

DECEMBER 12, 2020
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Luke 1: 39-47

“TO BE WITH HIS PEOPLE.”

To be with the poor, outcasted, sick, and marginalized are the life and mission of Jesus Christ. All His life was dedicated, given and devoted to all people, people who are also willing, open and eager to hear His voice and love. This is also the Church’s mission: to be with God’s people.

In our First Reading, Prophet Zechariah spoke about God dwelling in the midst of His people: “Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! For lo, I will come and dwell in your midst, says the Lord. Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day and shall be my people; and I will dwell in your midst.”¹ Our God is with us, that’s why, He was born, a great sign of His love, His presence and His protection. Even in our gospel, Mary’s visitation, a sign and symbol of bringing the Lord to others, Elizabeth and her baby in the womb leaped for joy because both of them feel God’s presence in their midst. God used Mary to manifest that presence and indwelling of the Lord, becoming Man for the people to see God Himself.

As today we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, what is the message Mary is giving us today? Why she appeared to St. Juan Diego, a simple, little native of the Aztec people? Aztecs had a tradition of “sacrificing people by ripping their still-beating hearts out of their chests to placate the god of darkness, Tezcatlipoca. For one feast they sacrificed atop of the great pyramid of Tenaochtitlan 80,000 people in three days with a line of victims stretching 2 miles long. God sent his Mother to them to save them from extinction. Her coming to the Aztecs heralded the conversion of over 10 million people in a few years. In a few decades, the people that were a warring culture, intent on conquering different tribes of

¹ Zechariah 2: 10-11 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

peoples to find more victims for sacrifice, had become peace loving and God fearing and had replaced human sacrifice with the Holy Sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.”²

We heard a lot about the Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Patroness of the Americas, whose enshrine is the 2nd most visited place in the world. My brothers and sisters, “significantly, Mary appeared not as a white-skinned, blue-eyed, blond-haired European Madonna but as a dark-skinned, brown-eyed, black-haired ‘Tonantzin,’ the revered Indian Mother, and she spoke to Juan Diego not in cultured Castillian but in his own Nahuatal language. She spoke in the language of the powerless, disenfranchised, and despised Indians. She was then and is today, “La Morenita” – the Brown One. Her message to the bishop was that God’s church should be built out on the fringes of society, amidst the poor and the downtrodden. The vision challenged the powerful conquerors, the Spaniards of Mexico City, to change their way of thinking and acting. It challenged them to move out from their position of power and influence on the periphery; to leave their magnificent cathedral and build God’s house in Tepeyac – among the poor and the despised, away from the center of power and culture and education and the arts. Guadalupe is a ‘vision’ story and, like all such stories, tells us something about God and something about ourselves. More precisely, it tells us how God wants to be among us. St. Juan Diego’s vision of where God wants to be or whom we should listen to should come as no surprise to us. Throughout history, God has consistently chosen to be with poor people. In that respect, the Blessed Virgin Mary’s message to St. Juan Diego at Guadalupe is a restatement of Jesus’ mission: That God is in those who are hungry, thirsty, imprisoned, naked, sick, stranger, and suffering. The challenge for us is to heed the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the message of Christ’s Gospel, and reach out to those who belong to the margins of our society.”³ So, let us beg Our Lady to intercedes for us as we prepare this season of Advent, amidst this difficult situation so that we may not forget to be with the poor, jobless, homeless, and sick, to help them materially and spiritually. May Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.

² www.catholic.org

³ bobtraupman.com