

July 8, 2023

Speech by Mitzi Perdue on the presentation of the tapestry to the *Intercession of the Virgin Mary Women's Shelter* in Lviv, Ukraine.

Proceeds from the sale of her Atocha Emerald Ring made this shelter possible.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning! I am delighted to stand before you today in the beautiful city of Lviv, Ukraine. I come bearing gifts and gratitude from the other side of the world, from the hearts of the people in Delaware, USA. We stand in unity, driven by the universal language of compassion, respect, and support for women.

I am deeply moved and humbled by the spirit of this community, which reminds me of a quotation by a famous American poet, James Russell Lowell, who once said, "A gift without the giver is bare". I resonate deeply with these words. As an entrepreneur and philanthropist, I have found that the most fulfilling aspects of giving are not merely in the act itself, but in the relationships it fosters, the stories it writes, and the love it manifests.

And that brings me to the story behind our gathering today. I come to you not just as an American donor, but as a woman, a friend, and a sister who was once the owner of a historic and unique engagement ring. It was an emerald from the treasure ship, Atocha, and when it was auctioned, newspaper accounts said that only once in a couple of decades does an emerald this large and historic come up for sale. The proceeds from the sale of my ring have brought us together today. But it's not about the price of the ring. It's about what it symbolizes. The sale of that ring has meant the promise of safety, of shelter, and of hope for the many women who will walk through these doors. To me, that's more valuable than any jewel.

Right now, in my hands, I hold another symbol of unity and friendship - an embroidered wall hanging, a labor of love meticulously crafted by members of the 20 women's clubs that form the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Delaware. Every stitch, approximately 10,000 in total, carries with it our love, our thoughts, and our hopes for you. Master embroideress Deborah Johnson created the design and then attached the different flowers, each one embroidered by a different woman, into this wall-hanging. Trish Rodriguez, President of the GFWC Delaware coordinated the project.



This intricate artwork interweaves our nations' symbols: Ukraine's steadfast sunflower, the vibrant American Beauty rose, and Delaware's lovely peony, each of these flowers together form a tapestry of friendship.

Today, we stand before the *Intercession of the Virgin Mary Women's Shelter*. Not just a building, but a beacon of hope, a fortress of safety, and a home that epitomizes love and care. Each brick laid, each room constructed, reflects the resilience, strength, and determination of every woman who will seek solace here.

I firmly believe that every woman deserves respect, love, and a safe place to call home. Today, we have made a significant stride toward that vision. Let us continue this vital work, empowering and supporting the women who, with our help, will build brighter futures. May the Virgin Mary intercede for every woman who finds refuge here and bless her with strength, peace, and hope.

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