

“Imitating the Example of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Juan Diego”
Homily – Archdiocesan Mass for Our Lady of Guadalupe
December 9, 2017

Readings: Rev 11:19; 12:1-6. 10; Lk 1:39-48

Introduction

“Am I not here who am your Mother?” We know these words well: they are the words the Blessed Virgin Mary spoke to St. Juan Diego when he was despairing that the message she had entrusted to him was not being accepted by the authorities. To be complete, this is what she told him:

Listen and let it penetrate your heart...do not be troubled or weighed down with grief. Do not fear any illness or vexation, anxiety or pain. Am I not here who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not your fountain of life? Are you not in the folds of my mantle? In the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else you need?

Assurance of Our Lady

This is the assurance our Lady gives to Juan Diego during his time of distress. And distress is what he felt: he was poor, indigenous, illiterate; he did not feel worthy to bring our Lady’s message to the bishop, and, indeed, no one believed him at first. In fact, the bishop’s assistants even made it unreasonably difficult for Juan Diego to have an audience with him. But he is the one she chose, he was her favored son, and so she gave him assurance that she was with him and that she would take care of him, even in his moments of distress. All would be fine, because she keeps him under her shadow and protection, within the folds of her mantle.

She could give him this assurance because she was speaking from personal experience, for she herself knew distress in her life, which came from being the favored daughter of her heavenly Father in bringing about His plan of salvation. In the first reading for our Mass today we heard about a woman clothed with the sun, and a huge red dragon that was seeking to devour her son. As the reading tells us, “The woman herself fled into the desert where she had a place prepared by God.”

This is indicative of all that she suffered to fulfill God’s will for her and for the entire world, and the special protection that God gave her: at the time of giving birth to her Son, she was a migrant and homeless; shortly after his birth, she had to flee with the child and her husband into Egypt in order to protect her baby from the local governing authority who was seeking to kill him; later in life, he left home to begin his public ministry, when once again the local authorities saw him as a threat and began to devise a plan to get rid of him; she had to bear the incomparable pain of seeing her Son convicted, tortured and executed, standing next to him all the way to the bitter end.

Serving the Other

Yes, she suffered much to be the Mother of God’s Son; and yet, she was always ready to help others. We see a clear example of this in the Gospel reading for our Mass today: as soon as she received the news that she was going to be the Mother of God’s Son, she “set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.” Elizabeth was her cousin, the mother of St. John the Baptist, the

precursor to our Lord, whom she was carrying within her womb. That is, Mary went immediately to share this saving good news with her kinswoman, and stayed with her for several months to assist her in her need, as Elizabeth herself was given a miraculous child-bearing, being elderly and now expecting a child. Elizabeth certainly had some very pressing needs in her unique situation, and our Lady was there to help her, even with all that was happening in her own life.

This is an important lesson for us: no matter how great is the distress we might be feeling ourselves, we can always show love toward others. No matter how vulnerable or unimportant we may feel, we can always love God by showing love toward others and serving them. This is what makes one great in God's sight, and that is all that matters. We learn this lesson from the Blessed Virgin Mary herself, and from her favored son, St. Juan Diego.

To those who are suffering distress at this time because of the current political climate, please remember how great you are in God's sight when you trust in Him and continue to show your love for Him in your love and service to others. And to those in our Archdiocese who are coming to the assistance of our brothers and sisters experiencing such distress, I want to express a profound word of gratitude. You are recognizing and fulfilling God's will in your own life, making the assurances our Lady gave to Juan Diego very real and felt in the lives of those who are dearest to her, and to all of us.

Conclusion

Yes, our Lady suffered much to fulfill God's will. But suffering is only part of the story: that has to do with one set of the mysteries of the rosary, the sorrowful mysteries. In those mysteries we contemplate the sufferings of our Lord and his Mother. But there are also the joyful and glorious mysteries. Joy exists where there is love, where there is caring attention to serving the other, even in the midst of distress.

When Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph were migrants and homeless, nobody took them in. And yet, this is a joyful mystery, because the birth of this child means that God's saving love has entered into this world. And it entered into this world for the sake of our salvation. The cycle of praying the rosary ends with the glorious mysteries, and, in particular, the mysteries by which our Lady shares in the glory of her Son: her bodily assumption into heaven, and her Queenship over heaven and earth. God's glory is revealed to us when we recognize God's will and do it, no matter the cost to us.

Let us all, then, always focus our lives on doing God's will by sharing His love with others in the concrete circumstances of our lives. Then we can be confident in her who is here, who is our Mother, who keeps us under her shadow and protection, who is our fountain of life, who keeps us in the folds of her mantle and in the crossing of her arms. Truly, there nothing else that we need.