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Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mother of a New Creation¹

I'M REALLY HONORED TO BE WITH YOU TONIGHT, and to delve into the contemporary challenge that the Church faces. The contemporary challenge of the many, many peoples who make up our Church. The Church has usually looked upon people as a homogeneous group, with a homogeneous language, a homogeneous culture, a homogeneous background to form a community, and that's beautiful. That certainly has been the case. But today we're faced with an incredible challenge in this country, and in many countries, but certainly in our country. We're faced with the incredible challenge of the great multiplicity of peoples that belong to our Church. They tell me that in the archdiocese of Los Angeles, California, Mass is celebrated every Sunday in at least seventy-eight different languages. That's quite a variety. So it is a reality. It's a reality that's come into our country.

We can see it as a problem. But we can also see it as an opportunity, as a challenge to create something new. And that's how I choose to see it. I see it as a moment of grace when God is bringing about a new breakthrough in the buildup of the human family. I see it as a moment when the Church has a tremendous amount to contribute. The Church—rather than being scared of what's happening and backing away—can be the real guiding Spirit, the real vision to turn what could be a problem of disintegration, of a breaking down of our society and our common spirit, into something new, dynamic, and exciting.

For this vision, I myself turn to the origins of what we today call America. Go back with

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me, and allow yourselves to imagine that moment which today we often take for granted, the beginning of what we call America, of what we call the New World. We see the two halves of the globe, the two halves of the hemisphere, beginning to suspect the existence of one another. There are people who have been developing in very different ways, with different value systems, priorities, languages, and ways of expression—people who have been developing in totally different ways. Imagine the fascination, the fear, the awe of these two worlds coming together. Imagine these two worlds—coming together for the first time, meeting each other, encountering each other—and what they would think of one another. Certainly we can try to go into it. Maybe, if someday in our lifetime we experience a visitation from another planet, we might have an experience similar to the one they had in those times. Imagine seeing, for the first time, those ships coming in, and they look like floating islands. That's what the natives called them. Imagine the people of this land, who had never had horses, seeing people come on horseback and mounted with armor and with spears. What was this? Half man, half animal? They'd never seen this before. You have this fascination of different languages, different priorities.

It was an incredible moment in history. The Church at that time, led by Pope Alexander VI, considered it the final moment in the development of humanity. The missionaries saw it as a great opportunity to spread the gospel. Had that moment been an encounter between very different people who become friends and begin to enrich one another's lives, it would have been beautiful. But it wasn't that way, unfortunately. History is sad. History is sad because, unfortunately, this was not the encounter of friends; it was a very unequal encounter. One side was far better developed in the art of warfare. One side had much better weapons. One side had a much better ability to fight and to mobilize. And so began the great battles over control of the land.

Europe in 1492 had an incredible year. In 1492, Europe had come to the end of the last Crusade. On January 2, 1492, the conquest of Granada and the final defeat of the Muslim Empire in Spain took place. And they turned their attention now to something new. They came with the mentality of conquering for Christ, but nevertheless

conquering by power. There was the contradiction of the sword and the cross coming together in these incredible battles which took place during 1492-1521 in Mexico, with the harshest battles in 1521. In fact, in 1521 the Indian nations of this country were defeated. It was the beginning of the most brutal period of history. We know this because of the testimony of the missionaries. The missionaries did not hesitate to call a crime a crime or a sin a sin. Had it not been for the testimonies of the missionaries, we probably would not even know of the cruelty, of the brutality of that moment of history.

But we have two different worlds encountering each other, one defeating the other. We have the missionaries, who came with a great dream. If we think we have scandals in the Church today, we should go back to 1492 and see what was happening then. The missionaries were so upset with the Church at this moment of history. They were convinced that the Church of Europe was dying and there was no future for it. They were convinced that now, here, in this new land they had found, they would be able to start a new Church, a new Church of the Spirit, a new Church that would learn from the mistakes of the European Church and really re-create the Church of the Gospel. They started by trying to form evangelical villages, but they lacked the understanding of the local mind. They believed that whatever was different was diabolical and had to be eliminated. They also had to struggle against the pain that the people could still remember: the trauma of the brutal conquest by those people, those—in the words of the missionaries themselves—"so called Christians." They were the same human group, and they emphasized "so called Christians." So these were the people giving the example.

The natives would hear the message of the gospel, the message of God, the message of God's love and compassion, but the lifestyle they saw was totally the opposite. The missionaries could not truly understand the religious, symbolic world of the native people. There were two totally antagonistic religions, two totally antagonistic cultures, coming together. There seemed to be a complete lack of communicability. The missionaries tried as hard as they could, but conversions were at a minimum.

This is what I would like to share with you, the topic for tonight. I feel that the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which happened in 1531, is the key to knowing how we can

build the new Church for the new millennium, the Church that will help us find the way to turn what could be a destructive problem into a fascinating moment, a breakthrough of the Spirit for humanity.



It's 1531, ten years after the conquest of Mexico, a time when the people are in such great pain that the indigenous annals have some powerful poetry about the memory of the conquest. One of them goes something like this: "You have killed our warriors, you have burned our cities, you have destroyed our temples, you have raped our women, and now you tell us our gods are not true. If that be true, why should we live? Let us die." There is a collective death wish among the people, the suffering so great that they simply want to die. It's at that moment, 1531, ten years after the conquest, that you have a fascinating epiphany, as I would like to call it, an epiphany we call today the apparitions of our Lady of Guadalupe.

Put yourself in the context. Put yourself in the context, that you might enter more deeply into this event at the very beginning of what we call today America. At the very geographical center, look at the map, we have what is called Mexico today. It's the very center of this land.

Here the story is very, very simple. I'll retell the story briefly and then will try to interpret it for you. I'm sure many of you know the story, but it's worth retelling. Many of our parishes like to reenact it. You love to see little children reenact it year after year. It's like the gospels. It's so simple that children love it, yet so profound that theologians continue to explore it and have only now begun to really penetrate its innermost meaning and understand why Guadalupe has such power among the people. Why is it still spreading? Why is Guadalupe today no longer just a Mexican devotion? Why are the bishops of Canada, for example, proposing the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe as the feast that can bring about unity to the Canadian peoples? The bishops of Holland have declared the month of December "the month of Our Lady of

Guadalupe" as the patron of peace and unity. In South Africa, there is a feeling that she can be the one who can bring unity to the diverse people of South Africa. What is the power behind this simple story?

I'd like to retell the story. I'd like to begin with an interpretation for you. An interpretation of what has happened. What has happened is that it continues to spread today to make Tepayac the second biggest shrine in the religious world today—second only to the Vatican. It has more pilgrims than Mecca. What happened on that site?

In 1531, in December, a cold month, an elderly Indian—not a young boy, probably about 56 years old, quite old for that time—who had been recently baptized, was on his way, walking to Tlatelolco to learn about the things of God. As he is walking, he goes by the hill of Tepayac, and it is beginning to dawn, and he hears this beautiful music. He hears the singing of the birds that is so beautiful that he stops and begins to question himself, thinking maybe he is dreaming. Maybe he is already in heaven. Maybe he is already in the land of the ancestors. He starts to question himself. But he goes in the direction of the music, and he hears this voice calling to him by name, in the diminutive sense used in Spanish or in Náhuatl, which was the language, to show that you love someone. "Juanito," "Johnny," "Johnny Boy," "Juanito," a term of endearment. He hears this calling, and he goes toward it and sees a beautiful lady, who is so beautiful that she radiates like the sun, and she stands upon the moon. In her presence everything seems to be transformed. Instead of there appearing to be cactus and rocks and so forth, there appear to be emeralds and diamonds and pearls. Everything appears to be different in her presence. She calls him by name, and she introduces herself to him by saying,

I am the Mother of the True God, the God through whom one lives, the God of the near and the far away, the God of persons, the God the creator of all things. I have desired that you go to the bishop and tell him that on this site I want the Bishop to build a temple where I can be ever present to all the inhabitants of this land, to show my love and compassion, to defend and protect, and be their ever merciful Mother.

So she sends him to the bishop, and Juan Diego goes, the story says. He's quite happy about it, about the encounter. He's running and full of joy and happiness. He goes to the bishop's office and tries to see the bishop. Well, I'm sure you can guess what happens next. It wasn't that easy to get in to see the bishop. Some things have not changed too much. But I cannot blame the bishop. I was the pastor of a busy parish, and believe me, if somebody had come and told me they'd had an apparition, I'm not sure how I would have reacted. So I cannot blame the bishop too much. But anyway, Juan Diego waited. Finally, the bishop saw him. He told the story to the bishop. The bishop listened patiently and told him he had many, many things to do and that he would have to come back another day when he could listen to him.

Well, Juan Diego knows in his heart that the bishop had not believed him. He goes back very sad and goes back to the Lady and apologizes to her; he begs her forgiveness, blames himself for not having been believed. Now he goes into a painful litany of derogatory terms about himself. "I am nothing. I am worse than dried leaves. I am worse than a work robe. I am worse than this..." He goes through a whole litany of derogatory terms about himself, and he tells her, "My Lady, it's very important that you pick someone who's credible. That you pick somebody who has nobility, that you pick somebody who's important. That you pick somebody who has prestige so that you will be believed." And the answer of the Lady is beautiful. "My son, I have many ambassadors that I can pick from, but it is in every way precise that you, the most insignificant of my children, be my trusted ambassador." So she asks him to go again. He goes and again has trouble seeing the bishop, but this time the bishop is impressed. The fact that he's come again, the fact he has told the whole story, has not changed a single thing, given the same details. But the bishop still questions him, "Juan Diego, I need a sign." Juan Diego startles the bishop, because he immediately says, "What sign do you want?" He does not even hesitate. And the bishop says, "The Lady will know. She will know what sign to give me."

He goes back, and—there's a little humor in the story—the secretary to the bishop

follows Juan Diego to see where he is going. According to the story, when Juan Diego is in her presence, he disappears to them. They don't see him anymore. So they go back and tell the bishop that he's some kind of witch doctor. That he's pulling tricks and disappearing acts and so forth. But in the meantime, Juan Diego is talking to the Lady, and the Lady says, "Come back tomorrow, and I will have the sign."

He goes home and his uncle, Juan Bernardino, is dying of one of the new diseases brought in by the conquistadors. He's dying, so Juan Diego decides to go get a priest to come and confess his uncle. He's got to go back to the church, but he can't go through the same route, because the Lady is going to stop him again, and he's got more important things to do. He has to find a confessor for his dying uncle. He takes a different route, going around the other side. He gets quite embarrassed when he hears the Lady coming from that side calling him by name. And he starts telling her, "My Lady, I wasn't trying to play tricks on you, I wasn't running out on you. I really just have to go get a priest to confess my uncle." The Lady tells him, "You have nothing to worry about. Your uncle will not die of this sickness. Now go up on top of the hill and there you will find the sign that the bishop asks for."

Juan Diego climbs to the top of the hill and there, on the barren hill, if you go to Tepeyac today, you will find a basically barren territory. There he finds these beautiful flowers of all colors. Beautiful flowers in December, out of season. He cuts them and, according to the story, the Lady herself arranges them in his *tilma*. The *tilma* was a little coat, a kind of a blanket worn around the shoulders. It was wintertime, so he was wearing his winter coat. That is why when you see the *tilma* today you say, "Juan Diego must have been a very tall person." No, he wasn't, but it was a winter *tilma*, and that meant it was one that he would wrap around himself. He puts the flowers in the *tilma* and goes to see the bishop. Again, the story is quite interesting. The secretaries to the bishop insist they must see first what he has to show the bishop, that they are the bishop anyway. They try to wrestle the flowers away from him, and according to the story, when they try to take the flowers away, the flowers appear to be embroidered in the cloth so they couldn't take them.

He finally gets to the bishop, he unrolls his *tilma*, the flowers fall to the ground, and the image appears on the *tilma* as we have it today. The *tilma* is made of a cloth of maguey plant, which is a very rough cloth, like a potato sack cloth, a cloth that you would never paint on, a cloth that should have disappeared many, many years ago. According to the story, the bishop breaks into tears for not having believed sooner. Then they go to see the uncle; the uncle has been healed. It is the uncle who names her, "The Blessed Ever Virgin Mary of Guadalupe." She never calls herself that. It is the uncle who names her as Guadalupe. From there on the devotion begins. That's a simple story, a beautiful story.

What happens here? In many ways it is the gospel of Jesus Christ presented through the imagery of the Indian world. Presented not only in their vocabulary but through their imagery and thought patterns, so that the Indian world—which could not understand the Spanish usage of religious terms—could understand the depth of the gospel in terms that were appreciated by them. Don't forget that the religious language of the Indians was abominable to the missionaries. The religious language of the missionaries was totally incomprehensible to the Indians. There was a total lack of communicability. We see it in the most marvelous part of the first ecumenical dialogs that I know of, the dialogs between the Spanish theologians and the Native American theologians. They are called *Los Coloquios de los Doce*, the Colloquies of the Twelve. Notice the symbolism. The first missionaries that came were twelve in number. Does twelve remind you of something? It was the new Apostolic College, the twelve apostles. That's why they are called *Los Doce Apóstoles*. Because now the new Church was going to start here. Now, the Lady comes and she appears on the *tilma* and the bishop now will start to believe.

Let us go deeper into this. What is the symbolism? First of all, notice the story. Juan Diego leaves his home while it is still dark. Constantly you are going to find this binomial. He leaves his home while it is still dark, and he arrives at Tepayac while it is beginning to dawn. You are going to find this several times in the story. The Indians always thought that you had to express everything in two terms. The reality was never in

one or the other, but in-between. We like to conceptualize things. They thought that reality could only be experienced in-between two terms.

Darkness and light had a very precise meaning for them. First of all, in a way it was chronological. It was still dark in the morning. So, that was chronological time, but it was also spiritual/psychological time. It was a moment of darkness. For the Indian world, everything that was meaningful for them had disappeared. Everything that was of value had been crushed. They went from being a very proud, dignified people to being enslaved. They were being told they were not even fully human. Don't forget, Europeans were debating the humanity of the Indians at this time. It was a darkness of the soul, a darkness where nothing makes sense to you anymore. But even more so for the Indian world, the binomial "while it was still dark beginning to dawn" had a far deeper meaning. For them, "...while it was still dark..." is a term used for the final moment before creation takes place, the final moment when the gods are deliberating. The final deliberation and creation is about to take place. Here it places Juan Diego now in that moment when creation is about to take place. The term "beginning to dawn" in the Indian cosmological, religious terminology is the moment of a new creation. Therefore, the fact that he arrives at Tepayac, and it is beginning to dawn, this is where the new creation takes place. This is where the creation is going to come about.

Notice the singing of the birds that opens the story. The story begins with the beautiful singing of the birds—you'll find the term "sing" and "song" used five times in the same sentence. The Indians used numbers to signify. So that meant a perfect, divine communication. North, south, east, west, heaven and earth; therefore, you are at the center of the cosmic divine order. It's about divine communication. For them, they now have a term for divine revelation. For example, we say in our liturgy, "Word of God." The Indian world would say, "flower and song," because God can only communicate through poetry. They could not understand dogmatic, doctrinal formulations of God, because that corrals God, and God is too large, God is too big. God cannot be corralled in a definition. For them God can only be communicated through poetic expression that

stimulates the mind to the openness, to the infinity, to the beauty of God. Divine communication only comes through flower and song. Notice the two poles of the story. The story begins with the beautiful singing of the birds, and Juan Diego is convinced that he must already be in heaven and the land of his ancestors. Now notice the end of the story; it ends with a sign of flowers. The whole story is encased in what the Indian world would understand as a divine communication, would understand as "God has spoken," the word of God. As a divine communication, it does not just fall down from heaven. The divine communication is going to come about through the active participation of Juan Diego.

Who was Juan Diego? Again, he is consistent with the entire biblical tradition. Who was Juan Diego? The lowest of the low. How many times in scripture does God take the one that's convinced he or she is not suited for the task? Moses thought he couldn't speak properly, because he stuttered. And yet God says, "You will be the one." What do the scriptures say? "The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone." How often we find this, that God takes what the world rejects, because in this God reveals the lie of the world. The world often thinks by external categories to deny people their fundamental dignity, their fundamental human worth.

Here again the Lady says, "I have many ambassadors, but it is very precise that you, the most insignificant of my children, be my trusted ambassador." So Juan Diego hears the beautiful song, and it begins to rehabilitate him. He who had been crushed, now is full of life. In the presence of the Lady, he begins to enter into conversation with her. She treats him in a very beautiful way. They dialog with each other in terms that, though they sound silly in English, are very much a part of our native American Spanish. For example, to call somebody in English, "My Queen," doesn't sound too good. But those of you who know Spanish know how often we refer to our little children as "*Mi reina*" or "*Mi rey*." Why? Because they are the King or Queen of our hearts. So we hear parents calling their children very ordinarily, "*Mi reina*" or "*Mi rey*." And that's the way he refers to her, because she reigns in his heart. She's not a Queen who dominates from the outside, but

one who has captivated the inner recesses of his heart. They refer to each other in the most intimate terms out of tenderness. There's a tenderness in the revelation that is fascinating, a tenderness in the way they relate.

In her presence Juan Diego is rehabilitated. He becomes not a dumb Indian, but he becomes someone. He becomes a human being. He regains his dignity, his confidence. He is willing now to go to the bishop. There is a rehabilitation of Juan Diego. This is very important in the story, the rehabilitation of the whole Indian nation. But also, in the story, it begins also the reversal. At this moment the natives have been declared to be human, but to be minors. In other words, as a people they have not reached the age of reason. They were to listen and learn, but they were not to speak.

Juan Diego is sent to the bishop. The bishop is not telling him what to do. He is now sent to the bishop. Here you begin to see the importance that Juan Diego could have been punished, and even burnt to death, for daring to bring a devotion that appeared to be the restoration of an old Indian deity. Tepayac was not just any site in Mexico. Tepayac had been from time immemorial the sanctuary of the mother goddess Tonanzin, which means "our most beloved mother." That had been a shrine from time immemorial where the Indians went to offer tribute, to offer devotion, to the mother goddess, the mother of the gods. Tonanzin was not the mother of one of the gods who demanded human sacrifice. In fact, the very fascinating thing—and I'll read it for you, because I think it's one of the most fascinating texts—is in paragraph twenty-two of the narrative. When she introduces herself to Juan Diego, she says, "Know and be certain in your heart, my most abandoned son, that I am the ever virgin, Holy Mary, Mother of the God of great truth, of the one through whom we live, the Creator of persons, the Owner of what is near and together, the Lord of heaven and earth."

What she is doing here in this one paragraph is fascinating. She takes the Christian word for God and unites it with the Indian concept of God. She unites the term of God, that was incomprehensible to the Indians, with the terms of God that were abominable to the

Spaniards, and she is the Mother of all of them. You notice what she is doing? She is pulling the two together. Christianity was advancing by way of opposition at that moment: "Either you do it our way or you're wrong. You have to get rid of everything you believe, and you have to enter our world." That's what the Indians found so difficult. They could not abandon all the religion of their ancestors. They could not abandon a tradition that had given them corn and food and life and sustenance. That was the argument against the missionaries: "How can we abandon something that has given us life, something that has given us corn and food, everything that we have?" That would be a betrayal of the family. So now Our Lady brings the two worlds together.

What is the deeper element of Guadalupe? Remember, Christianity in Europe at that time, historical Christianity, had gotten quite far from the gospel. Historical Christianity had become quite distant from the Christianity of Jesus Christ. That's why we needed the Council of Trent later on, that's why we were going to need other councils. Christianity had also become very fascinated with the harshness of the punishment of God. I don't know how many of you have had a chance to see some of the paintings of purgatory that used to illuminate some of our catechisms, some of the church walls, or how many of you have seen the paintings of hell. I remember being in a small town in southern France a few years ago, and the church was literally intended to scare you out of hell. Its paintings depict what the devils do to those who have been damned, such as poking different parts of their bodies out with hot irons or hanging them by the feet and doing all kinds of atrocities. Christianity in those days was obsessed with the punishment of God rather than with the mercy and compassion of God. Historical Christianity was also at that time very, very strongly masculine oriented. God was punishing and stern. Christianity, in a way, needed to be refreshed. It needed to be refreshed in order to rediscover the beauty of the gospel.

The Indian religions were very beautiful in many ways, but there's no doubt there was one very negative element. It would have scandalized you; it would have scandalized me. That element was human sacrifice. They didn't kill people because of sport. They

didn't have gladiators and all those kinds of games that kill people just for recreation, but they did believe they had to nourish the sun. So it was a bloody religion. But not all native American religions believed in human sacrifice, as appears to be the case with Juan Diego's religion. He came from Texcoco, not from Tenochtitlan, and those religions seem to have opposed human sacrifice. So human sacrifice seems to have been an extreme, just as overemphasizing the punishment of God seemed to be an extreme which eclipsed the mercy and compassion of God.

What Our Lady is doing in this story is bringing the best elements of both together. She is purifying both and bringing out both in a better light. Rather than destroying, she is uniting, as a way to reach both of them. The Indians would not have to abandon their religion but would be able to take on the new religion at its best, to maintain the best of the old tradition and form something new. This is what Our Lady does. That's why she wants a temple to be built. I'll read again for you—because I think it's a very beautiful paragraph—why she wants that particular temple. It's in paragraph seventy-five of the narrative.

By the way, this narrative is considered by scholars of religion to be one of the most beautiful religious narratives in the world, in comparison with any religion. They put it at the level of the Genesis stories of creation, at the level of other great stories. The poetry and precision of this narrative are fascinating. That's why the more we study it, the more we get into it. With the canonization of Juan Diego the Holy Father has called for even more scientific studies of this. I was very privileged two weeks ago to spend a weekend with the official postulator and vice-postulator for the canonization of Juan Diego. They have been doing some incredible detective work for the last twenty-five years. The documentation they have accumulated, and the interpretations that have come forth—I thought I knew a lot, but it was just mind-blowing. It's a fascinating text where every word is carefully placed to bring out the meaning.

Here is why she wants a temple:

Listen and hear well in your heart, my most abandoned son. That which scares you and troubles you is nothing. Do not let your countenance and heart be troubled. Do not fear that sickness or any other sickness or anxiety. Am I not here, your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and my protection? Am I not your source of life? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle where I cross my arms? Who else do you need? Let nothing trouble you or cause you sorrow. Do not worry because of you uncle's sickness, he will not die of the present sickness. Be assured in your heart that he is already healed.

Notice the constancy of the heart: "Do not worry." This is her constant message: "Why do you worry? Am I not here, who am your Mother?" She brings them together and allows the Indian world to begin to appreciate Christianity through the categories that they understand and appreciate. This is the great breakthrough of Guadalupe.

The story ends with the bishop and the flowers. The flowers confirm the truth of the message. But even more so, let us move a step further now, because the grace of Guadalupe is that she appeared on the *tilma*. There are beautiful paintings. If you ever have the chance to see the museum of the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which holds the whole evolution of Guadalupe art from the beginning to the present, I recommend that you see it. There are some beautiful paintings that have profound theological interpretations. One of them is God the Father painting Guadalupe, with God the Son holding the paints and the Holy Spirit guiding them. It's a divine painting, a beautiful interpretation of the Guadalupe event.

A miraculous apparition, she's been studied by scientists. I, myself, was part of a team of scientists from NASA that did a very, very scientific study about twenty years ago. A study by many, many people, and they find no explanation about why the image should be there, because scientifically speaking, it should not exist, but it's there. Millions of people go by and see it every year. I myself will be there, two weeks from now, with a video team. We are creating a video on the truth of Juan Diego. We are working with the team that brought about the canonization.

What is in the painting? First of all, the painting itself you cannot explain humanly. You can try, you can give many explanations, and at the end you say it shouldn't be there, but it's there. For the Indian world it's more. Remember, the Indian world was not alphabetic. The Indian world was a very literate world, but it was not an alphabetic world. It was a pictographic world. It communicated through hieroglyphs. The image itself is an open letter to anyone who has the code. You can read the image the way you and I read a book, because it's an open letter. Keep in mind the Indian world, and keep in mind the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It's an image of the Madonna with the sun behind her and the moon under her feet. She's dressed with a blue-green mantle, turquoise. Her dress is the color of clay, and she's in a position of prayer and has a beautiful face with eyes looking down. That's a simple description. Keep it in mind.

What does it tell the Indian world? First of all, you see the picture as Our Lady is standing around clouds and fog. For the Indian world, the words "clouds" and "fog" meant coming from heaven, a messenger from heaven. She is kind of opening a window to heaven, because you see it in the image of the clouds and the fog. She herself is standing and covers the sun. You don't see the sun, but she doesn't extinguish the sun. That's very important. The missionaries are saying, "You have to get rid of all your religious symbols." She's affirming their religious symbols, that there is something greater. She's also standing upon the moon. That was the second greatest deity for the Indian world. So she's greater than the moon, but she doesn't crush the moon.

She who is greater than the sun, who is greater than the moon, but doesn't extinguish them, doesn't destroy them, is herself not a goddess. And how do we know she's not a goddess? She does not wear a mask. You look at her and she has a beautiful face, and she has eyes that see. If you look at the Indian deities, their eyes never saw. She has very beautiful eyes. In fact, one of the things that has been studied the most is the makeup of her eyes. There are whole books on them, incredible photographs of the incredible perfection just of her eyes. She has eyes that see.

This beautiful Lady, who is greater than their gods, but not a goddess, is also dressed with a blue-green mantle. In the Indian world, color had meaning. The blue-green, the turquoise, is the color of divinity. She who is greater than their gods, is not herself a goddess, but she is clothed with divinity. But she also wears the color of clay in her dress, so she is of the earth. Therefore, she unites heaven and earth.

She who is greater than anything they have, who's not a goddess but shares in the divine, is in a position of prayer, her hands near her heart. For the Indian world the notion of the heart was the deepest notion they had. The heart was not just a physical organ; the heart was a dynamic person in relation to the other. That's why in Spanish—if you speak Latin American Spanish—you see how often we use the word *corazón* (heart) for a name, such as when we call someone "*Mi corazón*." I don't think it's too common in English to call people simply, "My heart." The recent president of the Philippines was named Corazon Aquino. Heart is a dynamic person in relation to the other. In fact, one of the ways people refer to others in Spanish, to people who are related to each other, is "*Mi vida*" ("My life"). So *corazón* is a person giving life to the other. *Corazón* is in relation to the other in such a way that the other becomes my life, and I give life to the other. In this painting the Lady is in a position of offering her heart to us, offering herself to us.

When you see the painting, you also see that right on her waist she's wearing a black band. In Spanish we don't say a woman is pregnant, you say she is "wearing the band," *está en cinta*. In this painting she is pregnant, and she wears the sign of pregnancy. In the Indian world the woman was considered to be divinized when she found out she was pregnant, because at this time she was giving new life. Creation was being renewed within the womb of the woman. The Indians felt very deeply about life, and creation was renewed every time there was a new conception. The woman, in a way, was cooperating with a god, was the divine receptacle to bring about new life. Therefore, she was due honor, especially as long as she wore the band. People would recognize she was pregnant. If you look right underneath the band, right over her womb you'll see the only little image of the four leaf clover. That four leaf clover, for the Indian world, was the

symbol for what they call the fifth sun, the present cosmic age that we are living in. The fact that she wears the cosmic age over her womb, for the Indian world, would mean that what she carries in her womb is going to begin the new cosmological age of humanity. She is pregnant with a new life that's going to bring new life to the real new world.

Her face is neither Spanish nor Indian. She is *a mestiza*; therefore, she already combines the two races that were in many ways opposed to each other at that moment. She is both Indian and European, so she's not fully either, but both. She's the one life that offers new life to them. She's crowned with the stars, and you can see the beautiful stars over her head. Many studies have been made now. Some people claim that she reflects perfectly the position of the stars at that moment of history.

Here she is offering something new to humanity which is carried within her. It's Juan Diego who makes the identification that she's the Mother of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior. Here we have a Marian apparition in Indian categories. The Spaniards saw her as the Immaculate Conception. The Indians saw her as a new version of Tonanzin. Both the same. She spoke to both in a new way, starting to bring them together.

This is the Guadalupe story. We could say much more; there's a lot more to it. Guadalupe in a way was a call to conversion. She called the Indians to a conversion that meant a rehabilitation of their human dignity, of new life. She called them to a conversion to a religion of compassion and mercy. But she also called the Church to a conversion, to come away from its pre-planned programs and to enter into participation with the Indian world in creating something new. She called both of them to a new openness. From there on, we're told by historians, in the next ten years over eight million people came to ask for baptism. People would walk as far as what we would call today maybe sixty or eighty miles. Can you imagine walking sixty or eighty miles to go to catechism? People were doing that to be baptized. All of a sudden, there was something new. There was a new understanding and a new appreciation.

What does Guadalupe tell us today? I think Guadalupe is about developing a spirituality of appreciating difference. I think in our natural way we tend to fear difference. We tend to fear difference as destructive. Look at the problems of the world today, where people are building incredible barriers' and shedding so much blood because of difference. The differences in their histories were greater than any of our differences today, and yet she was able to reconcile those differences and begin something new. I think Guadalupe is precisely about developing a spirituality of appreciating difference as a gift of God. Appreciating that God did not make a mistake when he made different peoples to be who they are. That it is our task to bring out the goodness and the beauty of one another. Weakness we all have, and maybe within the very context of discovering the beauty and dignity of the other, I might discover more clearly my own personal weaknesses and limitations that I need to change, because all of us have them. So rather than focus on the negative, to focus on the positive.

I think today the Church can do this in the parishes. There are parishes where different people are coming in, and the natural reaction is to fear: "Why do they have to be different? Why do they have to do things differently?" I think we need to convert ourselves from that mentality to a mentality of welcoming, which has been the great attribute of the Church as it has gone out on missionary journeys all over the world. The greater challenge of the Church today is to receive the foreigner into our midst and to receive him as a gift of God. To see how we can bring in together and harness this beautiful gift that God is bringing to us for the good of all of us. I am thinking of a spirituality of appreciating difference, of being open to the otherness of others. We have so much to learn from each other. I believe that we can be a real gift to the world.

A few years ago I was invited to northern France to do a workshop on cultural differences. They were bringing university students from different European countries together to try to think European. Instead of thinking Romanian, instead of thinking French, instead of thinking Irish, they were trying to get them to think European. I was giving my standard talk about how we have to go beyond tolerance, that tolerance isn't

sufficient. That we have to go beyond tolerance to being able to work together and to appreciate the giftedness of each other. During the coffee break this beautiful lady from one of the eastern countries comes up to me and says, "You know, I find what you say very, very interesting. I cannot think I might want to like it, but it's so different for me. You have to understand that in my culture, we only tolerate someone else when we are too much of a coward to destroy them. In my culture, you only tolerate when you are too weak to take over." So tolerance is a sign of weakness, and appreciating differences is not even thinkable. We forget that.

Look at what's going on in the world today. We can be the leaders in something new. God is blessing our land with peoples from all over the world. Look at the Olympics and the American team. Look at the faces. Who were they? What were their names? What were their faces? I found it fascinating. Look at golf champion Tiger Woods. What is he? Thai, African-American, and Caucasian—one person bringing things together. Our Church can make the difference, because this will be the unity, not of the world, but of the Spirit. The unity of the Spirit which, just like in the Acts of the Apostles, let the early Christians go through all kinds of borders to become a new human community, a new Christian community. We have an ever more glorious moment today right within our home parishes. But we need to develop a spirituality, a spirituality of difference that will welcome even what we do not understand at the moment, knowing that when we understand it, we are going to love it, are going to become better for it. It's not one over the other. It's a win-win situation.

I think the first step is letting go of what is dehumanizing in my own culture and showing other people how to let go of what is dehumanizing in their culture. We all gain if we are willing to let go a bit, and we become richer. I like to give the example that maybe the Spirit of God is bringing about a new stew. How do you prepare a good stew? You put in different ingredients, and then you let it boil for a while. What happens in the boiling process? Everyone lets go of something, but everybody gains from what everybody else has let go. No one is destroyed, but you have new richness.

And this is the society of the Spirit that we can build today.

I think today we need to learn from Guadalupe that although in Christianity we emphasize dogmas and doctrines much—and I am not against that—maybe more important to evangelization is the rediscovery of poetry, of music, of art and drama. What moves the heart to action? It is not dogmatic definitions. Again, I'm not against them. We need dictionary definitions to clarify literature. But you don't study the dictionary to get excited about literature. I think we need the Magisterium. I'm not against it at all. I've worked on the new catechism a lot. But I think for evangelization we need a language of the heart. That's what Guadalupe did, she entered Juan Diego's heart through poetic and beautiful language. I think that's what we need today, poetic, beautiful language and music.

I think today we need more than ever a gospel that will truly emphasize what Our Lady emphasized, and what Jesus emphasized: a gospel of compassion. A gospel for whom people will be important. There are so many lonely people today—young people, old people, single people. We need a gospel of compassion, of reaching out to each other. Our Lady reached out to Juan Diego, and through him they started reaching out to each other. I think today Our Lady teaches us compassion, love, and a unity that bypasses all the divisions we can make.

And finally, I think that the temple the Lady was asking for has not yet been built. I think the temple Our Lady was asking for was not just a church building—and I think a church building is very proper—but is still a temple in the building. I dare to hope, along with our Holy Father. When he called the bishops of the hemisphere together, they were talking about the Americas. Pope John Paul corrected everyone—and me too; I am not a bishop, but I too was speaking about the Americas—and he said, “No, it's time you start speaking about America as a hemisphere. It's time you start looking at becoming a common family.” It's a dream, it's a vision. But we are Christians, we are about vision, we are about dream. Wouldn't it be marvelous to create a real New World? Not just the

problems of the Old World transported to a new territory, but a real New World? Couldn't we dream and really work at it? I don't know the practical way, but I think it can come about if there's a dream or vision that we can have an America without borders. That we can have an America where people come and go, looking for jobs, for work, for opportunity. Where they seek educational opportunities, seek to enrich one another with their customs, their music, their art, their foods. Wouldn't it be marvelous if you could actually turn this into a real symphony of a new human family?

I think it can be done, and I think it begins at the parish level. At the parish level, we begin to see a parish that becomes like the plant growing in the greenhouse. Here we learn how to celebrate each other's feasts, how to reach out and try to understand each other, how to appreciate the otherness of others. I think this is the beginning of the temple Our Lady wants. The ultimate temple that Our Lady wants will be a real New World: an America without borders that will be a real sign of peace and hope to a world that, at the present moment, is tearing itself apart by violence because of differences and lack of understanding. I think what Our Lady of Guadalupe started in 1531 is more real and more urgent today than ever before, and I think we're about building that new temple. That's why the pope wants to canonize Juan Diego, because the man who thought he was worthless, in effect, became the first and most important evangelizer of the entire hemisphere. If he could do it, you and I can do it too.

God bless you and thank you very, very much.

