

Entrustment

On Dec 9, 1951, as Juan Diego was planning on going to Church on that early Saturday morning, he suddenly heard birds singing from the hill beside him. When he had reached the top of Tepeyac hill, he encountered the Blessed Virgin Mary who had a special mission for him to ask the bishop to build a temple/church where she could offer all of her love in the form of her Son. Juan had obliged and relayed the message to the bishop who was doubtful but asked Juan for a sign from our Lady. Juan came back to the hill of the apparition and was bewildered to see dozens of roses blooming in the middle of December! So he gathered some roses in his cape/tilma and brought it to the bishop. As he dropped the roses at the feet of the bishop, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe was miraculously imprinted on the tilma of Juan. Suffice to say that the bishop received his sign who fulfilled his promise to our Lady. Yet the real miracle is that within 8 years 9 million Indians had converted to the Catholic faith.

In 1946, Pope Pius XII entrusted the Americas to the care of the Our Lady of Guadalupe and the liturgy also invites us today to entrust ourselves under her powerful yet loving care.

Mary's care over us is powerful and the readings portray her as the New Ark of the Covenant. Recall how the Ark of the Covenant was the place where God dwelt among the Jewish people while they were wandering in the desert. Recall again the story where the ark of the covenant was processed around the fortified walls of Jericho for seven days and on the seventh day the walls had crumbled and Jericho was captured. The Israelites brought the Ark of the Covenant with them into war, and the reason for their success was due to the presence of God in their midst. Now consider how distraught the Jewish people were when the temple was destroyed by Babylon in 587 BC and in order to protect it, the prophet Jeremiah hid the ark of the Covenant.

It had been lost for six centuries until the book of revelation reveals the location of the ark:

In my vision...the ark of the covenant was seen within his temple...a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet...the woman...was about to bear a child

The book of revelation presents Mary as the New Ark of the Covenant! As the Ark of the Covenant bore the staff of the Aaron the high priest, the manna in the wilderness and the tablets of the Ten Commandments or Ten Words which signified the presence of God, so too Mary bears the New High Priest, the Bread/Manna from heaven and the Word made flesh in her womb. Similarly, the gospel today also presents Mary as the New Ark of the Covenant because when Elizabeth says "why has this happened to me

that the mother of my Lord comes to me?” this is an allusion to a similar phrase used by King David when the ark of the covenant was being transferred to Jerusalem: “How can the ark of the Lord come to me?” (2 Sam 6:9). And just as David leaped before the Ark of the Covenant as it was processed into Jerusalem, so too John the Baptist leaped in the womb of Elizabeth when she heard the greeting of Mary.

Truly Mary is the New Ark of the Covenant who does not break down the walls of Jericho, but Mary in cooperation with her Spouse the Holy Spirit helped remove the barriers in the hearts of the Indigenous people’s of Juan Diego’s time to prepare them to receive Jesus. The Spanish missionaries tried a thousand ways to spread the message of the Gospel. However, it was the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe which depicted a woman greater than the sun, moon and stars that the indigenous peoples worshiped since she was clothed in the sun and the stars with the moon under her feet. With her eyes bowed in humility, unlike their gods depicted looking forward, and hands pressed in prayer, this image clearly represented to the people that this woman pointed to the one and only God who was greater than she—the God of the Christians.

At one point during the apparitions, Juan Diego was delaying in his mission to take care of his uncle who was dying. But here is what Mary said to him to console him: **Listen, put it in your heart...whatever made you afraid and afflicted you, it is no longer; do not allow your face and your heart to be upset; do not be afraid of this illness or any other illness...am I not here, I who am your mother? Aren’t you under my shadow and protection?”**

Therefore, we too can entrust our hearts and our cares to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Guadalupe meaning ‘the one that carries the water’. We too can entrust ourselves under her shadow and protection because she brings to us the riches of his grace, the living water flowing from the side of Christ, whose blood can transform all those fragments of our heart still awaiting conversion and redemption.