

Day two: 12.07.08

The 7th of December. We left our hotel and headed for Plateros and the shrine of Santo Nino de Arocha. The Child Jesus is depicted as a little traveler with his basket. This is a very popular shrine with many people approaching on foot even as we proceeded in our comfortable bus. Father Manning, SVD celebrated one of the Sunday Masses at the shrine for not only we pilgrims but for the hundreds who packed the church to hear him celebrate in Spanish. There was a devotion there and a site of "Milagros" as well. The walls are covered with testimonials of cures and miracles from this remarkable site of faith.

From the shrine we were on the road again and, just a dusk arrived at the very center of Mexico! It is marked by the shrine of Cristo Rey, a gigantic statue of Christ at the very top of a huge mountain. Our bus wound its way aching to the top, switch back curves and all, to provide us with a view as well as another devotional site, Church, Mass and all. We were one of the last of MANY buses to have arrived and as we descended in the dark to the valley below, one of the first to leave. The bus driver did a great job and there was a collective release of breath once we hit the valley floor and proceeded to our Hotel and overnight in Guanajuato.

Guanajuato is a World Heritage Monument as declared by UNESCO. It too was a mining city and built in a riverbed. Over the years the diggings and tunnels there had been used for flood control but now serve as underground roads and passages. The 17th Century Basilica is painted a striking yellow and inside contains the oldest piece of Christian Art in Mexico. The statue of the Madonna is over 800 years old and was a gift from King Philip II in thanks for all the silver paid to the crown over the years. Guanajuato is a beautiful medieval town viewed best from the heights where we found the monument of El Pipila. (El Pipila was one brave patriot. He slung a slab of stone to his back, crawled to the city walls, set fire to the wooden doors and allowed the taking of the city in the war of Independence! His statue is well deserved!) The city played a key roll in Mexico's drive for Independence. The Granary, from whose four corners were hung the heads of four Mexican Patriots (long since laid to rest) still dominates the city. It is a city of beautiful monuments and churches as well as an outstanding baroque theater of the arts called Teatro Juarez. After a full day of touring, which included a stop at a bizarre catacomb and its mummies, we were glad to call it quits and proceeded to our hotel, surrounded by a town festival in anticipation of the the morrow's feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception.