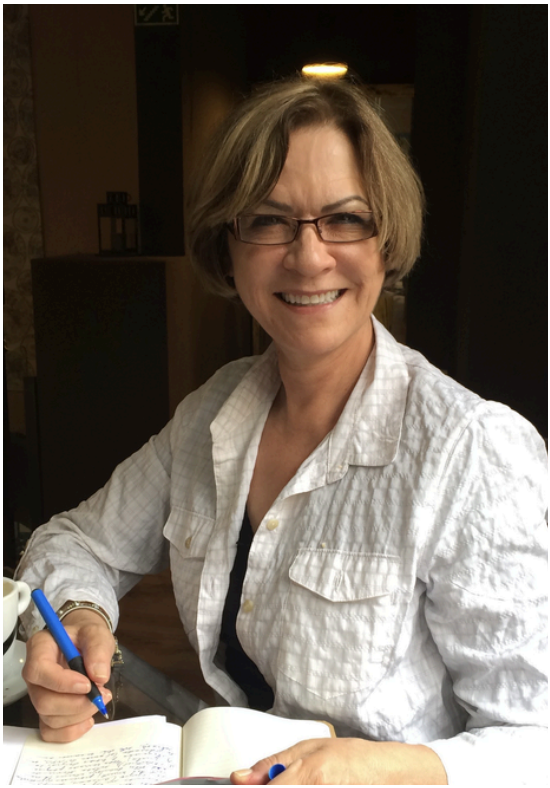
Celebrating the Life of

María del Refugio "Cuca" Robledo Montecel

August 9, 2025 at 10 am



January 14, 1953 - August 5, 2025

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
San Antonio, Texas

Funeral Liturgy

Placing of the pall by Cuca's grandnieces and grandnephews

Prelude: "Nada te turbe" (see Page 4)

Introductory Rites

Entrance Song: "Lord of the Dance" (see Page 5)

Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-2, 18-31 | Victoria Robledo

> "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service has ended, that her guilt is expiated, That she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins."

Psalm 103: "The Lord Is Kind and Merciful"

Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-2 | Ismael Montecel

"See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God."

Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

> "Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his Body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive."

Homily | Fr. Tony Vilano

Prayers of the Faithful | Javier Gonzalez

R./ Lord, hear our prayer.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Gifts: "Prayer of St. Francis" (Breaking Bread #510)

Presentation of the Gifts | Aurora Montecel-Potkalesky, Noah Bimstein, Rosa Guadalupe Bimstein, Rosa Robledo

Communion Rite

Holy, Holy, Holy

The Mystery of Faith

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Sign of Peace

Lamb of God

Communion Song: "Pescador de Hombres" (see Page 6)

Final Commendation

Remembrance: Xavier Mario Montecel

Song of Farewell: "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" (Breaking Bread #691)

Prayer of Commendation

Final Song: "Be Not Afraid" (Breaking Bread #563)

Honorary Pall Bearers: Juan Enrique Cienfuegos, Rosalinda Botello, Alfredo B. Robledo, Jr., Claudia Robledo Gonzalez, Nora Gonzalez, Anna Berta Romanos, Miguel Angel Robledo, Mario Robledo

Nada te turbe

Palabras de Santa Teresa de Ávila

Nada te turbe, nada te espante
Quien a Dios tiene, nada le falta
Nada te turbe, nada te espante
Solo Dios basta (chant repeats)

Living Water Zen

Lord of the Dance

I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
And I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,
And I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth:
At Bethlehem I had my birth.

Refrain: Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee,
But they would not dance and they wouldn't follow me;
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John;
They came with me and the dance went on.

Refrain

I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame:
The holy people said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me on high,
And they left me there on a cross to die.

Refrain

I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black;
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back.
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone;
But I am the dance, and I still go on.

Refrain

They cut me down and I leapt up high;
I am the life that'll never, never die.
I'll live in you if you'll live in me:
I am the Lord of the dance, said he.

Refrain

Pescador de Hombres

Lord you have come to the seashore,
neither searching for the rich nor the wise,
desiring only that I should follow.

Refrain: O Lord, with your eyes set upon me,
gently smiling, you have spoken my name;
all I longed for I have found by the water,
at your side, I will seek other shores.

Lord, see my goods, my possessions;
in my boat you find no power, no wealth.
Will you accept, then, my nets and labor?

Lord take my hands and direct them.
Help me spend myself in seeking the lost,
returning love for the love you gave me.

Lord, as I drift on the waters,
be the resting place of my restless heart,
my life's companion, my friend and refuge.

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Tu has venido a la orilla,
no has buscado ni a sabios ni a ricos;
tan sólo quieres que yo te siga.

Refrán: Señor, me has mirado a los ojos,
sonriendo has dicho mi nombre,
en la arena he dejado mi barca,
junto a Ti buscaré otro mar.

Tú sabes bien lo que tengo
en mi barca no hay oro ni espadas;
tan sólo redes y mi trabajo.

Tú necesitas mis manos,
mi cansancio que a otros descanse,
amor que quiera seguir amando.

Tú pescador de otros lagos,
ansia eterna de almas que esperan
amigo bueno, que así me llamas.

Cuca: A Life of Crossing Borders

Ismael and Paula Robledo crossed borders. They lived between nations, between cultures, and between challenges and dreams. Their youngest daughter, María del Refugio—affectionately known as Cuca—grew up in a family defined by courage and movement. Cuca was the youngest of four, born into a Spanish-speaking, working-class household from Laredo, Texas. It was a home rich in resilience and love. The family struggled to survive, migrating to California and Wisconsin, taking their children across landscapes of opportunity and hardship. Theirs was a home rich in love and warmth, despite every hardship they faced.

From her earliest years, Cuca learned the quiet dignity of perseverance. Every border she crossed left a mark. Whether navigating life in Laredo's Chacon neighborhood or attending high school alongside children of the city's elite, she carried the lessons of home with pride. She attended Ursuline Academy and often faced social and economic discrimination, yet she never allowed herself to feel less-than. She did not come from financial wealth but, as Cuca knew, wealth had many meanings. She remained steadfast in her love and pride in her family.

The Robledos believed in one another deeply. Cuca knew her value and that of those she came from. Her loyalty showed in how she showed up for others. She supported her sister Lupe through a difficult set of personal circumstances. She became a second mother to her niece and nephew, always opening her arms and heart. When illness came for her sister, Cuca remained present and devoted. She supported Lupe through her cancer until her death, surrounded by a room full of loving family. These, too, were borders: of grief, of love, of letting go. Those are tough borders to cross.

Cuca's life would take her far beyond Laredo. Cuca crossed an international border when she married Lucas, a cultural border from Texas to Ecuador. She began a new chapter as a spouse, mother, and thinker. She remained grounded in her faith, a practicing Catholic, lector, and Eucharistic Minister. She also stepped onto another path, practicing Zen meditation for more than a decade. She became a roshi, a master teacher, through dharma transmission by Fr. Robert Kennedy in the White Plum lineage. For some, these paths may seem irreconcilable, but

Cuca crossed the border between Christianity and Buddhism, belonging to both. Cuca did so brilliantly, compassionately and firmly.

Cuca's family blossomed into a complex, beautiful map of connections. Her familia is a map of many border crossings. Her partner Lucas was both a veteran and entrepreneur, who came from South America and built a life in New York, Puerto Rico, and San Antonio, among many other places. Her eldest son Ismael, now a senior data scientist, served in the Air Force and made his way to Washington, D.C. Her son Xavier completed a Ph.D. in theological ethics and is now a professor at St. Mary's University in San Antonio. Cuca's love was unconditional and joyful. She crossed a major cultural, political, and religious border with her proud and unapologetic celebration of Xavier's engagement to his husband Ryan Bowley. She welcomed her new son-in-law with open arms, honoring love in all its forms.

All this border crossing is sustained by four deep and powerful groundings: Faith, Courage, Insight and Persistence. These were not abstract values for Cuca but living principles. Her Faith was grounded in people and community. It informed her actions as much as her prayers. Her Courage blossomed into taking a stand for children, especially those marginalized by poverty, language, or status. Her Insight was rooted in a clear vision of reality: a sharp ability to name injustice and call forward potential. Uncovering and pointing to the brilliance and potential in all children became her life's mission as an advocate and professional.

More than a set of ideals, Cuca's Persistence was daily, practiced, and long-suffering. Her Persistence kept her in the battle and fray for the long haul. She understood that victories were not always swift. Savoring the periodic wins in a stream of losses, she kept on keeping on, for justice. Her vision was unwavering: not only not giving up but always planning with hope. She believed in transforming schools to be places of safety, excellence and possibility.

The children she held in her vision were not abstract. She worked for children who grow up poor, or are of color, speaking a language other than English, recent immigrants, or all of the above. They reflected her own experience, and she never stopped advocating on their behalf. She leaves a legacy that inspires us to keep our faith in the children. She also urged others to have the courage to keep up the battle for the children, even when powerful forces seek to limit their educational opportunities. "Maintain a clear vision of what is in the best interest of children," she

would say, and "persist with vigor and with strategies that will transform our schools."

Even in her personal journeys, Cuca pushed boundaries. She crossed many distant borders in Spain, twice completing the Camino de Santiago. She walked long miles in sacred silence, side by side with her son Xavier or with her Zen community. The border town girl who once had to go to Chicago to live with her oldest brother so that her father could find a job became a woman of global presence. Whether picking crops or advocating policy, she knew her value and the value of all children and all people. She proclaimed the civil right of children to an excellent bilingual education. Her legacy is written in the lives she touched and the borders she crossed with grace, strength, and love.

¡Cuca Robledo Montecel, presente!

Written in loving memory of a lifelong friend by Aurelio Montemayor.

Cuca: Una vida cruzando fronteras

Ismael y Paula Robledo cruzaron fronteras. Vivieron entre naciones, entre culturas, y entre desafíos y sueños. Su hija menor, María del Refugio—conocida con cariño como Cuca—creció en una familia definida por el valor y el movimiento. Cuca fue la menor de cuatro hijos, nacida en un hogar de clase trabajadora y de habla hispana en Laredo, Texas. Un hogar lleno de amor y resiliencia. La familia luchaba por sobrevivir, migrando a California y Wisconsin, llevando a sus hijos por paisajes llenos de oportunidades y dificultades. A pesar de todo, siempre fue un hogar lleno de cariño y calidez.

Desde muy joven, Cuca aprendió la dignidad silenciosa de la perseverancia. Cada frontera que cruzó dejó una huella. Ya fuera navegando la vida en el barrio Chacón de Laredo o asistiendo a una preparatoria junto a los hijos de la élite de la ciudad, siempre llevó con orgullo las enseñanzas de su hogar. Estudió en Ursuline Academy, donde enfrentó discriminación social y económica, pero nunca permitió que eso le hiciera sentir menos. No venía de una familia con riquezas materiales, pero como bien sabía Cuca, la riqueza tiene muchos significados. Su amor y orgullo por su familia siempre fueron firmes.

Los Robledo creían profundamente los unos en los otros. Cuca sabía lo que valía, y lo que valían aquellos de quienes venía. Su lealtad se

mostraba en cómo se entregaba a los demás. Apoyó a su hermana Lupe durante momentos personales muy difíciles. Se convirtió en una segunda madre para su sobrina y sobrino, siempre con los brazos y el corazón abiertos. Cuando la enfermedad tocó a su hermana, Cuca estuvo presente y entregada. Acompañó a Lupe durante su lucha contra el cáncer hasta su fallecimiento, rodeada de una familia llena de amor. Estas también fueron fronteras: de duelo, de amor, de soltar. Fronteras difíciles de cruzar.

La vida llevó a Cuca mucho más allá de Laredo. Cruzó una frontera internacional al casarse con Lucas, y una frontera cultural al ir de Texas a Ecuador. Inició un nuevo capítulo como esposa, madre y pensadora. Se mantuvo firme en su fe: católica practicante, lectora y ministra de la Eucaristía. Pero también caminó otro sendero, practicando la meditación Zen por más de una década. Se convirtió en roshi, maestra espiritual, tras recibir la transmisión del dharma por el padre Robert Kennedy en la tradición White Plum. Para algunos, estos caminos pueden parecer irreconciliables, pero Cuca cruzó la frontera entre el cristianismo y el budismo, perteneciendo a ambos. Lo hizo con brillantez, compasión y firmeza.

La familia de Cuca floreció en un mapa complejo y hermoso de conexiones. Su familia es un mapa de muchos cruces de frontera. Su compañero Lucas fue veterano y emprendedor, originario de Sudamérica, y construyó una vida en Nueva York, Puerto Rico y San Antonio, entre muchos otros lugares. Su hijo mayor, Ismael, ahora científico de datos, sirvió en la Fuerza Aérea y llegó a Washington, D.C. Su hijo Xavier completó un doctorado en ética teológica y es profesor en St. Mary's University en San Antonio. El amor de Cuca fue incondicional y lleno de alegría. Cruzó una gran frontera cultural, política y religiosa al celebrar con orgullo y sin disculpas el compromiso de Xavier con su esposo Ryan Bowley. Recibió a su nuevo yerno con los brazos abiertos, honrando el amor en todas sus formas.

Todos estos cruces de frontera fueron sostenidos por cuatro fundamentos profundos y poderosos: Fe, Valentía, Claridad y Perseverancia. Para Cuca, estos no eran valores abstractos, sino principios vivos. Su Fe estaba enraizada en las personas y en la comunidad, y guiaba tanto sus acciones como sus oraciones. Su Valentía se convirtió en acción, luchando por los niños marginados por la pobreza, el idioma o el estatus migratorio. Su Claridad venía de una visión realista y aguda: la capacidad de nombrar la injusticia y señalar el potencial. Su misión de vida fue

descubrir y resaltar la brillantez y el potencial en todos los niños, como defensora y profesional.

Más que ideales, su Perseverancia era diaria, constante y a veces dolorosa. Su perseverancia la mantuvo en la lucha durante décadas. Comprendía que las victorias no siempre llegan rápido. Disfrutaba los triunfos esporádicos en medio de las derrotas, y nunca dejó de luchar por la justicia. Su visión era firme: no solo no rendirse, sino siempre planear con esperanza. Creía en transformar las escuelas en espacios de seguridad, excelencia y posibilidad.

Los niños a quienes tenía en mente no eran una idea abstracta. Trabajó por los niños que crecen en la pobreza, que son de color, que hablan otro idioma además del inglés, que son inmigrantes recientes, o todo eso a la vez. Esos niños reflejaban su propia experiencia, y jamás dejó de luchar por ellos. Nos deja un legado que nos inspira a mantener la fe en los niños. También nos llamó a tener el valor de seguir en la lucha, incluso cuando fuerzas poderosas buscan limitar sus oportunidades educativas. "Mantengan una visión clara de lo que es mejor para los niños," decía, "y persistan con energía y estrategias que transformen nuestras escuelas."

Incluso en sus caminos personales, Cuca rompió límites. Cruzó fronteras lejanas al caminar dos veces el Camino de Santiago en España. Caminó largas jornadas en silencio sagrado, acompañada por su hijo Xavier o por su comunidad Zen. Aquella niña de frontera que alguna vez tuvo que irse a Chicago a vivir con su hermano mayor para que su padre pudiera trabajar, se convirtió en una mujer de presencia global. Ya fuera cosechando frutas o abogando por políticas públicas, siempre supo lo que valía ella y lo que valían todos los niños y todas las personas. Proclamó el derecho civil de los niños a una educación bilingüe de excelencia. Su legado vive en las vidas que tocó y en las fronteras que cruzó con gracia, fortaleza y amor.

¡Cuca Robledo Montecel, presente!

Escrito con amor en memoria de una amiga de toda la vida, por Aurelio Montemayor.

“Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar”
- Antonio Machado