

PILGRIMAGE OF SEMINARIANS OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT LOUIS
MEMORIAL OF SAINT JOHN MARY VIANNEY, PRIEST
CHURCH OF THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE, LA CROSSE
AUGUST 4, 2008

Ez 3:17-21
Mt 9:35-10:1

HOMILY

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

1. The apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe are rich for our reflection upon the priestly vocation and mission. Her desire that a chapel be built in which she could manifest the mercy and love of God for his children of America and far beyond Gathering for the annual celebration of the Solemn Consecration of Marian Catechists at the newly dedicated Church of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, our thoughts turn naturally to our vocation and mission to be tabernacles of Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit. When King David proposed to build a temple for the Lord, our Lord responded, through the Prophet Nathan, assuring David of His dwelling with His faithful people forever and of His unchanging desire to establish them as a permanent kingdom, under His reign of mercy and love (Reading I).

2. Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to Saint Juan Diego with Child, with God the Son Incarnate in her womb. She appeared as the tabernacle in which God the Son first came to dwell with us. She appeared to manifest to us God's unfailing reign of mercy and love, inaugurated by her Divine Son through His Passion, Death and Resurrection. She asked that a chapel be built in which she could always manifest God's immeasurable and unceasing love of us. Only in a chapel or a church could she point us to the greatest sign of God's love, the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. We come on pilgrimage to Our Lady, as the wine stewards at Cana approached her in the moment of their great embarrassment at not having sufficient wine for the wedding guests, and she draws us to her Divine Son in the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy

Eucharist, with the maternal counsel: “Do whatever He tells you” (Gospel). Our Lady of Guadalupe manifests to us, through her miraculous image painted by the Hand of God on the *tilma* of Saint Juan Diego, which she interpreted through her apparitions to Saint Juan Diego and his uncle, Juan Bernardino, the fulfillment of the promise made by the Lord to King David through the Prophet Nathan.

3. The words of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the first manifestation of the glory of her Divine Son to the world, the manifestation granted by Christ at her request at the Wedding Feast at Cana, contain the program of our life in Christ, which is also our program as Marian Catechists: “Do whatever He tells you” (Gospel). Mary Immaculate is our model in putting into practice, each day, the program of our life in Christ. It is a dynamic program which embraces every aspect of our lives. The simple maternal counsel of our Blessed Mother makes clear what it means to be saved by God and to have His rule established in our lives. Living in Christ, saved from our sins and brought to life by His Passion, Death and Resurrection, we are called to do the will of the Father in all things, to offer our lives, every moment and every part of our lives, to the Father in pure, selfless and total love. The offering of our lives, with Christ, to the Father is, at once, the offering of our lives for all our brothers and sisters whom the Father loves with unceasing and immeasurable love. The manifestation of the mercy and love of God by Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady’s drawing us to her Divine Son, bears fruit in the safeguarding of all human life, especially the life of the most vulnerable and the most threatened, and in the witness of a holy life, which is the greatest gift we give to others and which cannot fail to attract others to Christ.

4. Saint Juan Diego was the chosen messenger of Our Lady. He brought her message and, ultimately, her image to Bishop Juan de Zumárraga, and he devoted the remaining years of his life to telling the story of Our Lady at the chapel in which her miraculous image was enshrined. In so doing, he gave his life completely to Christ Who purified and strengthened him to do the will of the Father in all things. Our Lady of Guadalupe is the perfect woman of the Church. She respects in all things the authority of those who act in the person of Christ as Head and Shepherd of the flock, the Bishops with their priests, and inspires and assists the witness of the flock to the

great mystery of salvation at work in their lives.

5. Marian Catechists strive to follow, in all things, the maternal counsel of the Mother of God: “Do whatever He tells you.” Marian Catechists receive the request of Our Lady of Guadalupe that they be the messengers of divine mercy and love. Marian Catechists are called to give witness to God’s mercy and love by bringing the message of salvation, in all of its richness, to others, especially children and young people who depend upon us to hand on to them the greatest treasure which is ours, God the Father’s gift of life in God the Son through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The program of the Marian Catechists, a program of ongoing spiritual and doctrinal formation, is dynamic, for it expresses the life of Christ within us, urging us on to do the Father’s will in all things.

6. The Act of Consecration, which we are about to witness, is a solemn prayer by which those making the consecration ask God for all that they need to be good, faithful and generous messengers of His mercy and love in the world. It is the act of uniting one’s heart to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, so that it may be given totally and always to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the fountain of living water from which flows forth in the Marian Catechists the living water of sound example and sound teaching. The Act of Consecration is made in humility, for we recognize that what we consecrate ourselves to do is impossible for us on our own. But it is also an act of total confidence, for we trust completely in the promise of God to establish the kingdom of His grace in our hearts and in our world for the witness and teaching which we pledge ourselves to give.

7. The demands of catechesis in a totally secularized world would overwhelm us, if we did live in Christ and trust in the never failing help of His grace. Our Lady of Guadalupe keeps us always under her eye, she enfolds us in her mantle, and she holds us in her arms, so that we never leave the company of her Son, the Master and the Teacher, Who alone is our salvation and our life. Our Lady of Guadalupe, in her motherly love of us, helps us to become catechists after the example of Saint Juan Diego, giving our entire self to the witness of the Christian life, both

by our actions and by the personal account of our Catholic faith, which we humbly and confidently offer.

8. Together with our Blessed Mother, all of the saints accompany those who make the consecration, interceding for the grace needed to live the consecration in daily life. Consider the images of the saints depicted in this church and reflect upon their example and their intercession: Saint Joseph, Husband of Mary and Guardian of the Child Jesus; Saint Juan Diego, Saint Therese of Lisieux, Saint Peregrine, Saint Faustina Kowalska, Saint Maria Goretti, Saint Gianna Beretta Molla, and Blessed Miguel Pro. On the facade of the Church, at either side of the statue of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, are Saints Peter and Paul, the Prince of the Apostles and the Apostle to the Nations. Along the path of the pilgrimage to this church, in addition to image of Saint Joseph, is the image of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha who gives particular inspiration to the apostolate of evangelization and catechesis. With special confidence, we call upon the intercession of the Servant of God Father John Anthony Hardon of the Society of Jesus, the Founder of the Marian Catechist Apostolate. As a religious and priest, the Servant of God gave his whole life in service of Christ and His Church. One of the greatest gifts contained within the gift of his life was the gift of sound catechesis which he himself tirelessly gave and which he tirelessly prepared others to give. It is my fervent hope that soon the Archive and Guild of the Servant of God, together with the center for the Marian Catechists, and a retreat house can be constructed, in accord with the plans which the Servant of God and I discussed when he visited this site and blessed it in the Winter of 1999.

9. With the confidence of Our Lady of Guadalupe and under her protection, let us now life up our hearts to the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, ever ready to receive us, to heal us and to give us rest and strength. Let us unite our hearts to His Heart in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, so that we may receive from Him the grace to bring Him, God's mercy and love incarnate, symbolized most fully in His Sacred Heart, to all of our brothers and sisters, especially those who do not yet know Him or, having known Him, have drifted from His company.

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 Juan Diego, pray for us.

Servant of God Father John Anthony Hardon, pray for us.