

MASS FOR THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEDICATION OF THE CHURCH
SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
LA CROSSE
JULY 31, 2010

First Reading: *Ezek 43:1-2, 3c-7a*
Responsorial Psalm: *Ps 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9*
Second Reading: *Eph 2:19-22*
Alleluia Verse: *Ezek 37:27*
Gospel: *Lk 19:1-10*

HOMILY

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

The Prophet Ezekiel's vision of the restored temple after its destruction at the time of the Babylonian Exile points to the powerful reality which we celebrate today. In the vision, Ezekiel sees the glory of the Lord enter into the new temple with the most powerful earthly manifestations. He tells us that there was "a sound like the roaring of many waters, and the earth shone with [the Lord's] glory" (*Ez 43:2*). Earth herself could not remain unmoved and silent before the reality of God's coming to dwell in the midst of His children, created in His own image and likeness, in order to save them for lasting communion with Him. The divine voice in the vision made clear the truth to which the earthly signs were pointing. At the high point of the vision, God declared to Ezekiel:

Son of man, this is where my throne shall be,
this is where I will set the soles of my feet;
here I will dwell among the children of Israel forever (*Ez 43:7*).

The restoration of the ancient temple would indeed be for God's children the sign of His abiding presence with them, for the temple was the privileged place of prayer and sacrifice, the place of the encounter with the glory of God.

But the vision of Prophet Ezekiel pointed ultimately to the fullness of the reality of God's dwelling with us, of which the new temple would be a sign. The ancient temple, in fact, was always awaiting the moment when the glory of God in its fullness would dwell with man, the glory which is nothing less than the presence of God Himself in our midst. The

faithful of Israel, when they gathered in the temple, were always awaiting the reality of which it was the powerful sign, the reality of their salvation, when God Himself would indeed put the soles of His feet in their midst to remain with them forever.

The wealthy tax collector Zacchaeus must, in some way, have participated in the longing for the definitive entrance of the glory of God into the temple, for, when Christ came to his town of Jericho, he spared no effort to see Him. His eyes, in some way, were surely trained to look for the coming of the glory of God in our midst. So strongly was Zacchaeus attracted to see Christ that, notwithstanding his civic and social status, he humbled himself to climb into a sycamore tree, lest he miss seeing Jesus as He passed by the way. In the encounter with Jesus, which followed, an encounter in which Jesus expressed His desire to come to the home of Zacchaeus, it is clear that Zacchaeus recognized what Christ declared to those who criticized his evident care for a sinner. Zacchaeus knew that God had visited him with the gift of salvation, the gift of eternal life, and, therefore, his life must necessarily be totally changed. In the encounter with Zacchaeus, the Son of Man, the long awaited Savior, showed, beyond a doubt, that God had come into the world, seeking the lost, so that indeed they might be found and saved.

Christ's personal encounter with Zacchaeus, even to the point of spending time in his home and dining with him, was a most striking sign of the salvation which He was to win for all men by His Passion, Death and Resurrection. Through His encounter with Zacchaeus, Christ gave an indisputable sign of the definitive reality of His abiding and real presence with us in the Church, of the divine glory which shines forth for us and for all men in the Church of which, as Saint Paul reminds us, we are the living stones, "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone" (*Eph 2:20*). In the words of Saint Paul, as members of the Church, we, though sinners as was Zacchaeus, are growing "into a temple sacred to the Lord;" we are "being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (*Eph 2:21-22*).

What the Prophet Ezekiel saw in the vision of the new temple has become a reality in the Church, in our lives as living members of the Church. God the Son Incarnate, seated in glory at the right hand of the Father, is, at the very same time, dwelling with us always in the Church, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit from His glorious pierced Heart.

Celebrating today the anniversary of the building of this temple of Our Lord, we

contemplate the powerful reality of its being, from the moment of its consecration, from the moment that Our Lord Jesus Christ made present on its altar, for the first time, His Sacrifice on Calvary, from the moment that Our Lord Jesus Christ, really present in the Most Blessed Sacrament, first began to reside in its tabernacle. As we recall the great beauty of the Rite of Dedication, we are once again in awe to think that in this temple Our Lord makes present the offering of His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity as the Heavenly Food which sustains on our earthly pilgrimage home to God the Father. In our pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a microcosm of our life pilgrimage, we reach our destiny, when we are one with Christ in the offering of His Body and Blood for our salvation, in this His holy temple.

We are deeply conscious that Our Lord has brought us here through His loving Mother whom, in the act of His supreme love, He has given to us as our Mother. Fittingly, it is the image of the Mother of God behind the Crucifix suspended over the Altar of Sacrifice which invites us to look, with her, upon the image of Christ Crucified and to contemplate, with her, the reality of His Real Presence in the Most Holy Eucharist, won for us by His suffering and dying. She draws us to contemplate His coming to us in the Holy Eucharist which He inaugurated on the night before He died, so that we might share always in the fruits of the salvation He was about to win for us by His suffering and dying. She draws us to His abiding presence with us in the Most Blessed Sacrament, the incomparable fruit of His Sacrifice, reposed in the tabernacle.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, gazing upon us and into our eyes, draws our eyes to the unity of the Crucifix, the Altar of Sacrifice and the Tabernacle. She draws us to Christ Crucified, Who poured out His life for us on Calvary, makes fully present, in an unbloody manner, the one and same outpouring of His life in the Eucharistic Sacrifice accomplished on the altar of this church; and abides with us in the fruit of His Sacrifice, His true Body reposed in the tabernacle for us in time of great need and when we simply want to be in His presence to offer to Him our loving prayer and adoration.

Contemplating the reality of this temple, the reality of God's dwelling with us here in all His glory, we are also deeply conscious of our responsibility to care for it, so that its beauty may never be diminished but may be, as it is meant to be, a constant sign for pilgrims that they have reached the goal of their pilgrimage, the encounter with God the Son, no less real than the encounter of Zacchaeus with Our Lord, the encounter which is indeed our

salvation. Celebrating each year the anniversary of the Dedication of the Church, we are reminded of all of the sacrifices which were made by so many, in order that the Church of the Shrine might reflect as perfectly as possible the incomparable reality of the dwelling of God in our midst, above all, in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Reflecting upon the sacrifices of so many for the noble construction and fitting decoration of this church, and reflecting upon what those sacrifices mean for us, in terms of the incomparable beauty of the encounter with Our Lord, which is ours here, we are inspired to join our sacrifices to theirs, so that this church, the destiny of every pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, will never cease to provide a glimpse of the glory of God, of the encounter between earth and Heaven, which takes place in every offering of the Holy Mass and which really remains present in the tabernacle.

After the Prayer after Communion, we will witness the knighting of the first two young men who have completed the preparation to be Our Lady's Knights of the Altar. Over many months, they have been deepening both their knowledge of the Mystery of Faith and their understanding of the various elements of the Rite of the Mass, in both its Ordinary and Extraordinary Forms, so that they may more worthily assist the Bishops and priests who offer the Holy Mass for those who come on pilgrimage here. Brother Joseph has generously and most ably prepared them, under the guidance and protection of the Mother of God. He has prepared them to be Knights of the Altar, who ask always Our Lady's intercession and seek always to imitate her sinless devotion to Our Savior.

They are to be Our Lady's Knights at the service of Her Divine Son. They are keenly aware of the challenges which will be theirs to remain courageous and true in the service of Our Lord, not only when they are assisting at the Holy Mass but in their every activity. They, therefore, will place their hand on the sword as the pledge of their loyalty to Our Lord and will receive the Miraculous Medal as a sign of Our Lady's constant help to them in remaining loyal to Christ at all times and especially in times of temptation. Having received the recommendation of Brother Joseph, I am most happy to knight the first Our Lady's Knights of the Altar, today. Let us all pray for them that they will be ever more worthy of the holy service for they are being knighted and will thus inspire other young men to seek Our Lady's Knighthood of the Altar.

Finally, the celebration of the Dedication of the Church leads us also led to reflect on

the essential need of catechesis in the faith, in order that pilgrims here, like Zacchaeus, will recognize their salvation in Christ alone and will be led to an ever fuller encounter with Him in the Church. The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, resplendent behind the Crucifix and the high altar, and directly above the tabernacle, is itself a catechism to help us understand the great mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation, of the coming of God the Son in our human nature, in order to save us from all our sins and to win for us the gift of eternal life.

How many in our midst, even within the Church, are longing for what the Mother of God wishes to teach us! The society in which we live refuses to admit the presence of God in the world and so deprives its members of what they most desire and need. And, within the Church, there is a need of new catechesis, catechesis which opens up the great mystery of our salvation, in its unfathomable richness, to the minds and hearts of all. The new catechesis is indeed the old, the perennial catechesis of the Church, the catechesis imparted by the Apostles to the first disciples, the catechesis imparted by the first missionaries to the faithful of our continent. We think, for instance, of the remarkable catechesis imparted by the Franciscan Friars at the time of the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe on our continent, a catechesis which drew the Native Americans, literally, by the millions to faith and baptism.

The Servant of God, Father John Anthony Hardon of the Society of Jesus, when he visited the site of this church, before the site had been cleared and prepared for construction, blessed the site and expressed his sure hope that the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe would become a center of the new catechesis, which our world and Church so urgently need. In his own apostolic zeal, he founded the Marian Catechist Apostolate, under the care of Our Lady of Guadalupe, to prepare catechists, spiritually and doctrinally, to be the effective agents of the new catechesis.

At the very foundation of the formation of the members of the Marian Catechist Apostolate are the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, made at home, with the help of a priest director, and renewed annually, at least, by some days of spiritual retreat. Visiting the very site on which we are now offering the Holy Mass, he expressed the hope that this church would be, in a special way, a place of pilgrimage for the members of the Marian Catechist Apostolate, as for all the faithful seeking a fuller knowledge of Our Lord, in order to love Him more ardently and serve Him more fervently. Such knowledge, love and service would be fostered not only through study of the doctrines of the faith but through

days spent at the Shrine on spiritual retreat.

From the first days of planning for the Shrine, it has been hoped that, in accord with the vision of Father Hardon, a center of the Marian Catechist Apostolate, including a retreat house, would be a fitting instrument of all that Our Lady wishes to accomplish for pilgrims. Now that the Cause for the Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God Father Hardon has begun, the catechetical center and retreat house will also become the location of the Archive and Guild of the Cause. It is also the hope that one day the earthly remains of the Servant of God Father Hardon will be interred in the crypt of this church to inspire the prayerful devotion of many.

As we gather today to celebrate the second anniversary of the Dedication of the Church of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, let us pray that the vision of the Servant of God Father Hardon may be realized soon, that the Father John A. Hardon Marian Catechist Apostolate Center and Retreat House, together with the Archive and Guild, may be constructed and dedicated as a worthy center of the new catechesis so urgently needed in our time and so naturally inspired by pilgrimage to the Shrine.

Con particular afecto, doy la bienvenida a los peregrinos de lengua española que han llegado a celebrar la dedicación del Santuario de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe; que bajo su guía y protección, puedan Ustedes encontrar aquí la misericordia y el amor de Dios. De un modo especial, el Santuario de la Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe es su casa espiritual. Por favor recen para que este Santuario pueda ser siempre un lugar fiel a la misión de la Iglesia y pueda ser, aún más, un centro de la nueva catequesis que se necesita urgentemente en nuestro tiempo.

Elevemos nuestros corazones, unidos al Corazón Inmaculado de la Virgen de Guadalupe y ofrezcámoslos ante el Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, el cual está siempre presente para nosotros en su Sacrificio Eucarístico. En su Sagrado Corazón encontraremos descanso y fortaleza, para que podamos continuar fielmente con Cristo en nuestro peregrinar aquí en la tierra.

Celebrating the Anniversary of the Dedication of the Church of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, let us hasten to lift up our hearts to the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus open for us in His Eucharistic Sacrifice. Our hearts, one with the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady of Guadalupe, placed into the Sacred Heart of Jesus, will be cleansed of sin and will be

strengthened with the grace of Holy Spirit. In the encounter of our hearts with Heart of God the Son Incarnate, we are saved and become living signs of His unfailing presence with us in the Church for the salvation of the world.

Heart of Jesus, house of God and gate of Heaven, have mercy on us!
Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!
Saint Juan Diego, pray for us!

(Most Rev.) Raymond L. Burke
Archbishop Emeritus of Saint Louis
Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura