

Reflections on my Journey with the Silver Roses: Puddles in the Church



Back in October I received a call from Raymond Medina, founder of Knights on Bikes. He wanted to know if I was willing to help with the Running of the Silver Roses. He wanted me to coordinate the escort of the Roses from San Antonio to Laredo. Raymond couldn't give me too much information in regards to the Silver Roses but encouraged me to look for more information on the internet. Wanting to serve and always looking for a reason to ride, I agreed, not knowing what exactly I was agreeing to. I told him to count me in and I'd try to get a few of my fellow Knights to join me. I had no idea why Mr. Medina called me. Del Rio is not in the route between San Antonio and Laredo, but I didn't ask. I was pleased to be considered.

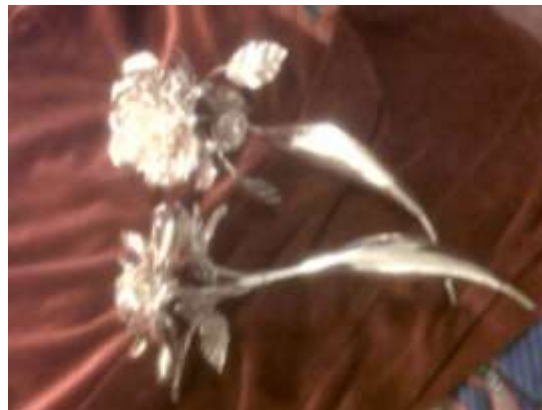
As soon as we ended our conversation, I went online and looked for information on the Silver Roses. I vaguely remembered hearing something about the Roses, but I couldn't recall who had mentioned it or what was mentioned. I did a Google search on "running of the roses" and sure enough, as Mr. Medina had mentioned, I found a website www.runningoftherose.org. After reading different articles posted on the website I was excited. What a beautiful history the Silver Roses have, from the first running of the rose in 1960(which was a real rose) to 2010 when three silver roses were incorporated. Wow, I was asked to be a part of this. I immediately contacted a few of my fellow Knights. Juan Garza, Ruben Resendez and David Hughes committed to join me (Father Clay and Klaus Wilhelm would eventually end up having schedule conflicts, and later Father Tom Edelen would commit to join us as well).

The weeks passed and slowly the plan came together. Though it was frustrating at times because I couldn't get a concrete time and place of transfer and drop off, we had a plan for our portion of the journey. David, Ruben and I would ride our motorcycles. Juan and Father Tom would be in the tailgunner vehicle (they would follow us with my trailer in case we had a break down). We would leave to San Antonio Thursday December 8th, after work. Friday morning we would take possession of the Roses and deliver them to Laredo. We would remain in Laredo until Saturday morning to witness the delivery of the Roses to the delegates from Nuevo Laredo, then we would return back home to Del Rio. In our mind, we were humble delivery boys about to embark on a service that probably few would know and perhaps care about. But we cared. We were eager to serve our Holy Mother and spend some time on the road together. And though we all still new little of the Silver Roses, we all felt it was a worthy and beautiful sacrifice. In retrospect, we still underestimated the worthiness and value of our journey.

At mass the Sunday before we left, Father Clay announced that Thursday (December 8th) was a holy day of obligation. It was the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. I remember thinking, "how appropriate" to have mass on a feast day of our Holy Mother as we depart on a journey in service of her. Thursday morning Juan, David, Ruben and I were all at the 6:30 mass at St. Joseph. To me this was the beginning of several events that would hint to us the importance of our pilgrimage.

4:30 came. We hit the road. The three iron horses roared as Mr. Resendez led the way. Mr. Garza and Father Tom were about 30 minutes behind. It was cool and getting colder and we wanted to reach Uvalde before the sun went down. We remained on schedule and arrived at the Red Roof Inn off of 410. We were a few degrees short of becoming popsicles, but we arrived safe and in good spirits.

After some coffee (for defrost purposes) and dinner I made contact with John Ramirez. John was my contact in San Antonio, and he was coordinating the transfer of the Roses with us. John asked if he could deliver two of the Silver Roses to us, and he would guide us to the last Rose Friday morning. We were eager to see the Roses, so we happily agreed. Mr. Ramirez arrived with a duffle bag. Inside were two wooden boxes. We asked for permission to see the Roses. What a moment. We opened the boxes and gently laid the two roses on a bed on top of a piece of red velvet material. We all gathered and took pictures of our precious cargo. We were pleased with the beauty and craftsmanship. Perhaps we were starting to realize what was in our possession.



That evening there was some discussion about the Third Rose. The Rose was at Devine Providence off of Old Pearsall Rd. John suggested we eat breakfast, pick up the final Rose and head to Laredo. John and a fellow Knight, Larry Espree, were going to join us for the ride to Laredo. They simply wanted to be a part of the escort. They would return back to San Antonio the same day.

Father Tom, however, said that a mass would be an appropriate ceremony to receive the Third Rose and begin our pilgrimage to Laredo. Having taken part in the Running of the Roses in the past, Father Tom emphasized to us the importance of proper reverence for the Roses we would journey with. Though it was past 9:00pm, Father Tom got on his phone to make arrangements for a church to host us. He was successful in convincing the priest of Devine Providence to allow us to celebrate mass there.

My evening ended with Father Tom hearing my confession. I wanted to prepare myself spiritually for our journey.

The following morning had us waiting for John and Larry. Father Tom led us in morning prayers and informed us that it was the Feast Day of St. Juan Diego. I was amazed. Pope John Paul II canonized Juan Diego and described him as "a simple, humble Indian." What a befitting day it was. Here we were, about to embark on the delivery of the Three Silver Roses in honor of our Holy Mother on the Feast Day of St. Juan Diego, the first to carry Roses for our Mother. How insignificant I was for this honor. I was humbled in the shadow of St. Juan Diego, the simple, humble Indian.



John and Larry arrived and the five Harleys left the hotel followed by our tailgunner. We arrived at Devine Providence to be greeted by Knights from San Antonio along with Mr. Garza's daughter and son-in-law. Father Tom celebrated a beautiful mass. Pictures were taken and we were ready. The three Silver Roses were placed in Mr. Garza's truck. The truck was no longer our tailgunner. Now it had our precious cargo. In the truck was the purpose of our trip. I asked for the truck to be surrounded. John and I would be in the front of the truck with Ruben, David and Larry in the back. And off we were...to eat breakfast.



All the travelers plus Mr. Garza's family enjoyed breakfast. We shared and laughed and enjoyed good food. God blessed us with a beautiful morning. We were anticipating another frigid morning but the day proved to be excellent for camaraderie and a ride. How blessed the travelers were. We left the restaurant at about 10:30. We were finally beginning our mission.

The trip went relatively well. We had to pull over in Devine to fasten my license plate frame which had come loose. In Cotulla we stopped to refuel and Mr. Resendez had a minor repair as well. We continued our trip. I wondered what people on the highway must have thought, seeing the Harleys ridden by bikers with black vests and large Knights of Columbus patches on their backs surrounding a truck. Did they wonder what cargo was in the truck? Did they wonder what we were protecting?

We arrived in Laredo at about 1:00pm and stopped at the Harley Dealership. Our guest riders wanted to look around, take a few minutes of rest before turning around and heading back to San Antonio. As we walked around the Harley store I felt an urgency to take the Roses to my grandmother. I had previously made arrangements with her, and even though we had a lot of time before our 7:00pm ceremony, I wanted to take the Roses to grandma while Father Tom was still with us. My grandmother is 81 years old and her arthritis is taking a toll on her. I knew she wouldn't be able to attend mass on Saturday; I wanted to take the Roses to her while they were still in our possession, so we did.

John and Larry left Laredo to return to San Antonio. Ruben and David stayed at the dealership for a while longer, and Mr. Garza, Father Tom and I left to take the Silver Roses my grandmother, Guadalupe Cabello; the thought warmed my heart.

My grandmother received us. She sat at her table, and we laid the Silver Roses in front of her. With tears in her eyes she said that she never thought these Roses would ever be in her home.

Apparently she knew about the Silver Roses. She knew their significance and was humbled in their presence. And I was even more humbled to place the Silver Roses in front of my Guadalupe.



After visiting my grandmother, we all made our way to my mother's house. David, Ruben and I would be spending the night at my mom's. My mother, being the warm, friendly person she is, made sure all of us were as comfortable as we could be after our trip.

My mother is also a "Guadalupe", Patricia Guadalupe. Her birthday is December 12th, the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I smiled at the thought of us crossing paths with another Guadalupe in our journey. Guadalupe was taking care of us.

We rested at my mother's and at 6:30 left to our destination, the American Legion post. The Laredo Knights were having a welcoming ceremony for us and other dignitaries. It was a nice welcoming. We were treated like guests of honor. *"When you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he can say, 'My friend, move up to a higher position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."* (Luke 14: 10-11)

We were introduced to the crowd as "the bikers". (Even though we told everyone our names, they preferred to refer to us as the bikers.) I was asked to say a few words. I shared our experience thus far with the Silver Roses. I shared the importance the Roses had to my grandmother and consequently to me. I wanted people to know how little we knew about the Roses at the beginning of our pilgrimage, but how meaningful they had become to us. I wanted them to know how honored and humbled we were to possess them and be entrusted with them.

We were there as servants, and we made it known that in whatever capacity we were needed, we would serve. Rain was expected for Saturday, but the plan was for us to travel 18 miles out of

Laredo, wait for a sheriff escort and ride back into town. We assured them that we would gladly do as asked, rain or shine. We left the American Legion Post in the rain. Even though Laredo hadn't received any significant rain in about a year it rained all night and would rain all day Saturday. The Roses bought water to a parched land.

As expected the following morning welcomed us with heavy rains and cold temperatures. Expecting to ride in the rain we left my mom's house early to buy rain gear. Our first stop, HEB Plus, only had ponchos which would be rather useless on motorcycles. Academy was still closed so we went to the Super Wal-Mart. Leave it to the Laredo Wal-Mart not to have any raingear, or even ponchos. What are the odds? We returned to my mother's house to eat breakfast and await confirmation that the procession was still going to happen as planned. Though we never received confirmation, we left to the 18 mile mark, in the cold rain, without rain gear. As I rode in the front, I couldn't help being grateful for this sacrifice. I offered it to the Lord as atonement for my sins and those of my fathers. I hoped the Lord looked down upon me with favor for my willingness to serve and sacrifice myself for our Blessed Lady. I was glad for the cold rain.

We reached the rest area at mile marker 18. We were drenched and cold. Mr. Garza and Father Tom were already there in the truck with the Silver Roses. Mr. Garza had received confirmation that our two sheriff escorts were running a few minutes late, but they would be there. We waited next to the restrooms, huddled up, keeping out of the rain and trying to keep out of the wind; we weren't doing a good job of it. Finally our escorts arrived, first one, then another. The final procession was about to begin. Our duties to the Holy Mother and Her Roses were soon coming to an end, one more 18 mile stretch in the cold rain.

We had one sheriff vehicle in front, followed by the three motorcycles in a "V" formation with me as the lead bike and Ruben and David riding side by side. Mr. Garza and Father Tom drove with the Roses in the truck and another sheriff vehicle at the end. Off we went. Again I wondered what onlookers must have thought as our procession passed. I'm sure people would like to have known what was in the truck. What was so important, to be escorted by two sheriff vehicles and have three men ride in the cold rain? We the travelers, the pilgrims, the insignificant bikers, the 5 Juan Diego's, we knew. In the truck with Juan and Father Tom was a gift to the Holy Mother, but in there was also a gift for us as well. We the travelers, through our pilgrimage, received a beautiful and powerful experience, both as individuals and as Brother Knights. One we would remember for the rest of our lives.

We reached our destination, San Augustine Cathedral. We were soaked and cold but had arrived safely. We backed up our Harleys to the curb. People came out of the church to greet us. Onlookers stopped to see what was going on. Pictures upon pictures were taken. As we walked into the church, you could tell where we had walked; we were so soaked. We left footsteps of water everywhere.

We were given instructions on how to process in. The church was full of 4th Degree Knights in their tuxedos, many holding other silver roses from their districts. But we, the soaking wet bikers, had the three International Roses, the ones that would journey across the Americas. What honor was bestowed upon us.



The matachines danced. Bishop Tamayo processed in along with our fellow traveler, Father Tom. All the 4th degree Knights followed with the District Roses and towards the end, there we were, leaving a trail of water as we walked. We handed our Roses to the Bishop and took our seat in the assigned pew.





I had been asked to read the responsorial psalm. I was glad to, but felt out of place, intimidated. How would it look, everyone else in tuxedos and I standing in front of everyone in leather and jeans, soaked. I was a little nervous. Occasionally I shivered from the cold. Finally the first reading was over. As I got up to walk out of the pew, I looked down. My jeans and thermals and boots had soaked up so much water that there was a puddle under my feet. I was embarrassed and scared. What were the other Knights thinking about me? What if someone slipped on my puddle? As I walked towards the front of the church you could hear the water in my boots with every step I took. How out of place I felt. I made it through the responsorial psalm, but I couldn't wait to get back to my pew. I wanted to hide.



As the mass continued I pondered over my puddle. I became less embarrassed. It almost became a badge, or should I say, a puddle of honor. It represented my little, personal sacrifice to honor the Holy Mother and I should not be ashamed of it for many would not have dared what we dared. Were we fools? Perhaps. But we threw caution and logic to the wind and rode by pure faith, believing that this is what our Holy Mother wanted of us.

Mass ended. We processed out. Because David and I did not have passports, we could not take part in the exchange on the bridge. We didn't mind. We served as we had been asked. We had spent more time with the Silver Roses than many had. We were content with our part. As Bishop Tamayo, walked out of San Augustine Cathedral, he stopped and took a picture with us. Wow, the Bishop delayed himself to take a picture with the travelers. How he honored us with such a simple action, treating us as if we were something special.



Mr. Garza and Father Tom followed the procession to the bridge. They were able to witness the transfer of the Silver Roses to the delegates from Nuevo Laredo in its entirety. We remained in front of the cathedral until the procession was out of our sight. We hopped on our steel horses, which had also honored our Holy Lady, and headed back to my mother's house, in the cold rain yet again.



Once at my mom's we questioned how we were going to get home. The rain had really taken a toll on us and according to the weather radar there was no end in sight. The trailer that Mr. Garza was pulling was too small to haul all three motorcycles. We were at a loss. Our plan was to go to academy, buy rain gear, and brave the rain all the way home. But none of us were looking forward to that. Mr. Resendez wondered if perhaps Mr. Garza knew of someone who could lend us a larger trailer, one that could haul all three motorcycles back to Del Rio. When Mr. Garza arrived I asked about acquiring a larger trailer, not expecting him to be able to get one. Juan called his brother and before too long we were on our way to get a longer trailer that would accommodate all the Harleys.



We loaded and strapped down our iron steeds. Though our egos took a little hit, it was as if the Holy Mother still had plans for us. Mr. Garza pointed out that when the journey began we all traveled separately. Now, we would get the opportunity to end our journey together and talk about what we had experienced. And that we did. As Father Tom typed an article to submit to different magazines and newspapers we had the opportunity to reflect and share our thoughts and blessings. We were fascinated by the impact the Roses had on us and reflected over how many lives were impacted by those who took part in the Running of the Silver Roses 2011.

Thank you to my brothers, Juan, David, Ruben and Father Tom, for being a part of this journey with me. Thank you for your willingness to serve at each other's side. Thank you Father Tom for being our guidepost and providing spiritual guidance to all of us and encouraging us to show the proper reverence and respect throughout our journey. And thank you Blessed Mother for having us. We were all humbled in your service. Amen.

I would like to dedicate my journey and this reflection to my wife Veronica, and my three little Angels, Catalina Guadalupe, Micaela Ester, and Carmen Magdalena. May we live a life that pleases the Good Lord and may the Blessed Mother always intercede on our behalf. Amen

Respectively,
Thomas Moses Cabello,
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