

HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES AND
CHANCELLOR OF THE PONTIFICAL COLLEGE JOSEPHINUM
LAUDS, FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
CHAPEL OF SAINT TURIBIUS, COLUMBUS, OHIO
DECEMBER 12, 2020

My Dear Friends in Christ,

As the Chancellor of the Pontifical College Josephinum, I am delighted to be here once again. As the Apostolic Nuncio, I bring you the greetings of Pope Francis during this joyful season and assure you of his prayers and closeness. I greet Father Beseau, the Rector of this seminary, and all the faculty here present, especially the new priests.

Finally, I greet you the seminarians and wish to express my gratitude to you for your response to the Lord's call. At this seminary, you have Saint Joseph as your patron and model. He was silent and listened for the Lord. He was humble and diligent in his work, carrying it out without much recognition. He worked to provide for his family, his beloved Mary and the Redeemer, who did not disdain to be called the carpenter's son. In his human nature, Jesus learned much about fatherhood from the witness of Joseph. Joseph was chaste and loved Mary; he was deeply in love with Mary, and he was willing to make every sacrifice for her and for her Son. Joseph teaches us to love Mary.

Today, in celebrating the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we have a chance to show our devotion and love for Mary and for her beloved Son, because just as at the Savior's birth God visited his people, so through the Holy Virgin of Guadalupe, the Lord again visited a new people and a new continent. Just as Mary went forth to see her kinswoman Elizabeth, with the infant John the Baptist leaping for joy in the Presence of the Messiah, so too do the peoples of the New World rejoice in the visitation which occurred through the apparitions at Tepeyac.

We heard from Zechariah: *"Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! See I am coming to dwell among you, says the Lord. Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day, and they shall be his people, and he will dwell among you, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you."* (Zech 2:14-15)

In the Aparecida document, then-Cardinal Bergoglio wrote:

Mary is the great missionary, the continuer of her Son's mission, who forms missionaries. As she gave birth to the Savior of the world, she brought the Gospel to our Americas. In the Guadalupe event, together with the humble Juan Diego, she presided over Pentecost, which opened us to the gifts of the Spirit. Since then, countless communities have found in her the closest inspiration for learning how to be disciples and missionaries of Jesus. (V CONFERENCIA GENERAL DEL EPISCOPADO LATINOAMERICANO Y DEL CARIBE, *DOCUMENTO CONCLUSIVO*, CELAM, Aparecida 2007, n. 269).

Mary is a missionary. The Holy Virgin of Guadalupe was rightly called by Saint John Paul II the "Star of the New Evangelization." The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe is important for the new evangelization because it also calls us to build a culture of encounter. In the Guadalupe event, we experience the encounter between God and man; the encounter between Spanish and indigenous culture;

and the encounter between faith and culture. Importantly, the encounter helps overcome conflict and gives rise to a new synthesis of faith and a people, with their piety and devotion, which they are now bringing to the United States.

Indeed, the image of the Guadalupe has much to say to the peoples of the Americas. Her embrace is for all the peoples of this continent. She gazes upon them with tenderness and hears the cries, offering them the gift of her Son, who is the life and light of the world. She continues to teach us of the need to bear this light and life to others – to go forth in a new Visitation for a New Evangelization.

In the ten years following her appearance at Tepeyac, nine million people accepted Jesus Christ. Through her God visited the people of the Americas. Together, we are the heirs to the fruit of her visit. As heirs to this great heritage of inculturated faith, we are left to ponder: how might I make known this faith in this particular culture, in this seminary and in my diocese? How can the image of Guadalupe help our Church be the Church that Christ wants and our people need?

You have a daunting task, both at this seminary and in your respective dioceses to evangelize in a secularized culture. Therefore, I conclude with words of consolation from the Holy Virgin:

Listen and let it penetrate your heart ... do not be troubled or weighed down with grief. Do not fear any illness or vexation, anxiety or pain. Am I not here who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not your fountain of life? Are you not in the folds of my mantle? In the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else you need?