

Dear Friends,

On this Second Sunday of Advent, we also remember the first Native North American to be canonized whose Feast is today, St. Juan Diego. On this day in 1531, as he was on his way to Mass and to learn the catechism from the priest, Our Lady appeared to Juanito and told him to go to the bishop and to tell him to build a church on the site where she appeared. Humble and obedient, Juan Diego went to the bishop, but he was not taken seriously until after two more visits from the Blessed Virgin Mary, she provided a miracle that convinced the bishop. After the apparitions, the Virgin Mary evangelized the Mexican people with the help of her faithful servant, St. Juan Diego, offering hospitality to the millions who would come to visit her shrine. Praying at the tomb of St. Juan Diego, I imagined him humbly and joyfully recounting the encounter he had with the Mother of God. He did this faithfully until the end of his life right there where our Blessed Mother appeared to him.

The conversation that occurred between Our Lady and Juan Diego is recorded for us in the native Aztec language and recounts a tender exchange between perhaps two of the most humble people to ever live. Our Lady's words are affectionate and kind, even after Juan decided to try to avoid her in order to go and get the priest to visit his uncle who was sick and was requesting the Sacraments of Anointing and Viaticum to prepare for death. Juan Diego tried to go a different way in order to not encounter Our Lady, but she cut him off at the pass, and after hearing her little son's excuse for not obeying her, she responded with the most loving words, *"Listen, put it into your heart, my youngest-and-dearest son, that the thing that frightened you, the thing that afflicted you is nothing. Do not let it disturb you. Do not fear this sickness nor any other sickness, nor any sharp and hurtful thing. **Am I not here, I, who am your mother?** Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? **Do you need something more?**"*

What more do we need? Our Lady is here to gently guide us every step of the way.

This Wednesday, we will begin at 5am serenading our Blessed Mother. We will then have Mass at 6:30 and 8:45 as usual. I encourage you to come and experience the morning devotions if possible and attend Mass with the school children at which there will be a group of dancers. If you can't join us in the morning, we will begin our evening program at 5pm with a rosary and procession, a recounting of the apparitions, and then the celebration of the Mass with Bishop Eusebio Elizondo at 7pm. I conclude with the prayer of St. John Paul II at the end of his homily during the Canonization Mass in Mexico City in 2002.

Blessed Juan Diego, a good, Christian Indian, whom simple people have always considered a saint! We ask you to accompany the Church on her pilgrimage, so that she may be more evangelizing and more missionary each day. Encourage the Bishops, support the priests, inspire new and holy vocations, help all those who give their lives to the cause of Christ and the spread of His Kingdom.

Happy Juan Diego, true and faithful man! We entrust to you our lay brothers and sisters so that, feeling the call to holiness, they may imbue every area of social life with the spirit of the Gospel. Bless families, strengthen spouses in their marriage, sustain the efforts of parents to give their children a Christian upbringing. Look with favor upon the pain of those who are suffering in body or in spirit, on those afflicted by poverty, loneliness, marginalization or ignorance. May all people, civic leaders and ordinary citizens, always act in accordance with the demands of justice and with respect for the dignity of each person, so that in this way peace may be reinforced.

Beloved Juan Diego, "the talking eagle"! Show us the way that leads to the "Dark Virgin" of Tepeyac, that she may receive us in the depths of her heart, for she is the loving, compassionate Mother who guides us to the true God. Amen.

Sincerely yours in Jesus Christ,



Fr. Jack D. Shrum
Pastor