

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: Our Lady of Guadalupe ..., the cloak ... the roses ...

In this month of May 2024, we are proposing for reflection these two homilies from Pope Francis on Our Lady of Guadalupe, one given on Tuesday December 12th 2023 and the other on Thursday December 12th 2019, at St. Peter's Basilica, Rome

Good reflection and sharing.

Recall: Our monthly meeting should favour an encounter with Christ. A spirit of prayer will ensure a meeting that will promote a good experience for all the members.

MAY 2024 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening of the meeting

The members can offer suggestions for a song, the prayer according to the Ritual or one chosen by the fraternity starts the meeting.

Introduction

We have chosen these excerpts as a reflection on another aspect of the Virgin, that is the Virgin of Latin America.

From the December 2023 Homily

The first thing that comes to mind is the image of the Virgin on the tilma or cloak. It is the image of the first disciple of the Mother of believers, of the Church herself, that is imprinted in our humbleness and in what we have, which is of little value, but which will become something great in God's eyes. It is imprinted on the tilma.

The Virgin entrusts Juan Diego with a small task, to gather some flowers. In mysticism, flowers symbolize the virtues that the Lord infuses in the heart; they are not our own doing. The act of picking them reveals to us that God wants us to welcome this gift, that we 'enhance' our fragile existence with good works, eliminating hatred and fears.

If we look closely, in the message of Guadalupe, the Virgin's words, "Am I not here, I who am your mother?", take on new meaning. This "being" of the Virgin, this "being there" is to remain permanently imprinted on those poor garments that emanate virtues gathered in a world that seems incapable of producing them. Virtues that fill our poverty in the simplicity of small acts of love that

illuminate our 'tilma', without us realizing it, with the image of a Church that carries Christ in her womb.

The image of the tilma, the roses, this is the message, so simple, without any comment, along with the certainty that she is mother, that she is here. And this message protects us from many social and political ideologies, that often use the reality of Guadalupe in order to gain a following, to legitimize themselves and to make money.

The message of Guadalupe does not tolerate ideologies of any kind. Only the image of the tilma, the roses

Reflection and sharing

In the preceding paragraphs, what do you notice? What is the message?
Take the time necessary to share your thoughts.

From the December 2019

Today's celebration, the Bible passages we have heard and the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe that remind us of *Nican mopohua*, bring to mind three words: woman, mother and mestiza.

Mary is a woman. She is a woman, a lady as the *Nican Mapohua* says, a woman par excellence. She presents herself as a woman and she presents herself with a message from someone else, hence as a woman and a disciple. Saint Ignatius liked to call her 'Our Lady'. And it is so simple that it does not presume anything else: she is a woman, a disciple.

Over time, Christian piety has always tried to exalt her with new titles: they were filial titles, loving titles of the People of God, which however did not mention her as being a woman-disciple.

Reflection and sharing

After the reading of preceding paragraphs, share your reaction to their content.?
Take the time necessary to share your thoughts.

Saint Bernard used to say that when we speak of Mary, there can never be enough praise; titles of praise but they never touched upon her humble discipleship. A disciple.

Faithful to her Teacher who is her Son, the only Saviour, she never wished to appropriate anything of her Son for herself. She never presented herself as a co-Saviour. No, a disciple.

And there is a Holy Father who goes around saying that the discipleship of motherhood is worthier. These are issues for theologians, but a disciple. She never took anything from her son for herself. She served him because she is a mother. She gives life in the fullness of time to this Son born of woman.

Mary is our Mother. She is the Mother of our people. She is the Mother of us all. She is the Mother of the Church, but she is also the image of the Church. And she is the Mother of our hearts, of our souls. There is a Holy Father who says that what can be said of Mary, can also be said in its own way of the Church and in its own way of our souls. Because the Church is feminine and our soul has this ability to receive grace from God, and in a certain sense, the Fathers saw the Church as a woman. We cannot think of the Church without this Marian principle as this ability to receive grace from God, and in a certain sense, the Fathers saw the Church as a woman. We cannot think of the Church without this Marian principle.

Reflection and Sharing

In the preceding paragraphs, share what the text presents about the femininity of the Church? Take the time necessary to share your thoughts.

When we research the role of women in the Church, we can follow the path of functionality because women have functions to perform in the Church. But this is only half the journey. Women in the Church achieve more with this Marian principle which “maternalizes” the Church and transforms it into Holy Mother Church.

Mary as a woman, Mary as a Mother, without any other essential title. The other titles — let us think of the Litanies of Loreto — are titles sung by children in love with their Mother, but they do not mention the essential nature of Mary’s being: woman and mother.

Reflection and Sharing

In the preceding paragraphs, does it seem to you that women accomplish functions in the Church today? Take the time necessary to share your thoughts.

And the third word that I would attribute to her as I gazed upon her: she wanted to be a mestiza (mixed race) for us, she chose to appear as a mestiza. And not only to Don Juan Dieguito but also to the people. She chose to appear as a mestiza in order to be the Mother of all. She made herself mixed for all of humanity. Why? Because she made a mestizo of God. And this is the great mystery: Mother Mary made a mestizo of God, true God and true man, in her Son.

When they tell us that we should declare her as such or come up with another dogma, let us not lose ourselves in chatter. Mary is a woman, she is Our Lady, Mary is the Mother of her Son and of the

Holy Mother hierarchical Church and Mary is mestiza, a woman of our people, one with a “mixed-race” God.

May she speak to us as she spoke to Juan Diego with these three titles: with tenderness, with feminine warmth and with a closeness of “mixedness”. Amen.

Reflection and Sharing

In the preceding paragraphs, what do you remember in particular? Take the time necessary to share your thoughts.

Biblical Reflection and Sharing:

Do the reading of Sunday or of the previous or following day of the meeting:

Share your thoughts on this Gospel using the following questions:

- * Take a moment of reflection; underline the words or inspiring phrases ...
- *- Share your thoughts on the Gospel text chosen ...

Link between these texts and the Rule and the General Constitutions

While preparing this document, we have found that Article 9 of the Rule and Article 16 of the General Constitutions have a link to these texts.

Rule Article 9

The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to his every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family.

The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.

General Constitutions Articles 16.1 and 16.2

1. Mary, Mother of Jesus, is the model of listening to the Word and of faithfulness to vocation; we, like Francis, see all the gospel virtues realised in her. The brothers and sisters should cultivate intense love for the Most Holy Virgin, imitation, prayer, and childlike surrender. They should manifest their own devotion with expressions of genuine faith, in forms accepted by the Church.
2. Mary is the model of fruitful and faithful love for the entire ecclesial community. Secular Franciscans and their fraternities should seek to live the experience of Francis, who made the Virgin the guide of his activity. With her, like the disciples at Pentecost, they should welcome the Spirit to create a community of love.

Life-Objective

In this month of May, let us take time to thank God for his gift of the Virgin Mary as our Mother ...

End of the meeting (song or prayer chosen by the fraternity)

Suggestion: a song or hymn to the Virgin Mary

At home

The prayer to the Virgin of Guadalupe can be recited at the end of the meeting or as a prayer before you lay down to rest for the night.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, I know for sure that You are the perfect and perpetual Virgin Mary, Mother of the true God. You show me and offer me Your love, Your compassion, Your help, Your protection.

You are merciful Mother, Mother of all those who love You, of those who implore You, of those who trust in You. You hear my tears and my pain. You heal and alleviate my sufferings, my needs, my misfortunes.

You ask me not to be troubled or overwhelmed by my sorrows, and not to fear sickness, vexation, anxiety, or pain. You are my Mother and I am under Your protection. You are my Fountain of Life and I snuggle in Your arms!

Mother of mercy, with love, I consecrate to You my whole being, my life, my sufferings, my joys, all those whom You have entrusted to me and all that belongs to me. I desire to be all yours and walk with you on the path of holiness. O Immaculate Virgin, listen to the prayer which I address to You with filial confidence, and present it to Your Divine Son.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Unborn, give us the grace to love, to give, to welcome and to respect life, in the same love with which you conceived in your womb the life of Jesus, your beloved Son. Holy Mary, Queen of Hearths, protect and help our families, so that they may always be united; Assist us in the education of our children and bless them.

I beg you, most holy Mother, give me a great love of the Eucharist and regular Confession, a taste for prayer and prayer, so that I may bring peace and joy through Jesus Christ our Lord who, together with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Photo of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe who appeared to Juan Diego.



Photo: Wikimedia

