

Solemnity of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
La Crosse
December 12, 2017

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 world into which the Virgin Mother of God entered by her apparitions at Tepeyac, in what is today Mexico City, from December 9th to 12th, 1531, was marked by sharp contrasts. On the one hand, there was an open rebellion against God and His Law written upon every human heart. The Aztec people were engaging in a cruel and wholesale practice of human sacrifice, killing violently innocent and defenseless human lives in the name of their religion. Wicked men had perverted the religious sense of the people, so that they no longer listened to the voice of God in their heart, the conscience, which teaches every man of good will that it is always and everywhere wrong to destroy innocent and defenseless human life. At the same time, a number of the Spanish explorers, for the sake of selfish interests, viewed the native people as less than human and, therefore, thought nothing of using military force to conquer them, at the cost of many human lives and of great destruction of the necessities of life.

On the other hand, God had spoken to the heart of the King of Texcoco already in 1464 and to his son, leading them to seek God and His truth, beauty, and goodness. Their work to lead the people to the knowledge of God found its fulfillment with the arrival of the first Franciscan missionaries from Spain in 1524. The Franciscan Friars, under the leadership of one of their own, Bishop Juan de Zumárraga, the First Bishop of Mexico, were carrying out, in a wonderful way, the first evangelization of Mexico.

The Friars provided a careful teaching of the faith, instructing the native people about God and His plan for our eternal happiness. Through their teaching, many of the natives came to understand more fully the voice of God speaking to their hearts, and many embraced the Catholic faith. Among the first of the converts to the true faith were Juan Diego, his wife Maria Lucia, and his uncle Juan Bernardino. They happily walked the fourteen miles from their home to Tlalteloco to receive instruction in the faith from the Franciscan Friars on

Saturday and to participate in Sunday Mass. When Maria Lucia died in 1529, Juan Diego moved near to his uncle, Juan Bernardino, to care for him. His Catholic faith deepened more and more, especially through his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God.¹

It was into this world, suffering from so much confusion, error and violence, that God sent the Mother of His only-begotten Son, Savior of the World, to give powerful witness to the truth of His immeasurable and unceasing love for all mankind and to the fullest expression of that truth in the Mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation. God chose Juan Diego and Bishop Juan de Zumárraga to receive the apparitions and message of the glorious Virgin Mary, so that she might reach all the people, drawing them to the truth, beauty and goodness of God Who alone dispels the lies, the ugliness and the evil, which destroy human life and lead man into sin and eternal death.

The whole purpose of the apparitions and message is expressed in the first words of Our Lady to Saint Juan Diego:

Know, know for sure my dearest and youngest son, that I am truly the ever perfect Holy Virgin Mary, who has the honor to be the Mother of the one true God for whom we all live, the Creator of people, the Lord of all around us and of what is close to us, the Lord of Heaven, the Lord of Earth.

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

Because truly I am honored to be your compassionate mother, yours and that of all the people that live together in this land, and also of all the other various lineages of men; those who love me, those cry to me, those who seek me, those who trust in me. Because there [at my sacred house] truly will I hear their cry, their sadness, in order to remedy, to cure all their various troubles, their miseries, their pains.²

¹ Cf. *A Handbook on Guadalupe* (New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, 2001), pp. 42-47.

² “Sábelo, ten por cierto, hijo mío, el más pequeño, que yo soy en verdad la perfecta siempre Virgen Santa María, que tengo el honor de ser Madre del verdaderísimo Dios por quien se vive, el Creador de las personas, el Dueño de la cercanía y de la intermediación, el *Dueño del cielo, el Dueño de la tierra*.

Mucho quiero, mucho deseo, que aquí me levanten mi casita sagrada, en donde lo mostraré, lo ensalzaré al ponerlo de manifiesto, lo entregaré a las gentes en todo mi amor personal, a Él que es mi mirada compasiva, a Él que es mi auxilio, a Él que es mi salvación.

Porque, en verdad, yo me honro en ser tu madre compasiva, tuya y de todos los hombres que vivís juntos en esta tierra, y también de todas las demás variadas estirpes de hombres, los que me amen; los que me llamen, los que

The apparition of the Mother of God, her image which God left permanently on the mantle of Juan Diego, and her message confirm the truth of our salvation which Our Lord accomplished by His Passion and Death, the grace of which He never ceases to offer us in the Church, His Mystical Body.

When the people were rebelling against God and His plan for our happiness already now on earth and its perfection in the Heaven, the goal of our earthly pilgrimage, God sent the Mother of His only-begotten Son, our Savior, to lead them to Him alive for them in the Church. The little sacred house of the Virgin of Guadalupe is a symbol of the whole Body of Christ in which God the Son Incarnate dwells through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit from His glorious pierced Heart into the hearts of those who seek Him, who give Him their hearts, and who strive to serve Him in all things.

Our Lady of Guadalupe leads us to the true dwelling of God in our midst, announced 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 has indeed come to dwell among us always in His holy Church, in which His only-begotten Son, Our Lord, works to draw all men to Himself, so that they may live in justice and peace, serving God and their neighbor, and reach their eternal home in Heaven. In the Virgin of Guadalupe, we behold the “woman clothed with the sun,” who “was with child,” and who “gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod.”⁴ The Virgin of Guadalupe is the Virgin Mary, “full of grace”⁵ because she was destined from all time to bear in her womb, through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, the “Son of the

me busquen, los que confíen en mí. Porque ahí, en verdad, escucharé su llanto, su tristeza, para remediar, para curar todas sus diferentes penas, sus miserias, sus dolores.” “El Nican Mopohua,” tr. Instituto Superior de Estudios Guadalupanos, in Carl A. Anderson y Eduardo Chávez, *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Madre de la civilización del amor* (México, D.F.: Random House Mondadori, S.A. de C.V., 2010), p. 214. English translation: “The Nican Mopohua,” in Carl A. Anderson and Eduardo Chávez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mother of the Civilization of Love* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), pp. 173-174.

³ Zech 2, 14-15. 17.

⁴ Rev 12, 1-2. 5.

⁵ Lk 1, 28.

Most High,”⁶ the Son who rules “over the house of Jacob forever,” and of whose “Kingdom there will be no end.”⁷

As we witness, in our time, so much confusion and error regarding God and His plan for our eternal salvation, and also open rebellion against the Law of God written upon every human heart, Our Lady of Guadalupe bids us to come to her, so that she may lead us to her Divine Son, the only source of our salvation. The situation is grave, even as it was at the time of her apparitions in 1531, but we must never give up hope, we must never turn away from the maternal gaze of the Mother of God Who draws us to her Divine Son alive for us in the Church, above all, in the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

As we celebrate today the Solemnity of Our Lady of Guadalupe, let us pray for her shrine here, that it may always be the fitting instrument by which she encounters her children who come here on pilgrimage, hearing their pleas for help, their cries of sorrow, healing them in their sufferings, both spiritual and physical, and receiving their acts of thanksgiving and of deepest love, represented today by so many beautiful roses brought here to show our deepest love for the Virgin Mother of God. Let us pray, too, for all who serve the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe here, so that they may become ever more her messengers in the world, imitating Saint Juan Diego, so that many in our world today who are confused or lost may find themselves in Christ Who alone is our salvation.

In a particular way, let us pray for Our Lady’s Knights of the Altar, the boys and young men who serve Our Lord during the Sacred Liturgy, invoking the help of Our Lady and Saint Juan Diego. May those who today will become Pages, the last step before Knighthood, persevere in their preparation to become fully Our Lady’s Knights of the Altar. May the holiness of their service here be reflected in everything that they think and say and do.

Finally, in order that the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe here may carry out more perfectly its mission by providing a center for sound catechesis and for a longer stay at the Shrine, I ask you to respond generously to the capital campaign which the Shrine is now conducting. The campaign, “Answering Mary’s Call,” will provide for the greater financial stability of the entire work of the Shrine and for the construction of the Father John A. Hardon, S.J., Marian Catechist Apostolate Center and Retreat House. The response thus far has been most generous, but, if the work is to be completed, there is need for many more

⁶ Lk 1, 32.

⁷ Lk 1, 33.

generous gifts. Please sacrifice from your substance for the continuation and development of Our Lady's work here.

Filled with the confidence which Our Lady of Guadalupe gives to us and imitating her example, let us now place our hearts completely in the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus. Let us be one in heart with Him in His Eucharistic Sacrifice by which he saves the world and offers to us the incomparable food of His true Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. Resting our hearts in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, let us be confident and courageous in carrying out whatever mission God has given to us, so that the truth of His dwelling with us in the Church may shine forth for all to see. So may Our Lady of Guadalupe, through us who seek to imitate her messenger, Saint Juan Diego, draw all souls to her Divine Son and to His Mystical Body, the Church.

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