

Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Advent  
Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe  
La Crosse, Wisconsin  
15 December 2018

Is 7, 10-15  
Lk 1, 26-38

## SERMON

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

It is a source of great joy for me to offer the Votive Mass of Our Lady in Advent in our Shrine Church dedicated to the Savior and to His Virgin Mother under her title of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I thank Father Elias Mary, Rector, the Canons of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest, and all who have made it possible for me to celebrate the Pontifical Mass today. I thank, in a particular way, Father William Avis, the Master of Ceremonies.

Today, we celebrate the mystery of our salvation in Jesus Christ by recalling how God the Father prepared the Virgin Mary, from the moment of her conception, to be the worthy vessel in whom His only-begotten Son would take our human nature and of whom He, God and man, would be born at Bethlehem. In accord with His all-loving plan to adopt us as His own dear children – in His only-begotten Son – , God, by a wondrous work of His grace, chose the Virgin Mary “before the foundation of the world,”<sup>1</sup> predestining her to be the mother of His Son at His Incarnation. Let us listen to the words of Saint Paul in the Letter to the Ephesians:

In love [the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ] destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted to us in the beloved.<sup>2</sup>

God the Father granted to the Virgin Mary the grace of the victory over sin and everlasting death, at her conception, which the Son, Whom she was to conceive in her womb by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, would accomplish on our behalf by His Suffering and Dying on Calvary.

When our First Parents, by their sinful pride, had lost the life of grace for which God had created them, God necessarily expelled them from the Garden of Eden, the place of full

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<sup>1</sup> Eph 1, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Eph 1, 5.

communion with Him. In doing so, He spoke to the serpent, to Satan, announcing the first promise of man's salvation:

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.<sup>3</sup>

While God, in His justice, expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, in which they had enjoyed communion with Him, He, in His immeasurable and unceasing mercy, immediately announced the great work of their salvation and of the salvation of their offspring through His Son, born of a virgin.<sup>4</sup>

Along the centuries of waiting for the Divine Offspring of the Virgin Mother, God renewed His promise. In today's Epistle, Our Lord spoke to King Achaz in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century before Christ, through the Prophet Isaiah, renewing the promise of salvation:

Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel.<sup>5</sup>

As we prepare to celebrate with the greatest possible solemnity and joy the Coming of Our Lord in our human flesh, we rightly contemplate the mystery of His Virgin Mother Mary, and we thank God for the gift of her Divine Maternity by which she is also the Mother of Divine Grace for the whole Church.

In order that the Virgin Mary might be prepared to accept her vocation and mission of Mother of God, Mother of the Redeemer, God the Father granted her a full share in the divine grace, in the victory over sin and eternal death, which only God the Son Incarnate could accomplish. The classical representation of Mary Immaculate shows her crushing the head of a serpent with her feet, reminding us of the fulfillment of the first promise of our salvation through her Divine Maternity. From her conception in the womb of her mother Ann, Mary was totally for Christ; there was no mark of sin in her. Throughout her life, she remained totally for Christ.

At the moment of the Annunciation, at the moment of the virginal conception of God the Son in Mary's immaculate womb, the Archangel Gabriel acknowledged the total beauty of her soul by his greeting: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!"<sup>6</sup> The Virgin Mother manifests the Divine Wisdom at work in the creation of the world and, above all, in the creation of man. She manifests the Divine Wisdom in person, the person of her Divine Son,

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<sup>3</sup> Gn 3, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Is 7, 14; Rev 12, 4-5.

<sup>5</sup> Is 7, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Lk 1, 28.

at work to restore creation to its original perfection and, above all, to restore man to communion with God. For that reason, the Holy Scriptures describing the Wisdom of God refer allegorically to Mary whom God, from the beginning, had chosen to be the Mother of His only-begotten Son Who took our human flesh in her womb by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup>

Mary Immaculate is the image of the victory over sin in our lives by the working of God's grace, the working of the Holy Spirit in our souls. Her sinlessness inspires us to call upon the grace of Christ given to us in Baptism and Confirmation, restored within us through the Sacrament of Penance, and nourished within us through the Holy Eucharist we celebrate. Mary Immaculate leads us to her Son with the instruction which she first gave to the wine stewards at the Wedding Feast of Cana: "Do whatever he tells you."<sup>8</sup> Her obedience is our model of holiness of life through obedience to God's Word. Not without reason, the words of Mary's maternal instruction are carved in the cornerstone of this Shrine Church. In fact, we prepare each day for the Lord's Coming on the Last Day by doing each day "whatever He tells [us]."<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, Mary Immaculate is ceaseless in her maternal prayers for us. She knows well the wiles of Satan by which our First Parents fell from grace; she knows the daily struggles, which are ours in following her Divine Son on the Way of the Cross, which leads to eternal salvation. We face a situation in which Satan, with his principal works of confusion, error, and discouragement, has entered into the very life of the Church. Our principal weapons against the assaults of Satan is the Holy Eucharist and our prayer united to the Holy Eucharist. It is the Mother of Divine Grace who leads us to the Eucharistic Sacrifice and who guides us to renew our participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice through our daily prayers and devotions. Let us, therefore, turn to her daily and throughout the day, asking the help of her intercession in these most tumultuous times for the Church of which she is the mother.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, under her title of the Immaculate Conception, is the patroness of our beloved nation. Let us ask her prayers for our homeland in these profoundly troubled times in which human life, marriage and the family, and the free practice of religion are under a constant and fierce attack. The Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a most powerful spiritual means for obtaining the many graces, which we so much need for the

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. L. Bouyer, *Dictionnaire théologique* (Tournai: Desclée & Co., 1963), p. 594. English translation: Louis Bouyer, *Dictionary of Theology*, tr. Charles Underhill Quinn (New York: Desclee Co., Inc., 1965), p. 464.

<sup>8</sup> Jn 2, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Jn 2, 5.

conversion of our personal lives to Christ and for the transformation of our culture, in accord with God's plan for us and for our world. Let us "storm heaven" on behalf of our families and of our nation by praying the Holy Rosary.<sup>10</sup>

Mary Immaculate now leads us to the Eucharistic Sacrifice in which we, with her, are united with Christ, her Son, in the offering of His life for the salvation of all men. She also leads us to the Fruit of His Sacrifice: Communion in His Body and Blood which purifies and strengthens us to embrace our suffering with pure and selfless love of God and of our neighbor. Christ alone is the Wisdom of God. He alone wins the victory of eternal life. One with Him, especially in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, we know Divine Wisdom and His victory is also ours.

*Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mother, have mercy on us.*

*O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. [https://www.catholicaction.org/take\\_heaven\\_by\\_storm](https://www.catholicaction.org/take_heaven_by_storm).