

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR
QUEEN OF THE AMERICAS GUILD CONFERENCE
SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN
AUGUST 2, 2015

Ex 16, 2-4. 12-15
Ps 78, 3-4. 23-24. 25. 54
Eph 4, 17. 20-24
Jn 6, 24-35

HOMILY

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

God's gift of "bread for heaven" to sustain His chosen people during their pilgrimage from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land reveals both His patience with their complaints against Moses and Aaron, and His care to feed them in their hunger.¹ It foreshadows the full and perfect expression of His patient and enduring love in the gift of His only-begotten Son, sent from Heaven to earth to be the lasting spiritual food for all men on their earthly pilgrimage to the lasting home which He has prepared for us in Heaven.

Christ confronted the crowd who followed him to Capernaum because, having witnessed the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, they were looking for more miraculous signs like the manna from Heaven. He taught them about the true meaning of the gift of the manna in the desert: the foreshadowing of His Redemptive Incarnation. When they asked for a sign by which to believe in Him, a sign like the "manna in the desert,"² He taught them that God the Father had rained down the manna from Heaven in preparation for His full and perfect gift of "the true bread from heaven."³ He declared: "For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."⁴

The crowd then asked to receive the truly heavenly bread. Christ responded by revealing to them the Eucharistic Mystery by which He Himself becomes the spiritual food of our earthly pilgrimage and the foretaste of eternal life in Heaven, the destiny of our pilgrimage. He is the

¹ Ex 16, 4. 15.

² Jn 6, 31.

³ Jn 6, 32.

⁴ Jn 6, 33.

heavenly bread of God Who gives true life, life without end, to the world. He declared with words unmistakable in their meaning: “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”⁵ Christ taught the crowd that He Himself would remain with them always to satisfy their deepest spiritual hunger and thirst.

On the eve before He offered up His life for us on the Cross, Our Lord instituted the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist by which He makes always present His Sacrifice on Calvary and its incomparable fruit: His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in Holy Communion. By His suffering and dying, Our Lord gives us the most miraculous gift of all to sustain us during our earthly pilgrimage.

Our Lord gives us Himself totally in the Holy Eucharist to satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst, lest we faint along the way of our earthly pilgrimage or abandon the way of the pilgrimage to seek the satisfaction of our deepest needs in ways in which it can never be found. Through the Most Blessed Sacrament, Christ accompanies us all the days of our earthly life, and, at the time of our death, He sustains us in passing from this life to the eternal life which is to come. Through our devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, we are reminded throughout the day that Our Lord Whom we receive in Holy Communion remains with us through the immeasurable and unceasing outpouring of His Holy Spirit into our souls.

When the Virgin Mother of God appeared to Saint Juan Diego at Tepeyac in 1531, she asked that a chapel be built in which she could manifest to all men the merciful love of God for them. At her very first appearance, after revealing her identity as the Virgin Mother of God, she instructed Saint Diego with these words:

I want very much that they build my sacred little house here, in which I will show Him [the one true God], I will exalt Him upon making Him manifest, I will give Him to all people in all my personal love, Him that is my compassionate gaze, Him that is my help, Him that is my salvation.⁶

In her chapel, Our Lady of Guadalupe has always drawn pilgrims to the one and only font of their salvation, of the satisfaction of their deepest hunger and thirst: the Sacred Host, the Body, Blood,

⁵ Jn 6, 35.

⁶ “Mucho quiero, mucho deseo que aquí me levanten mi casita sagrada en donde lo mostraré, lo ensalzaré al ponerlo de manifiesto: lo daré a las gentes en todo mi amor personal, en mi mirada compasiva, en mi auxilio, en mi salvación.” Antonio Valeriano, *Nican Mopohua (Aquí Se Narra)*, tr. Mario Rojas Sánchez (México, DF: Centro de Estudios Guadalupanos, 1991), pp. 19-20, nos. 26-28. English translation: Carl A. Anderson and Eduardo Chávez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mother of the Civilization of Love* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), p. 173, nos. 26-28.

Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ really present for them as spiritual food. In her shrine here, her sacred image draws our attention to the altar of sacrifice on which Our Lord makes present His sacrifice and to the tabernacle in which He remains for us as the Bread from Heaven. The crucifix which hangs above the altar of sacrifice, with the image of Our Lady as its background, reminds us that God the Son became incarnate in the Virgin Mary's womb, in order to offer His life for us on Calvary and to make that Sacrifice ever present for us, until He returns in glory at the end of time. The Virgin of Guadalupe accomplishes her mission in "her little sacred house" in which her Divine Son dwells in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Today, let us renew our love of the Holy Eucharist, the Bread from Heaven which sustains us along the pilgrimage of life and brings us safely to our heavenly home. Let us also renew our devotion to the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, and the Immaculate Heart of His Virgin Mother, the Mother of Divine Grace. Uniting our hearts with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, let us rest our hearts totally and forever in the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Whom our hearts are healed of the wounds of sin and inflamed with His pure and selfless love. Placing our hearts into the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, we will be sustained along the pilgrimage of life, especially in times of great temptation and of intense suffering, so that we may reach the final goal of our pilgrimage, the Kingdom of Heaven. Here, Our Lady of Guadalupe teaches us so to live and, by her unfailing intercession, assists us so to live.

We now offer our hearts to our Lord Jesus in His Eucharistic Sacrifice. We place them into His Eucharistic Heart ever open to receive us. As the Virgin of Guadalupe has drawn us to her sanctuary, so may she be our model and intercessor in giving our hearts, one with her Immaculate Heart, totally and forever to Our Lord. Receiving the fruit of the Eucharistic Sacrifice in Holy Communion, may our deepest hunger and thirst be satisfied. Nourished by the Bread from Heaven, may the members of the Queen of the Americas Guild and may we all become, like Saint Juan Diego, messengers of Our Lady, so that she may draw many souls to Christ Who alone is our salvation.

*Heart of Jesus, patient and most merciful, 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.*

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE