



December 12, 2021

## Third Sunday of Advent/Our Lady of Guadalupe

*The Lord will rejoice over you in gladness and renew you in his love.—Zephaniah 3:17b*

Dear Friends;

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent but it also happens to be the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Church throughout the world this Sunday is invited to rejoice because God is doing new things for us. It is also fitting that we celebrate the fiesta of love and liberation represented by the Virgin of Guadalupe.

“*La Morenita*,” as Guadalupe is affectionately called, refers to the fact that the image of Guadalupe depicts Mary as a mestiza, a person of both European and Indigenous American ancestry. This divinely made mixture of cultures has undoubtedly made “*La Morenita*” our hemisphere’s most loved manifestation of Mary as the Mother of God.

The story of Guadalupe begins some ten years after the violent conquest of Mexico by the Spanish Empire. It is a time of turmoil, violence and abuse. In 1531 Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin a poor indigenous man received three visits or apparitions from a woman he eventually identified as the Virgin Mary. She sends Juan Diego to the bishop to ask the bishop to build a church in her honor on a hill that had been a place to honor the Aztec mother-goddess, Tonantzin.

After several encounters with an unconvinced bishop, Mary asks Juan to gather roses from the hill (it was the middle of winter not normally a time to gather roses.) Juan Diego gathers them in his *tilma* (cloak). When he opens his cloak before the bishop the roses fall out and imprinted on the cloak is the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Her image conveyed a message. Her eyes are cast down a symbol to the Aztecs that she was not divine. Yet she is dressed in a turquoise mantle which represented the highest of Aztec deities. She wears a maternity band that indicates she is bearing the Lord of Justice who is coming into the world. The stars on her cloak symbolize the new era that is coming. The sun rays shining from behind her symbolize she is the dawn of a new day.

In our reading from Zephaniah the prophet tells the people of Judah who are experiencing great social upheaval to “*Shout for joy... The LORD, your God is in your midst.*” To a defeated people *La Morenita* brings the same message. She tells Juan Diego “*I will give the peoples my love, my compassion, my help.*”

As a sign of conversion John the Baptist in the gospel demands that each one contribute to justice by their individual and collective actions. We are to rid ourselves of the pride and greed that inflicts so much harm on others. The kingdom of God’s justice is coming to judge both oppressor and the oppressed. Speaking like God to Moses or the Baptist, *La Morenita* tells Juan Diego, “*I will listen to your cries and sadness...relieve and heal your pain, your misery, your hurts.*” This is the liberating message of God in this time of Advent.

The image of Guadalupe is a message to the conquered indigenous peoples and to the conquering invaders who were supposed to bring the Good News to the indigenous people. She represents the potential of the Gospel to bring together ancient traditions to create something new that neither tradition could imagine until God’s grace entered in. The Virgin of Guadalupe is an Indigenous American embodiment of John the Baptist’s voice demanding justice for all people; especially for the conquered peoples of this hemisphere. Sister of St. Joseph, Mary McGlone writes,

*Our Lady of Guadalupe symbolizes divine love and God’s desire that humanity create a community of love and justice. La Morenita incarnates the intercultural unity that is possible when we allow faith to lead us to a communion that respects and simultaneously goes deeper than our diversity.*

Let us never forget the original peoples of the Americas as we seek to live in unity in all our rich diversity!

Come Lord Jesus!

*Fr Ron*

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