

To wish you
Peace, Happiness
and every Joy for
this
Christmas
and the New Year

Mela and Bob Martin

Photograph is of the hide painting of "Nuestra Señora de la Begoña" in the Nuestra Señora de la Remedios Church in Galisteo, New Mexico. It was painted by the Franciscans in New Mexico, from an engraving dated 1608, of a statue of Nuestra Señora de la Begoña in its shrine.

She is the patroness of Bilbao, the capitol of Vizcaya, Spain. She dates back to the VIII century and was canonically crowned in 1900.

The Virgin of Begoña appeared carved of linden wood (sitting in a chair without arms) with the Infant Child; her hand on His left shoulder, surrounded by branches within an evergreen oak, exact date unknown. News of her apparition spread throughout the country and people came to worship the Virgin in the evergreen oak.

It was decided to build her a church. The site chosen was on a mountain top where the oak grew profusely. After the building materials were carried and left on the summit of the mountain, the workmen went to the evergreen oak to transport the image to the top ridge when they heard a voice coming from within the sacred image that said, "Begoña"; which in vascuence means, "Estese el pie quedo." (Keep your feet where they are.) All remained terrified but they interpreted what had happened to mean that the Virgin of Begoña desired to remain where she was and did not want to be moved.

The following day the workmen returned and discovered that the building material had been moved from the summit to the site of the evergreen oak where the image was.

The Church was built around the evergreen oak that enclosed the image but it soon became too small to accommodate all the faithful that were coming to see the Virgin of Begoña. The worshippers covered the image with precious jewels of great value.

Soon the funds needed to build another church were available and in 1523 the work was started on the church of Our Lady of Begoña; the old church was knocked down and the new one erected in its place. Bilbao possess the most venerated Marian Shrine in Vizcaya, Spain, that of Nuestra Señora de la Begoña.

During the construction of the church, one of the workmen, a stone cutter, seeing the quantity of jewels that the Virgin possessed, decided to steal the jewels.

The following night he entered the church in darkness and stripped from the image the jewels that adorned her. When he reached to remove the jewels from her crown, Nuestra Señora extended her arm and pushed the thief causing him to fall to the floor with the jewels he had taken.

The thief fled down the hill leading from the Church to Bilbao, encountering four obstacles of nature during his flight. First: he met a herd of furious rams that made him retreat. Second: on another try to get to Bilbao, a drove of bulls blocked his path and to avoid their attack, he once again changed his route. Third: now he found himself in an impenetrable forest of oak and thorns. Looking for a short cut he met his fourth obstacle: he was halted by a giant. The thief now in desperation looked for a place to hid among the thickest of bushes and branches.

In the meantime, the people in Bilbao heard the church bells ringing. The church bells had been hung temporarily on some of the thick tree branches. Not knowing how or why the bells were ringing, they proceeded to the site of the church. On discovering the robbery, they went in search of the thief and found him. He said that he had already repented and wanted to turn himself over to the law and asked that he be punished since he deserved it. The punishment was carried out.

Ref: Popular Arts of Spanish New Mexico (1974) by E. Boyd
 El Culto Mariano en Espana (1943) by Jose Augusto Sanchez Perez
 Photographed by Robert H. Martin, August 11, 1957

