

Guadalupe Maria Torres

1905 – 2001

Guadalupe Maria Torres was born in Aguascalientes, Mexico on December 17, 1905, the third of five children. Her father was president of the Province in which they lived and in Lupe's own words: "Every four years there was a revolution instead of an election in Mexico; my father was in danger." However, he managed to keep his position time after time. We know very little of Lupe's early life, but we do know that during the religious persecution in Mexico in the early twentieth century, she was arrested for teaching catechism and spent the night in prison until her family could get her out the next day. Those of us who knew Lupe can just imagine the dramatics that went on that night!

When Lupe wanted to enter the Society, her mother encouraged her to enter in Spain because of the religious situation in Mexico. The arrangements were made for Spain when someone put her in contact with Reverend Mother Gertrude Bodkin. Lupe then decided to cross the Rio Grande that forms the boundary with the United States rather than cross the ocean to Spain. Lupe traveled from San Francisco to Albany by train with Reverend Mother Bodkin. At that time the journey took four days and three nights. Lupe loved to tell how she and Reverend Mother Bodkin went to the dining car and Reverend Mother wanted her to eat salad. She refused saying that lettuce was only for rabbits. Reverend Mother Bodkin did have a box of chocolates, much to Lupe's delight. Her love of chocolates was legendary. Lupe often told us that her grandmother would often coax her into doing things by producing chocolates.

At the time of Lupe's entrance, Mother Ursula Benziger was mistress of Novices. Even then, Lupe's piety impressed one as being deep and very real. A personal love of the Lord and His mother were central to her spirituality. Lupe had four loves as she would say: My Lord, My Lady, Mother Benziger and candy. In the summer of 1938, just after the retreat, Mother Benziger left the noviceship to become Superior at Maplehurst, a disaster for Lupe. Unfortunately Mother Benziger drove off just before the novices came in for noon office. There were floods of tears. To make things worse, Lupe was versiculaire, not an assignment she either cared for nor did particularly well. The Office was a disaster!

Her noviceship came to a happy conclusion when Lupe pronounced her First Vows on March 2nd, 1940. Her Final Profession also took place at Kenwood on July 31, 1945. Mother Agnes Barry was Mistress of Novices and of the Probation.

After her First Vows, Lupe was sent to Sheridan Road, Chicago where from 1940 to 1943 she taught Second Grade and from 1943 – 1946 she taught the Fifth Grade Boys at Hardy Prep. Though her second language, Lupe's English was remarkable and she spoke it beautifully. Her teaching methods may have been original, but she was a splendid teacher and was very much loved by both the girls and the boys. In the summers, Reverend Mother Rosalie Hill brought the religious who were completing their degree studies to

San Francisco from Chicago and Omaha. The July fog on the coast apparently was more conducive to study than the Midwest heat. Sr. Torres was among those who went there for summer study. In 1946 she received her BA from San Francisco College for Women, Lone Mountain.

After receiving her BA, Sr. Torres was sent to Menlo Park where she lived from 1946 until 1950 while she studied at Stanford University, receiving first her MA and then her PhD in Spanish Literature. In 1950, PhD's were in great demand as Reverend Mother Hill had four colleges to staff with professors including the newly opened University of San Diego. However, Mexico asked for Sr. Torres. Consequently, Lupe was sent to Chihuahua, Mexico as Mistress of Studies, charged with the grade school studies. The comments made of Lupe at this time were that she did the work well, was very much loved and a wonderful religious.

Lupe served in Mexico for ten years and then, in 1960 she went to Newton College where she was Professor of Spanish Literature until her retirement in 1975. Lupe was always very serious about her teaching and her classes, but casual and easy going about most other things. Rules and regulations were at times beyond her. Her students from Hardy Prep boys to college girls respected and loved her. Her wit was sparkling and original.

Lupe's retirement years began at Varnum Street in Washington, DC where she tutored adult classes until she came to Kenwood in 1983. She endeared herself to all in her own typical ways. Those who came to visit during her early years at Kenwood remark about her joy. She loved to sing and to dance as well as to draw and to paint. Her work in the Art Classes was as original as was Lupe herself. A friend remembers: "Lupe, wrapped in her shawl, would take my arm. She had a special way of linking one's arm. We would walk down the corridor together engaged in what would appear to be a very serious conversation about mere nothing."

While she was able, she spent many hours in prayer in the Chapel and the Oratory. To the end her loves were the same. When asked about them she answered: "My Lord, My Lady, Mother Benziger and then, with a twinkle in her eyes . . . and candy".

As the years passed, Lupe's dementia became more severe and her memory was gone, but when the Eucharist was brought to her and she heard the word: "El Senor" her face would break into a magnificent smile to receive her Lord.

Her Lord welcomed her on Tuesday afternoon, March 13, 2001. She went to Him without a struggle gently, peacefully.