



FRIENDS

October 2026



"The Wall That Wouldn't Fall..."

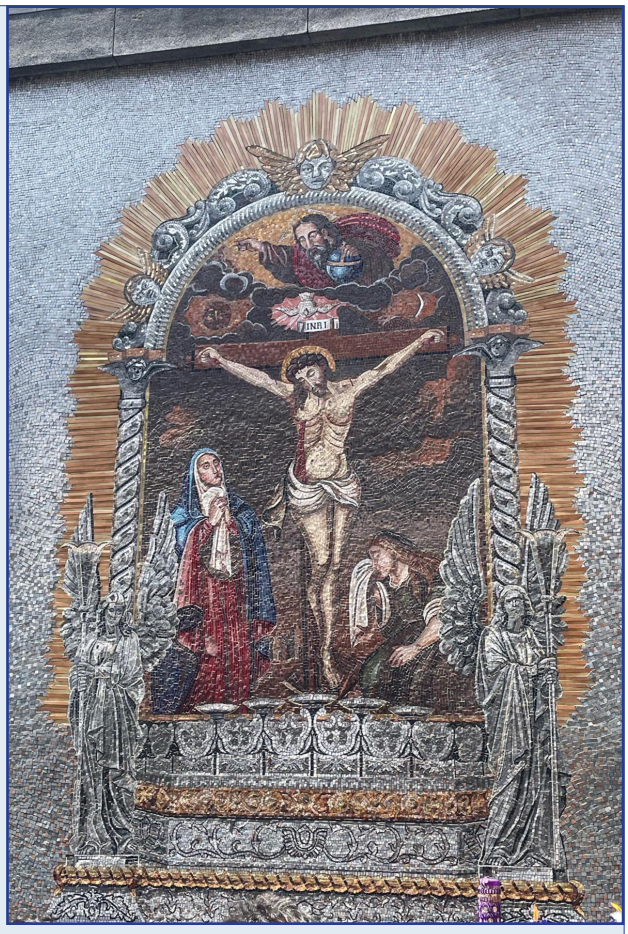
Photo, courtesy of: https://www.machupicchuterra.com/guide/senor-milagros-lima/

Dear Friends,

We live in an era in which many bemoan that, whilst scientific and technological advances move at a rapid pace, progress towards diminishing polarization in society and procuring more harmony across the nations is less evident. Perhaps the story of a 17th-century Peruvian miracle has something to teach us. In 1651, an enslaved Angolan man in Pachacamilla - a deeply improverished and

marginalized district of colonial Lima—painted an image of Jesus on a fragile adobe wall. He had no formal artistic training. His canvas was made of simple mud and straw. Yet, his inspiration would completely reshape the spiritual landscape of Peru, offering a timeless reminder that true unity and communion are always the work of the Holy Spirit. At that time, the institutional Church in Lima was struggling immensely to reach the marginalized populations. Human plans, top-down pastoral strategies, and strict administrative rules all failed to bridge the deep cultural and racial divides. Yet something was about to happen that would change all that. When a catastrophic earthquake levelled Lima and Callao in 1655, grand stone churches and wealthy estates crumbled to dust; but, in the midst of all the destruction, the fragile adobe wall stood completely untouched among the ruins. The survivors—mostly enslaved people and marginalized laborers—scattered to other areas of the city to find work and shelter. Because the area was largely deserted, the untouched adobe wall stood completely isolated among the rubble for over a decade. For years, there were no crowds, no organized gatherings, and no public commotion to attract the attention of colonial rulers. To the institutional Church and civil authorities, it simply looked like a broken patch of land.

The situation was to shift dramatically in 1670 due to the initiative of a layman named Andrés de León. He suffered from a terminal illness (believed to be a severe malignant tumor).

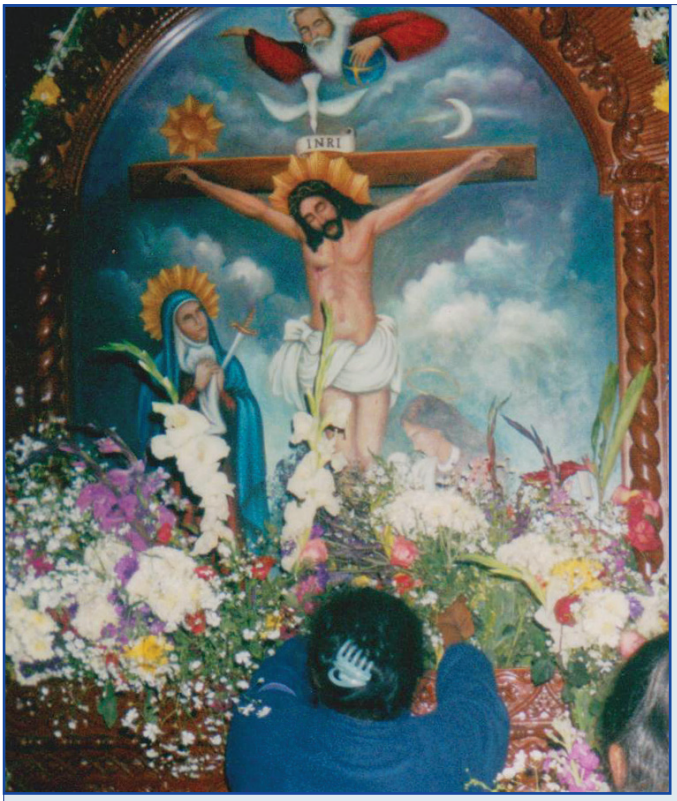


The original image of Senor de Los Milagros, on the wall, (above); An image, as seen in the Sanctuary of the Nazarenas in Lima, Peru (left); A procession in the parish of El Resucitado, Lima (below)



Having heard rumors of the wall that survived the earth quake, he cleared the weeds from the ruins, found the image, and began praying desperately for a cure. *Andrés de León was completely healed!*





Adding flowers before the image and procession, above.



Filled with gratitude, Andrés built a modest straw altar by the wall and spread the word. Within months, thousands of people began flooding the area. The devotees, who were primarily Afro-Peruvians and indigenous laborers, gathered on Friday evenings. These weekly gatherings quickly evolved into vibrant spiritual celebrations filled with traditional singing, dancing, and drumming. A fuse was lit! It was this sudden change that alarmed the establishment. In 1671, the parish priest of San Marcelo, Don José Laureano de Mena, officially complained to the Viceroy (the Count of Lemos). He argued that these massive, unregulated, and high-energy gatherings were outside "religious norms" and threatened Catholic doctrine. The authorities panicked and in September of that year issued a formal directive to paint over the image, setting the stage for the miraculous failures of the "*eraser crew*".

Historical accounts document that three separate attempts to erase the image failed. The first man hired to paint over the mural raised his brush, only to be struck by sudden chills and tremors, and he refused to go ahead with the task. A soldier approached, ready to deface it, but stepped back in terror as the image grew intensely radiant before his eyes. When a mob was sent to tear it down, a violent, unexpected storm erupted, scattering the crowd. Realizing they were fighting against divine power, the authorities surrendered. Once they stopped trying to force the community into rigid moulds, something beautiful happened. Amid the ruins originally caused by the earthquake, heartbroken people came together and offered prolonged, desperate, and persistent prayer. In response to that intense intercession, the Holy Spirit brought about what centuries of human laws and campaigns never could: the shattering of every racial and social barrier. Colonial caste systems dissolved entirely. Wealthy Spanish viceroys, indigenous workers, and enslaved African labourers all ended up kneeling together side-by-side in the dirt, praying as social equals. Hearts softened, confessions multiplied, and a fragmented city was pulled back to Christ.

This was the birth of ***The Lord of Miracles*** (*El Señor de los Milagros*), a devotion that now fills the streets of Lima with thousands of people in purple robes every October. In my own parish, months of preparation are given over to ensuring that as many people as possible have the opportunity to see the image (the weight of which requires 24 volunteers to lift it) pass along their street.

The movement of the bearers of the image who carry the massive "*anda*" or platform of the Señor de los Milagros is a highly coordinated, rhythmic ritual. They do not walk forward in a standard linear fashion. Instead, they use a slow, cadenced, side-to-side swaying motion. This synchronized lateral movement causes the entire structure to gently swing back and forth as it slowly advances through the crowds, creating a mesmerizing, wave-like visual effect. The story of The Lord of the Miracles, which began with a slave deciding to paint an image on a wall, is a narrative that confronts us with an abiding truth. How often human attempts to bring about harmony and unity founder because of a clash of egos, but wonderful things begin to happen when supernatural help is constantly invoked. It seems that it is in the humble, ordinary, and "fragile" spaces—much like that adobe wall—where the Holy Spirit tends to release His immense power to unite, heal, and restore. So, as we thank you for your continued generosity to the St James Missionary Society, let me end with a prayer to The Lord of Miracles...

~ Fr. Simon Cadwallader



Prayer to the Lord of Miracles

Lord, You who stood firm
on a fragile wall
when everything else crumbled
around it, look upon our lives today.

When the storms of division,
financial problems or personal trials
threaten to overwhelm us,
give us the grace to keep our eyes
fixed entirely on You.

Break down the barriers
in our own hearts just as
You dissolved the divides
in colonial Lima.
Teach us to listen to your quiet whisper
over the roar of the world,
and grant us the gift to
step out further
in our faith journeys.

Amen.

With Every Good Wish in Christ,

Rev. David Costello, Director



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