

“The Lord’s Visitation and the Rebuilding of God’s Temple”

Homily for the 27th Annual Cruzada Guadalupana
Plaza of the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption
December 5, 2020

Introduction

We gather today outside on the plaza for our annual celebration in honor of our Lady of Guadalupe. We are saddened that we cannot mark this occasion with the usual celebrations of processions and other festivities, but we can be thankful that God has given us beautiful weather, in fact, I would say almost ideal weather for celebrating Mass outdoors, notwithstanding a little bit of cold.

Visitation

Perhaps it is appropriate that we have this Mass outdoors, as we think about that historic day when our Lady appear to St. Juan Diego, for he, too, was enduring the cold of the winter outdoors when she visited him – and far worse than we are today! So our Lady is very pleased to see our devotion to her today, outside here on our Cathedral plaza. Having to celebrate this Mass outdoors gives us even more opportunity to show our love and devotion to our Holy Mother.

Our Lady visited St. Juan Diego. It seems that our Lady is someone who loves to visit her people. We hear about her visitation to her cousin Elizabeth in the Gospel for today’s Mass. Our Lady knows when her loved ones need her to visit. Elizabeth was elderly and carrying within her the forerunner of Mary’s Son, St. John the Baptist. All of this is in preparation for the great visitation: the visitation of our Lord to his people.

And this is why our Lady visited St. Juan Diego that fated day at Tepeyac: to prepare the way for the visitation of her Son to a new people. She took to herself as a loving Mother a new people who would be incorporated into the people of God, new members of the Body of Christ. The visitation of our Lord to this new people began the project of building a new Christian civilization, and our Lady is always there to protect us, to guide us, to reconcile enemies and lead us to the heart of her Son.

Rebuilding Then

So we see that there, at Tepeyac, our Lady is doing her part once again to fulfill the prophecy from the prophet Zechariah as she did when she first brought her son into the world: “Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! 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.”

Zechariah has a vision of Jerusalem being once again at the heart of the gathering of God’s people, once again the place of God’s dwelling. He was writing at a time when his people had been exiled from Jerusalem. Jerusalem was invaded and sacked, and the Temple was destroyed. All that was sacred to them had been violated. But Zechariah has a vision that God will now do something even better: He will gather all nations, not just the Jewish people, the first people of the Covenant, but all nations to worship the one true God in Jerusalem: the Temple will be rebuilt, and Jerusalem established once again as God’s dwelling place.

In God’s loving plan which is beyond all human comprehension, the Church has fulfilled this vision. The Church from her very beginning has reached out to the farthest corners of the

earth to bring all nations into God's people. And we see our Lady always there accompanying her Son's Church in this effort, as she did with St. Juan Diego's people.

Rebuilding Now

But are we not now in a similar situation as those ancient people of Israel when they saw the Temple of God's dwelling destroyed and all of Jerusalem with it? We have struggled to sustain our faith at this time when we have been shut out of our churches. You are here because you have kept your faith alive. Thank you for that! But for many others their faith has been weakened, and some have fallen away from the practice of the faith altogether.

This, too, is a time of rebuilding, as we struggle under a government that is suppressing our right to fully practice our faith, and the most central part of our faith, that of giving worthy worship to God. There is no greater duty or higher dignity of man than to give worship to the one true God. So we need to rebuild. We need to rebuild God's dwelling place even as our civil authorities and the cultural forces of our time keep trying to push God further away, out of the consciousness of our society, and try to push us away from Him.

We thank God that we still have our physical churches, where our Lord continues to dwell in the tabernacle. What we need to rebuild is the living Temple of God, God's people. Our Lady will help us, she accompanies us, as we seek to grow stronger in our faith and to show that the way of Christ is the best way. He is the one who loves us and gives us life; all else is a false promise that leads to sadness, loneliness, and, in the end, destruction.

Conclusion

So it is with the joy that we gather today, here on this plaza, to honor our beloved Mother, who protects us, accompanies us, and leads us to the heart of her Son. We thank God for giving us such a loving Mother, and most of all for giving us His Son to be our Savior. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He welcomes all people into his Body the Church. Let us be his light in the midst of the darkness of our times, so that all might know the love of Jesus Christ and come to the liberating knowledge of the truth.