By Frances M. Tomczyk

On May 17, 2006, the parishioners of Our Lady of Guadalupe were reunited with their beloved Assumptionists at a special Mass and reception. Religious and faithful had not been together since 1998 when the Augustinians of the Assumption handed over the administration of Our Lady of Guadalupe to the Archdiocese of New York.



Fr. Claude Grenache, A.A., Rev. Msgr. Kevin Nelan, Fr. Peter Precourt, A.A.

In 2003, the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe was combined with St. Bernard's Church (both on 14th Street in Manhattan) to form the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. Bernard's Parish. The merger worked out well for parishioners in both parishes. The former buildings of OLG are currently in use for meetings, classes in English and other subjects for immigrants, CCD, and a residence, as well as for gatherings of South Manhattan Pastors under the Vicar for the area, Monsignor Kevin Nelan, who is the present Pastor of OLG at St. Bernard's. The church at the new OLG at St. Bernard's is open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. for services and for the steady stream of visitors who come to pay homage to the Patroness of the Americas.

Shortly after the merger, the entire church of OLG at SB was painted, the church hall renovated, and the entire facility was air-conditioned. New murals were installed, reflecting the shrines in Mexico and the patrons of the parish: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Saint Juan Diego, and Saint Bernard. To round off the renovations, the parish is in the process of raising funds for an elevator to enable all parishioners to attend services and functions.

The reunion in May was the culmination of much work on the part of individuals and parish organizations. The main collaborators were Deacon Rene Garcia, Antonio Gomez, Ignacio Ramos, Nelly Rivera, and Frances Tomczyk, along with the Curcillistas, and Cofradias. The music for the Mass was the same used in 1998 at the final Mass of the Assumptionists at OLG. In the church hall were several exhibits: one on Father D'Alzon, another detailing the history of the OLG parish, and a third exhibit (which had been placed in the church during Mass) honoring

the deceased Assumptionists who served at OLG in recent decades. A plaque honoring the Assumptionists for founding OLG and serving the parish and the Hispanic Community of New York was presented at the Mass. The plaque now hangs in the former OLG building where all who attend daily classes or meetings will know of the work of the Assumptionists. The main reason for having the Mass and reception was to reunite the parishioners with their spiritual leaders and to ensure that future parishioners would know the debt of gratitude owed to the Augustinians of the Assumption for starting the faith community which now reaps the benefits of their century of work in New York.

The Mass was celebrated in both English and Spanish. The main celebrant was the present Pastor, Monsignor Kevin Nelan, and concelebrating were Father Lino Gonsalves, Assistant Pastor, Fathers Claude Grenache, A.A. and Peter Precourt, A.A., former Pastors of OLG, Fathers Philip Bonvouloir, A.A. and Albert Brochu, A.A., who had served at OLG, Father Dennis Gallagher, A.A., the Assumptionist Regional Superior, and Father Francis, a diocesan priest from Africa, guest of the AA's in Worcester. Also in attendance were Brother John Thomas McHugh, A.A., and two Assumptionist novices.

Immediately following the Mass, the parishioners went to the parish hall to sign a guest book for the Assumptionists. While waiting for the Assumptionists to arrive, the parishioners looked at a series of albums preserved by Nelly Rivera, the parish secretary. These books contained photos going back to the beginnings of OLG. Several of the albums had been created by Father Bernard Guillet, one of the deceased Assumptionists who had served at OLG. The parish hall and the tables were decorated in red, white, and green, in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico. A hot *buffet* meal of American, Hispanic, and Philippino dishes was offered. The American and Hispanic food was prepared by "From Earth To You Cafe", which is co-run by Sammy del Toro, the son of Rosa del Toro, a longtime parishioner of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The festivities started when the Assumptionists entered the hall and were greeted by the parishioners with a champagne toast, offered by Ignacio Ramos.



At the end of the evening, a large cake decorated with the words, "With Gratitude To Our Assumptionists" was cut by the Assumptionist Regional Superior, Father Dennis Gallagher, and the present Pastor of OLG at St. Bernard's, Monsignor Kevin Nelan. The day

was preserved in memory by photos taken by the Catholic NY, the archdiocesan newspaper, which also carried stories about the Mass and reception in two of its issues, in both English and Spanish.