vo



Fr. Sean, Fr. Gastón, and Fr. William celebrating Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of San Juan de los Lagos.







At the relic of St. José Sánchez del Río in Sahuayo.  
Left to right: Fr. Sean, Jacelyn, Kimberly, Fr. William.

## SURRENDERING TO THE WILL OF GOD

By Kimberly Hebert, Director of Evangelization & Communications

Embarking on a pilgrimage takes much preparation. It is necessary for one to plan ahead in prayer and in logistics, ensuring that all that is left behind at home is in order and to minimize distractions. I worked hard in the weeks leading up to the pilgrimage to get things in order so that I could really enter into prayer with a disposition of receptivity. In this way, the pilgrimage began for me before I left the United States as I worked to entrust the work of daily life to the Lord, choosing to believe that all would be well while I was gone.

The act of surrender in preparation for a pilgrimage does a lot for preparing the soul to receive the gifts that God wants to give during the course of the pilgrimage. I entered into it with a great desire to pray, to grow in relationship with God and with the other pilgrims.

I am so grateful to Fr. Will, Fr. Gastón, and Fr. Sean for their spiritual guidance throughout the pilgrimage. The opportunity to celebrate Mass everyday and to receive the wisdom of the Church and of our priests

from the prayers, scriptures, and homilies that were proclaimed each day was beautiful. I am also very grateful to the priests for guiding us in prayer each day on the bus. We often had very long drives to journey to the next holy site, and praying in community together on the bus helped me to remember that these bus rides are a crucial part of the pilgrimage, as we seek to journey with the saints to heaven in both a physical and spiritual sense.

All three of the priests spoke often of vocations, and the urgency in building a culture that is vocational, that is, a culture that strives for heaven. As a young adult who is discerning my vocation, whether it be to married life or religious life, it was so helpful and encouraging to hear from our priests about the fruits of married life and of religious life, looking to them as great examples of pursuing sanctity as a celibate, while also walking closely with pilgrims who served as great witnesses of pursuing sanctity within married life.

What an honor it is to share life with people for 8 days! Through prayer, early mornings, long bus rides, hotels (some of which were better than others), sharing of meals, long walks, great conversations, and late nights, I had the opportunity to get to know others at Our Lady of Guadalupe much more intimately as I witnessed first hand how each of them lives out their faith over the course of a week in all different types of situations.





Finally, I learned so much from the saints! Visiting the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the Church that San Juan Diego built for her and asking for their intercessions for friends, family, priests, and fellow parishioners, knowing how much Our Lady cares and desires for us all to come to know her son better was a beautiful experience.

It was especially fruitful to literally walk in the footsteps of the Cristero saints who were martyred for their faith during the Cristero War. To see the outfit that Blessed Miguel Pro was martyred in, to touch my rosary to a relic of his finger bone, to visit the grave of San José Sánchez del Río, and walk the path that he walked to his grave at just 14 years old, served as a great reminder of the depth of our faith, and the courage that we are called to as we strive to live it out ever more boldly.

While I will likely never be asked to die for the faith, I am asked to lay down my life for the faith every day. In waking up earlier to pray, in setting aside time to go to Mass on a weekday, in filling out spreadsheets for the Faith Formation program, in planning an Alien Symposium or a cigar night, in staying up later to talk with a friend who is struggling, and even in answering phone calls and text messages!

In Matthew 9:37-38, the Lord tells us that “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” I pray for more laborers, and I pray that God gives me the grace to become a laborer worthy of His call. And I trust that He will.

Thank you very much for your support. This pilgrimage has bore much fruit in my own life, and I believe that it has in the lives of the other pilgrims as well. Please continue to pray for us, as we seek to share these fruits with others in La Habra!



On the balcony of our last hotel in Guadalajara.



Outside of Mexico City Metropolitan Cathedral.

Top from left to right: Aaron, Seth, Silvia, and Gregory.

Bottom from left to right: Kathleen, Jacelyn, Kimberly, and Angel.

**“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.**

Matthew 9:37-38





# A SENSE OF CONTINUITY

By Gregory Jenn

This pilgrimage was far more than a simple trip; it was an encounter with the living faith of our Church and the heroic witness of the saints.

Standing before Our Lady of Guadalupe at her Basilica, I felt an overwhelming sense of peace and maternal love. To view the Blessed Mother on her Tilma reminded me of how deeply Mary accompanies us on our journey of faith.

What made this visit even more special is that the last time I stood before Our Lady of Guadalupe was 20 years ago, as a child, with my mother. To return after two decades, now as an adult, and once again stand beside her was deeply moving. I was able to thank the Blessed Mother for her constant guidance and protection throughout my life, and for the quiet ways she has led me closer to her Son. Sharing that moment with my mom again brought a beautiful sense of continuity.

Another powerful moment was visiting the sites connected to the Cristero martyrs, especially the place where St. José Luis Sánchez del Río ("Joselito") gave his life for Christ at such a young age. Standing on the very ground of his martyrdom was humbling beyond words. His witness, and that of so many others who fought for the faith, inspired me to live my faith more boldly and with greater love.

Experiencing this with our own parish priests, Fr. Will, Fr. Gaston, and Fr. Sean, made it even more special as we celebrated Mass on the Camino de los Martires where we made our intentions at daily Mass for you, our families, and friends. Thank you for your kind generosity in supporting this pilgrimage. This pilgrimage deepened my love for the Church and renewed my sense of mission as a Catholic. I return home with a stronger devotion to Our Lady and a deeper reverence for the martyrs. ¡Que Viva Cristo Rey! ¡Que Viva La Virgen de Guadalupe!



Venerating Our Lady of Guadalupe at her Basilica.



Gregory and Silvia (mom) at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in 2005 and 2025.







Visiting the Panteón Municipal De Sahuayo cemetery in Sahuayo where St. José Sánchez del Río was originally buried.

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Gregory Jenn

## HE IS NOT JUST AN IMAGE

By Brendan Ray

Leaving this trip, I felt particularly inspired to give my life fully to God, in the model and example of the Cristero Saints. Of the many inspiring events of this trip, two Cristero saints, Bl Miguel Pro and Saint Toribio Romo, two priest martyrs in different parts of Mexico, were examples of courage and total surrender to God. The way they, under intense persecution, did not alter or shy away from their duties to the priesthood and their faith, is a model for me and a call to go all in for God, and to persevere under the difficulties we face in our own lives and pressures to not follow God, whether from our own sinfulness or from the secular world we live in.







The outfit Bl. Miguel Pro wore when he was shot, stained with blood and torn by a bullet.

After venerating Bl. Miguel Pro's relics, as seen to the right, we later arrived in the trip to Santa Ana de Guadalupe, where Saint Toribio Romo's body and relics are kept in two churches.

This shrine to the right holds the blood and various other personal belongings of St. Toribio Romo. Before this trip, I only knew of him via a small image kept in the foyer of St Mary's, Fullerton. Having now visited his place of burial and learned his story, every time I see his image I will be much more inspired each time I pass by going forward for daily Mass.

Overall this trip was amazing, not just for the beauty, both geographic, culturally and gastronomical, of Mexico, but for the work God has wrought there through his holy saints, which are an inspiration to us modern day Americans today.



The relic of Bl. Miguel Pro at Parroquia de la Sagrada Familia (Holy Family) .



The Shrine of St. Toribio Romo in Santa Ana de Guadalupe, Jalisco, Mexico.





# FROM MARY TO CHRIST

By Vianney Goytia

My expectations for this pilgrimage were not just met, but surpassed. When I first heard this was a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Guadalupe, I was overjoyed as my devotion to her runs deep. I did not realize then that the Lord has even more in store for me.

While I have a strong devotion to Our Lady, it was my relationship with Christ that truly needed fortifying. Learning the stories of the saints and blessed martyrs ignited a profound renewal of faith within me. The humility and grace radiating in the lives of the martyrs, especially Saint José (Joselito) Luis Sánchez del Río, moved me. I could hardly fathom the pain Joselito endured after the torture of his feet. Though he was not Christ, Joselito reflected Christ so clearly—especially in his spiritual courage and the manner of his death.

Blessed Padre José Ramón Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez (Miguel Pro) was another Cristero martyr who evoked strong emotions in me. We were able to see his garments and the bone of his finger. The museum that housed these relics immersed me in a way I never expected. His suit, stained with blood and torn by a bullet, stood across his priestly vestment, which appeared to be stained by wine, perhaps from the celebration of the Eucharist. Seeing these made him not just a figure of history, but a real, human priest: a Jesuit priest who celebrated Mass and faced death with unwavering faith.

This pilgrimage reminded me of God's perfect timing. During quiet moments, I revisited some of my past reflections from *Lectio Divina*, a form of meditative prayer. Exactly one year ago, in July 2024, I was still experiencing a strong and vibrant faith. There had been a time when I wrestled with misdirected anger and doubt, but over the past few years, I have been rebuilding myself spiritually, by the grace of God. I had even prayed for Him to help keep me on His path



At the garden outside of the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.



Blessed Miguel Pro's priestly vestment, stained by wine, perhaps from the celebration of the Eucharist.



St. José Sánchez del Río in Sahuayo with the footsteps where he walked from Guadalajara to the cemetery where he was martyred.

and not let me go, especially in moments when I felt myself beginning to slip. Lately, it felt like I had begun to drift again, then this pilgrimage came just when I needed it most. As if to further affirm His providence, we returned during the week of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. On July 15, Father Gastón celebrated a Mass in her honor and bestowed upon us the scapular of Our Lady of Carmel. His words struck a deep chord in my heart. "This scapular is a sign for Mother Mary to show her that you belong to her."



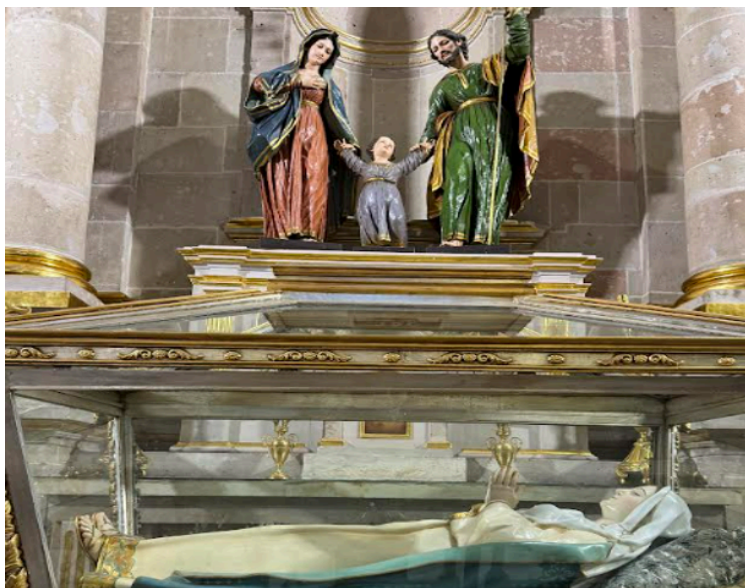


# THE HOLY FAMILY

By Kathleen Pineda-Hernandez

This pilgrimage journey has been an enlightening, prayerful, and devotional experience with the Holy Family. At first I hesitated to join Run to Mary— because that would mean I would have to leave my personal responsibilities, husband, and young children behind. My husband and I intended to go together but it was not possible. Through fervent prayer, Mama Mary interceded, and Jesus graciously supported my pilgrimage journey through the kindness of generous donors and a loving husband and family who has supported me along the way. I was called and had felt I had a personal responsibility to fulfill that mission.

Throughout this pilgrimage, we attended Mass daily, obtained the Holy Eucharist, and prayed ardently for all the intentions of our pilgrims and OLG community. Personally, this pilgrimage was the most powerful prayerful experiences for me. I was very focused and undistracted in prayer. I felt very connected to God.



Throughout this journey, I connected with other pilgrims, learned about others' faith journey, life of the Cristo saints, and of our spiritual mother Mary who is a mother to us all. Throughout this spiritual journey, I took my own family with me spiritually and gained an extended Catholic family— pilgrims, priests Fr Will, Monsignor Sean, and Fr Gaston, and the OLG community who had been praying with us along our journey.

I reminisced what my Lolo would say when we would pray together as a family, "when we pray the suffering is divided but the joy is multiplied among us". Although it was very challenging leaving my family behind, I was so grateful to have this opportunity to renew my faith in Jesus within the Catholic faith and am inspired to offer my time, talents and treasures for the good, glory of God. My Run to Mary experience has called me to live life more purposefully and intentionally, encompassing God in all I do. Mary was and will always be my compass pointing to Jesus and a constant reminder to always trust and surrender to Him.

“

**“When we pray, the suffering is divided and the joy is multiplied among us.”**

Kathleen's grandfather







## BE NOT AFRAID

By Jazmin Troncoso

Friends in Christ, as I reflect on this journey throughout Mexico, my heart is full and moved by the Cristero Saints. I was particularly inspired by BI. Miguel Pro, a priest, and the 14-year-old Saint José Sánchez del Río. Both martyrs are known for their unwavering faith and rallying cry “¡Viva Cristo Rey!” Their abandonment of themselves and giving themselves wholeheartedly to God is a guide to many of us as we continue our journeys to sainthood.

The image to the right is the imprint of his foot leading towards the cemetery located in Sahuayo, Mexico, where he was forced to walk barefoot to his grave after being brutally tortured. Before visiting, I just knew his last words and his age. As I left, I was in awe of his exposition of physical strength, and the virtue of forgiveness during his execution is a true inspiration to me.



Located in Mexico City at the Church of the Holy Family, the relics of BI Padre Pro are found. I had only heard his name mentioned, but I never knew his story. His execution by a firing squad and final words remind me not to be afraid of sharing the truth.

Overall, I am grateful for this trip and everyone who made it possible. We all walked away with something. May we continue to share the stories of the Cristero Martyrs and live out our faith. ¡Viva Cristo Rey!

“The virtue of forgiveness during his execution is a true inspiration to me.”

Jazmin Troncoso





# FAITH, FAMILY, AND LOVE

By Britney Gutierrez

Eight days was all we had for our pilgrimage to Mexico, but with the grace of the Holy Spirit and the help of both Franciscos (our bus driver and tour guide), everything unfolded peacefully and beautifully. If I had to sum up this journey in three words, they would be: *faith, family, and love*.

Our group included three priests and thirty-one lay pilgrims who, through shared prayer and unforgettable experiences, formed a lasting bond. We visited sacred sites, deepened our understanding of the Catholic faith, and encountered God's presence in every step. I'm forever grateful to God and Our Lady of Guadalupe for allowing me to live this pilgrimage. And to our generous sponsors—thank you from the bottom of my heart. I carried your intentions with me throughout the journey and will continue to do so in my prayers for the rest of my life.

I was blessed to grow up Catholic. It's all I've ever known, and I wouldn't want it any other way. I especially thank my grandmother, whose deep love for the faith inspired generations. Still, like many, I've faced doubt and spiritual struggle. But God, in His mercy, always sends a shepherd to guide His flock back—and for me, that shepherd was Father Gaston.

I met Fr. Gaston during a very difficult time in my life when I had been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Though I believed God wouldn't give me more than I could bear, there were moments I

felt I couldn't go on. But every Sunday, Fr. Gaston's homilies spoke directly to my heart. It felt as though God Himself was telling me everything would be okay. His devotion to Christ and Our Lady of Guadalupe reignited my faith.

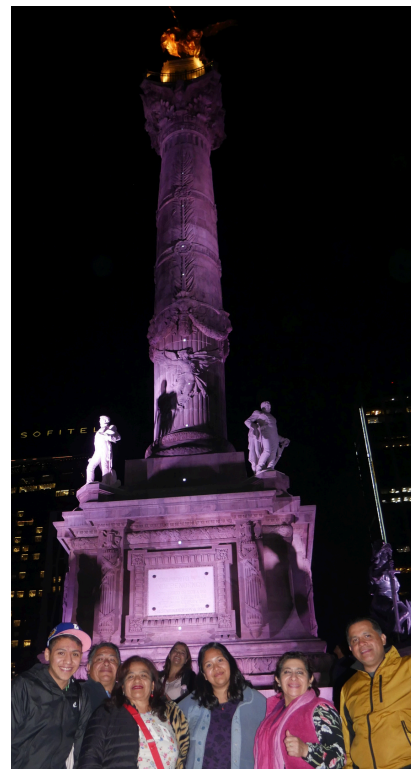
So when I heard about this pilgrimage, I prayed fervently for the chance to go. It became an opportunity to give thanks to Our Lady for her intercession in my healing. We were blessed with not just Fr. Gaston, but also Fr. Will and Fr. Sean from Liverpool, each of whom brought wisdom, joy, and spiritual leadership to the group.

Celebrating Mass daily—including at the Cerro del Cubilete—and visiting holy sites like the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe deepened my love for God. Learning about the Cristeros, who courageously stood for their faith shouting “¡Viva Cristo Rey!”, left a lasting impression. Visiting the tomb of St. José Sánchez del Río (Joselito), a 14-year-old martyr, was a

powerful reminder that even the young can show incredible courage. His quote, “It has never been easier to earn heaven,” continues to echo in my heart.

This was my first time in Mexico, and by God's grace, we spent the first few days in Mexico City. Unsure of what to expect, we reached out to relatives on our father's side—family we had never met and hadn't spoken to in years. We weren't sure how they'd respond. But God and Mary had a plan.

Miraculously, they welcomed us with open arms. We spent hours talking, sharing memories, and exploring the city together. From the Angel of Independence to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, it was clear this reunion was part of something greater. I feel closer to them now than I could've imagined, and I believe Our Lady brought us together to heal and unite us.







Lunch at El Mesón de Chucho El Roto in Querétaro. Left to right: Fr. Gastón, Silvia, Gregory, Christian, Seth, Jazmine, Britney, Katherine, and Anselma.

Traveling with 33 strangers could have been daunting—but instead, it was a gift. Each person on this pilgrimage came with the same goal: to grow in faith. I gained not just friends, but spiritual brothers and sisters. I will always carry them in my heart and prayers. Most special of all was sharing this experience with my sister, Katherine. Walking this journey with her reminded me how blessed I am to have her in my life. She's my role model, and I pray our bond continues to grow as we encourage each other toward holiness.

This pilgrimage also taught me to love myself more fully. I am learning to be gentle and patient with myself, just as God is with me. Though imperfect, I now know: with God, anything is possible.

Looking back, these eight days weren't just a trip—they were the start of a lifelong journey. We are no longer walking alone. We walk together, led by God and our Blessed Mother. I will never stop thanking God for this experience, our incredible priests, our group, and our sponsors. If given the chance, I would do it all over again.

Please keep me in your prayers and may God bless you always. Remember, "It has never been easier to earn heaven."

## LIVING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD

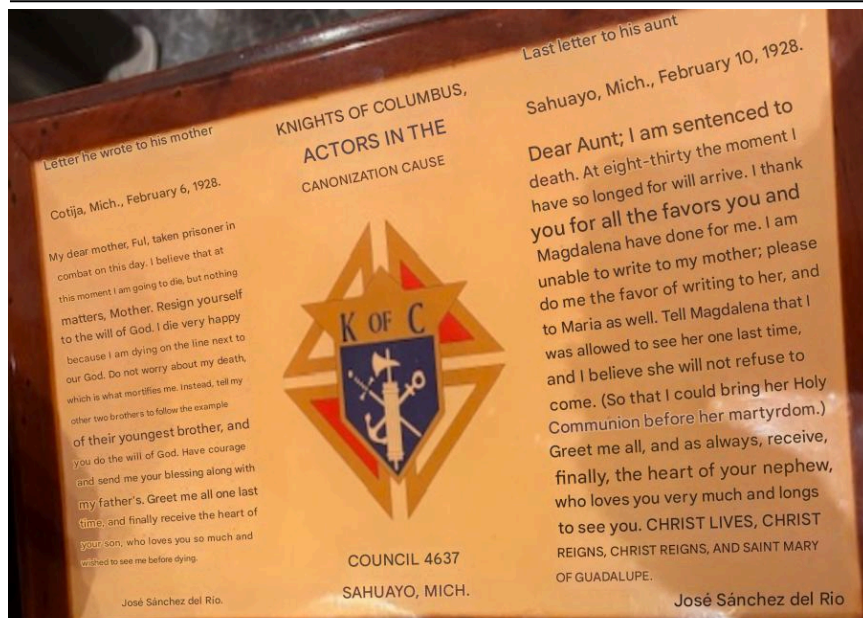
By Katherine Gutierrez

Most people have heard the saying, "Jesus, take the wheel." Trusting in God helped me fully experience my first pilgrimage in Mexico City. Jesus and our Mother Mary constantly show us they are there for us, ready to hear our worries, guilt, and shame. Leading up to the pilgrimage, I carried all these emotions, as did the 33 others around me. Seeing them go through similar struggles encouraged me to continue strengthening my relationship with God and Mary.

I began growing in the Catholic Church at age 3, attending Mass every Friday with my school. At 7, I became an altar server. But by 18, my faith was there, though my practice was not. At 23, I got closer to God and made my confirmation. By 27, I became a Godmother. Now at 30, looking back, I feel nothing but gratitude for God's guidance. In this new stage, I want to be an example of a Catholic woman who loves her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.







**Left:** Joselito's last letter to his mom and aunt. **Right:** Bl. Miguel Pro disguised as a businessman, mechanic, or beggar, would slip into homes to celebrate Mass, hear confessions, and bring the Eucharist to those in hiding.

During this pilgrimage, we met inspiring people, including Our Mother Mary, who said "yes" to God, accepting the role of Jesus' mother. She is a true model of what it means to be a daughter, wife, mother, and warrior. I was blessed to witness her apparition to St. Juan Diego and the bishops in 1531. At Mass that morning, I poured out my heart to her, thanking her for always being by my side and for blessings I had once failed to see.

My heart was torn hearing the stories of the Cristero saints who were martyred for their faith. "Viva Cristo Rey!" were the last words spoken by St. Padre Miguel Pro and St. José Luis Sánchez del Río.

St. José Luis Sánchez del Río, at the age of 14, was imprisoned. His godfather showed him what would happen if he did not deny his faith. Despite the threats, St. José Luis was ready to be with God, seen in the above letters he wrote to his mother and aunt before his death.

The picture above shows Bl. Miguel Pro having to disguise himself to celebrate the Holy Sacrament. He was eventually captured and executed, along with his brothers. These two martyrs knew exactly what awaited them, but none of it mattered in this world. The only thing that mattered was being with God in His Kingdom.

The lives of these Saints increased my desire to also be in God's Kingdom, and I know the only way to get there is by putting all my trust in Him. Everything is part of God's plan. I was blessed to reunite with family I hadn't met before.



Our young adults outside of the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

For Those 33 pilgrims who joined me also became my family. We were all able to leave it at the altar and say yes to God. We talked about our journeys, and I was moved by so many stories. I thank God for my new family. This is a very special group of people, and I'm excited to see what God has in store for them.

Overall, this experience was something I am so grateful to have been a part of. My life has changed for the better because of it, and I hope to be a great example to others.





# NOT A CELEBRITY BUT THE MOTHER OF GOD

By Seth Contreras

Hi everyone, I am Seth Contreras and I was a pilgrim on our pilgrimage to Mexico this summer. As a 23 year old in this group of people, I can't tell you how many times I've been reassured that I'm a baby. Being one of the youngest on this trip, it has been such a blessing getting to hear all the input and advice from everyone who came. To say that I grew spiritually during the week is such an understatement; I can easily say that this is the strongest I have felt spiritually as you can see from this picture of me showing my spiritual strength on one of the Aztec Pyramids.

I was on the phone with my dad one night and he was so surprised that this was an ACTUAL pilgrimage. He was impressed with the things I had been telling him, like how we had Mass everyday and we did lots of praying. LOTS of praying. I was pretty hesitant in the beginning because my prayer life isn't the most consistent and hasn't been too strong, so as you could expect, Mr. Nap has been calling my name during these prayers. But I decided to take it seriously and really involve myself in this. When that happened I started to think, how many 23 year old men are on a two hour long bus ride praying the Liturgy of the Hours with three priests, two of which love showing off their opera prayer mode voices? That's when I realized how special this is.



Seth showing his spiritual strength in front of the Pyramid of the Moon.

The picture above on the left is of us young adults just outside the Basilica where we got to see the Tilma of Our Lady. A few years back my family and I visited the Basilica but we didn't get to go in and see it. After doing some praying and learning before the trip it hit me how amazing of an opportunity it is to be able to see her image in person. This time it felt as if I was going to see a celebrity at a meet and greet; the excitement was rushing all over me. That was until we walked in I got to see her image with my own eyes realized, she is no celebrity, she is the mother of God. The feeling was indescribable, almost bringing me to tears.

Overall, a few things I can take away from this pilgrimage is that I am so grateful and blessed to be able to have a community of people my age where we get to worship Jesus together. As someone who can be shy at times I understand that this Catholic faith thing is not a one man journey. To have people around me to share stories, laughs, and memories is something I will never take for granted. I am so happy to have experienced this especially with this group and I can't wait to continue my faith and be involved in our community.



Fr. Sean, Christian, Seth, and Fr. Gastón at San Miguel de Allende Center.



Kimberly, Christian, Aaron, Angel, Fr. William, Seth, and Fr. Sean in front of the Pyramid of the Moon.





## PLACES WHERE HE SPEAKS

by Angel Adame

Dear Sponsors, I want to express my deepest gratitude to each of you who supported me and made it possible for me to travel to Mexico on this unforgettable pilgrimage. Your generosity didn't just cover expenses—it opened the door to experiences that touched my soul and renewed my faith in powerful ways.

One of the most moving moments was visiting the Tilma of Our Lady of Guadalupe at the Basilica in Mexico City. Standing before the miraculous image, I felt an overwhelming sense of peace, love, and divine presence. It was more than a visit; it was an encounter with something sacred, something eternal. I carried each of your intentions in my heart during that time of prayer.

Another highlight was praying in San Miguel de Allende. The beauty of the city, paired with moments of silence and reflection in its holy places, made it an incredibly spiritual experience. It reminded me that God speaks in both the grandeur of cathedrals and the quiet corners of our hearts.

A particularly emotional moment for me was returning to the Cristo Rey (Christ the King) Monument in Guanajuato. The last time I was there, I was just 12 years old, and my great-grandmother was still alive. Being back brought her memory flooding back. Celebrating Mass at the foot of the monument was a moment of deep reverence and love—an unexpected but beautiful way to honor her legacy.

This trip renewed my faith, strengthened my devotion, and deepened my appreciation for my heritage and the saints who guide us. None of this would have been possible without your support. I am truly blessed to have such a generous and faith-filled community behind me. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.



Angel outside of Cerro del Cubilete Cristo Rey.

## MY FIRST EVER PILGRIMAGE

By Aaron Salinas

This year's trip to Mexico was my first ever pilgrimage. I was apprehensive at first due to the fact that I didn't know anyone except for a handful of people at one of the meetings before we left. I felt very welcomed by everyone even though they had never met me.

I was amazed when I saw Our Lady of Guadalupe's Tilma at the Basilica in Mexico City because of its miraculous significance. It is mind boggling to see the colors of the Tilma that were non-existent 500 years ago, learn of the stars on her mantle, as well as the reflection of the people in attendance through the Virgin Mary's pupils, and so much more! I also thought it was powerful to see the number of people displaying their faith along the street outside the Basilica by crawling on their knees and praying.

A few additional highlights included the amazing pyramids of Teotihuacan. Experiencing the view on top of the Moon Pyramid was breathtaking. Driving up to the Church of the Cross and seeing the 66 foot statue of Jesus in Guanajuato felt special to me. I was saddened to learn about the martyrs during and after the Mexican Revolution War and inspired by the heroic sacrifices they made to keep the Catholic faith in Mexico. It was especially touching to learn the tragic story about Joselito and what he went through to stay close to God. His faith never wavered.

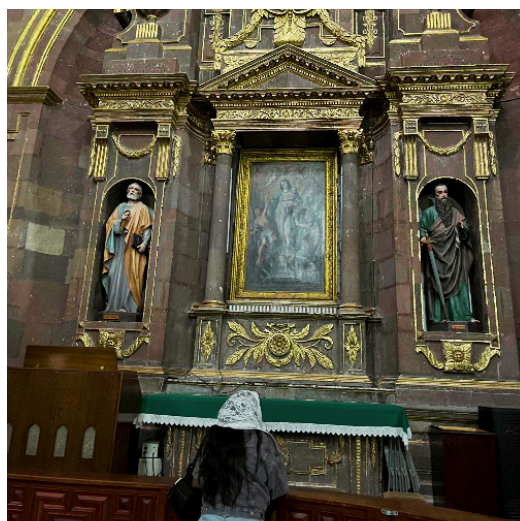
I am grateful to have met Jacelyn and Kimberly who helped guide me throughout the trip and for their perspectives of the Catholic faith. Father Will, Father Sean, and Father Gastón were also very helpful in teaching me why Catholicism is so important and what it means to be a son of God. Everyone else I met on the trip were all so very kind to me and I am honored to have met them.







Fr. William, Aaron, Fr. Sean, and Jacelyn in front of Cathedral Basilica of San Juan de los Lagos.



Angel praying at the Church of St. Michael in San Miguel de Allende.

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