**Our Lady of the Angels Mission**
Feast of the Visitation
LaDonna Manternach
May 31, 2022

Good afternoon, everyone, on this special feast day.

It is a privilege to be with you today, on this holy ground.

Like Mary going to visit her cousin Elizabeth, though we traveled *from* the “hill country” instead of *to* it, it is like “coming home”.

When we arrived yesterday afternoon, Sr. Stephanie even welcomed us back “home.” All the BVM sisters are honored to be present with you today at this celebration bringing home this statue of Mary.

Many BVM sisters served in the school and the parish from 1904 until 1996.

The annals, which each convent community submits to the Motherhouse, recorded the events of the mission annually - from the number children who made their first communion and were confirmed, to the success of the spring musical program and the number of graduates.

In 1931, the sisters noted that the local bank where they had their savings had closed. All were worried.

In 1943, the annals not only recorded the sacramental celebrations but that the students were helping the war effort by collecting scrap metal and paper. It was the first year that the school celebration of the coronation of the Blessed Virgin in May was mentioned.

The School Fire on December 1, 1958 was a tragedy that will never be forgotten in this neighborhood and across the country. The annals that year identified the loss of 92 children and listed the 3 sisters who died. Let us pause for a moment to remember them and their families… May they Rest in Peace.

The new school opened in the fall of 1960, and was dedicated on Oct. 2, the Feast of the Guardian Angels, by Archbishop Meyer, who declared: “Here in this school of Our Lady of the Angels…may [we] continue to join with our Blessed Mother in her chant, proclaiming that the mercy of God comes upon generation to generation to those who fear Him.”

In 1977, the sisters’ annals indicated that the neighborhood had changed. They found it “challenging, …sometimes frightening.” Principal, Sr. Marion Murphy received a citation from the State of Illinois for her efforts to stop drug transactions.

A few years later in 1982, they sister stated that they were working to deal with the root causes of injustice and that the school was an oasis where people of different races and cultures are working peacefully in bright and cheerful surroundings.

The BVM sisters departed in 1996 that allowed for a new ministry to begin. In 2010, a community of faith reaching out in service to the neighborhood was reestablished with the founding of the Mission of Our Lady of the Angels and the Franciscans of the Eucharist. The ministry you are about here is one of love.

After being welcomed by Elizabeth, Mary’s song of joy helps us understand the purpose of this mission: “He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.”

Like Mary coming to Elizabeth’s door, once again this image of Mary stands at the door to greet all who are seeking refuge and respite. Once again the school is an oasis where people of different races and cultures are working peacefully in bright and cheerful surroundings.

May the work that has been established here bless this neighborhood with a safe and happy home filled with peace.

Virgin Mary of Mt Carmel

Who in ancient prophecy

God revealed to St. Elias

By an oriental sea

Rise again on God’s creation

Bring to bloom this arid place

With the white cloud of thy beauty

and the rainfall of thy grace