

Second Sunday of Advent
Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
La Crosse, Wisconsin
9 December 2018

Bar 5, 1-9
Ps 126, 1-2. 2-3. 4-5. 6
Phil 1, 4-6. 8-11
Lk 3, 1-6

Homily

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

Saint John the Baptist, the Herald of Our Lord at His coming into the world, is both our example and special intercessor during the Season of Advent. He is our example. He looked for Our Lord's coming with unfailing attention and firm discipline. He was thus disposed to hear and to respond to "the word of God," which came to him "in the desert."¹ Having received the call of Our Lord, he went forth to prepare Our Lord's coming by "proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."²

The Advent Season is especially strong in grace for us, so that we may attentively hear the Word of Christ in our lives and steadfastly put it into practice. Saint John the Baptist announces to us that "*all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*"³ We, in fact, see the salvation of God in Christ alive for us in the Church, especially as He comes to us through the Sacraments. The grace of Advent disposes us ever more to cleanse from our hearts anything which keeps us away from Christ and to grow in our knowledge, love and service of Him. In fulfillment of the prophecy of Baruch, God, in His only-begotten Son Incarnate, has brought us back from slavery to sin and given us the grace to "advance securely in [His] glory."⁴

Saint John the Baptist intercedes for us. We can be certain that in the Communion of Saints, Saint John the Baptist intercedes for us, so that we cooperate with God's grace, so that we are watching and ready to welcome Our Lord on the day of His Final Coming. In a particular way, as he did for the people of his time, he will intercede for us, that we may receive the grace of repentance for our sins, and of reparation of the offenses which we have offered to God, and the harm we have done to ourselves and others because of our sins. John the Baptist never fails to intercede for us, that we may live more fully in Christ, for in Christ

¹ Lk 3, 2.

² Lk 3, 3.

³ Lk 3, 6.

“God is leading Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with his mercy and justice for company.”⁵

When we consider our own sinfulness and the wages of sin in our world, especially the ferocious attack on human life and on its home in the family formed by the marriage of a man and a woman, we are tempted to profound discouragement or even despair, but we must not give way to the temptation, for Christ is alive in our souls through the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We must remember the inspired text of Saint Paul: “I am confident of this, that the one who began the good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.”⁶ We should embrace each moment of life which God gives us, striving to be “pure and blameless for the day of Christ,”⁷ because of “the fruit of righteousness”⁸ that is poured forth into our hearts from the glorious pierced Heart of Christ.

During Advent, Saint John the Baptist gives us an heroic example of how to live so as always to welcome Christ into our lives. The Gospel describing John the Baptist’s call and mission, making reference to the prophecy of Baruch, exhorts us:

Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.⁹

We must never lose confidence that the grace of God, poured forth into our hearts from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, is constantly at work within us to correct anything in our lives, be it a high place or a low place, which makes difficult the path for the arrival of Our Lord. Divine grace makes the path smooth for Our Lord to reach our hearts, to heal them, and to strengthen them with His truth and love.

Today, we remember Saint Juan Diego, the messenger of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who imitated Saint John the Baptist in his attentiveness to all that God asked of him through the Virgin Mother of God. The account of the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Saint Juan Diego tells us that, when she first appeared to him, “[i]t was Saturday, not yet dawn, when he was coming in pursuit of God and His commandments.”¹⁰ It was Saint Juan Diego’s

⁴ Bar 5, 6-7.

⁵ Bar 5, 9.

⁶ Phil 1, 6.

⁷ Phil 1, 10.

⁸ Phil 1, 11

⁹ Lk 3, 5-6.

¹⁰ “Era sábado, muy de madrugada, venía en pos de Dios y de sus mandatos.” *Nican Mopohua (Aquí se cuenta)*

desire to know God more fully that led him to love God and to serve Him, in accord with the instructions given by the Virgin Mother of God.

Throughout the account of the apparitions, the purity of heart of Saint Juan Diego is evident. When he was presenting the sign from Our Lady to Bishop Juan de Zumárraga, he described to the Bishop how Our Lady provided the sign of beautiful roses on a craggy hill in the cold of winter:

Although I knew well that the top of the hill isn't a place where flowers grow, because it's just rocks, burs, thorny plants, wild prickly pear and mesquite bushes, I didn't doubt because of that; I didn't hesitate because of that.¹¹

Saint Juan Diego trusted the word of Our Lady. He wanted only to know, love and serve God.

At the conclusion of the Holy Mass, boys and girls will be inducted into the Saint Juan Diego Guild of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe here. By presenting themselves to become members of the Saint Juan Diego Guild, they manifest their desire to imitate Saint Juan Diego as true messengers of Our Lady.

Boys and girls to be enrolled into the Saint Juan Diego Guild, God made you to know, love and serve Him, as Saint Juan Diego did. By your enrollment in the Saint Juan Diego Guild, you commit yourselves to seek a deeper knowledge of God, so that you can love Him more generously and serve Him more faithfully by the love you show to others, especially in your family.

Boys and girls, young men and young women, who are to be inducted into the Saint Juan Diego Guild, imitate Saint John the Baptist, as did Saint Juan Diego. Be attentive to do all that God is asking of you. Your vigilance in watching for Our Lord and welcoming Him into your lives will inspire others to seek knowledge of God and to love and serve Him wholeheartedly.

In a particular way, may your participation in the Saint Juan Diego Guild help you to know God's special plan for you, your vocation in life. Pray each day, through the intercession of Saint Juan Diego, to know how God wants you to serve Him in His holy

(México, D.F.: Design & Digital Print S.A. de C.V., 2001), p. 1, n. 6. [Nican Mopohua]. English translation: Carl A. Anderson and Eduardo Chávez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mother of the Civilization of Love* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), p. 172, no. 6. [Nican Mopohua Eng].

¹¹ "Aunque bien sabía yo que no es lugar donde se den flores la cumbre del cerrito, porque sólo hay abundancia de riscos, abrojos, huizaches, nopales, mezquites, no por ello dudé, no por ello vacilé." Nican Mopohua, p. 19,

Church, whether it be in the vocation to married or the dedicated single life, or to the consecrated life, or to the priesthood. With Saint Juan Diego, trust that God will provide all that you need, as long as you strive to do His will in all things.

Let us now, imitating Saint John the Baptist, lift up our hearts to the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus. One with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, may our hearts belong totally and forever to the Most Sacred Heart. Uniting ourselves to Him in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, may our hearts draw from His Most Sacred Heart unfailing love for our neighbor, especially our neighbor who is in most need.

*Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, have mercy on us!
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America and Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us!
Saint John the Baptist, pray for us!
Saint Juan Diego, pray for us!*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE