



ON DIOCESAN SHRINES AND  
OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE:

Articles published in The Times Review

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*Bishop of La Crosse*

TIMES REVIEW  
19 May 1999

**D E V O T I O N   T O**  
**T H E   B L E S S E D**  
**V I R G I N   M A R Y**

*The Most Reverend Raymond L. Burke  
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**T**raditionally, the month of May in the Church is marked by special devotions to the ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Blessed Mother. The practice of bringing flowers each day to the image of our Blessed Mother at home or at school, the crowning of the statue of our Blessed Mother in church or in school, the clothing in the scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel at the time of First Holy Communion, and the daily praying of the Rosary and the Litany of Loreto are just some examples of special devotions to Mary during this month.

What is the meaning of our devotions to the ever-Virgin Mary? Devotions are prayers and practices by which we strive to deepen our appreciation of and participation in the mystery of the Redemption. For instance, devotions to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus deepen our understanding of the infinite love of God for us, manifest in the Heart of the Incarnate Son of God, and lead us to a fuller participation in the Holy Eucharist in which Our Lord Jesus offers His very Life to us under the forms of bread and wine. They also inspire us to express the love of God in our homes and in all our relationships. Devotions are words and actions which express devotion or love for God or for one of His saints. Among the saints, Mary is the first and the best, and so devotion to her and devotions to her have marked the life of the Church from the moment when Our Lord Jesus, dying on the cross for our salvation, gave her as mother to the Apostle John and confided her into John's care. (cf. *Jn* 19, 26-27)

Devotion to our Blessed Mother deepens within us our understanding of the mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation and leads us to fuller union with the Incarnate Redeemer. As disciples of Our Lord Jesus, we are naturally drawn to His Mother who was the first to welcome the Redeemer into the world, when she responded, "Let it done to me as you say," to the Archangel Gabriel's announcement that she was conceive the Redeemer in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. (*Lk* 1, 38) From the moment of the Incarnation of the Redeemer in the Virgin Mary's

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womb to the moment of the Redeemer's death on the cross, Mary steadfastly embraced God's will for her Son and for her, even when it was difficult to understand and when it entailed the acceptance of intense suffering and even death. Mary's perfect discipleship is reflected in her words to the table waiters at the Wedding Feast of Cana, "Do whatever he tells you." (Jn 2, 5) Mary is always leading us to a closer following of Christ, a fuller following of Him. Pope John Paul II stated so clearly the meaning of Marian devotion in his *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation "The Church in America,"* promulgated this past January 22 at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City:

*"Devotion to the Mother of the Lord, when it is genuine, is always an impetus to a life guided by the spirit and values of the Gospel." (No. 11a)*

Pope Paul VI reflected the same truth in his *Apostolic Exhortation "Marian Devotion,"* of February 2, 1974:

*"Devotion to the Mother of the Lord becomes for the faithful an opportunity for growing in divine grace, and this is the ultimate aim of all pastoral activity. For it is impossible to honor her who is 'full of grace' (Lk 1, 28) without thereby honoring in oneself the state of grace, which is friendship with God, communion with him and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit." (No. 57d)*

The devotion of praying the Rosary is particularly apt for deepening our love of the Redeemer and of the grace of Redemption at work within us through the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Pope Pius XII called the praying of the Rosary "the compendium of the entire Gospel." By praying the Rosary, we reflect upon the principal events of our Redemption, from the Incarnation of the Divine Son of God in the womb of Mary ("The Annunciation") to the fulfillment of the purpose of the Incarnation in the Resurrection and its effect in the life of the Church and of Mary ("The Assumption" and "The Coronation as Queen of Heaven and Earth").

*As we prepare to celebrate the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, we count upon Our Lady of Guadalupe to be the mother of the new evangelization.*

For the American continent, the devotion to our Blessed Mother finds special expression in the appearance of the ever-Virgin Mary to Blessed Juan Diego, a humble native American, in 1531 to assure her children in America of God the Father's infinite mercy and love toward them, especially toward those most in need. At Tepeyac, Our Lady of Guadalupe appears as the immaculately conceived Virgin who is pregnant with the Child Jesus. God the Father reveals His infinite mercy in His only-begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At Tepeyac, Mary became the mother of the first evangelization of the American continent. As we prepare to celebrate the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, we count upon Our Lady of Guadalupe to be the mother of the new evangelization. In the prayer for the Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops, our Blessed Mother is rightly called "Patroness of all America and Star of the first and new evangelization."

*Next week, I will continue my reflection on the devotion to and devotions to the ever-Virgin Mary, our Blessed Mother.*

TIMES REVIEW  
29 May 1999

D E V O T I O N   T O  
O U R   L A D Y   O F  
G U A D A L U P E

*The Most Reverend Raymond L. Burke  
Bishop of La Crosse*

Our devotions express our devotion or to love for God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — above all, and our Blessed Mother and the saints as the closest friends of God and our close friends in the Communion of Saints. Devotions help us to deepen our love of God and of one another, through our participation in the life of the Church, especially the Sacraments. Marian devotions, in particular, express our love for the ever-Virgin Mary and help us to deepen our participation in the mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation in which she cooperated so intimately by accepting God the Father's will that she be the Mother of the Redeemer.

On our American continent, Marian devotion is frequently centered around the figure of our Blessed Mother as she appeared in December of 1531 to the native American Blessed Juan Diego at Tepeyac Hill in the area of modern day Mexico City. Our Blessed Mother actually appeared four times to Blessed Juan Diego and once to his dying elderly uncle, Juan Bernardino. The fourth appearance to Blessed Juan Diego was the most wonderful. A brief account of the apparitions will help us to appreciate better God the Father's purpose in sending the Blessed Mother to us at Tepeyac and the important meaning of devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The first apparition took place on December 9, which at that time was the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in the Spanish Empire, of which Mexico then was a part. Our Blessed Mother appeared to Blessed Juan Diego, an older native American who had recently lost his dear wife. Juan Diego himself died in 1548, seventeen years after the apparitions, at the age of 74. On May 6, 1990, Pope John Paul II, during his second pilgrimage as Pope to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, declared Juan Diego blessed.

Juan Diego was a devout Catholic but a man of no particular prominence in the local society or the Church. He had been

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living with and looking after his elderly uncle, Juan Bernardino, who was gravely ill. This is how the **first apparition** took place. On Saturday morning, December 9, 1531, Juan Diego was on his way to church to participate in the Mass for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and in the catechetical instruction which would follow. As he reached Tepeyac Hill, he heard beautiful music and a beautiful voice calling out his name. Our Blessed Mother appeared to him as the “woman clothed with the sun” of the *Book of Revelation*, pregnant with the Child Jesus. She instructed Juan Diego to go to the house of Bishop Juan de Zumárraga and to request that a chapel be built in her honor on Tepeyac Hill so that she might show the infinite majesty and mercy of God to all His children of America.

Juan Diego went to the Bishop’s house at which he was received with great respect but also with hesitation regarding his story of the apparition and of our Blessed Mother’s request. The Bishop, who was praying and working to bring together the native Americans and the Spanish conquerors and settlers, requested time to consider the matter. On Juan Diego’s return home, the Blessed Mother appeared to him for the **second time**. Disappointed that he had failed in his mission, he asked Our Lady of Guadalupe to send a more esteemed messenger to the Bishop, so that he would believe the message. Our Blessed Mother instructed Juan Diego to return to the Bishop with her request.

The **third apparition** took place on December 10. Juan Diego had gone to the Bishop for a second time. The Bishop responded by asking for a sign so that he might believe the Blessed Mother’s request. On his way home, Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego and he told her of the Bishop’s request of a sign.

Juan Diego missed his appointment with Our Lady of Guada-

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lupe on December 11 because he was looking after his uncle Juan Bernardino who was gravely ill. On December 12, he was hurrying to bring a priest to administer the sacraments to his uncle who was dying. He took a different route in order to avoid another encounter with the Blessed Mother, embarrassed that he had missed the appointment on December 11 and not wanting to be delayed in seeking spiritual help for his uncle.

Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to him nonetheless, assuring him that his uncle was already cured and instructing him to gather flowers on the top of the hill as a sign to take to the Bishop. Juan Diego trusted Our Lady and found on the top of the frozen and barren hill the most beautiful flowers. He gathered them and Our Blessed Mother arranged them in his cloak or *tilma* as it was called. Juan Diego then hurried to the Bishop's house where this **fourth apparition** reached its fullness. When he opened his *tilma* to show the flowers to the Bishop, Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared depicted on the *tilma*. The Bishop immediately understood the truth of Juan Diego's message from the Blessed Mother and hastened to have the chapel built on Tepeyac Hill.

The **fifth apparition** took place in the little home in which Juan Diego was living with his uncle. Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to Juan Bernardino and cured him of his fatal illness.

*Next week, I will continue presenting the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe by presenting in detail her message to Blessed Juan Diego and its importance for us today.*

TIMES REVIEW  
9 June 1999

**T H E M E S S A G E O F  
O U R L A D Y O F  
G U A D A L U P E**

*The Most Reverend Raymond L. Burke  
Bishop of La Crosse*

**I**n our continuing discussion of the importance of devotions in our Christian life, I am giving special attention to the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America and Mother of the New Evangelization. In my last column, I described her five appearances to Blessed Juan Diego, Bishop Juan de Zumárraga, and Juan Bernardino, the elderly uncle of Juan Diego. In this column, I will present the message which our Blessed Mother brought to Juan Diego and, through Juan Diego, to the peoples of America.

When our Blessed Mother appeared to Juan Diego at Tepeyac Hill, known as Guadalupe, in 1531, her message was direct and clear. The original account of her apparitions to Juan Diego is entitled *Nican Mopohua* written by Antonio Valeriano in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, the native Americans of the area. It was written while Juan Diego was still living and contains the text of his conversations with Our Lady as Juan Diego recalled them. It has been translated into English and can be found in a wonderful volume on the apparitions, their background and their meaning: *Handbook on Guadalupe* published by the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate and distributed by Ignatius Press. Another excellent book on the apparitions is *Mary of the Americas: Our Lady of Guadalupe* by Father Christopher Rengers, O.F.M. Cap., published by Alba House in New York.

Our Blessed Mother spoke to Juan Diego in loving terms, as to a dear son, and identified herself as the Virgin Mary, Mother of God. In fact, in the image which our Blessed Mother left on the *tilma* or mantle of Juan Diego, she is pregnant with the Divine Son of God. She calls herself "Mother of the God of truth through Whom everything lives, the Lord of all things near us, the Lord of heaven and earth."

After identifying herself, our Blessed Mother makes clear the purpose of her visit. She asks that "a little house be built here for me." She immediately makes clear that the "little house" is to

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serve one purpose. It is to be a place in which she, as a loving and compassionate mother, will show God the Father to her children and draw them to Him. She tells Juan Diego: "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." She speaks of all the people of the land or continent, and of people of different ancestries. In other words, it is clear that her message is for all whom her Divine Son, as He was dying on the cross, gave to her as her children, especially His brothers and sisters of the continent of America.

In speaking about her desire to encounter her children at her "little house," she mentions, in particular, those who love her and those who are experiencing trials and sufferings. She tells Juan Diego: "Here I will hear their weeping, their complaints and heal all their sorrows, hardships and sufferings."

There is a second important part of the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In order to achieve her goal, our Blessed Mother sent Juan Diego to Bishop Zumárraga to request the building of the "little house" or chapel. As we know, the Bishop was hesitant to believe Juan Diego and asked him to return another time. When our Blessed Mother appeared to Juan Diego for the second time, he suggested that she send a noble or influential person to accomplish her mission. The response of our Blessed Mother is key to her whole message at Guadalupe. She acknowledges that she has many servants and messengers who could carry out the mission but insists that it is Juan Diego, the humble and poor native American layman who is to carry out this mission. She tells Juan Diego: "But it is very necessary that you plead my cause and, with your help and through your mediation, that my will be fulfilled." In the very choice of Juan Diego as her emissary, our Blessed Mother accomplished her mission of showing

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God the Father in all his mercy to His children. By her appearances to Blessed Juan Diego and his uncle, Juan Bernardino, our Blessed Mother made it clear that she brings the message of God the Father's all-merciful love to all His children without discrimination and that all of His children are called to be messengers of His divine mercy in the world.

There is yet a third important part of her message. On December 12, Juan Diego was trying to avoid another encounter with our Blessed Mother for a legitimate reason. He was in a hurry to get a priest to bring the Sacraments to his dying uncle, Juan Bernardino. Once again, our Blessed Mother appears to him and tells him to put aside his anxieties and fear. She says to Juan Diego: "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."

Her message is one of trust in God's merciful love shown to us by the Mother of God. Our Lady of Guadalupe teaches us not to give way to the fears, doubts, hesitations and temptations which blind us to God's love. Juan Diego carried out the mission confided to him by our Blessed Mother and, God took care of his dying uncle. As we know, the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to Juan Bernardino, her fifth and last apparition, and he was cured. Our Lady of Guadalupe invites us to come to her and to find through her the solace and peace of God's mercy and love, especially in times of trial, suffering, fear, doubt and temptation.

The message of Our Lady of Guadalupe was so needed at the time, the very first years of the First Evangelization of our continent. There was a shocking loss of respect for the dignity of the human person because of the widespread practice of human sacrifice among the native people and because of the mistreatment of the native people by some Spanish explorers and settlers

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who questioned whether the Aztecs had a human soul. By her appearances and message, our Blessed Mother made clear beyond any doubt or question that God the Father loves with tender mercy all of His children, especially those most in need. The tender love and cooperation between our Blessed Mother and Juan Diego is a wonderful reflection of the great dignity which belongs to every child of God and of the mission which every child of God has to show forth God's mercy.

Today also there is a great need for us to hear the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In our age, as in the time of Juan Diego, there is a widespread loss of respect for the dignity of the human person, manifested in procured abortion, in euthanasia or assisted suicide, in warfare and civil strife, in violence and crime, in injustice and oppression. Today more than ever we need to look upon the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe and to know her message of God's infinitely merciful love for us, especially for those who are innocent and defenseless and those whose lives are burdened because of special need, illness or advanced years.

*Next week, I want to give special attention to the request of "a small house" or shrine for the devotion which our Blessed Mother requested of the people of the American continent. In reflecting upon the importance of the devotional life, it is important to note the central place of shrines in our devotions.*

TIMES REVIEW  
23 June 1999

**THE IMPORTANCE  
OF SHRINES**

*The Most Reverend Raymond L. Burke  
Bishop of La Crosse*

When Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to Blessed Juan Diego in 1531, she asked that a little house be built for her at Tepeyac Hill. She indicated immediately the purpose of the little house or shrine: to provide a place in which she could show forth God the Father in all His mercy to His children and so draw His children to Him. In our devotional life, a shrine always reminds us of the ultimate destiny of our earthly pilgrimage, returning home to God the Father. The shrine represents the goal of our life pilgrimage. Often times, the shrine is built at the place of some significant event in our salvation, for instance, the church at the place of Christ's Death and Resurrection. In Mexico City, the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe recalls the great sign of God the Father's love, the appearance of the Mother of God to His children of America.

Not only does the Shrine recall the important event but it is itself a gift of grace to God's people. Recently, the Holy Father's Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People published a document on the importance of shrines in our devotional life, entitled *The Shrine: Memory, Presence and Prophecy of the Living God*.

First of all, the shrine is a place which calls to mind God's loving providence, all that He has done and does for our salvation. From the beginning of His relationship with His people, God asked that a temple be built to His honor and as His dwelling with us, not as our initiative but as His work. The shrine reminds us always that our origin is in God the Father and that God the Father is our final destiny. The document of the Holy See on shrines tells us:

*"The topographical arrangement of the shrine and its individual areas, the respectful behavior that is required of every ordinary visitor, the attentive hearing of the word of God, prayer and the celebration of the sacraments will prove of immense help in enabling people to understand the spiritual significance of their experience there." (No. 6)*

*One of the special graces of pilgrimage to a shrine is that of sorrow for our sins and desire for God's forgiveness.*

Not only does the shrine call to mind our relationship with God the Father but also the relationship which we have with one another as children of the same divine Father. The shrine increases our solidarity with one another, especially with those who are in most need. Just as Our Lady of Guadalupe came to manifest the infinite mercy of God the Father to us, so she also draws us to imitate the loving mercy of God in our relationships with one another. The shrine is a "continuous call to the love of God and to the sharing of gifts received." (No. 8)

The shrine is also a place of God's presence with us, a privileged place to receive the gifts of God's grace. Central to the life of the shrine is the proclamation of the Word of God, the New Evangelization. The hearing of God's Word proclaimed at the shrine has a strong effect on us. Also, central to the shrine's life is the celebration of the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance. It is especially fitting to encounter Our Lord Jesus Christ in the most perfect way possible to us, that is in the Holy Mass, when we are on pilgrimage. In that sense, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and the reposition of the Holy Eucharist in the tabernacle of the shrine church is the heart of the shrine and of all its activities.

One of the special graces of pilgrimage to a shrine is that of sorrow for our sins and desire for God's forgiveness. With pilgrimage to a shrine comes the gift of an indulgence, the "total gift of the mercy of God," by which temporal punishment due to our sins which we have confessed is remitted.

Because the shrine is a place for hearing the Word of God and for celebrating the sacraments, it also draws the pilgrims closer to one another. It is typical of a shrine to welcome a great diversity of visitors who experience at the shrine the unity of their common origin and common destiny.

Finally the shrine is a place of prophecy, a place in which our

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ultimate destiny in God is celebrated. The shrine is always a sign of great hope to God's children. For that reason, the shrine is a place which the sick and the suffering very much seek out and a place in which they feel very much at home. The document of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People tells us:

*"Every time the community of the faithful gathers together in the shrine, it does so to remind itself of that other shrine, the future city, the dwelling of God, which we wish to begin building already in this world and which we cannot help but desire, filled with hope, conscious of our limitations, striving to prepare as best we can the coming of the Kingdom." (No. 15)*

Because the shrine calls to mind our final destiny, it inspires us to live in this world in a way which prepares for the life which is to come. For this reason, the shrine is a place which inspires and fosters growth in the life of the virtues, especially the virtues of justice and charity.

*Shrines dedicated to Our Lord and to His Mother, our Blessed Mother, have a special place in our life of faith and in our practice of the faith. For that reason, very early on in my service as Bishop of La Crosse, I spoke and wrote about the need of a place of sound Marian devotion in the Diocese. In my next column, I will write more about that conviction.*

TIMES REVIEW  
7 July 1999

M A R I A N D E V O T I O N  
I N T H E  
D I O C E S E O F  
L A C R O S S E

*The Most Reverend Raymond L. Burke  
Bishop of La Crosse*

**F**rom the time I was named Bishop of La Crosse on December 10, 1994, I began to reflect upon and pray about the pastoral needs of the whole Diocese, which were soon to become my principal care. Having grown up in the Diocese and having been ordained a priest for the Diocese, my reflection and prayer was filled with deepest affection for the people of the Diocese. When I was installed as the Eighth Bishop of La Crosse on February 22, 1995, I spoke about my pastoral concern for the family which has suffered so many assaults in our time. I also expressed concern about the violence which more and more marks our American culture.

From the beginning of my ministry as Bishop, I have found in the faithful of the Diocese a deep faith in God and in His Church but also a strong desire to deepen their faith and its practice in order to meet the challenge of living the Gospel in our time. Because our American culture is pervasively secular, we all experience the need for spiritual renewal—for time away in prayer and worship, for the experience of special times and places for prayer. In all our lives, there are the important times which we wish to mark with prayer: making a decision about one's vocation in life, marriage preparation and marriage, entering the seminary, beginning formation in the consecrated life, the birth of a child and the child's baptism, first Holy Communion, confirmation, graduation, the beginning of new work. For all of us, there are also times of special need: illness, spiritual crisis and doubts of faith, financial difficulties, marital discord and breakup, failure in school or at work, separation from family and friends, death. Farmers in the Diocese, who make up a significant part of the faithful and who carry out the work of agriculture upon which we all depend for food and fiber, have experienced intense suffering because of present economic structures. At the important and critical times in life, we need to bring ourselves to God in prayer and to experience His closeness to us, His blessing and His comfort and strength. In a special way, it is Our Blessed Mother who is near to us at these times and invites us to bring

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our lives to her Son, to receive from Him the gift of God the Father's infinite love and mercy.

In the face of the pastoral reality of living the Catholic faith in our time in our Diocese, I have become more and more convinced of the need for a place of pilgrimage, an extraordinary place in the Diocese to which the faithful may come at any time, but especially in times of special joy and of special need to be renewed in faith and grace. I have come to understand that the place of pilgrimage or shrine should be dedicated to Our Blessed Mother, the first and best among us who are the disciples of her Son, who constantly prays and works to draw us closer to the Redemption which her Son offers us in the Church. More specifically, in America, as I have been recounting, Our Blessed Mother has showed forth the love and mercy of God the Father for all His children, especially those in most need, by her appearance at Tepeyac in 1531 to the faith-filled, humble native American Juan Diego. Our Blessed Mother's appearance and message at Tepeyac show God's love and mercy as much to us today as she did some 468 years ago. It is a loving appearance and message for which we all hunger and which can draw us all to the fount of life and grace in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is my hope and prayer that a place of pilgrimage—a shrine—dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe may become a reality for the spiritual good of the faithful of our Diocese and of far beyond who will come there to place their lives before the Lord in prayer and to receive from the Lord renewed faith and grace. I ask you to join me in praying, especially through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, for God's blessing on the proposed shrine.

TIMES REVIEW  
21 July 1999

D I O C E S A N  
S H R I N E T O  
O U R L A D Y O F  
G U A D A L U P E

*The Most Reverend Raymond L. Burke  
Bishop of La Crosse*

I bring to conclusion my reflections on the importance of places of devotions, especially of pilgrimages and shrines, in the Christian life.

At the end of my last column, I asked prayers that a hope which I have had since becoming Bishop of La Crosse may be brought to realization. It is the hope of founding and building a fitting place of devotion in our Diocese to the honor of the Mother of God, as she appeared to God's children of the American continent in 1531. The celebration of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, two thousand years since the Incarnation of the divine Son of God in the womb of the Virgin Mary, makes especially timely the beginning of such a place of pilgrimage.

What progress has been made toward the beginning of a shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe in the Diocese of La Crosse? For almost four years, I, with the help of many others, have considered the possibility of a shrine and searched for a fitting site. Initial proposed sites proved, for various reasons, to be unfeasible. Last year, the family of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Swing offered the gift of a beautiful tract of land just three miles south of La Crosse for the proposed shrine. You may know of Mr. and Mrs. Swing through their son, Father John Swing who has been a priest of our Diocese since 1970 and is presently Pastor of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish at Nekoosa and Saint Alexander Parish at Port Edwards. Mr. Swing, who passed away some years ago, had always desired that the beautiful site which he had cared for so well might one day become a place to draw people closer to God. Mrs. Swing, her son Father John Swing and her daughter Jeanne Pavela continue to nurture the desire of their husband and father.

With the gift of a truly fitting place for the Shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe, I gathered together a group of professionals to

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assist me in addressing various practical matters involved in carrying forward the proposal. Visits have been made to the neighbors and to local government officials to explain the possibility of the Shrine. The property has been studied thoroughly so that the Shrine may be developed with full respect for the environment and in harmony with the striking natural beauty of the place. Legal questions have been addressed. The location of the essential components of the Shrine have been discussed. The cost of constructing the Shrine and of providing for its ongoing maintenance continues to be studied. Architectural and construction concerns also continue to be addressed. Initial gifts toward the future shrine have made the necessary initial study possible.

A final proposal regarding the Shrine will not be ready for some time but I am happy to share the results of the work so far.

The proposed Shrine will be under the exclusive direction of the Bishop of La Crosse but it will be incorporated separately so that it will not in any way encumber financially the Diocese of La Crosse. The Shrine, if it is to become a reality, must be financed completely through gifts of the faithful. Also, before I will begin the construction of the Shrine, I insist that it must have a sufficient endowment to provide for its ongoing maintenance and development. It would be wrong to build a beautiful shrine and then have it deteriorate because of the lack of means to maintain and develop it properly.

The first component of the proposed Shrine is a church dedicated to Our Lord and to His and Our Blessed Mother under her title of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The church will be the heart of the Shrine from which the Word of God will be preached and taught, and in which the life of grace will be

*...the Marian Catechetical Apostolate [will] be connected to the church. This apostolate founded by Father John Hardon, S.J., premier catechist and teacher of catechists in our country would offer a fitting place for study and spiritual renewal for the catechists in the Diocese.*

renewed in pilgrims through prayer and devotions, and, most of all, through participation in the Holy Eucharist and the confession and forgiveness of sins in the Sacrament of Penance. The sacred art in the shrine church will foster important devotions for different members of the faithful – mothers and fathers, families, dedicated single persons, priests, consecrated persons, first communicants, young people, Scouts, Catholic women, Catholic men, persons afflicted by addiction and with cancer and other diseases. The church will not be a parish church but a place of pilgrimage for faithful from the Diocese and beyond.

It is proposed that a center for the Marian Catechetical Apostolate be connected to the church. This apostolate founded by Father John Hardon, S.J., premier catechist and teacher of catechists in our country, would offer a fitting place for study and spiritual renewal for the catechists in the Diocese, who, together with their pastors, carry out the essential apostolate of working with parents in handing on the faith and its practice to our children and young people. Also connected to the church would be the office and quarters of the priest director of the Shrine. A beautiful feature of the building housing the center for catechists and the director's quarters is a Marian Garden in which the planting and care of various plants and flowers named in honor of our Blessed Mother will be a particularly beautiful expression of devotion.

Essential to the life of the proposed Shrine will be the presence of contemplative religious Sisters who will carry on a continuous apostolate of prayer for the Church. The pilgrims who come to the Shrine will always find there intense prayer for the Church and the world, to which they unite their own prayer.

The ample grounds of the Shrine offer the possibility of devotional areas, for instance, a walk marked by the mysteries of the Holy Rosary and chapels honoring blessed and saints

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who have a special importance for the faithful of the Diocese: Saint Joseph the Worker, patron saint of our Diocese; Saint Francis of Assisi, secondary patron of the Diocese; Saints Isidore and Maria, patron saints of farmers; Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, model and intercessor for native American Catholics; the Seven Blessed Martyrs of Thailand, heroes of faith for Hmong Catholics; the servants of God Bishop Frederic Baraga and Father Samuel Mazzuchelli, O.P., early evangelizers of our area, and Father Solanus Casey, O.F.M. Cap., a native of the Diocese, whose causes for canonization are in progress.

Finally, the proposed Shrine will need a visitors' center at which pilgrims would be welcomed and given an informational presentation on the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe and on the Diocesan Shrine dedicated to her honor. The visitors' center would also provide hospitality to pilgrims.

Will the proposed Shrine become a reality? At present, it is not possible for me to give a definitive answer. It is my goal to make a definitive announcement about the Shrine on December 12 of this year, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In the meantime, further practical questions must be addressed. A key question which I must address is whether the building of a truly fitting place of devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe is financially possible.

To conclude, I ask you once again to pray for God's blessing on the proposed Shrine, so that one day from this place of devotion, the voice of the Mother of God may be heard by pilgrims as it was first heard by Blessed Juan Diego in December of 1531:

*“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.”*