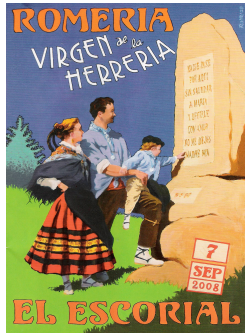


October 2008

THE ROMERÍA



The plaza is a whirl of black, red and white as half the town are in traditional costume. The dancing and music will go on to the early hours. It's all in honour of the town's virgin. The statue of the Virgin Mary has been carried out of the church and presented with dozens of bouquets of flowers. When the dancing has finished she'll be taken back only to be taken out a few hours later and placed on a special carriage surrounded by her floral tributes. The rosary will be said and then, accompanied by bands, other decorated carriages and most of the town on foot, she will process to a small hermitage two kilometers away in the countryside. Mass will be said and then there will be a big picnic.



This festival is probably the most striking example of the way in which religion is mixed with tradition, folklore and superstition in Spanish life.

Elizabeth's friends are going. They've even bought identical T-shirts and had their own slogan printed so they can be recognised as a group on the Romería (Pilgrimage). None of them are practising Catholics; they are just going for the fun.

Yet Mary is still there — the picture is this year's poster advertising the event. The wording on the stone says 'Nobody passes by here without greeting Mary and asking her, our mother, not to leave us'. But, of

course, it's Jesus who is with us always: something that people can fail to see, because Mary gets in the way.

For Prayer

- Give thanks that the Evangelical church of El Escorial has found a bigger, yet affordable, place to rent.
- Please pray for three people being baptised this month: Rafa, Danny and Milton.

Jonathan & Hilary Rowe are seconded by the South American Mission Society (www.samsgb.org) to the Seminario Evangélico Unido de Teología, Madrid.