

Feast of Saint Juan Diego
Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
La Crosse
December 9, 2016

Sir 3, 17-24
Ps 34, 2-3. 4-5. 6-7. 8-9. 10-11
Mt 11, 25-30

HOMILY

Praised be Jesus Christ!

As we anticipate the Solemnity of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we remember today her faithful messenger, Saint Juan Diego, on the anniversary of the day on which she appeared to him for the first time and conferred upon him the mission of speaking for her to the Bishop and, through the Bishop, to all of the faithful. Providentially, the heavenly message of Our Lady, as it was communicated by Saint Juan Diego for the seventeen years of his life which remained after her apparitions, was carefully recorded by his good friend Antonio Valeriano. The faithful record of the apparitions and message of Our Lady of Guadalupe, as Antonio Valeriano directly and thoroughly knew them from her chosen messenger, has inspired the faithful, also today, to a fervent devotion to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God and Mother of the Church.

The reality of the remarkable relationship between Our Lady and Saint Juan Diego is not simply an historical fact for us to admire, but a confirmation of that reality as it continues in our lives. We, like Saint Juan Diego, have received the divine grace to be co-workers with the Virgin Mother of God, in giving our hearts completely into the glorious pierced Heart of her Divine Son and, thereby, in drawing many brothers and sisters to Him Who alone is our salvation. Remembering Saint Juan Diego and his heroic life, we also know that he, together with all of the angels and saints, are present at the Eucharistic Sacrifice which Christ now offers anew for us on His altar here. We, therefore, call upon his intercession, in order that we may imitate his example of Christian discipleship under the care and direction of the first and best disciple of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

We, like Saint Juan Diego, may consider ourselves unworthy of the title: disciple of Christ, but Saint Juan Diego, together with the Virgin Mary, shows us how, giving our hearts, no matter how poor or sinful they may be, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we are purified and made

strong as faithful witnesses to Christ alive in the Church for the salvation of the world. Our Blessed Mother opens our ears, as she opened the ears of Saint Juan Diego, to hear the word of Christ to us:

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. For my yoke is easy and my burden light.¹

The Book of Sirach, in fact, instructs on how to give our hearts to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

It is not a matter of great works, but a matter of recognizing, in humility, who we are before Our Lord and, therefore, repenting of our sins and striving, with the help of His grace, to do what is right and good. The inspired word of God tells us:

My child, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts... What is too sublime for you, seek not, into things beyond your strength search not. What is committed to you, attend to, for it is not necessary for you to see with your eyes those things which are hidden. With what is too much for you meddle not, when shown things beyond human understanding. Their own opinion has misled many, and false reasoning unbalanced their judgment.²

The great temptation of the world is the pretense that we know better than God. It was the temptation with which Satan led our First Parents into their great sin, of which we are the heirs. For us, it is enough and, in fact, more than we can ever fully accomplish, to ponder God's word as it comes to us in the Church and to strive to obey His word with ever greater fidelity. When, in humility, we recognize that all that we are and have is a gift from God, then we dispose ourselves, all that we are and have, to serve Our Lord, loving Him with our whole heart and bringing His pure and selfless love to our neighbor.

What Our Lady was asking of Saint Juan Diego seemed impossible for him. He imagined that someone more highly placed and more gifted than he could carry out her mission much more efficaciously. When his uncle, Juan Bernardino, became gravely ill, he imagined that the care of his dying uncle meant that he could not fulfill the mission which Our Lady had confided to him.

¹ Mt 11, 28-30.

² Sir 3, 17. 21-24.

But Our Lady communicated to him the truth of our Christian discipleship, namely, that the grace of the Holy Spirit, dwelling within our hearts, make it possible for us to accomplish God's will in all things and even, in times of great struggle and trial, to accomplish His will with heroic courage and strength.

With Saint Juan Diego, let us listen again to the words of the Mother of God to him and to us all, so that, with him, we can be confident disciples of Christ in the world:

Do not fear this sickness of your uncle or any other sickness, nor anything that is sharp or hurtful. 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.³

Thus, the Virgin Mother of God taught Saint Juan Diego to imitate her in trusting that God's word to us, His promises to us, will be fulfilled, if only we remain faithful. Let us recall the words with which Saint Elizabeth praised the Virgin Mother of God at the Visitation: "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."⁴ Under the maternal instruction of the Virgin Mary, we, with Saint Juan Diego, are confident that, even when doing God's will means suffering and dying for us, it is truly our way to eternal salvation, to joy and peace in this life, and to the fullness of joy and peace in the life to come.

The Feast of Saint Juan Diego is the principal day for inducting new members into the Saint Juan Diego Guild, the Shrine's association of children and young people who strive to imitate Saint Juan Diego in their daily lives, in everything that they think and say and do. Let us pray today, in a particular way, for all of the members of the Saint Juan Diego Guild and for all who will be inducted into the Guild today, so that they, with Saint Juan Diego, will always be faithful messengers of Our Lady, announcing the great mystery of the abiding presence of God with us in His only-begotten Son through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

³ "[N]o temas esta enfermedad, ni ninguna otra cosa punzante, afflictiva. ¿No estoy aquí, you, que soy tu madre? ¿No estás bajo mi sombra y reguardo? ¿No soy la fuente de tu alegría? ¿No estás en el hueco de mi manto, en el cruce de mis brazos? ¿Tienes necesidad de alguna otra cosa? Que ninguna otra cosa te aflija, te perturbe; ..." *Nican Mopohua (Aquí se cuenta)*, tr. Mario Rojas Sánchez (México, D.F.: Design & Digital Print S.A. de C.V., 2001), p. 13, nn. 118-120. English translation: "Nican Mopohua: Original Account of Guadalupe," *Handbook on Guadalupe* (New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, 1997), p. 200.

⁴ Lk 1, 45.

Imitating the humility and trust of Saint Juan Diego, let us now lift up our hearts, one with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. Let us trust that our hearts, placed completely into His glorious Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, will be purified of all sin and, at the same time, will be inflamed with His pure and selfless love. In the Eucharistic Heart of Our Lord, may we discover ever anew the powerful reality of our Christian discipleship, the grace which overcomes our weaknesses and helps us to be faithful witnesses of Christ alive in the Church, Christ alive in our midst for the salvation of the world.

*Heart of Jesus, patient and full of mercy, have mercy on us!
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Virgin most merciful, 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