

DEDICATION WEEK OF THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
JUAN DIEGO GUILD DAY
MEMORIAL OF SAINT MARTHA
PILGRIM CENTER, SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE, LA CROSSE
JULY 29, 2008

1 Jn 4:7-16
Lk 10:38-42

HOMILY

Praised be Jesus Christ, now and for ever. Amen.

1. How pleased Martha and Mary were to have Our Lord Jesus visit their home! We can easily understand how Martha was anxious to provide for Him the best possible hospitality, and how she was worried, lest anything be lacking to her Master. Certainly, Our Lord Jesus was most grateful to Martha and could see that all of her obvious concerns flowed from an ardent love of Him. His words to her, which could seem to be a bit harsh, are, in fact, said very lovingly. Our Lord was not critical of Martha's hospitality; in fact, he was deeply appreciative of it. He wanted, however, to remind her that the most important thing was to be in His company and to hear His teaching.

2. Mary, Martha's sister, had understood and was devoting her exclusive attention to listening to our Lord. In our Lord's words, she had chosen "the better part," that is, she was devoting herself exclusively to listening to the teaching of our Lord. By using the word, "better," our Lord does not discount Martha's concerns for hospitality. If listening to the teaching of Jesus is "the better part," then Martha's care to provide hospitality is surely good Gospel).

3. In our everyday life, our Lord asks us, first, to spend time in His company by studying His teaching and by having conversation with Him in prayer and, if possible, by participating daily in the Holy Mass. He teaches us to recognize that "the better part" of our lives is the time we spend

with Him, listening to His teaching and praying. Study and prayer is the most necessary part of our life in Christ. To underline the truth, our Lord said to Martha: “There is need of one only thing” (Gospel). He was not saying that study and prayer are all that we are called to do, but that they are the one and only solid foundation upon which to build a Christian life.

4. The fruit of our study and prayer is a deeper love of God, which, as Saint John the Apostle teaches us, is love of one another. The love of God, which we come to know ever more deeply through our study and prayer, is, by its very nature dynamic; it demands to be expressed in love of one another. Saint John the Apostle exhorts us: “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God” (Reading I). It is the knowledge of the love of God in our lives, through study and prayer, which inspires and strengthens us to share God’s pure and selfless love with one another. We see in Martha and Mary, together, how Christ dwells with us through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that, through us, He may love all of our brothers and sisters, especially those who are in most need.

5. The Servant of God Bishop Frederic Baraga, heroic missionary to our part of the world at the time of the first evangelization of our nation, chose for his episcopal motto the words of Our Lord to Martha: “There is need of one only thing.” He lived according to his motto by his fidelity to daily prayer, especially the Liturgy of the Hours, and to the Holy Eucharist. At the same time, because of his closeness to Our Lord in prayer, he was tireless in teaching the faith and bringing the Sacraments to his flock living in the immense territory confided to his pastoral care as Bishop. His image is in the undercroft of the Church of the Shrine to remind of his heroic example and to inspire us to pray through his intercession. Bishop Frederic Baraga is an outstanding example of essential relationship between prayer and good works in our daily living.

6. Boys and girls, young men and young women, members of the Saint Juan Diego Guild, you are called each day to grow closer to our Lord through prayer and to bring Our Lord and His love to your homes and neighborhoods by your good works. Saint Juan Diego is your patron and your model. Remember that he was going to the church to receive instruction in the faith and to

participate in Holy Mass, when our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to him and asked him to be her messenger. It was Juan Diego's desire to be close to Our Lord by learning more about his Catholic faith and by praying, especially at Holy Mass, which made him ready to do what God was asking of him through the Mother of God, Our Lady of Guadalupe.

7. Even though being Our Lady's messenger was difficult for him, and even though he thought that someone of a higher class would surely have been a better choice to do it, when Our Lady assured him that he was her chosen messenger, he put aside his fears and doubts. As a result, he was able to accomplish all that Our Lady asked in a manner more wonderful than he could ever have imagined. Our Lady not only gave him the most beautiful roses to take to Bishop Juan de Zumárraga as a sign of the truth of his words, but God, even more wonderfully, miraculously left Our Lady's image on the *tilma* or mantle of Juan Diego. Through the miraculous *tilma*, Saint Juan Diego continues to be Our Lady's messenger, some 477 years after she first appeared on December 9, 1531.

8. You are the messengers of Our Lady of Guadalupe, today. In order to carry out your mission as messengers of Our Lady, come to know, as best as possible, the story of her apparitions and her message to her children of America and far beyond. Be close to Our Lady, so that you can imitate her closeness to Our Lord. Unite your heart to her Immaculate Heart, so that she can lead you to place your heart completely into the Sacred Heart of Jesus, her Divine Son. Mary's heart was immaculate, from the first moment of her life, so that she could be totally for her Divine Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Imitate her example, purifying your heart of anything which keeps you from belonging totally to Our Lord and giving your heart, with Mary, totally to the Heart of Jesus.

9. Our Lady of Guadalupe invites us now to join her in lifting up our hearts to Our Lord's glorious pierced Heart, opened for us in His Eucharistic Sacrifice. She invites us to be, with her, one with Our Lord in the offering of His life in pure and selfless love of all our brothers and sisters, without boundary or exception. She urges us to put aside our fear and doubts and to trust

that, resting our hearts in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we will be healed and strengthened to love as He loves, to bring the pure and selfless love which we receive in the Holy Eucharist to all our brothers and sisters. Once again, today, Our Lady of Guadalupe speaks to us all and, in a special way, to her beloved members of the Saint Juan Diego Guild:

Listen, put it into your heart, my youngest and dearest son, that the thing that disturbs you, the thing that afflicts you is nothing. Do not let your countenance, your heart be disturbed.... 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*, nos. 118-119).

Dear members of the Saint Juan Diego Guild, let Our Lady of Guadalupe protect you within her mantle, hold you securely in the crossing of arms, so that, with her, you may be totally for Christ and, totally for Christ, be totally for all your brothers and sisters in pure and selfless love.

Heart of Jesus, full of goodness and love, have mercy on us.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America and Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us.

Saint Martha, pray for us.

Saint Juan Diego, pray for us.

Servant of God Frederic Baraga, pray for us.