

May 2011: Missionary Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe

During the 10 short days in May that the Missionary Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe visited Catholic churches throughout northern Maine, the image logged 1,000 miles - a distance equivalent to driving from Portland, Me. to Jacksonville, Florida.



Liturgical guardian Francis Megno of Christ the Divine Mercy Parish stands by the Missionary Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe as he leads the recitation of the Holy Rosary at a site overlooking the Millinocket paper mill. Those assembled asked Our Lady to intercede with Jesus to reopen the local mills and to provide long-term employment for the area communities.

The 4' x 7' image's travels did, indeed, span a wide area, from Brewer to Houlton, travels that included two special stops, both of which held significance for Katahdin area worshippers. On Wednesday, May 25, the traveling image was set up at two separate sites near the two shuttered paper mills - in Millinocket and East Millinocket - and those attending a ceremony held in each location asked Our Lady of Guadalupe to intercede with her Son, Jesus, asking his help in restarting the mills, finding a buyer for the mills and bringing employment to the area for many years to come.

During the separate ceremonies conducted in the two towns a total of nearly 50 parishioners from Christ the Divine Mercy Parish and from St. Benedict's Church in Benedicta, were in attendance. Recitation of the Holy Rosary at both sites was led by Francis Megno, liturgical guardian at a Christ the Divine Mercy Parish worship site, St. Martin's Church, in Millinocket.

Locally the image paid a visit to both parishes in Cluster 5, stopping at all three of their worship sites. It was also brought to the nursing home in Millinocket so the residents there also would have the opportunity to venerate the image and participate in the recitation of the Divine Mercy Chaplet. The image also made visitations to the sick of the area.

The visitations began on Houlton on May 20 and included visits to churches in Howland, Brewer, Lincoln, Catholic schools in Bangor and an abortion clinic. The tour ended at St. Martin's Church on May 30 when the Knights of Columbus Honor Guard from Council 680 carried the image from the church through downtown to Millinocket Cemetery where the image was present for the annual Memorial Day Mass.



David and Mary Labun, guardians for the Missionary Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe during its visit to Maine, stand by the image, a photographic replica of the original icon.

The local visitations were held under the auspices of Council 680 and a visitation team made up of parishioners from Cluster 5. The team included David and Mary Labun of Millinocket who served as image guardians during the visitations. The image that visited Maine is one of four images that travel the world each year and is a photographic replica of the original Our Lady of Guadalupe icon which is on display at the Basilica of Guadalupe, Mexico City, Mexico.

Thousands of people on seeing or venerating the image have experienced healing, both physical and spiritual, according to Thomas Darling, a member of Council 680's Honor Guard. Darling noted, the image "...represents the spiritual presence of the Mother of God and it

is said that the Blessed Mother lives in the image in a mystical way."

The original icon and the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe dates back to Dec. 9, 1531 when Mexican peasant Juan Diego encountered the Blessed virgin on a Mexican hillside and was told to seek out the bishop and have the bishop build a church on that site. When the bishop told Diego he, the bishop, needed proof before could build a church there, Diego return to the Blessed Virgin. Instructed by the Blessed Virgin to pick roses growing behind him, Diego did so, placing them in his tilma (cloak). Diego return to the bishop, opened his cloak, and out spilled roses, roses that only grew at that time in Spain. While that, in and of itself, was deemed amazing, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe that appeared on the inner lining Diego's cloak proved to be even more amazing. And, of course the church got built.



More than 30 parishioners and other interested persons attended a special event at a site near the Millinocket paper mill. These people prayerfully asked Our Lady of Guadalupe to intercede with Jesus to reopen the mills and provide long term employment to the communities.