

## **Iconic Northern New Mexico pilgrimage site, Chimayó, focus of new exhibit at New Mexico History Museum**

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**Santa Fe, NM** – More than 30,000 people walk miles up narrow roads in Northern New Mexico each year in search of blessings or miracles. The exhibition, “Chimayó: A Tradition of Faith,” opens at New Mexico History Museum April 12, 2025, and is a snapshot into the rich history and enduring spiritual significance of the annual pilgrimage to the Santuario de Chimayó.

The Santuario, or sanctuary, draws the largest religious pilgrimage in the US during Christian Holy Week. Many come to obtain the famous healing “holy earth” within the sanctuary.

“All are welcome on the pilgrimage. Young children, adults, and the elderly walk to the Santuario de Chimayó from as far away as Albuquerque or Santa Fe to remember family members who have passed away, in search of blessings and miracles, and to obtain the famous healing ‘holy earth,’” says Cathy Notarnicola, Curator of Southwest History at the History Museum. “All are united in spirit as they traverse their way across the landscape to the Santuario.”

The exhibition captures the essence of the event through the lenses of four photographers. Sam Howarth has made the pilgrimage to Chimayó many times and started documenting this living tradition with his camera. In 1996, he invited photographers Miguel Gandert, Oscar Lozoya, and Cary Herz to participate, along with oral historians Dr. Enrique R. Lamadrid and Troy Fernández. Howarth received a grant from the New Mexico Endowment for the Humanities to support this project.

“Chimayó: A Tradition of Faith” also features a recreation of the Santuario’s rooms and spaces, where pilgrims leave offerings from paintings and prints of santos to photographs, letters, locks of hair, military dog tags, and crutches, all testaments to the faith and hope that draw people to Chimayó.

While the sanctuary has been a meaningful place for Christians, its history as a sacred place goes back to time immemorial. The word Chimayó, derived from the Native Tewa

term Tsi-Mayoh, was given by Pueblo Indians who used the area as a healing site long before the arrival of Spanish colonists.

“Chimayó: A Tradition of Faith” will be on view through May 31, 2027. A public reception will be hosted by the Museum of New Mexico Foundation Women’s Board on Saturday, April 26, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

***About New Mexico History Museum***

*New Mexico History Museum, a division of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, offers a welcoming place for exploration of multifaceted views on history, dialog that bridges social and cultural divides, and reflection on the conditions needed for a more resilient, just, and sustainable future. The NMHM campus is located on the north side of the historic Santa Fe Plaza. Learn more at [nmhistorymuseum.org](http://nmhistorymuseum.org).*