



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

TO MEXICO

(12-18 FEBRUARY 2016)

HOLY MASS AT THE BASILICA OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Mexico City

Saturday, 13 February 2016

[Multimedia]

We have just heard how Mary went to meet her cousin Elizabeth. She set out without delay, without doubts, without lessening her pace, to be with her relative who was in the last months of her pregnancy.

Mary's encounter with the angel did not hold her back since she did not consider herself privileged, or make her hesitate in leaving those around her. On the contrary, it renewed and inspired an attitude for which Mary is and always will be known: she is the woman who says "yes", a "yes" of surrender to God and, at the same time, a "yes" of surrender to her brothers and sisters. This is the "yes" which prompted her to give the best of herself, going forth to meet the others.

Listening to this Gospel passage in this place has a special significance. Mary, the woman who gave her "yes", wished also to come to the inhabitants of these American lands through the person of the Indian St Juan Diego. Just as she went along the paths of Judea and Galilee, in the same way she walked through Tepeyac, wearing the indigenous garb and using their language so as to serve this great nation. Just as she accompanied Elizabeth in her pregnancy, so too she has and continues to accompany the development of this blessed Mexican land. Just as she made herself present to little Juan, so too she continues to reveal herself to all of us, especially to those who feel, like him, "worthless" (cf. *Nican Mopohua*, 55). This specific choice, we might call it preferential, was not against anyone but rather in favour of everyone. The little Indian Juan who called himself a "leather strap, a back frame, a tail, a wing, oppressed by another's burden" (*ibid.*),

became “the ambassador, most worthy of trust”.

On that morning in December 1531, the first miracle occurred which would then be the living memory of all this Shrine protects. On that morning, at that meeting, God awakened the hope of his son Juan, and the hope of a People. On that morning, God roused the hope of the little ones, of the suffering, of those displaced or rejected, of all who feel they have no worthy place in these lands. On that morning, God came close and still comes close to the suffering but resilient hearts of so many mothers, fathers, grandparents who have seen their children leaving, becoming lost or even being taken by criminals.

On that morning, Juancito experienced in his own life what hope is, what the mercy of God is. He was chosen to oversee, care for, protect and promote the building of this Shrine. On many occasions he said to Our Lady that he was not the right person; on the contrary, if she wished the work to progress, she should choose others, since he was not learned or literate and did not belong to the group who could make it a reality. Mary, who was persistent — with that persistence born from the Father’s merciful heart — said to him: *he* would be her ambassador.

In this way, she managed to awaken something he did not know how to express, a veritable banner of love and justice: no one could be left out of the building of that other shrine, the shrine of life, the shrine of our communities, our societies and our cultures. We are all necessary, especially those who normally do not count because they are not “up to the task” or because “they do not have the necessary funds” to build all these things. God’s Shrine is the life of his children, of everyone in whatever condition, especially of young people without a future who are exposed to endless painful and risky situations, and the elderly who are unacknowledged, forgotten and out of sight. The Shrine of God is our families in need only of the essentials to develop and progress. The Shrine of God is the faces of the many people we encounter each day....

Visiting this Shrine, the same things that happened to Juan Diego can also happen to us. Look at the Blessed Mother from within our own sufferings, our own fear, hopelessness, sadness, and say to her, “What can I offer since I am not learned?”. We look to our Mother with eyes that express our thoughts: there are so many situations which leave us powerless, which make us feel that there is no room for hope, for change, for transformation.

And so, I think that some silence may do us good today as we pause to look upon her and repeat to her the words of that other loving son:

Simply looking at you, O Mother, / having eyes only for you, / looking upon you without saying anything, / telling you everything, wordlessly and reverently. / Do not perturb the air before you; / only cradle my stolen solitude / in your loving Motherly eyes, / in the nest of your clear ground. / Hours tumble by, / and with much commotion, / the wastage of life and death / sinks its teeth into foolish men. Having eyes for you, O Mother, simply contemplating you / with a heart / quieted in

your tenderness / that silence of yours, / chaste as the lilies.

And in the silence, and in this looking at her, we will hear what she says to us once more, “What, my most precious little one, saddens your heart?” (*Nican Mopohua*, 107). “Yet am I not here with you, who have the honour of being your mother?” (*ibid.*, 119).

Mary tells us that she has “the honour” of being our mother, assuring us that those who suffer do not weep in vain. These ones are a silent prayer rising to heaven, always finding a place in Mary’s mantle. In her and with her, God has made himself our brother and companion along the journey; he carries our crosses with us so as not to leave us overwhelmed by our sufferings.

Am I not your mother? Am I not here? Do not let trials and pains overwhelm you, she tells us. Today, she sends us out anew; as she did Juancito, today, she comes to tell us again: be my ambassador, the one I send to build many new shrines, accompany many lives, wipe away many tears. Simply be my ambassador by walking along the paths of your neighbourhood, of your community, of your parish; we can build shrines by sharing the joy of knowing that we are not alone, that Mary accompanies us. Be my ambassador, she says to us, giving food to the hungry, drink to those who thirst, a refuge to those in need, clothe the naked and visit the sick. Come to the aid of those in prison, do not leave them alone, forgive whomever has offended you, console the grieving, be patient with others, and above all beseech and pray to God. And in the silence tell him what is in our heart.

Am I not your mother? Am I not here with you? Mary says this to us again. Go and build my shrine, help me to lift up the lives of my sons and daughters, who are your brothers and sisters.