

Dec. 12, 2018 Immaculate Conception Parish, Hartford

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe – Luke 1:26-38

This beautiful Season of Advent celebrates the coming of Jesus. We celebrate His Birth, when Baby Jesus was born in the darkness of that “silent night”. But Jesus was more than a precious Baby; Jesus is the Incarnate---living, breathing, powerful---Word of God made Flesh Who dwelt among us. Jesus, the Word of God, brought us Salvation---Forgiveness of our sins---and Redemption for the world.

Today, we celebrate our Blessed Mother----the one human being in all the history of the world, chosen by God to be the Mother of His Son---the Mother of God’s Word.

And when Mary said her “Yes”---her “Fiat”----her “let it be done to me according to Your Word”---then, and only then, could God’s Word be made Flesh, conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary’s Virginal womb.

“Words” are so important! Words communicate our intentions; they express our emotions; they inform others of who we are.

From our earliest days, when we are still not able to walk, or even crawl, we’re “communicating”, and struggling to find our words.

A baby screams, coos, wails, and giggles as ways to let their parents know what they need and how they feel, even before they can speak.

And as the baby grows, they learn more words to communicate with their grandparents, sisters and brothers, ----words to help them express their needs, their desires, their sorrow, and their love.

It doesn’t take long for a baby to learn one of their favorite words: “No!” when they don’t want, or like something.

And of course, they also know the word “Yes!” to let you know what they do want, and need.

And what are typically the baby’s first words? “Mama” or “Dada”/“Papa”, because they know those are the two people who love them the most. And from there, they establish a deep and strong connection with “Mama”; we depend on her, we trust in her; we know that she is always there for us, and the answer to all our needs.

Just a few days ago, we celebrated the beautiful Feast of the Immaculate Conception. And it was on that same day that I had the privilege of consecrating our entire Diocese to the protection and intercession of our dear Blessed Mother.

We celebrate her first of all because she is one of us---a human being, as we are. We celebrate her because of the great privilege that was given to her to be the Mother of God’s Word Made Flesh. And most of all we celebrate her because she was the first Disciple, and the greatest and most faithful, Disciple of Jesus. Mary is our Mother; Mary is our Model.

From the first moment that she said “Yes” to God as we heard in this evening’s Gospel, allowing God’s Word to be made Flesh, Mary continued to say “Yes” to God for the rest of her life:

through the 30 years that she and Joseph raised Jesus from infancy, to childhood, through teenage years, and into early adulthood.

Mary said “Yes” to God as she followed Jesus throughout His public ministry on the days when she took great pride in seeing the crowds of people thinking He was great, and she said “Yes” to God even when the crowds condemned Him to death. She stayed with Him along the Way of the Cross, and throughout His suffering and crucifixion.

Mary stood at the Foot of the Cross and heard Jesus entrust her into the care of His 2nd closest disciple, John, which is when Mary also became our Mother.

And throughout her time in Heaven sitting next to Jesus, Mary continues to say “Yes” to God in helping those of us here on earth to do the same---to try to say “Yes” to God, and “No” to sin.

That is what we celebrate on this most Joyful Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

It was almost 500 years ago when a Lovely Lady from Heaven appeared to the poor and humble Juan Diego (whose Feast we celebrated on Sunday) on Tepeyac Hill in Mexico.

We know the rest of the story so well:

Mary sent Juan Diego to the top of the hill to collect roses to give to the bishop as his sign, where roses wouldn't normally grow in winter. Juan collected the roses in his tilma made from cactus fibers.

When Juan unfurled his tilma to give the roses to the bishop, an image of Our Lady was revealed, miraculously printed on the tilma.

This image that still appears on the tilma as it is on display in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, was her way to say to her children, I am here, talk to me, count on me. That is her way to say “Yes” to all of us.

What beautiful words Our Lady of Guadalupe spoke to St. Juan Diego. I'm sure you remember them well:

She called him: “Juanito, Juan Dieguito.”

As he got close to her he was amazed at her supernatural grandeur... Bending before her he heard her very tender and cordial words, words coming as from one who attracts and is highly esteemed.

“Juanito, the smallest of all my children, where are you going? He responded: My Lady, I need to go to your house in México, to follow the divine things that our priests, the delegates of our Lord, teach and impart to us.”

She responded to him with such Love: “Junito, am I not your Mother?” As if to say: Juan Diego, why do you worry, why do you question? I am here with you. Everything will be alright! Don't worry!

Over the centuries, Our Lady of Guadalupe has appealed to the hearts of the Faithful throughout the world. Mexico, just make know this wonderful exchange of Love, and it took roots in the hearts of millions of Catholics all over.

Just because we have consecrated our Diocese to the protection and intercession of our Blessed Mother doesn't mean that we can expect some sort of special treatment from her, or from Jesus. No, what that means is that we hope that WE will give our Blessed Mother special treatment. We pray that WE will pay more attention to our dear Lady of Guadalupe. We pray that WE will hear her say to us, just as she said to St. Juan Diego: "Am I not your mother?" Don't you realize that? Why are you not acting the way my children should act? Why do you not love my Son Jesus more faithfully? You worry and fret about so many things. Am I not here with you? Everything will be alright. Don't worry. Say "Yes" to me; say "Yes" to Jesus. Say "No" to sin!

Mary's motherly Love for us----each and every one of us--- makes it easier for us to look to her with Love, and say: "Mama!".

Today, let us look to St. Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe as examples of faith, speaking out to us from their Heavenly Home, a time and place so different from our hectic and sometimes-confusing world, but with a message that is as important today as it ever could be.

This is our "Tepeyac"----right here in this parish church, and right in the homes where you live, and throughout our Diocese of Kalamazoo. And Our Lady of Guadalupe keeps calling us----by name: "Maria", "Pablo", "Juan", "Cecilia", ALL of us....She too wants us to "do whatever her Son Jesus tells us to do"; she wants us to help build Jesus' Church; she wants us to go and tell all who will listen about the Good News of Salvation, and to speak those powerful words of God's Compassion, Mercy, Forgiveness, and Love for all people.

May of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the image of a poor native woman, pregnant with Child, help us to prepare a place in our hearts for the upcoming Birth of Christ into our world.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe inspire us to help others in our community and in our world as a symbol of unity for all of us who live in the Americas.

May the Tender love of this beautiful Mother, La Morenita, be for everyone in your families, the sign of the certainty of God's love and care for His children.

May God bless you. Long life to Our Lady of Guadalupe!!!