

## **Trip to Sacramento**

*Rev. Edwin S. Limpiado, CSS - 2005*

It was slightly past five Saturday afternoon of June 25th and the sun was still shining radiantly while the summer's heat was still blistering outside St. Joseph Hall when I started driving out of our Stigmatine property in Waltham. Fr. Antonio Medeiros, a fellow Stigmatine priest who just flew in from Brazil, was on the passenger seat, a bit anxious but excited about the almost 4,000-mile cross-country trip we were to travel to reach our new assignment in Sacramento, California.

After years of discussions and deliberations, it was last year that the Stigmatine General Superior with his council and through the support of the major superiors of the different Stigmatine religious provinces, that the opening of a new foundation in the United States became a reality.

In February this year, Fr. Andrea Meschi, CSS, the Superior General, came to the United States and met with Bishop Richard Garcia, D.D., the auxiliary of Sacramento, to lay out the plan for the taking over by the Stigmatines of the two parishes in Sacramento, namely, Holy Cross and St. Elizabeth in the summer.

As we were heading out of Boston, I felt a lump in my throat. I began reminiscing the four full years of my stay in Boston, a wonderful city despite its freezing cold in the wintertime. I began recalling my first days at Emerson College in downtown when I had to walk hundreds of times to attend my classes both on Beacon and Boylston streets with the thought of getting my Master's degree in Broadcast Journalism in a couple of years.

As the sun began to set, I drove steadily and farther away from Massachusetts towards Connecticut. As I drove with my Red Sox World Series hat on, I had mixed feelings of loneliness of leaving behind my Bostonian friends and my dear Red Sox, the New England Patriots, the Celtics and the Bruins which have been parts of my life in Massachusetts and I was also excited about what awaited us in Sacramento and of course the thought of fulfilling a promise to myself to drive across America! The traffic was relatively smooth until we got caught in a jam while crossing the George Washington Bridge in New York. I decided to spend the night with some Filipino friends in New Jersey and plan to tour Fr. Medeiros around New York the following day.

In New Jersey, I met some relatives and friends I never saw for years. We were given a very warm welcome with superb accommodations to spend the night over.

Early the next morning, I drove across the Hudson River to show Fr. Medeiros around New York. We went to visit the Brooklyn Bridge, the site of the World Trade Center, the Times Square, the New York's Grand Central Terminal, the Rockefeller Center and we had the chance to attend the noon mass at St. Patrick's cathedral.

From New York we headed farther south to our next stop, Washington D.C. We arrived there rather late so we slept at Days Inn and early the following morning we toured the whole city. We visited the Capitol, the Washington Monument, the World War I and World II memorials, the Vietnam and Korean War memorials and of course the White House. We also visited the Museum of Aeronautics and Space, which was really very fascinating and informative. Then, we headed to our next stop, Nashville, Tennessee.

It was our first time to see America's countryside. The beautiful scenery, the evergreens, the rolling hills and the simplicity of life in the country were very captivating after years of living in the city. We could see miles and miles almost endless array of trees and verdant pastures in contrast with city life.

We were very fortunate because Fr. Gregory Hoppough, the provincial superior, took my car and gave me instead his very beautiful and still new 6-cylinder Avalon sedan. The car is in superb condition that despite the heavy load we put inside the trunk and at the back seat it moved smoothly and with ease even at high speed.

We had everything in the car - food and drink. In order not to fall asleep I asked Fr. Medeiros to play CDs and dance while I was driving. We had to stop every now and then to eat at some restaurants along the freeways when we were tired of munching sandwiches or to fill up the gasoline. And of course, we always set a time for prayers. We were praying the rosary in Spanish and in English. So, I ended up memorizing the prayers in Spanish and Fr. Medeiros learning it in English.

It took us about 14 hours of driving from Tennessee to reach Plano, Texas where a lay Stigmatine couple from Brazil, Vicente and Tereza, were waiting with great anticipation for our arrival. We came to know the couple two years ago through Fr. Henchey's website. They came to know us while searching the web for the Stigmatines in America.

We stayed with them for two days and three nights. We were extremely grateful to them because they gave us a new computer, a printer, a VHS and a DVD player as gifts for the new foundation in Sacramento. They gave us superb accommodations during our stay in Texas. Early Friday morning we headed for Gallup, New Mexico.

The trip to New Mexico was good despite sweltering 107 degrees Fahrenheit heat! Thank God the Avalon's air conditioning system worked perfectly well! I had been driving for about 16 hours straight that day and it was almost 10 P.M. that all I wanted was to stop at the nearest hotel and sleep to be ready for the next day's trip to Arizona.

The temperature was still in the lower 60s when we left Gallup, New Mexico at six in the morning. The highway was clear of vehicles that we took our time leisurely over the seemingly endless road in the midst of the desert. All we see were sand dunes on both sides of the road. It was so barren that we thought we would die of

thirst if we got stuck along the way. It was some sort of a dejavu as I reminisced the movies I watched about the Sahara desert. It was like an ocean of sand and it stretched as far as the eye could see! As we moved along we saw Native American Indian tents used as a camping site. How we wished we had the time to see the Grand Canyon when we passed by it. Unfortunately, I was concerned about arriving in Sacramento that Saturday night that our longest stop was at the Arizona and California border when we had our tires replaced at Needles, CA. The tires were so worn out because of the thousands of miles trip and at extremely high temperatures that proceeding ahead without replacing them might cause them to explode along the highway.

After an hour, we resumed our journey towards Sacramento. Perhaps due to fatigue and lack of sleep I missed an exit and I noticed that I was heading towards Las Vegas, Nevada instead of Sacramento. Thank God for the cell phone and through our "stationed human GPS" (global positioning system) Vicente and Tereza guided back to the right track.

From there, we proceeded smoothly towards San Francisco. Everything was fine until we reached Sacramento and it was our time to exit Interstate 5 to connect to West Sacramento that we could not find our way again! It was already 10 P.M. and we could hardly find our exit towards Jefferson Boulevard. After, several loops and three attempts we finally got the right exit and a motorist guided us to Holy Cross. Fr. Mitterpergher was very much relieved when he saw us safe and sound-Deo gratias!

The following morning, we had to get up early to celebrate mass in St. Elizabeth. We were still groggy from the whole week's journey and the late arrival the night before and there we were finding our way to our other parish St. Elizabeth. Thank God, the streets of Sacramento are numbered and alphabetically arranged that we did not have problems locating St. Elizabeth Church for the 9 and the 10:30 o'clock masses. Fr. Mitterpergher had to stay behind because he had to celebrate the 9 o'clock mass at Holy Cross. Shortly before the mass, we met the out-going pastor Fr. Januarius, a native of Goa India, who was a very gracious person. After he made the sign of the cross, Fr. Januarius introduced us before the parishioners saying, "With us this morning are the new priests assigned in this parish. They are Fr. Antonio and Fr. Edwin" then immediately, without pause proceeded with the mass saying "Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy"...in Portuguese! We just smiled thinking that perhaps he wanted the Lord to really look on us, the newly appointed priests of St. Elizabeth, with mercy!!! The parishioners welcomed us and were so pleased to have us at St. Elizabeth's.

After the two masses in Portuguese and English at St. Elizabeth's, we headed back to Holy Cross to concelebrate with Fr. Chad, the out-going pastor for the noon mass in Spanish. The people were very enthused to see us! They were so gracious to even come to the rectory and offered their services to help us in the cleaning and repainting of the rectory.

We still could not get over the kindness the people in the two parishes have shown us. It is our prayer and hope that our Stigmatine presence here in California

will open new hope for the people and fresh vocations for our Stigmatine province of the Holy Spouses. May St. Gaspar Bertoni and our Holy Patrons Mary and Joseph intercede for us.

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Rev. Edwin Sedo Limpiado, CSS was born in the Philippines, in March 26, 1970. He was ordained a Stigmatine Priest in June 11, 2004, in Waltham, MA. His first assignment was for the Sacred Heart Parish in Milford, MA, and on July, 2005, he was assigned to the new Stigmatine Foundation in Sacramento, state of California, in the United States of America.

See here the itinerary of the trip:



The cities on the way, for reference:

- 1 – Waltham, MA (Massachusetts)
- 2 – New York, NY (New York)
- 3 – Washington, DC (District of Columbia)
- 4 – Nashville, TN (Tennessee)
- 5 – Plano, TX (Texas)
- 6 – Gallup, NM (New Mexico)
- 7 – Sacramento, CA (California)