

Solemnity of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
La Crosse
December 12, 2016

Zech 2, 14-17
Jdt 13, 18bcde. 19
Rv 11, 19a; 12, 1-6a.10ab
Lk 1, 26-38

HOMILY

Praised be Jesus Christ!

The conversation between the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation manifests, in a wonderful way, how God calls us to be His co-workers in the salvation of the world. The Virgin Mary, preserved from all stain of sin from the moment of her conception, is our model in hearing God's call in our lives and in responding to it with an undivided heart. She is the first and the best of the disciples of Our Lord. Waiting intently for the coming of the Anointed of the Lord, Mary, in her Immaculate Heart, was disposed to cooperate, in every way possible, with God's saving work.

The Archangel Gabriel announced God's plan for her with these words:

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end.¹

Once the Archangel had explained how she was to remain a virgin and yet become the Mother of God, Mary responded with complete trust in God's Word spoken to her by the Archangel:

Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.²

From that moment, her immaculate womb became the tabernacle in which God the Son first came to dwell with us, as God the Father had promised through the Prophet Zechariah, and from which He was born to suffer and die on the Cross for our eternal salvation.

¹ Lk 1, 31-33.

² Lk 1, 38.

Today, we praise and give thanks to God for the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and Mother of Divine Grace for all who come to life in her Son through the waters of Baptism. Today, we recognize in our lives the reality of the Word of God spoken through the Prophet Zechariah:

See, I am coming to dwell among you, says the Lord. Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day, and they shall be his people, and he will dwell among you, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you... Silence, all mankind in the presence of the Lord! For he stirs forth from his holy dwelling.³

God confirmed His abiding presence with us in the Church in a most wonderful way through the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1531 in what is present-day Mexico City. The Mother of Divine Grace appeared to Saint Juan Diego, in order that, by means of a sacred place, her “little house,”⁴ she might always draw us to her Divine Son and to the immeasurable and unceasing graces of divine mercy which He pours forth from His glorious pierced Heart into our hearts.

The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which God has miraculously left for us on the mantle of Saint Juan Diego, reminds us that heaven, eternity, has come to earth, in time, by the Incarnation of God the Son in the womb of the Virgin Mary. In her image, we see elements of “a new heaven and a new earth,”⁵ seen in a vision by Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist. Our Lady of Guadalupe is the “woman clothed with the sun” who has conceived and brought into the world the Son Who is indeed the Lord of Heaven and Earth. The mystery of the Incarnation contains the anticipation of the glory of the Last Day:

Now have salvation and power come, and the Kingdom of our God and the authority of his Anointed.⁶

In her chapel, as in every church, we truly encounter Christ, especially in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and in the Sacrament of Confession, until His return in glory. We also see the image of the Church, of the Mystical Body of Christ, as she anticipates the heavenly Wedding Feast of the Lamb.⁷

³ Zech 2, 14-15. 17.

⁴ “...casita sagrada.” *Nican Mopohua (Aquí se cuenta)*, tr. Mario Rojas Sánchez (México, D.F.: Design & Digital Print S.A. de C.V., 2001), p. 3, no. 26. English translation: “Nican Mopohua: Original Account of Guadalupe,” *Handbook on Guadalupe* (New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, 1997), p. 194.

⁵ Rev 21, 1.

⁶ Rev 12, 10.

⁷ Cf. Rev 19, 9; 21, 2.

In order to render yet more perfect the image of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, the Holy Mass will now be offered here with the priest and the faithful all facing Our Lord. After the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, the reform of the Rite of the Mass was widely interpreted to require that the priest, acting in the person of Christ, face the people, but, in fact, such a disposition is not found in the teaching of the Council. Cardinal Robert Sarah, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, explains:

Contrary to what is sometimes affirmed, it is completely in agreement with the conciliar constitution and indeed fitting that, during the Rite of Penance, the singing of the Gloria, the orations and the Eucharistic Prayer, all, priest and faithful, should turn together towards the East, to express their desire to participate in the work of worship and of redemption accomplished by Christ.⁸

By doing so, we are returning to the ancient practice of the Church. When all face the East, when all face the Lord, during Sacred Worship, the priest does not turn his back to the faithful but rather with them directs himself to Christ Who makes sacramentally present His Sacrifice for our eternal salvation. Purifying and enriching the liturgical practice at the Shrine, we are one with Our Lady of Guadalupe in giving witness to the all-merciful love of God present, in a most extraordinary manner, in the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Facing our Lord in Sacred Worship gives form to our daily living. In everything that we think and say and do, we are to turn to the Lord. Each day, we devote ourselves anew to the conversion of our lives to Christ. We live, intently engaged in the life of the world, but always with our eyes fixed on heaven, on our true destiny and the final destiny of the world. We are called to worship and serve God. We are called to make Christ, not ourselves, the center of our lives, so that we truly serve God, directing our minds and hearts more and more toward Him with fidelity, generosity and obedience.

Finally, as we rejoice today in the apparitions and message of Our Lady of Guadalupe, I commend to you the capital campaign which the Shrine is now conducting, in order to better carry out Our Lady's mission, especially through catechesis and the sound doctrinal and spiritual preparation of catechists, and through days of spiritual retreat with the

⁸ “Contrariamente a quanto è stato a volte sostenuto, è del tutto conforme alla costituzione conciliare, è addirittura opportuno che, durante il rito della penitenza, il canto del Gloria, le orazioni e la preghiera eucaristica, tutti, sacerdote e fedeli, si voltino insieme verso Oriente, per esprimere la loro volontà di partecipare all’opera di culto e di redenzione compiuta da Cristo.” Robert Sarah, *Silenziosa azione del cuore: Per leggere e applicare la costituzione del Vaticano II sulla liturgia.* *L’Osservatore Romano*, 12 giugno 2015, p. 6. English translation by author.

Lord. The campaign, fittingly entitled “Answering Mary’s Call,” will place the entire work of the Shrine on more secure ground through the substantial increase in the holdings of the Shrine’s Endowment Trust, and will provide for the beginning of the construction of the Father John A. Hardon, S.J., Marian Catechist Apostolate Center and Retreat House. It is hoped that funds will be raised to build a good part, if not the whole, of the Center and Retreat House, so that the Shrine will be able to carry out more fully its mission of promoting sound catechesis and a sound spiritual life. Please pray for God’s abundant blessings upon “Answering Mary’s Call.” Please assist those carrying out the capital campaign. Please be generous, when you are asked to answer the call of Our Lady of Guadalupe by contributing to the fuller realization of her work here.

Filled with joy and hope on the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, let us now offer our hearts totally to the Lord. May our hearts, one with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, rest always in the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus from which flows an unceasing abundance of divine grace for the conversion of our hearts and the transformation of our world. Purified and strengthened through our participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice of Christ, may we, imitating the Blessed Virgin Mary, be faithful and generous co-workers of Christ in all that we think and say and do. May God bless us all, and may He bless this holy place to which we have come on pilgrimage today!

Heart of Jesus, of Whose fullness we have all received, have mercy on us.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of Divine Grace, pray for us.

Saint Joseph, Protector of holy Church, 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