

FEAST OF SAINT JUAN DIEGO
SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
LA CROSSE
DECEMBER 9, 2011

First Reading: *Sir* 3:17-24
Responsorial Psalm: *Ps* 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10-11
Second Reading: *1 Cor* 1:26-31
Alleluia Verse: *Mt* 11:25
Gospel: *Mt* 11:25-30

HOMILY

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

The word of Christ in the Gospel account is the key to understanding the heroic holiness of Saint Juan Diego, which we are celebrating today. Juan Diego had converted to the Catholic faith from the pagan Aztec religion and was seeking to deepen his knowledge and practice of the faith. On the morning when the Mother of God appeared to him, for the first time, 480 years ago, today, he was, in fact, on his way to church to receive further instruction in the faith from the Franciscan Friars and to take part in the Holy Mass for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. In his conversion and his love of the faith, we recognize the truth of Christ's words to His heavenly Father: "for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike."¹ Saint Juan Diego was indeed childlike, for he recognized his complete dependence upon God. For that reason, he desired to worship God on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. To show how pleased God was with Juan Diego, He chose him to be the messenger of the Mother of God at her appearances on our continent.

We can easily imagine how the apparition of the Virgin Mary filled Juan Diego with joy. Describing the setting of the apparition, he recalled his thoughts:

Could I be worthy of what I'm hearing? Am I dreaming? Am I rising from sleep?
Where am I? Perhaps in the earthly paradise of flowers and corn, about which our
ancestors spoke? Maybe already in heaven?²

¹ *Mt* 11:25.

² "¿Por ventura soy digno, soy merecedor de lo que oigo? ¿Quizá nomás lo estoy soñando? ¿Quizá solamente lo veo como entre sueños? ¿Donde estoy? ¿Donde me veo? ¿Acaso allá donde dejaron dicho los antiguos nuestros antepasados, nuestros abuelos: en la tierra de las flores, en la tierra del maíz, de nuestra carne, de nuestro sustento, acaso en la tierra celestial? *Nican Mopohua*, nos. 9-10.

We can also imagine how daunting for him was Our Lady's request. She asked him, a Native American and a recent convert to the faith, to go to the Bishop, a Spanish Friar of great learning and holiness, to inform him of the desire of the Mother of God that a temple be built, to which pilgrims might come to her and be drawn by her to her Divine Son, the font of God's all-merciful love.

Juan Diego willingly went on the mission but, when he failed to convince the Bishop, on his first visit, he revealed to the Mother of God how difficult the mission was for him. When she met him on his return from the Bishop's residence, Juan Diego told her that the Bishop had not believed him. He then made a plea to her:

The way [the Bishop] answered me I could clearly see that he thinks that I may have made it up, about you wanting a little house built for you here, or that it is not from you. So I beg you, my Lady, Queen and my little Girl, to send one of the nobles who are held in esteem and respected with the message, so that it will be believed; for I am a man of no importance, a backframe, a follower.³

When Our Lady, however, made it clear to Juan Diego that God had chosen him to be her messenger, he set aside his serious doubts and fears. He responded to her: "My Lady, my Queen, my little Girl, I do not wish to give you anguish, pain or grieve your heart; I shall go very gladly as you command; I shall by no means give up, nor do I consider it any trouble. I shall go to fulfill your wish; but I may not be heard or, if heard, still not believed."⁴ Juan Diego believed, in the depths of his heart, the word of Christ:

Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened,
and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for yourselves.

³ "Bien en ello miré, según me respondió, que piensa que tu casa que quieres que te hagan aquí, tal vez yo nada más lo invento, o que tal vez no es de tu labios; mucho te suplico, Señora mía, Reina, Muchachita mía, que a alguno de los nobles, estimados, que sea conocido, respetado, honrado, le encargues que conduzca, que lleve tu amable aliento, tu amable palabra para que le crean. Porque en verdad yo soy un hombre de campo, soy mecapal, soy parihuela, soy cola, soy ala; yo mismo necesito ser conducido." *Nican Mopohua*, nos. 53-55.

⁴ "Señora mía, Reina, Muchachita mía, que no angustie yo con pena tu rostro, tu corazón; con todo gusto iré a poner por obra tu aliento, tu palabra; de ninguna manera lo dejaré de hacer, ni estimo por molesto el camino. Iré a poner en obra tu voluntad, pero tal vez no seré oído, y si fuere oído quizás no seré creído." *Nican Mopohua*, nos. 63-64.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.⁵

Juan Diego understood that he was doing the will of Christ, expressed to him by the Mother of Christ, and, therefore, even though it seemed unlikely that he could accomplish what Our Lady was asking, he did what she asked with childlike confidence.

Saint Juan Diego never failed in the mission given to him by Christ through the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ. In fact, once the Bishop had fulfilled the Virgin's wish that a chapel be built, Juan Diego spent the remaining 17 years of his life, assisting the pilgrims who came to the chapel to know Our Lady's message and to know, through Our Lady, the mystery of God's all-merciful love of us in Christ Who is alive for us in the Church.

How often it is difficult for us to do what Christ asks of us, through His and our Blessed Mother. To do what is right and good takes courage. When we follow Christ faithfully, we find that others do not take us seriously or even ridicule us. But, if we persevere in humility and confidence, as children of the Virgin Mary, we can be certain that we will find the deepest joy in our lives, even as Saint Juan Diego did. We have Christ's word and the word of His Mother, who is also our Mother by the mystery of His suffering and dying on the Cross. Christ is God the Son Incarnate; He has come in our human flesh to show us God the Father and His immeasurable and unceasing love of us, and to give us a share in that same love by the outpouring of God the Holy Spirit into our souls. If we are faithful in our response to God's all faithful love, we will always find rest and peace, and the seemingly heaviest burden will become light, because Christ Himself is carrying it with us.

Boys and girls to be enrolled into the Saint Juan Diego Guild, Christ, through His Mother and your Mother, the Virgin Mary, has chosen you to be messengers of His love in your families, among your friends, and in our world. Do not be afraid to do what Christ is asking you through the Mother of God, but imitate the humility and confidence of Saint Juan Diego. You are Christ's chosen messengers and, no matter how weak and insignificant you may consider yourselves to be, if you are faithful in responding to Christ's love of you, he will make you strong and your message will be heard. When you think of your calling in the Church, remember the words of Saint Paul:

Not many of you were wise by human standards,
not many were powerful,
not many were of noble birth.

⁵ *Mt* 11:28-30.

Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise,
and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong,
and God chose the lowly and despised of the world,
those who count for nothing,
to reduce to nothing those who are something,
so that no human being might boast before God.⁶

For us, as it was for Saint Juan Diego, the only source of our boasting is doing what God wants of us, as He has revealed it to us in Christ, in the Church. We do not boast about ourselves but about all that Christ does for us in the Church.

Boys and girls, young men and young women, by fulfilling the obligations which you assume as members of the Saint Juan Diego Guild, let Christ be your only wisdom and strength. By your fidelity to the way of the messengers of Our Lady of Guadalupe, show to others that it is Christ alone who gives us rest and peace, that it is Christ alone who can help us to carry our burdens and who can indeed make them light. By so doing, you will bring to others the most important message possible in their lives, a message which serves them now on their earthly pilgrimage and which assures them of reaching the final destiny of their earthly pilgrimage, eternal life in Heaven.

Jovenes y señoritas, para ser introducidos en la Cofradía de San Juan Diego, deben imitar la humildad y obediencia de este Santo. A través de la oración de cada día y haciendo todo lo que Dios les pida a través de sus obras y actos, Ustedes serán capaces de ser humildes y obedientes ante Él. Vean las pequeñas prácticas de piedad que son la oración y obras de caridad, las cuales Ustedes prometen llevar a cabo como miembros de esta Cofradía de San Juan Diego, como ocasiones de dar gloria a Dios y de llevar a otros hacia Él.

Nada complace más a San Juan Diego que recontar la historia de las apariciones de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, así Ella puede continuar mostrando a nosotros, sus hijos, cuánto Dios nos ama y cuán grande es su misericordia hacia nosotros. En casa, con sus amigos, en las escuelas y en otros lugares Ustedes mismos pueden ayudar a otros a conocer y amar a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, a fin de que a través de Ella, ellos puedan venir a conocer y amar a Nuestro Señor Jesúcristo, su Hijo. Así, como San Juan Diego, Ustedes puedan ser mensajeros fieles de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, y con ella, mensajeros del Amor y Misericordia de Dios Nuestro Señor.

⁶ *1 Cor* 1:26-29.

Let us now, with the humility and confidence of Saint Juan Diego, under the care of Our Lady of Guadalupe and at her instruction, offer our childlike hearts to Our Lord Jesus Christ, placing them completely into His glorious, pierced Heart through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Giving our hearts completely to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through His Eucharistic Sacrifice, we will receive the wisdom and strength to do all that God is asking of us. We will find rest and peace in Christ, and, with Christ, we will bear even the heaviest of burdens.

May Saint Juan Diego intercede for us that we may be faithful and generous messengers of Our Lady of Guadalupe. May Our Lady of Guadalupe keep us always under the mantle of her loving care, bringing us daily to her Divine Son, so that in Him we find rest and strength for our daily living.

*Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, 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!*

Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke
Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura