

August 2, 2010 - Guatemala – Don Bosco on the road



(ANS – Guatemala City) – On July 31 the casket of Don Bosco arrived at the military airport in Guatemala City, beginning the final phase of its pilgrimage in Central America. The Vice President of the Republic, the cardinal archbishop, the apostolic nuncio, and local dignitaries were there to meet it.

After the completion of formalities, the **casket** containing a major relic of Don Bosco was taken on a richly decorated carriage to Mesoamerica University. In only a few years this University, run by the Salesians, has risen to a high level of educational excellence on the national scene. Lecturers and students welcomed the casket and, in solemn and devout prayer, expressed the spiritual value of the visit of the Salesian founder.

Then the casket was taken to the nearby Salesian parish of Divine Providence, which is in a heavily populated working class area. It was placed on a valuable carpet made from vegetation, depicting various Salesian themes in symbolic form. The Guatemalan people are very skilled at expressing their faith in tapestries of this type, crafted with great aesthetic taste.

Don Bosco's entrance into the church provoked a tumultuous ovation from the hundreds of young people waiting inside. The casket remained in the parish throughout the night, in the midst of a dense crowd of devout faithful, patiently waiting their turn to pass near the saint of youth.

In Guatemala it is traditional to make carpets decorated with fine sand, bold colors, and intricate designs, representing religious themes. To honor Don Bosco not one, but a multitude of traditional carpets were created. On August 1, along the mile and a half between the Divine Providence Parish and the Don Bosco School, carpets of every type and color were displayed.

A dozen bands of music students along the processional route played marches. In such an atmosphere the casket entered the central courtyard of the school, where the pupils and their parents had laid out another carpet for the triumphal march of the saint. Cheers and applause accompanied the casket to the entrance and then inside the large church, a gem of modern architecture.

Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Rodolfo Quezada Toruño, archbishop of Guatemala, with Salesian Bishops Oscar Vian and Mario Fiandri and many other priests. In spite of the size of the building it was not possible for all the faithful to fit inside the church. Those left outside were able to participate with the help of large video displays.