

**SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT
CAPILLA DEL CERRITO
SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
DECEMBER 15, 2001**

Homily

Our minds and hearts are filled with wonder and awe to celebrate the Holy Mass, our fullest possible participation, on earth, in the mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the place at which three of the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe took place and from which the Mother of God descended for the fourth apparition. At the fourth apparition, Our Lady sent Juan Diego to this rocky place to gather beautiful castillian roses blooming out of season, the sign of the truth of her apparitions, requested by Bishop Juan de Zumárraga.

II. Into the darkness which enveloped this privileged part of our American continent in December of 1531, into the darkness of devil worship and of the sacrifice of countless human lives by the Aztec rulers, into the darkness of the racism of some of the Spanish explorers and settlers who denied to the indigenous people the respect of their human dignity, the ever-virgin Mary brought the light of Jesus Christ, Son of God and her Son.

To Blessed Juan Diego, a native American widower of no special stature, who had a heavy heart because of illness of his dear uncle Juan Bernardino with whom he was living, the Mother of God appeared to announce the love and mercy of God the Father incarnate in her womb, God-made-man, Jesus Christ, who would give His life in order to shower God's mercy on all His children. She identified herself with these words spoken in Nahuatl, Juan Diego's native tongue:

I am the perfect and ever Virgin Holy Mary, Mother of the true God, through whom one lives, the creator of mankind, the one who owns what is near and beyond, the owner of heaven and earth. (Antonio Valeriano, Apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Original Story Known as Nican Mopohua, tr. Real Burque, O.M.I. Mexico, DF: Centré de Estudios Guadalupanos, n.d., p. 8, No. 26)

She asked one favor:

I ardently desire that here they build me my sacred little house, "a teocalli." (Ibid.)

And she announced the purpose of her request of the building of a chapel: Where I will show Him [the true God], I will exalt Him and make Him manifest. (Ibid., No. 27)

The Mother of God entrusted her request into the hands of the devout layman Juan Diego whom she instructed to go to Bishop Juan de Zumárraga, so that her work of evangelization, her work of showing forth and exalting God, might be carried out.

When the Bishop understandably questioned Juan Diego's report of the Virgin's request, the Virgin of Guadalupe confirmed her request by a miraculous gift of the most beautiful flowers on this rocky hill in the middle of winter and, yet more wonderfully, by the gift of her own miraculous presence on Juan Diego's mantle or tilma. At the witness of these gifts, the Bishop lost no time in carrying out the Blessed Mother's request as it had been presented to him by her messenger, the lay apostle Juan Diego.

For over 470 years, Our Lady of Guadalupe, present on the tilma of Blessed Juan Diego, has been the messenger of the mercy and love of God the Father to His children of America. Forty-one years after the discovery of America, she appeared as the Mother of the First Evangelization of our continent. By drawing God's children in America to her Son, she has unfailingly shown them the way to life and freedom as true sons and daughters of God the Father in His only-begotten Son. She has unfailingly manifested the Lord and His mercy to the American continent.

Mary's mission of evangelization is illumined by the readings of today's Mass. On this last day of the Second Week of Advent, the Church draws our attention to Saint John the Baptist and his mission as the last of the prophets, as the New Elijah who turns hearts to God in order to prepare God's people for the coming of the Christ (Reading I) As we have observed earlier in the week and as Our Lord, the Christ, makes clear in the Gospel, the herald suffers the rejection of the people, even as He Himself experienced, because the people did as they pleased, also with John the Baptist.

Let us not ignore or reject the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe or do with her "as we please." Rather, as we have been doing all week let us turn our hearts more and more completely to Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may experience God's mercy always, know His and do His will in all things.

III. Today, the Virgin of Guadalupe, Queen of America, is present to you and me, descendents in Catholic faith of Blessed Juan Diego. She comes to us so that we may be transformed in heart, so that we may participate with new energy and enthusiasm in the mystery of Christ's Redemptive Incarnation, so that we may live more fully each day in Christ. She reveals herself to us as the Mother of the New Evangelization, of the teaching and living of the Gospel in America as if for the first time. She assures us of her help and prayers that we, like Blessed Juan Diego, may do God's will in our lives, in

service of Christ and His Church. In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “The Church in America,” our Holy Father expresses the hope that the ever-Virgin Mary, venerated on our continent under the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, will intercede before God for the grace of a new evangelization among us:

It is my heartfelt hope that she, whose intercession was responsible for strengthening the faith of the first disciples (cf. Jn 2:11), will by her maternal intercession guide the Church in America, obtaining the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as once she did for the early Church (cf. Acts 1:14), so that the new evangelization may yield a splendid flowering of Christian life. (Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Ecclesia in America,” 22 January 1999, No. 11e)

The Mother of God, who, by her love and prayers, assisted the Apostles in the preaching of the Gospel for the first time in the whole world, and who similarly assisted the missionaries who preached the Gospel for the first time on our continent, will assist us now to teach and live the Gospel, as if for the first time, in our once Christian culture which has now become thoroughly secularized. Today, anew, she will show, exalt and manifest the Lord and His mercy to His children of America.

IV. As we have come on pilgrimage to meet Our Lord Jesus Christ, to seek the grace of a new evangelization in our homes, our parishes, our dioceses and indeed, the universal Church, we turn to our Blessed Mother, the Virgin of Guadalupe, who will unfailingly lead us to her Son and ask from Him for us the grace to live the truth and love of the Gospel with new energy and enthusiasm.

We pray, invoking her maternal help, that the darkness which envelopes so much of our culture, the darkness of the attack on human life through procured abortion, assisted suicide and so-called “mercy killing;” through the pervasive diffusion of pornography, especially on the Internet; through the abandonment of Christian marriage and of family life; through racism; through violence and crime; and through the indifference to God and to the duties of religion may be overcome by the light of her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Through her intercession, we pray that we, like Blessed Juan Diego, may be her messengers, according to our state in life and vocation, by announcing God’s loving mercy, the Gospel of life and freedom.

V. Today, I ask that, as you pray before Our Lady of Guadalupe, you reflect in a special way upon your state in life and vocation, the call which God has given to you or will give to you. It is the call to give your life in total love of God and of your neighbor—either in the lay state of life and in the vocation to the married life or dedicated single life; —or in the ordained state of life and in the vocation to the priesthood or permanent diaconate; —or in the consecrated state of life and in the vocation to monastic life, apostolic or contemplative life, the life of consecration lived in the world, the eremitical life or the life of consecrated virginity lived in the world.

Each state of life and each vocation, in accord with God’s plan, offers an irreplaceable service to the whole people of God. The response to one’s vocation is the way of his or her salvation, the distinct way in which he or she lives in Christ each and every day.

In the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe, you will find the concrete reflection of the various states of life and vocations: Blessed Juan Diego, in the lay state, called to marriage and to a dedicated single life, after his wife’s early death; the priests who instructed Blessed Juan Diego and ministered the sacraments to him and his uncle, and Bishop Juan de Zumárraga in the ordained state of life and called to the priesthood; and our Blessed Mother herself as the model of the consecrated life in her consecrated virginity.

Reflect today on the abundance of God’s mercy, which you have experienced in your state of life and vocation, and ask God to give you the grace to respond to your vocation with the fervor and energy of your first response to His call.

Pray, too, for our young people that they will know their vocation in life and embrace it wholeheartedly. Let us pray for those called to the married life, that they will form a home and family according to God’s plan, loving one another with fidelity throughout a lifetime and welcoming new life made in God’s own image and likeness, as the highest fruit of their marital love. Let us pray for those called to the dedicated single life, that they may prepare themselves spiritually to serve selflessly God and their neighbor in most need, especially children, the elderly and those who are burdened with illness or special needs. Let us pray for those called to the priesthood and consecrated life, that, in our totally secularized society, they will have the wisdom to recognize God’s call and the courage to give their lives completely in service to the Church either as true shepherds of the flock, acting in the person of Christ the Head and Shepherd of His Body, the Church, in the priesthood, or as public witnesses to Christ and His life in the consecrated life.

VI. May the Holy Eucharist, in which we now participate, heal and nourish us for the work of the new evangelization. Through our participation in the Holy Eucharist may we bring Christ ever more into our lives and into our world.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America and Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us.