

Solemnity of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
La Crosse
December 12, 2018

Zech 2, 14-17
Jdt 13, 18bcde. 19
Rv 11, 19a; 12, 1-6a.10ab
Lk 1, 26-38

Homily

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Celebrating the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe in this church dedicated to Our Lord and His Virgin Mother, under her title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, during the tenth-anniversary year of its dedication, we continue to give thanks to almighty God. We thank Our Lord for the abundance of His grace poured forth into many souls who, under the maternal counsel of Our Lady, have entered this church to worship Him, to seek His forgiveness and to be united to Him through the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The beauty of the Shrine Church is a small reflection of the infinite beauty of the great mystery of our eternal salvation, the great mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation by which the Virgin Mary became the Mother of God.

The Gospel account today, so familiar to us and yet always so new in the wonderful truth it recounts, reminds us that the Virgin Mary, “full of grace,”¹ that is, privileged to share, in anticipation, in the grace of eternal life won for us by her Divine Son’s Coming into the World, and by His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension, is indeed the Mother of God. The Archangel Gabriel declared her vocation and mission with these words:

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus... The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.²

Truly, the Blessed Virgin Mary is the chosen instrument through whom God the Son became incarnate, in order to save us from our sins, to save us for eternal life. She is the “woman clothed with the sun,” who “was with child,” and who “gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod.”³

¹ Lk 1, 28.

² Lk 1, 31. 35.

³ Rev 12, 1-2. 5.

As we witness, in our time, so much confusion and error regarding God and His plan for our eternal salvation, and also open rebellion against the Law of God written upon every human heart, Our Lady of Guadalupe bids us to come to her, so that she may lead us to her Divine Son, the only source of our salvation. The situation is grave, even as it was at the time of her apparitions in 1531, but we must never give up hope, we must never turn away from the maternal gaze of the Mother of God Who draws us to her Divine Son alive for us in the Church, above all, in the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

The Virgin Mother of God expressed her Divine Maternity to Saint Juan Diego with concrete images to underline its reality in his life:

Am I not here, I who have the honor to be your mother? Are you not in my shadow and under my protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms?⁴

Her words, as also her apparitions, show us the way in which she, the Blessed Virgin Mary, gloriously assumed into Heaven, constantly intercedes for us, especially when we are doubtful or fearful. Fittingly, as we leave this church, we read these words inscribed at the base of the choir loft.

During the course of the apparitions, Saint Juan Diego suffered severe doubts about whether he could do all that God was asking of him. On December 9th, when he spoke with the Mother of God after his first visit with the Bishop, he asked the Virgin to choose a different messenger, a more important and imposing person to carry out her wishes.⁵ Then, when his uncle, Juan Bernardino, was dying, his worry about his uncle led him to forego an important appointment with Our Lady on December 11th, the appointment during which she was to give him the sign for Bishop Juan de Zumárraga.⁶

It is not the same, at times, with us? We doubt that we have the strength to do God's will, or the challenge of sorrow and suffering in our lives leads us to think that we cannot both deal with our sufferings and remain faithful to what God asks of us, especially our prayer and worship. At times, too, the evil in the world and sadly even in the Church seems so great, that we despair about the grace which overcomes all evil, if we only remain faithful.

⁴ “¿No estoy aquí, yo, que soy tu madre? ¿No estás bajo mi sombra y resguardo? ¿No soy la fuente de tu alegría? ¿No estás en el hueco de mi manto, en el cruce de mis brazos? *Nican Mopohua (Aquí se cuenta)* (México, D.F.: Design & Digital Print S.A. de C.V., 2001), p. 13, n. 119. [Nican Mopohua]. English translation: Carl A. Anderson and Eduardo Chávez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mother of the Civilization of Love* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), p. 179, no. 119. [Nican Mopohua Eng].

⁵ Cf. Nican Mopohua, p. 6, nn. 49-54. English translation: Nican Mopohua Eng, p. 175, nos. 49-54.

⁶ Cf. Nican Mopohua, p. 11-13, nn. 94-116. English translation: Nican Mopohua Eng, pp. 177-179, nos. 94-116.

In moments of doubt and fear, Our Lady of Guadalupe leads us to the true dwelling of God in our midst, announced through the Prophet Zechariah:

See, I am coming to dwell among you, says the Lord. Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day, and they shall be his people, and he will dwell among you, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you... Silence, all mankind, in the presence of the Lord! For he stirs forth from his holy dwelling.⁷

God has indeed come to dwell among us always in His holy Church, in which His only-begotten Son, Our Lord, works to draw all men to Himself, so that they may live in justice and peace, serving God and their neighbor, and may reach their eternal home in Heaven. Doubt and fear, if they are not corrected with the truth of the Gospel and dispelled through the grace to live that truth courageously, lead us to accept defeat, to accept what is truly sinful or, at least, to remain silent before great evil, when we should be combatting it.

As our hearts are filled with gratitude to celebrate the feast day of Our Lady in this church in which we venerate her with total love and, with her, offer worship to Our Lord, let us pray, through her intercession, that we may always recognize Christ alive within us through the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit and may likewise cooperate fully with His grace in doing all that we can for the love of God and our neighbor.

Before the Final Blessing, we will have the investiture of Knights and Pages in Our Lady's Knights of the Altar, the boys and young men who serve Our Lord during the Sacred Liturgy in this church. Let us pray, invoking the help of Our Lady and Saint Juan Diego, that those who today will become Pages, the last step before Knighthood, persevere in their preparation to become fully Our Lady's Knights of the Altar, and that those who today will become Knights grow ever stronger in the excellence of their service at the altar and of their witness to Christ in their daily living. May the holiness of their service here be reflected in everything that they think and say and do.

Let us now lift up our grateful, if also fearful and doubtful, hearts to the glorious Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, open to receive us. Giving our hearts, one with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we will be purified of our doubts and fears, and we will be fortified with the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit to give clear and courageous witness to Christ in the world.

⁷ Zech 2, 14-15. 17.

*Heart of Jesus, of Whose fullness we have all received, have mercy on us.
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America and Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us.
Saint Joseph, Protector of holy Church, 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