

FROM THE PASTOR
DECEMBER 10, 2023
THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

We are all aware that Advent is the season of Light. What a wonderful time then to contemplate the wondrous light that Our Blessed Mother brought to the very center of the New World on December 12, 1531.

There once was a civilization that lived in a world apart. To their north was a great desert which no one had ever crossed. To their south was an enormous and endless jungle through which no one ever emerged. To their east and west lay the vast expanse of the Ocean Sea. These people were the Aztecs who inhabited the modern nation of Mexico, but they called themselves the *Mexica*.

Perhaps because they were so isolated, the evil one enslaved them and the ancient enemy of our race, the prince of darkness and the father of lies (we never use capitals when writing of the devil) was openly worshipped. And he demanded what he always demands, human sacrifice. Ancient Mexico had become a river of human blood. In 1488 when the Temple of the Sun was dedicated, over 20,000 men were offered in sacrifice in three days' time. But amidst the horror of their surroundings the people prayed that a River of Light would flow into their darkness. Their own prophets had foretold that one day the Mother of the True God would come to their rescue and stop the human sacrifice.

Although the Spanish had conquered the Aztec Empire by 1521 (having first arrived in Mexico in 1519), only the Immaculate One would conquer their hearts and souls. On December 9, 1531 (the day of the winter solstice because the Gregorian calendar had not yet been inaugurated) the Light burst into their darkness. Our Lady appeared on the Tepeyac hill to Juan Diego and asked that a Church be built on that very spot where, as she said, *I will demonstrate, manifest, and make known my love and mercy for all who live united in these lands*. In four days, Our Lady appeared five times to Juan Diego and on Monday, December 12, 1531, she revealed herself as the Virgin of Guadalupe (a name which means River of Light). On that day her miraculous image formed on the tilma of Juan Diego,

and it is enshrined in the great Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. It is a continuous miracle because it is an image not made by human hands but given to us by God Himself. In merely 10 years (from 1531 to 1541) twelve million of the Aztecs were baptized through Our Lady of Guadalupe. Interestingly, December 12th that year was the day of the winter solstice (this was before the Gregorian reform of the calendar). It was the day when the light returned.

Here at St. Paul, we have our Chapel of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I am always so pleased to notice many of our parishioners praying there and lighting candles. The Chapel is adorned with three images. The Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is an exact replica of the Image that is in the great Basilica in Mexico City. It was touched to the original image as is testified in the notes of the Cardinal Archbishop and Primate of Mexico. It is in the typical frame common to Mexico. To the left in the chapel is a beautiful replica of the painting of St. Juan Diego to whom Our Lady appeared. The painting is in a silver and gold frame, again in the Mexican style. Both pictures were brought from Mexico. And the painting to the right in the Chapel is a canvas copy of the painting of Diego Velazquez' *Coración de la Virgen* (the Coronation of the Virgin). The original is in the famous Prado Museum in Madrid.

Viva los Estados Unidos!

Viva Mexico!

Viva la Virgencita de Guadalupe!

Viva Cristo Rey!

In Jesus and Mary,
Monsignor James F. Pereda