



# HOMILY

ARCHBISHOP RAYMOND L. BURKE

MASS OF DEDICATION  
OF THE CHURCH AND ALTAR OF SACRIFICE

SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE,  
LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN

JULY 31, 2008





**MASS OF DEDICATION OF THE CHURCH  
AND ALTAR OF SACRIFICE**

**SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE  
LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN  
JULY 31, 2008**

**Neh 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10 • Ps 19:8-9, 10, 15 • 1 Cor 3:9c-11, 16-17 • 2 Chr 7:16 • Mt 16:13-19**

## HOMILY

*Praised be Jesus Christ, now and forever. Amen.*

1. When the Mother of God appeared to Saint Juan Diego, for the first time, on December 9, 1531, she spoke, most lovingly and directly, about the purpose of her apparition. She expressed her firm desire that a chapel be built, in which she might manifest the mercy and love of God to her children of America (cf. *Nican Mopobua*, nos. 26-32). She made it clear that, for the fulfillment of her desire, Juan Diego, a Native American whom she addressed as her dearest son, was to be her messenger to Bishop Juan de Zumárraga (*Nican Mopobua*, nos. 33-37).

2. The Blessed Virgin Mary appeared with child, with God the Son Incarnate in her womb, on what was, at that time and in that place, the feast of her Immaculate Conception. She appeared as the “woman clothed with the sun,” described in the *Book of Revelation*, who would bring forth from her womb “a male child, one who is to rule all the nations” (cf. *Rv* 12:5). Every detail of her vesture and of the setting pointed to the great mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation, of the Coming of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity in our human nature to save us from everlasting death and to win our hearts for God the Father, forever (cf. Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, “On Christian Love,” 25 December 2005, no. 17).

3. The Mother of God desired that a chapel be built, to which she would invite her children to come on pilgrimage, in order that she might show them anew the living presence of God the Son with them in His holy Church, accompanying them along the way of their life pilgrimage. At her fourth and final apparition to Saint Juan Diego, on December 12, 1531, our Lord granted that her image remain with us, in a miraculous way, on the *tilma* of Juan Diego.

Her image, not made by a human hand, was to be enthroned in her chapel, so that she might continue to appear to her children and to speak to them her message of divine mercy and love. Through her miraculous image, Our Lady of Guadalupe leads her children to know and live the truth that God the Son took a human heart under her Immaculate Heart, in order that He might offer Himself in a pure, selfless and total sacrifice to obtain, for them, the forgiveness of sins and a share in His inheritance of eternal life.

4. Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of God and Mother of America, leads her children to the Church, built upon the “rock” of Saint Peter’s profession of faith in her Son, the only-begotten Son of God: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Gospel). She draws us to the great mystery of God’s love of us in His only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in which mystery she, from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, has been the first and best co-worker. She teaches us the truth that, in Jesus Christ alone, we find our salvation; the truth that Jesus Christ, by His living presence in the Church, gives, to Saint Peter and his successors, “the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven,” for the sake of the salvation of all mankind, without boundary or exception (Gospel).

5. By her apparitions to Saint Juan Diego, the Mother of God showed herself to be the first and best among us who are the members of her Son’s Mystical Body, the Church. She spoke and acted as the perfect woman of the Church, insisting that her desire of a chapel, of a place of pilgrimage, could only be accomplished with the blessing and at the direction of the Bishop, a true successor of the Apostles. Her apparitions and her message underlined for her children the truth that our Bishops and their priests are, in the words of Saint

Juan Diego, “the images of our Lord,” through their teaching, sanctifying and governing mission, carried out in His person as our Head and Shepherd (cf. *Nican Mopobua*, no. 24).

**6A.** Inviting her sons and daughters to come on pilgrimage to her chapel, Our Lady of Guadalupe uncovers for them the extraordinary truth about their ordinary daily living, namely, that they are called to live in Christ, that Christ thirsts for their love, in order that they might belong totally to Him and in Him find joy and peace during the days of their earthly pilgrimage and the fullness of joy and peace at the end of their pilgrimage in “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (*Heb* 12:22). Welcoming her children to her chapel, the temple of her Son, even as her womb was His temple, she teaches them that their daily living has its secure foundation in Jesus Christ, that they, too, are indeed temples of God, temples in which her Divine Son has chosen to dwell through the outpouring of His Holy Spirit (Reading II). Returning to their homes, her pilgrims will be filled with new enthusiasm and new energy to live in Christ more perfectly, in their homes, their parishes, their neighborhoods and local communities, and in the wide community of our world.

**6B.** Invitando a sus hijos e hijas a que vengan en peregrinación a su capilla, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe revela para ellos la extraordinaria verdad sobre su vida diaria ordinaria, específicamente, que tienen un llamado para vivir en Cristo, que Cristo tiene sed de su amor, para que puedan ser de Él totalmente y en Él encontrar alegría y paz durante sus días de peregrinación aquí en la tierra y la plenitud de esa alegría y paz al final de su peregrinación en “la ciudad del Dios vivo, la Jerusalén celestial” (*Heb* 12:22). Acogiendo a sus hijos en su capilla, el templo de su Hijo, así como su matriz fue templo, ella les enseña que

su vida diaria tiene cimientos sólidos en Jesucristo, que de hecho ellos también son templos de Dios, templos en los cuales su divino Hijo decidió morar por el derramamiento de Su Espíritu Santo (Segunda Lectura). Regresando a sus hogares, sus peregrinos estarán llenos de nuevo entusiasmo y de nueva energía para vivir más perfectamente en Cristo, dentro de sus hogares, parroquias, vecindades y comunidades locales, y en la vasta comunidad de nuestro mundo.

7. Our Lady of Guadalupe, drawing us to herself, takes us, with maternal tenderness and directness, to her Divine Son, above all, in the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance, with the instruction which she gave to the wine stewards at the Wedding Feast at Cana: “Do whatever He tells you” (*Jn 2:5*). The words of her dialogue with her Son and Lord, and of her instruction to the wine stewards at the Wedding Feast at Cana are fittingly inscribed in the dome of this church which we will now dedicate to His and to her honor. They are, in short, the program of our life pilgrimage, which we discover anew on pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

8. Our Lady of Guadalupe’s message of divine mercy and love is verified for us, today, in the ancient and most solemn rite of the Dedication of a Church and Altar of Sacrifice. God dwells with us, in a pre-eminent way, in our churches and chapels which are set apart by the Prayer of Consecration and the Anointing of the Altar of Sacrifice and of the Walls with the Sacred Chrism.

9. The offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass on the newly-consecrated altar brings to fullness the Rite of Dedication. Through His Eucharistic Sacrifice, God the Son will dwell with us, here, in the most wonderful way of all, in His

Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, offered and poured out for us on Calvary, the oblation which He makes ever present for us in the Holy Mass. The crucifix is suspended directly above the altar of sacrifice to remind us of the great mystery which takes place before our eyes, at every offering of the Holy Mass. Rightly the altar of sacrifice is the visual point of focus and the spiritual point of arrival in every church and chapel. In the same way, every pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe finds its fulfillment in the most sublime encounter with Christ, our Savior, in the Holy Eucharist. Without the altar of sacrifice, without the offering of the Holy Mass, without the reposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, there is no chapel in which Our Lady of Guadalupe can fully manifest to our minds and hearts the mystery of God's mercy and love in our lives.

**10.** Our Lord Jesus will remain with us in this holy place, for the Sacred Hosts consecrated at the altar of sacrifice will be reposed in the tabernacle after Holy Communion. The tabernacle is placed in direct relation to the altar of sacrifice, so that, upon entering the church, our eyes are directed, at once, to the altar and to the tabernacle. Our Lady of Guadalupe, in her most beautiful representation, stands in the background, drawing us to herself, so that she may take us to her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and in adoration of His Real Presence in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

**11.** Our Lady, drawing us to her Son in the Holy Eucharist, also leads us to meet Him in the Sacrament of Penance, in order that our hearts may be purified of anything, even the smallest thing, which may keep us from resting totally in the glorious pierced Heart of her Divine Son. Integral to her invitation to come on pilgrimage to her chapel is her leading us to meet Christ



in the Sacrament of Penance for the confession and forgiveness of our sins. Here, at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, at any hour, pilgrims, repentant of their sins, will be able to meet Christ in the Sacrament of Confession.

**12.** The altar of sacrifice represents for us the deepest meaning of our lives, the truth which we seek and find on pilgrimage. Because we are united with our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, accomplished on the altar, we, in turn, become altars of sacrifice with Him, offering our lives totally in love of God and our neighbor. United in heart and, indeed, in our whole being, to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are called to offer our lives as a pure and holy sacrifice. Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has reminded us that every aspect of our lives is transformed by the Holy Eucharist, by the union of our hearts with the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. In his Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation “On the Holy Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission,” he instructed us with these striking words:

Worship pleasing to God thus becomes a new way of living our whole life, each particular moment of which is lifted up, since it is lived as part of a relationship with Christ and as an offering to God (Pope Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, “On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission,” 22 February 2007, no. 71).

It is indeed our identification of self with the altar, which calls forth daily the very best we have to offer, which enables us to go beyond our sinful tendencies, in order to become a sincere gift of love to God and to our neighbor. It comes as no surprise that one of the principal fruits of a sacred pilgrimage is a deeper and more generous engagement in love of our neighbor, especially of our brothers and sisters who are in most need.

13. Our communion with Christ here is, at one and the same time, communion with all of our brothers and sisters. The beauty of this church lifts up our minds and hearts to Christ Who shares with us the gift of Divine Love, without boundary or exception; to Christ Who is all beautiful because He is all-loving. The beauty of this church inspires us to the even greater beauty of a holy life, lived in Christ. Just as Christ dwelt in the womb of the Virgin Mary, so He will dwell here, in order that He may dwell in each of us, through the outpouring of His Holy Spirit.

14. The apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe and her message brought the Native Americans and Europeans, dwelling in Mexico at the time, to Christ and, through their life in Christ, to a remarkable communion with one another. They, who were on the brink of a most bloody conflict, destined to end in the violent death of countless brothers and sisters, formed, under the maternal care and through the maternal intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, one people who addresses Our Lady by the affectionate name, *La Morenita*, referring to the color of her skin, which is, at once, true to her Palestinian origin and to the *mestiza* face of the one people of Mexico.

15. At the same time, through the conversion of literally millions of Native Americans, Our Lady of Guadalupe helped to bring an end to the diabolical practice of human sacrifice, which, at the time, was most violently destroying the lives of tens of thousands of our Native American brothers and sisters. Rightly, Our Lady of Guadalupe is called the Star of the First Evangelization of America, for she led her children of America, Native American and European, to the teaching and living of faith in Jesus Christ Who unites every brother and sister in respect for the inviolable dignity of human life, created in the divine

image and likeness, and redeemed by His Suffering and Dying on the Cross.

**16.** In our time, Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to exercise her maternal care and to make unceasing intercession for the restoration of the respect for all human life, especially the lives of our innocent and defenseless brothers and sisters, and of our brothers and sisters who carry a heavy burden of suffering because of special needs, serious illness or advanced years. In our time and in our nation, millions of infants in the womb have been destroyed through the legalized practice of procured abortion, and the lives of our weak and vulnerable brothers and sisters are increasingly under threat and attack. The culture of death surrounds us and threatens to overwhelm us, but Our Lady of Guadalupe leads us to Christ Who reveals to us, by His own Conception in her Immaculate Womb and by His Birth, and by His Suffering and Dying, the inviolable dignity of every human life, from the moment of its inception to the moment of natural death. In our doubt and fear that we can do all that God asks of us to overcome the culture of death and to foster a civilization of divine life and love, Our Lady of Guadalupe assures us of her care and intercession. She speaks to us the words which she first spoke to Saint Juan Diego:

Am I not here, I who am your mother? Are you not under my shadow and watch? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the fold of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? (*Nican Mopobua*, nos. 118-119).

Leaving Our Lady's church to return home, the pilgrim will read these words and be inspired to call upon the unfailing protection and intercession of the Mother of God in doing all that her Divine Son tells us, especially in giving witness to the Gospel of Life.

**17A.** Mother of America, Our Lady of Guadalupe draws the many and diverse peoples of South and Central and North America into one people, her sons and daughters for whom her Divine Son poured out His life on Calvary and for whom He never ceases to pour out His life in the Church. The Servant of God Pope John Paul II, with the Bishops of the entire American continent in the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for America, held from November 16<sup>th</sup> to December 12<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in 1997, invoked Our Lady of Guadalupe as Star of the New Evangelization. The Servant of God expressed his hope for our continent in these words:

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 she once 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*, “On the Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ: The Way to Conversion, Communion, and Solidarity in America,” 22 January 1999, no. 11).

May Mary Immaculate, our Mother and Star, lead us to Christ Who will overcome in us anything which divides us as brothers and sisters of America. May the grace of Christ, coming to us through Our Lady of Guadalupe, overcome in us every form of national or racial prejudice and hatred, and lead the diverse peoples of the one continent of America to the unity which her Divine Son alone creates in human hearts.

**17B.** Como Madre de América, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe atrae a muchas y diversas personas de Sur, Centro y Norteamérica y los convierte en sus hijos e

hijas por quienes su divino Hijo vertió su vida en el Calvario y para quienes Él nunca cesa de dar su vida en la Iglesia. El Siervo de Dios Papa Juan Pablo II, con los Obispos de todo el continente americano en la asamblea especial del Sínodo de Obispos para América, que se llevo a cabo desde el 16 de noviembre al 12 de diciembre, la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, en 1997, invocó a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe como la Estrella de la Nueva Evangelización. El Siervo de Dios expresó su esperanza para nuestro continente con estas palabras:

Abrigo en mi corazón la firme esperanza de que ella, a cuya intercesión se debe el fortalecimiento de la fe de los primeros discípulos (cf. *Jn* 2:11), guíe con su intercesión maternal a la Iglesia en este Continente, alcanzándole la efusión del Espíritu Santo como en la Iglesia naciente (cf. *Hcb* 1:14), para que la nueva evangelización produzca un espléndido florecimiento de vida cristiana (Papa Juan Pablo II, Exhortación Apostólica Postsinodal *Ecclesia in America*, “Sobre el Encuentro con Jesucristo Vivo, Camino para la Conversión, la Comunión y la Solidaridad en América,” 22 de enero de 1999, no. 11).

Que María Inmaculada, nuestra Madre y Estrella, nos guíe hacia Cristo que transformará en nuestros corazones todo aquello que nos impida ser hermanos y hermanas en América. Que la gracia de Cristo, que nos llega a través de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, elimine en nosotros toda forma de odio y prejuicio racial o nacional y que guíe los diversos pueblos de este continente de América a la unidad que solo el Divino Hijo de María puede crear en los corazones humanos.

**18.** The placing of the relics of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, Virgin, and Blessed

Miguel Agustín Pro, Priest and Martyr, into the altar of sacrifice reminds us that our life in Christ is lived in communion with all the saints who are both our inspiration and our intercessors for the many graces which we need to remain faithful pilgrims on the way to our heavenly homeland. The placing of the relics reminds us that, at every offering of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God; Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha and Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro; and all the saints join us in the worship of God through the offering of our lives in pure and selfless love.

19. Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, like her older Native American brother, Saint Juan Diego, was led to an ever deeper union with Christ through her devotion to the Mother of God, above all, through her praying of the Rosary. Her oneness of heart with the Immaculate Heart of Mary inspired her to offer her virginity to Christ in faithful and enduring spousal love, a love nurtured by frequent reception of Holy Communion and of daily and prolonged prayer before the tabernacle. When her life in Christ reached its fullness in death, she peacefully handed over her life to her Divine Bridegroom with the words: “Jesus, I love Thee” (cf. *Katharine Tekakwitha: The Lily of the Mohawks* [The *Positio* of the Historical Section of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on the Introduction of the Cause for Beatification and Canonization and on the Virtues of the Servant of God], New York: Fordham University Press, 1940, pp. 34-35, 44-47, and 53).

20. Through his father’s impassioned plea for the help of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the infant Miguel Agustín Pro was delivered from a chronic illness which threatened to snuff out his life. Throughout his life, so heavily burdened with chronic physical illness and, most of all, by the violent persecution of the

Church in his beloved homeland of Mexico, Blessed Miguel Pro unfailingly invoked the intercession of the Virgin of Guadalupe. After his martyr's death, a visit to the prison cell in which his brother and he had awaited execution revealed two prayers which they had inscribed on the wall: ¡Viva Cristo Rey! Long live Christ the King!, and ¡Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe! Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe! (cf. Ann Ball, *Blessed Miguel Pro: 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Mexican Martyr*, Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1996, pp. 2-3, and 75-76). In a most extraordinary way, Blessed Miguel Pro teaches us to keep our life in Christ pure and strong, invoking the intercession of the Mother of God and following her example.

**21.** I conclude by returning to the beginning of our celebration. We began the Rite of Dedication by purifying ourselves, the church building and altar of sacrifice with Holy Water, and by listening to the Word of God, proclaimed for our instruction. The sequence of the Rite reminds us that there is something which must go before the union of our hearts with the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. It is the opening of our minds through the confession of our sins and instruction in the Word of God, handed down to us faithfully in the Church. Like God's holy people, at the time of the restoration of Jerusalem after the Babylonian Captivity, the hearing of God's Word, proclaimed for us in the sacred assembly, fills our minds and hearts with sorrow for our sins and with the humble wonder at God's immense love of us, which leads to true worship, to the encounter with God Who dwells with us, as we confidently and joyfully exclaim: "Amen, amen!" (Reading I).

**22.** Saint Juan Diego was on his way to receive instruction from the Franciscan Friars, when Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to him at Tepeyac Hill. Over

the course of five apparitions, Our Lady instructed Saint Juan Diego and his uncle, Juan Bernardino, regarding the truth of the Redemptive Incarnation. Through her apparitions, she was the vehicle for the instruction of millions of Native Americans who received the gift of faith and Baptism. Juan Diego dedicated the seventeen years of his life, which remained after Our Lady's apparitions, to giving catechesis to the pilgrims who came to venerate her miraculous image.

**23.** How sorely needed is the same instruction in our time and place, in our culture which has either forgotten or has never known the Gospel of God's mercy and love! How much our society, especially our young people, are hungering to know Christ in all of the richness of His life with us in the Church! Essential to the invitation of Our Lady of Guadalupe to come to her on pilgrimage is the evangelization and catechesis of which she is the Star. As we rejoice, today, to dedicate the Church, the heart of Our Lady's Shrine, let us devote ourselves to making the sacrifices necessary for the development of the Marian Catechist Center and Retreat House, which, in a certain sense, we may call the head of Our Lady's Shrine.

**24.** At the very beginning of the development of this shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Servant of God Father John Anthony Hardon of the Society of Jesus, master catechist and founder of the Marian Catechist Apostolate, visited and blessed the site upon which this church has been erected. He understood so deeply the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a teaching which leads to the encounter with Christ alive in the Church, above all, in the Holy Eucharist. The Servant of God chose Mary Immaculate, under her title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, to be the patron of his apostolate for the spiritual and doctrinal



formation of catechists, and he wanted pilgrimage to this shrine to be the point of reference and the compass of direction for the Marian Catechists who are consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It is hoped that, one day soon, the Archive and Guild of the Servant of God will have its home at the home of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in the Marian Catechetical Center. May the Servant of God unfailingly intercede for the essentially catechetical mission of this shrine.

**25A.** As we now dedicate the Church of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe and its altar of sacrifice, let us recognize the great mystery of the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in our midst, offering Himself to God the Father for our eternal salvation. At the invitation of Our Lady and one with her Immaculate Heart, let us recognize our Lord Jesus Christ in our midst and let us lift up our hearts to His glorious pierced Heart. May our hearts, one with His Most Sacred Heart, become ever more a fountain of the “living water” of divine love for all our brothers and sisters (cf. *Jn* 7:38; and Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, no. 42).

**25B.** Al dedicar ahora la Iglesia Santuario de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y su altar del sacrificio, reconozcamos el gran misterio de la presencia entre nosotros de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo, ofreciéndose a Dios Padre por nuestra eterna salvación. Respondiendo a la invitación de Nuestra Señora y en unión con su Inmaculado Corazón, reconozcamos a Nuestro Señor Jesucristo entre nosotros y levantemos nuestros corazones a su glorioso Corazón traspasado. Que nuestros corazones, unidos a su Sacratísimo Corazón, lleguen a ser cada día más una fuente del “agua viva” de amor divino para todos nuestros hermanos y hermanas (cf. *Jn* 7:38; y Papa Benedicto XVI, Carta Encíclica *Deus caritas est*, no. 42).



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

Saint Juan Diego, pray for us.

Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us.

Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro, pray for us.

Photos: Bob Metcalf Photography

Our Lady of Guadalupe Mosaic: Vatican Mosaic Studios

Layout: ONE ILLUSTRATION, LLC [www.oneillustration.com](http://www.oneillustration.com)





**Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe**

La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601

Tel: 608.782.5440

[www.guadalupeshrine.org](http://www.guadalupeshrine.org)