

**VOTIVE MASS OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE  
QUEEN OF THE AMERICAS GUILD CONFERENCE  
SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE, LA CROSSE**

**AUGUST 5, 2005**

**HOMILY**

In the mystery of the Visitation, we see a most wonderful manifestation of the vocation and mission of the Mother of God. Once God the Son had been conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of His Virgin Mother, Mary began her mission, immediately carrying the Divine Son in her womb to the home of her cousin Elizabeth. Both Elizabeth and the infant son in her womb, John the Baptist, recognized the presence of the Savior in their midst. John the Baptist also began his mission of precursor of the Savior by leaping for joy in the womb of his mother, Elizabeth. Elizabeth, for her part, exclaimed:

And how does this happen to me,  
that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ....  
Blessed are you who believed  
that what was spoken to you by the Lord  
would be fulfilled (Gospel).

Mary responded, praising God for the infinite greatness of His merciful love, in which her soul and spirit participated in a pure and total way. In the simple and humble encounter of two devout women, cousins, both with child, the immeasurable goodness of God shone forth for us, shone forth in the world, in all its indescribable beauty.

The power and the glory of God, incarnate in the womb of Mary, which Saint John the Evangelist beheld in his striking vision, recorded in the Book of Revelation, is manifest in a most remarkable way at the Visitation. The Blessed Virgin Mary, from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, was the “woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” The Child conceived in her womb, “destined to rule all nations with an iron rod,” is the coming of the Kingdom of God into our midst. It is He Who conquers Satan and all evil spirits, freeing us from their deadly grip. Before the mystery of the Incarnation, Mary, Elizabeth and the unborn infant John the Baptist, and all of us exclaim in the words of the “loud voice in heaven” in Saint John’s vision:

Now have salvation and power come,  
and the kingdom of our God  
and the authority of His Anointed (Reading I).  
Christ conceived in the womb of Mary is Christ Who conquered sin and everlasting death by offering His Body, pouring out His life, on Calvary.

How easily, we forget the enduring reality of Christ’s victory of life! How easily we forget the wonder of the Visitation! Before the many difficulties, temptations and challenges of our times, how easily we become discouraged and defeated, compromising our faith in the Divine Savior, our trust that God’s promise of salvation will be realized in our personal lives and in our world, and, thereby, opening ourselves to the influence of Satan and his evil spirits!

In our moments of doubt, discouragement and suffering, the Mother of God, through the mystery of the Visitation, brings Christ to us, that is brings us to Christ alive for us in the Church,

so that we may recognize in Him alone our salvation. It is the Blessed Virgin Mary who invites us to join our hearts to her Immaculate Heart, placing our hearts, with her Immaculate Heart, into the secure, healing and life-giving haven of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Mother of God leads us to Christ Who helps us to overcome our doubts, to accept discouragements and to bear sufferings for the sake of divine truth and love.

Tonight, we celebrate the mystery of the Visitation as it was experienced on our continent in 1531. The woman clothed with the sun, bearing the Infant Savior, the Anointed, in her womb, appeared to Saint Juan Diego, from December 9 to 12, 1531, in order that a chapel be built in which she might manifest the all-generous and never-failing merciful love of God for us, incarnate in her womb and alive for us in the Church, above all, in the Sacrament of the Real Presence, the Holy Eucharist.

From her very first and most remarkable words to Saint Juan Diego, she identified herself as the Mother of God and as the privileged bearer of His Divine Mercy. She is, indeed, the bearer of God to the world. What is more, through the highly privileged apparitions of the Mother of God at Tepeyac, she has desired to remain with us always, in order that the mystery of the Visitation might be always new for us. She has miraculously left her living image on the tilma or mantle of Saint Juan Diego. In the magnificent basilica built to her honor, in which the tilma of Saint Juan Diego is enthroned, the Mother of God continues to visit pilgrims and to announce to them the great mystery of God's all-loving and never-failing mercy. Even as in 1531, she inspired her sons and daughters to abandon the horror of human sacrifice and to respect the inviolable dignity of every man, both the Native American and the European, so now she inspires us to be tireless disciples of the Gospel of Life, working to end the horror of procured abortion and so-called "mercy-killing," and to promote the respect for the dignity of every human life from the moment of inception to the moment of natural death.

How much the Mother of God desires to show her Divine Son to our world beset by so many and grievous evils, in which we easily give way to confusion and discouragement! How important it is that we imitate the example of Saint Juan Diego, messenger of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America and Star of the New Evangelization! Rightly, our late and most beloved Pope John Paul II placed the mission of the Church in America, at the beginning of the Third Christian Millennium, under the protection of the Virgin of Guadalupe and commended her to us as the Star to lead us to Christ and, in Christ, to the conversion of our personal lives and the transformation of our world. Pope John Paul II commended the Virgin of Guadalupe to us as the Mother of America and the Star of the New Evangelization.

For twenty-five years now, the Queen of the Americas Guild has devoted itself to making our Lady of Guadalupe better known to her children of America, especially by bringing her children to her shrine where she remains with us on the tilma of Saint Juan Diego. Many souls, thanks to the work of the Queen of the Americas Guild, have found clarity and courage, comfort and strength, in living their Catholic faith by coming to know and love Our Lady of Guadalupe. Let us pray for those founders of the Guild, whom God has called to Himself, especially the beloved Bishop Jerome Hastrich, that they may enjoy the reward of their selfless labors. Let us pray that God will bless the members of the Queen of the Americas Guild with new enthusiasm and new energy in carrying out their noble and most critical mission in our time.

We celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Guild at a new shrine dedicated to our Lord and His Mother, under the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in North America, at a holy place dedicated to carrying out the new evangelization under the care and with the direction of the Mother of God as she appeared on our continent in 1531. Here, in a powerful

way, Mary shows herself to be the Mother of America and the Star of the New Evangelization. Here, the Mother of God calls us, with Saint Juan Diego, to be her messengers of Divine Mercy, promising to hold us always in the crossing of her arms, in the folds of her mantle. How much the Mother of God desires to speak to and to embrace all of her children of America! Her shrine here, united to her principal Shrine in Mexico City, is her way to announce God's mercy and to draw us to God's mercy, incarnate in her Divine Son, Who is alive for us in the Church, above all, in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Let us pray that the spiritual work of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse may continue its steady progress, so that we and all our brothers and sisters who come here on pilgrimage may receive the graces of new enthusiasm and new energy to live daily in Christ and, with Christ, to overcome sin in our personal lives and in our world, above all the sins against human life and against the dignity of man created in God's own image and likeness, and redeemed by the Most Precious Blood of God-the-Son Incarnate.

Our mission in Christ today is daunting. With Christ, we must conquer fearsome evils in our world, evils in which the presence of Satan is palpable. We must not give way to fear. Christ has won the victory, and He has given us His Mother, so that we, with her, may share the victory. Before the temptations, the challenges and the seeming defeats in our lives, we hear again and again the words of the Mother of God to Saint Juan Diego and to us who wish to be her messengers with him:

Am I not here, I, who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need anything more? Let nothing else worry you, disturb you (Nican Mopohua, n. ).

We need nothing more, for God, through the Blessed Virgin Mary, has given us everything we need in His Divine Son, our Lord and our Savior.

Uniting our poor and troubled hearts to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, let us, with Mary, now sacramentally place our hearts into the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the unquenchable fountain of divine mercy and love. With Mary, let us unite our hearts to His Divine Heart in the Sacrifice of Calvary, the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Led by Mary to the Foot of the Cross, we now find life and salvation, and we exclaim in the inspired words of the Book of Revelation:

Now have salvation and power come, and the Kingdom of God and the authority of His Anointed (Reading I).

(Most Rev.) Raymond L. Burke