



## December 10, 2023

### SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*"I send my messenger before you to prepare your way."*

Mark 1:2



Dear Friends;

Almost ten years after the conquest of Mexico by Spain, the newly appointed bishop of Mexico wrote the King of Spain. He tells the king the future of Christianity in the new world was in doubt. He said short of a miracle the continent was lost. The indigenous population of Mexico were a defeated and demoralized people. Ruled by a hostile foreign colonial government, the native peoples were reluctant to accept the religion of their rulers.

On a December morning in 1531 a miracle happened. The Virgin appears to Juan Diego, an indigenous Mexican farmer. Mary speaks with Juan Diego in his native Nahuatl language. She appears as a *mestiza* (racially mixed). She is dressed as a royal and sacred Aztec woman. Surrounded by the rays of the sun she stands on a crescent moon. She is greater than both the sun and moon gods. Mary wears a sash that says she is pregnant.

The Virgin sends Juan Diego to the bishop and asks him to build a church on the site that she appears. She instructs Juan Diego to gather the roses that were blooming (out of season in December). And when Juan Diego opens his tilma (cloak) to let the flowers fall out, all those present were stunned to see the image of Mary imprinted on the cloak.

Why would Mary appear to a poor farmer rather than the bishop? Mary's action is a sign of solidarity with those who are not considered important or powerful by the world's standards. She shows us that even a humble native farmer has something to contribute. After her appearance thousands converted to Christianity.

Something new was born, a people who reflect all the peoples who live in this hemisphere. A culture built not by force, or built on race, but a society built on love and compassion. The Virgin told Juan Diego: *"Truly I am your compassionate Mother, yours and that of all the people that live together in this land, and also of all the various lineages of men, those who love me, those who cry to me, those who seek me, those who trust in me."*

Since 2016, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have named the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12) a day of prayer in solidarity with immigrants and refugees. The Virgin of Guadalupe gives us an example of how we can reach out to welcome those seeking better lives in this land.

Appropriately, this feast takes place during Advent. During Advent we recall Mary's love as she awaited the birth of her Son, Jesus. In Advent we also recall how Mary and Joseph were forced to leave their home in Nazareth and journey to Bethlehem. Along the way she gives birth to her Son, in a stable. As one who experienced vulnerability Mary's heart is open to all who experience vulnerabilities.

Like John the Baptizer, Mary prepares the way to a new world. God comes to our world not in money and power, but in the littleness of a child. The family of Jesus knew what it was to be refugees. They were forced into exile by forces that wanted to destroy the child. In these days we ask for Mary's protection—especially for refugees and immigrants—and children who are forced to flee from their homes. May Mary's witness inspire us to stand in solidarity with them.

Peace,

*Fr Ron*

*Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: [www.anne.church](http://www.anne.church)*