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WHEN LOVE GROWS OLD: SILVIA'S QUIET STRENGTH



There are moments in life when our hearts are deeply moved within—moments when reality forces us to stop, take a deep breath, and realize that time does not stop for anyone. That is what Jorge felt when he saw his mother, Silvia Pérez Villanueva, take her first steps using the walker she received through the Program for Seniors.

Silvia, 67, is cheerful and talkative. But behind her smile is a life marked by hard work, poverty, violence, migration, and a body that no longer responds as it once did.

She was born in San Marcos, Guerrero, Mexico, into a humble family where work came before play. By the age of nine, she was already selling bread from door to door, carrying a heavy basket that doctors later said permanently damaged her knees. She remembers her experience without bitterness, as someone who has made peace with her past.

Throughout her life, Silvia worked as a street vendor—selling bread, running a juice stand in Acapulco, and later opening her own food business. Through those efforts, she raised her six children. Everything changed when violence reached her community and, for safety reasons, she had to sell what she had built. Shortly after, one of her sons—who lived in Tijuana—fell into alcoholism. Silvia did not hesitate. She left her home and everything familiar to help him. *"A mother's love will do anything,"* she says.

Arriving in Tijuana was not easy. Her son, already in recovery, worked long hours, and Silvia spent many days completely alone. The loneliness grew heavy. True to her enterprising spirit, she began selling whatever she could—clothes, candy, small accessories. One day, another senior who attended the Program for Seniors noticed her and invited her to come along. That is how she arrived at Mary Immaculate Parish with the Oblates.

What she found there was not just a group—it was a refuge.

"When I come here, I forget a little bit about everything," she shares.

Today, Silvia participates as much as she can. Although her knees no longer allow her to dance, she enjoys the activities, classes, shared moments, and friendships she has built with women like Teófila, Evangelina, and many others who have found a second family in this space.

Every Saturday, from 8:00 to 11:30 a.m., Silvia and nearly 50 older adults arrive seeking companionship. They feel seen and not forgotten. They are welcomed with coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and cookies—and also with something far more valuable: a sincere hug.

The Health Program checks blood pressure, glucose levels, hearing, mobility, and other essentials. needs. At the same time, psychologists patiently and lovingly accompany those experiencing grief, anxiety, or abandonment—listening, comforting, and helping them heal. The morning includes prayer, mobility exercises, cognitive activities, a formative talk, and a meal prepared by volunteers. The day ends with a group photo—a reminder that it was all worth it.



When asked what she has found there, Silvia answers without hesitation: "Peace, love, calm... and God, in each of the young people who serve here."

For a woman who worked since the age of nine; who carried bread, pain, and responsibility for a lifetime; who faced poverty, violence, and migration—this place is more than a program.

It is family.

It is dignity.

It is life.

All of this is possible thanks to the support of people who believe in this mission, because caring for 50 seniors each week requires food, materials, medical supplies, and trained personnel.

That is why, when Jorge saw his mother walking again with the help of her walker, he said words no one has forgotten:

"Thank you for helping her walk one more day. Thank you for caring for the woman who cared for me my entire life."

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A FAITH THAT HELD UP A FALLING ROOF



No one imagines how much faith can exist beneath a roof that is falling apart. This is the story of the Ramírez family.

The household is led by José Ángel Ramírez Quero, a 63-year-old man who each night swept the floor of a taquería to earn a few pesos. Though his hands were worn from years of hard work, his spirit remained strong. By his side was his wife, Margarita Irene Ramírez Morales, a woman of deep faith who devoted her days to caring for her home and serving at Our Lady of Tepeyac Chapel. There, she cleaned the chapel with devotion and supported the social ministry, always trusting in God's providence—even though the family received no government assistance.

Under the same roof lived their daughter Azucena Ramírez and her nine-year-old daughter, Iliana. As a single mother, Azucena worked tirelessly to provide her daughter with a dignified life. Iliana attended school and was preparing with excitement for her First Communion. The home was also shared by Eréndira, José and Margarita's niece, a 45-year-old woman who shared her aunt's love for serving God at the chapel.

Despite being a home full of faith, they faced a serious and urgent problem: the roof. Years of wear and lack of maintenance allowed rain to pour in everywhere. Water leaked into José and Margarita's bedroom, the room shared by Azucena and Iliana, and even the areas where they stored their few belongings. Rainy nights became a constant battle against water, cold, and the fear that the roof might collapse.

One afternoon, while Margarita and Eréndira were cleaning the chapel as usual, they heard about a support program led by Serving Hands, the Oblate Missionaries, and the Building Hope team. The program offered free roof repairs for vulnerable families. Holding tightly to hope, Margarita decided to apply.

Weeks later, the news arrived—they had been selected. Joy overflowed in the small home. José Ángel, who had carried the burden of being the family's provider for so many years, felt deep relief knowing his loved ones would finally have a repaired roof and dry interior. Margarita and Eréndira lifted prayers of gratitude, while Azucena held her daughter's hand, showing her that faith is also lived through everyday miracles.






The morning the Serving Hands and Building Hope teams arrived, the home filled with movement and hope. Volunteers and young people began removing the old roof, while the family watched with emotion as each board taken down meant a step toward a more dignified future. With care and dedication, the team installed new beams, plywood, and everything needed to protect the family from rain and cold.

When the work was finished, the Ramírez family could not hold back their tears. Margarita, her voice soft and trembling, said to the volunteers: "You have been God's hands for us. We will never be able to thank you enough."

That night, for the first time in a long while, they slept in peace—without leaks, without fear, without cold. Beneath that new roof, they found more than protection. They found a living reminder that faith, service, and solidarity can transform lives.

That day, the Ramírez family understood that God never abandons those who trust in Him... and that sometimes, He arrives in the form of volunteers, hammers, and a new roof!

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