



12. December 2023

Our Lady of Guadalupe

A reading from the memorial of Our Lady of Guadalupe

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechari'ah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be[e] a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." And Mary said "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed".

Today I would like to send a special greeting to Mexico, because we cannot let this day pass without thinking of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas, whose feast day is celebrated especially in Mexico.

What Our Lady did there through her apparition, so simple and yet so great, brought about the conversion of the hardened Aztecs to the Catholic faith - one could almost speak of a "new birth" of the Mexican people, thanks to the apparitions of Guadalupe! In the hearts of the Mexicans there is a great love for their patron saint, which I was able to experience during my stay in Mexico.

The prophecy uttered by Mary herself in the Magnificat is being fulfilled in all nations: "*Henceforth all generations will call me blessed*". And rightly so, because no other person, except Jesus, who is both God and man, has given oneself so unconditionally to God and to His plan of salvation! For Mary, there was no way too long, no burden too heavy, no task too great to serve the Lord.

The apparition of Guadalupe shows us that Our Lady's mission continues from heaven. In fact, through these apparitions she fulfilled God's will by converting a people of whom, despite the efforts of missionaries, only a few had embraced the Catholic faith. In this way, Our Lady showed herself to be a great missionary...

God turned His gaze to Mary, and how lovingly He must have looked at this daughter of His, to whom He had entrusted His own Son. But He also offers this relationship of love to each one of us, because we are all called to be His sons and daughters; we can all spiritually bring Christ into the world; we can all give ourselves to God as Mary did... We can be sure that this is the goal to which Our Lady wants to lead us. She desires above all that her Son be known and loved!

And what can we say to Mexico? Mexico must be faithful to the inheritance it has received, and this means fulfilling what Mary said to the servants at the wedding in Cana: *"Do whatever he tells you"* (Jn 2:5). Then, through the intercession of His Mother, the Lord will be able to turn water into wine and make Mexico a great sign of our faith. *"He has not dealt thus with any other nation"* (Ps 147:20) - these words of the Psalm could also be applied to the Mexican nation! This is a great grace, but also a great responsibility. May Mexico remain faithful to the faith and, under the special protection of the Virgin Mary, resist the anti-Christian darkness that is spreading more and more in this world, even into the Church!

The apparition of the Virgin Mary is also a marvellous model of authentic inculturation. She appeared as an indigenous person to the native Juan Diego. In her figure she bore many signs that the Aztecs could understand: the ribbon around her waist indicates that she is pregnant; the loose hair, on the other hand, is a sign of her virginity, according to the indigenous culture; the four-petalled flower on her belly, where she carries the Child, is a symbol of divinity for the Aztecs; the oval brooch on her neck is identical in style to the jade oval carried by the statues of the Aztec deities, which supposedly gave them life. The difference between the medallions of the statues and that of the Guadalupe is that her's has the mark of the cross, the symbol of true life... This is just to mention some of its rich symbolism. To Juan Diego she presented herself as "the mother of the true God". Thus, after her appearance, the indigenous people converted in great numbers to the Christian faith.

The difference is obvious in relation to the cult of Pachamama, which took place a few years ago in the Vatican. The apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe is, so to speak, an inculturation worked by heaven, in the service of Christianisation. The Pachamama ritual, on the other hand, is the integration of a pagan idol into the authentic cult of the faith. In other words, it is a perversion of inculturation.

In one of the most beautiful hymns to the Virgin Mary, the so-called "Akathistos Hymn", these words are sung to the Lord: "Illuminating Egypt with the light of truth,

you cast away the darkness of error. For the idols, unable to stand your might, fell down...” And the salutation to the Virgin continues in verses like these:

“Hail, O Resurrection of mankind;
Hail, O Downfall of the demons!
Hail, O you who crushed the error of deceit;
Hail, O you who exposed the fraud of idols!”

May Our Lady of Guadalupe sustain our faith and help the people of our time to come out of their confusion and meet the true God!