

Common of the Anniversary of the Dedication of a Church
Tenth Anniversary of the Dedication of the Church
Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
La Crosse, Wisconsin
31 July 2018

Ezek 43, 1-2. 3c-7a
Ps 84, 3. 4. 5. 10. 11
Heb 12, 18-19. 22-24
Lk 19, 1-10

Homily

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

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, my brother priests, brothers and sisters in the Consecrated Life, and brothers and sisters in Christ, with deepest joy and gratitude, we recall the ancient and solemn rite by which this church, ten years ago today, truly became the House of God. For ten years now, pilgrims drawn here by their loving Mother, the Mother of God, under her title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, have received countless graces through their prayer and devotion and, above all, through the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and of Penance.

Here, God has fulfilled perfectly His promise, made during the Prophet Ezekiel's vision of the New Israel and the New Temple:

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.¹

Rightly, we have prayed today with all our heart: "How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord, mighty God!"² Here truly, above all on the Altar of Sacrifice and in the Tabernacle, heaven meets earth: Christ seated in glory at the right hand of the Father pours forth, without measure and without cease, the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit into our hearts.

Each time, we enter here, we approach, in the words of the Letter to the Hebrews, "the heavenly Jerusalem."³ Here, we truly keep company with "countless angels in festal gathering, and the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of the just made perfect."⁴ We encounter "Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant," the eternal covenant sealed in His Blood, which He sacramentally renews for us in the Holy

¹ Ez 43, 7.

² Ps 84, 2.

³ Heb 12, 22.

⁴ Heb 12, 22-23.

Mass. Christ makes His home with us here, as He made it in the house of Zacchaeus, fulfilling His divine mission “to seek and to save what was lost.”⁵ He ever makes sacramentally new his Sacrifice on Calvary and its incomparable fruit, the Heavenly Bread of His true Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, and He remains with us in the Tabernacle.

When the Mother of God appeared to Saint Juan Diego on our continent in 1531, she announced to him immediately the purpose of her heavenly visit. She wanted a church to be built, in which, through her special intercession, her children could encounter her Divine Son. Among her first words to Saint Juan Diego, she declared:

I want very much to have a little holy house built here for me, in which I will show Him, I will exalt Him and make him manifest. I will give Him to the people in all my personal love, in my compassion, in my help, in my protection: because I am truly your merciful Mother, yours and all the people who live united in this land and of all the other people of different ancestries, my lovers, who love me, those who seek me, those who trust in me. Here I will hear their weeping, their complaints and heal all their sorrows, hardships and sufferings.⁶

From the time of her apparitions, Our Lady of Guadalupe has never failed to draw pilgrims to her “little holy house,” truly the House of God, built for her by the First Bishop of Mexico City, Fra’ Juan de Zumárraga, and made larger with time by his successors.

In her “little holy house,” in the Church of her Shrine in Mexico City, the Mother of God has met and continues to meet pilgrims with all her “personal love.” Taking them into her arms, she brings them to her Divine Son Who alone is their salvation. She faithfully gives them the counsel which she first gave to the wine stewards at the Wedding Feast of Cana, the counsel inscribed upon the cornerstone of this church: “Do whatever he tells you.”⁷ By means of Saint Juan Diego’s tilma, upon which God miraculously wrote her image, she lovingly

⁵ Lk 19, 10.

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: Porque yo en verdad soy vuestra madre compasiva, tuya y de todos los hombres que en esta tierra estáis en uno, y de las demás variadas estirpes de hombres, mis amadores, los que a mí clamen, los que me busquen, los que confíen en mí, porque ahí les escucharé su llanto, su tristeza, para remediar, para curar todas sus diferentes penas, sus miserias, sus dolores.” San Juan Diego, *Nican Mopohua (Aquí se cuenta)*, tr. Mario Rojas Sánchez (México, D.F.: Design & Digital Print S.A. de C.V., 2001), pp. 3-4, nos. 26-32. English translation: *A Handbook on Guadalupe*, ed. Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate (New Bedford, MA: Our Lady’s Chapel, 2001), p. 194, corrected by author.

⁷ Jn 2, 5.

gazes upon pilgrims and they lovingly gaze upon her, their Mother and their Queen.

The church here was built to further the mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe, so that many more might know her maternal love and, through her love, know their Savior. It is a special gift from God today that a successor of Bishop Juan de Zumárraga, His Eminence Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera, Archbishop Emeritus of Mexico City, has come to be with us and, above all, to concelebrate the Holy Mass. From the first announcement of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe here, he has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement. On the occasion of the Solemn Dedication, at his direction, a piece of the stone of Tepeyac Hill was given to the Shrine and rests under the statue of Saint Juan Diego in the transept. On that occasion, he always presented to the Shrine the statue of Saint Juan Diego, which greets pilgrims as they approach the Pilgrim Center. Your Eminence, we ask your continued prayers for the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe here, that it may be a worthy daughter of the *Insigne y Nacional Basílica de Santa María de Guadalupe* at Mexico City. This church exists for one only reason, namely, the mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The pilgrim who enters the narthex of the Church reads below the fresco depicting the wondrous apparitions of Our Lady her words to Saint Juan Diego which I have just recounted.

Giving thanks today that Our Lady of Guadalupe continues her mission through her Shrine at La Crosse, we thank God, too, for so many graces granted to the pilgrims who have come to this church with faith. Pilgrims have come here to encounter Our Lord at moments of great joy for them: the proposal of marriage, the gift of marriage and the gift of its crown, a child, the beginning of a new endeavor, and other times of joy. Pilgrims have also come in moments of great trial and grief: grave moral struggle, serious illness, marital and family strife, the abandonment of the practice of the faith by a relative or friend, the loss of work, the death of a relative and friend, and other times of sorrow. Our Lady has brought them here to meet Christ, and He has given them His peace and joy, even in moments of seeming impossible suffering. When pilgrims leave this House of God, they read the words of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Saint Juan Diego, when he was suffering greatly in carrying out his mission:

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.⁸

The Mother of God assures them that the House of God is also their house, the House of the Church, and that, therefore, they have nothing to fear.

Thanking God today for the consecration of this church, we are filled with gratitude to all, living and deceased, who have followed in the way of Saint Juan Diego as messengers of Our Lady: benefactors, volunteers, Members and Directors of the corporation responsible for the Shrine, the Friars of the Immaculate, the staff and, above all, the Executive Directors, and all who, in any way, have made possible the great spiritual work which is daily accomplished here. In a particular way, I recall the memory of two persons who joyously participated in the Solemn Dedication of this House of God and whom the Lord has called to Himself. Let us thank God, in a special way, for Mrs. Robert, Mary Lucille, Swing, the donor of the exceptionally beautiful land for the Shrine here, who died on March 13, 2012, and Father Peter Damian Mary Fehlner, first Rector of the Shrine Church, who died on May 8th of this year. May they rest in peace. May God abundantly reward them and all who have sacrificed to be faithful messengers of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Thanking God for the past ten years, we look to the future and to all that God will ask of us her through the Virgin Mother of God, Our Lady of Guadalupe. This afternoon, I will bless the ground upon which the Father John A. Hardon Marian Catechist Apostolate Center and Saint Juan Diego Retreat House will be built. Through the Catechist Center, Our Lady will be able to carry out more fully her mission of manifesting the presence of God in our midst, in the Church, through the spiritual and doctrinal formation of catechists. Through the Retreat House, she will be able to receive those who desire to spend some time with her and, through her, with her Divine Son. Please pray for God's abundant blessing on this essential work of the Shrine and please support it generously.

Drawn here today, the tenth anniversary of the Solemn Dedication of this House of God, let us lift up our hearts to the glorious Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. Let us, one with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, offer our hearts completely to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so that we remain always in His company and, with Our Lady, lead others to Him.

⁸ “¿No estoy aquí, yo, que soy tu madre? ¿No estás bajo mi sombra y resguardo? ¿No soy la fuente de tu alegría? ¿No estás en el hueco de mi manto, en el cruce de mis brazos? ¿Tienes necesidad de alguna otra cosa? Que ninguna otra cosa te aflija, te perturbe; ...” *Nican Mopohua*, p. 13, nos. 119-120. English translation: *A Handbook on Guadalupe*, p. 200.

*Heart of Jesus, house of God and gate of heaven, 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!*

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

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE