



AP/Wide World Photos

Mothers share their grief

Thelma Mkhize (right) and Janine Groeves — respectively, mother and foster mother of 20-year-old Dudu Mkhize — console each other at their son's Aug. 1 funeral in Cape Town, South Africa. Mkhize was killed in late July in apparent random shooting at a taxi stand.

Thousands flock to site of supposed apparition

By Pat Hillyer
Catholic News Service

WATSONVILLE, Calif. — Thousands of people have visited a Watsonville park this summer, hoping to catch a glimpse of the Virgin Mary.

They have arrived in droves ever since Anita Contreras Mendoza, 53, said she saw Mary "encased in a seashell and holding a Sacred Heart to her chest."

Mendoza claims she was praying in a grove of trees when she saw the vision. She said she told Mary about her struggles as a single mother estranged from four of her five children.

When the vision departed, an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe was allegedly left in its place, 20 feet up on the branch of one of the trees.

Word of the apparition spread through the community. Pilgrims, primarily Hispanic, came in increasing numbers each day.

Some say another image of Mary is forming beneath the original; others report a cross-shaped crack in the tree.

When Mendoza visits the forest site several times a day, the crowds surround her, maneuvering close to listen. Clothed in black with several rosaries draped around her neck, she fervently leads the people in prayer and speaks passionately of her experiences.

A native of Michoacan, Mexico, Mendoza was one of seven children and was orphaned at age 6. Mendoza, a member of Assumption Parish in Pajaro, Calif., said she doesn't mind that many people don't believe her story about the apparition. She said she knows she had a religious experience

and that the form left on the tree is for the benefit of others.

"It's there so people don't kill, don't hit their wives, don't abuse their children and to help people find truth," she said.

Speaking on behalf of the Monterey diocese, Father Michael Miller said the church has not made any pronouncements on the alleged apparition.

"People have religious experiences in a variety of forms and ways, and if there is nothing going on that is contrary to the faith, then there will be no pronouncement on it," he said.

Noting the large number of Hispanic pilgrims, Father Miller said, "The Virgin Mary is an important symbol with tremendous meaning to these people."

"The Virgin's image on that tree assures them of her caring presence, encouragement and concern for them," he said.

Meanwhile, across the country, an estimated 6,000 to 10,000 people gathered in and around the back yard of Joseph Januskiewicz, a 54-year-old draftsman from Marlboro, N.J., when Mary allegedly appeared there Aug. 2.

Januskiewicz, a member of Marlboro's St. Gabriel Parish, said Mary started appearing March 17, 1989, but recently said she would only come on the first Sunday of each month.

According to the New Jersey man, Mary was accompanied by St. Joseph when she appeared at 9:13 p.m. (eastern daylight time) Aug. 2 and said, "Priests, my son loves you. Love him as much as he loves you. Pray for peace. Pray for your leaders to make the right choices. Many of my children will perish if they don't."

Dismissal underway against Father Fox

MEXICO CITY (CNS) — The former Dominican master general approved the dismissal of controversial Dominican Father Matthew Fox, and the process was scheduled to begin in late June, according to Father Fox's provincial superior.

The request now goes to the Vatican for consideration, according to Father Donald Goergen, head of the Domini-

cans' Chicago province.

Father Fox is founder of the Institute in Culture and Creation Spirituality at Holy Names College in Oakland, Calif.

The Dominicans' Chicago province had asked Father Fox to return to community life there. After the priest refused repeatedly, superiors in Chicago asked that he be dismissed from the order.

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