

On this day in 1531 (also a Tuesday), Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin (canonized: 2002) was intercepted on a mission of mercy to his dying uncle by a vision of a woman who identified herself as the “Mother of the Very True Deity,” whom he had met three times previously. In response to his troubles, she indicated that his uncle had recovered, and directed him to collect out-of-season, foreign roses from a barren hilltop called Tepeyac.

She arranged them in his tilma (cloak), and sent him, once again, to visit the Archbishop who had already disbelieved Juan Diego twice, asking for a “sign” prior to granting the lady’s request to erect a church on the site. This time, when Juan opened his cloak, spilling forth the roses, the Archbishop was astonished by the image emblazoned on the tilma and claimed it for himself.

On December 26, 1531, the tilma was carried in procession to a hastily-erected chapel on the hill, and has been enshrined at the basilica ever since. Church authorities repeatedly challenged the validity of the image and story, even to this day.

But in 1895, Pope Leo XIII granted Canonical Coronation to the event. Pius X named our Lady of Guadalupe “Patroness of Latin America” in 1910, and John XXIII invoked her as “Mother of the Americas” in 1961. The image is of a woman of Aztec descent cloaked in a mantel of blue emblazoned by 8-pointed stars, standing on a crescent moon, and surrounded by rays, like

the sun, not unlike Revelation’s description. When she spoke with Juan Diego, she used his native Nahuatl tongue, which was the language of the Aztec Empire, conquered just a decade prior to the Apparition. The Spanish authorities, civil and religious, had great difficulty crediting that Natives were co-equal with Europeans, and were fearful that the image would inspire revolt and reversion to “pagan religions” and practices. The image has become a beloved symbol of Mexico and often accompanied independence uprisings.

It is easy to become discouraged by the seemingly endless avoidance of dialogue and denial of experience by Roman Catholic authorities toward the LGBTQ population. Here, the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe offers hope. Church authorities did not want to believe that Our Lady would appear to a native (non-European), that she would speak in a local tongue, that she would look like an Aztec. Similarly, even today, church leaders do not want to acknowledge a language for love that is different than their own. They do not want to accept that revelation can occur outside of their particular understanding and experience.

But Our Lady of Guadalupe reminds us all that G-d continues to speak from outside the halls of human power; that G-d’s love is not contained by human arrogance; and mostly that G-d’s grace will eventually triumph over the bigotries that attempt to stifle it.

— Dan H.



DECEMBER 23

(4th Sunday of Advent)

Saturday Mass: 5:00 pm

DECEMBER 24

(4th Sunday of Advent)

Sunday Mass: 10:30 am

DECEMBER 24

(Christmas Eve)

Family Service: 5:00 pm

Choral Prelude/Carols: 8:15 pm

Mass at Night: 9:00 pm

Choral Prelude/Carols: 11:15 pm

Mass at Night: 12.00 midnight

DECEMBER 25

Mass during Day: 11:00 am

DECEMBER 30 (Saturday)

Holy Family: 5 pm

DECEMBER 31 (Sunday)

Holy Family: 9:30 am
11:30 am

DECEMBER 31

(New Year’s Eve)

Mary, Mother of God: 5:00 pm

JANUARY 1

(New Year’s Day)

Mary, Mother of God: 11:00 am

A new heart I will give you, and a

NEW SPIRIT

I will put within you. Ez. 36:26a

GOSPEL PROCESSION

During the Easter Season, the Liturgy Committee began the practice of having the Book of the Gospels processed into the assembly at the beginning of our celebration and having the Gospel proclaimed in the midst of the assembly. We will continue the practice during the Christmas Season.

Having the Book of the Gospels carried in the entrance procession is one of the ancient traditions of the Church. This practice highlights the Gospels because of our belief that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all the Scriptures.

In the Liturgy of the Word, God’s Word is presented to the liturgical assembly, not only in verbal proclamation, but also in music and ritual. Singing the Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation can help bring God’s Word to life for the assembled people. The procession with the Book of the Gospels, accompanied with song, candles and even incense, appeals to more than the sense of hearing by engaging the senses of sight and smell as well. In this way, the Liturgy of the Word is able to appeal to and engage the whole person.

The presence of the Book of the Gospels, carried in procession, helps emphasize God’s Word as present and visible to the assembled people. The Gospel Procession highlights the reverence that the Church extends to the proclamation of the Gospel as the Word of Christ. This had such importance in the life of the early Church that the Gospel Procession predates the

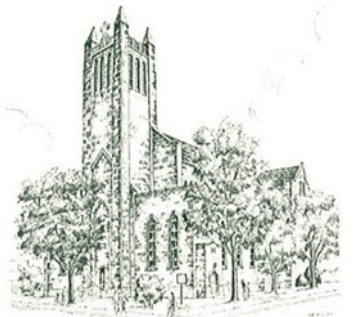
use of the processional cross for the entrance procession.

In the same way the carrying the Book of the Gospels in the entrance procession highlights the importance we place on Christ’s Word and presence in the Gospels, having the Gospel reading for the day proclaimed in the midst of the assembly highlights our understanding that Christ is in the midst of our assembly when we gather to pray, to listen to God’s Word and to celebrate Eucharist.

As we did during the Easter Season, the Gospel will be proclaimed from a position part way down the centre aisle. For those in the pews whose backs will be to the Book of the Gospels, you are welcome, and indeed invited, to turn toward the Book of the Gospels for the proclamation.

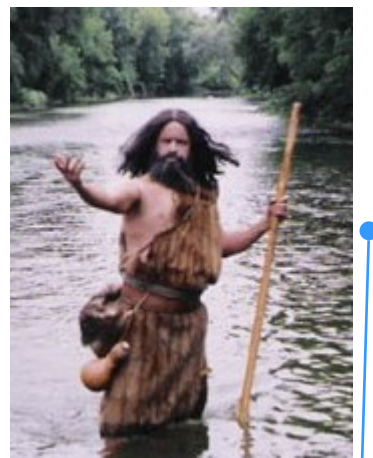
At the end of the proclamation, the Book of the Gospels is enthroned in front of the Ambo, where it remains visible to the assembly throughout the rest of the celebration.

Carrying the Book of the Gospels in the entrance procession, placing it on the altar at the beginning of the celebration, having the Gospel proclaimed in the midst of the assembly and enthroning the Book visibly at the Ambo are all ways in which we are reminded of the pre-eminence of God’s Word in our lives and of Christ’s continuing presence among us in and through His Word.



Inside this issue:

Advent: Remembering God’s Vision	2
Immaculate Conception	3
Practicing Presence	3
End of Life Issues	3
Our Lady of Guadalupe	4
Christmas Schedule	4



ADVENT: REMEMBERING GOD'S VISION

In this season we discover afresh God's dream for the world

God has a vision for our planet. It is easy to forget this. Often we experience life as a repetitive cycle of daily duties. Kids grow like weeds. Our bodies creak in new places. But in the wider world it is hard to see history as "going" anywhere, moving toward a particular purpose or end. Many days look just like the ones before. Indeed, the nightly news reads like an endless spiral of violence and chaos where the strong hold tightly to their power and the weak continue to disappear into the margins, just in rotating corners of the globe. But God has a vision.

The prophets painted this vision for us in rich images drawn from their desert homeland. Images of mountain-top feasts and wolves dining next to lambs. Swords beat into farming tools and cooling shade in the parching heat. They promised that "on that day" those who were blind would be able to see; those who were deaf would be able to hear; those who were constrained in any way would be free; those who were hungry would be satisfied.

Jesus so loved the prophets' "day" that he gave "that day" a name: Basileia tou Theou. Or, as we translate in English: The kingdom of God. He preached about it every chance he got and offered more vibrant illustrations of what it would be like. He prayed ardently for the kingdom "to come" and taught his disciples to do likewise. Moreover, he gave signs of what the kingdom would look like in its fullness. Wherever he traveled, persons without sight did come to see. Persons who could neither hear nor speak were suddenly singing God's praise. Persons who were paralyzed could dance. And multitudes were fed. Indeed, there were leftovers. The early Christian apologist Origen once referred to Jesus as "autobasileia" – the kingdom of God incarnate.

We live in a time when sometimes the miracles of Jesus seem like a quaint stories from a distant past – a time before doctors and modern medicine, before journalists and fact checking. Miracles don't happen anymore except in television docudramas. And the kingdom of God again seems far away. In our darkest moments, we sometimes wonder whether at this point in history it is even possible to meet society's most basic needs much less have leftovers.

But as Habakkuk reminds us, God still has a vision. "If it delays," he writes, "wait for it, it will surely come, it will

not be late." (Habakkuk 2:3) And God's concerns—for sight, hearing, freedom and fullness—remain constant. In our Catholic liturgical tradition we are reminded of this most definitively in our sacramental life. God still illumines our eyes through the light of baptism. God still opens our ears through his word. God frees us from what holds us bound in reconciliation. God feeds us at the table of Eucharist. In these ways and many others, we come to experience something of God's vision for us, and we are empowered to take that vision out into the world through acts of justice and mercy. Whenever we engage in any work that illumines, that opens ears, that frees, that feeds, we become collaborators with God in realizing that ancient vision. We, too, become miracle-workers of the kingdom.

Each year as the solstice nears, the church marks the season of Advent as a time to nourish hope in God's kingdom. During these four weeks, we open the word of God to hear anew of God's dream. We read the preaching of the prophets and of how this preaching was set afire in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Lest we become discouraged and forget that God does have a vision. Lest we become cavalier and forget that God eagerly awaits our collaboration to realize this vision.



The word of God is a powerful thing. In the book of the prophet Isaiah, God's word is compared to the rain and snow which does not return to the heavens before it has watered the earth and made it fruitful. "So shall my word be..." God says. "It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11) When we sit with God's word and participate in God's sacraments, we begin afresh to dream the dreams that God dreams. We begin afresh to long for the world God envisions. And we begin afresh to discover the ways that we can participate in bringing this kingdom about.

So many of us want to take the season of Advent seriously. We want to be persons of the kingdom. We hope our liturgical participation and works of justice during these sacred weeks will lead us to a deeper understanding of that kingdom. Come Christmas morn, having been faithful to this journey, may we stand together in awe of the goodness of a God who dreams so much for us that he sent his only son to show us the way.

Ann M. Garrido Celebration Publications

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Remember last August when many of us were outside hoping to catch a glimpse of the solar eclipse? We needed an aid in order to observe this spectacle with care. Our fascination was with the sun.

Our goal was standing in the light of the sun and looking upward at its brilliance, but the aides, so small and flimsy in comparison to the sun, were necessary to the celestial encounter. Mary is like that, a way, perhaps the best way, of standing before and looking upward at the Son.

Some Catholics worry that a devotion to Mary can overshadow and maybe undermine one's devotion to Christ. They warn against a notion of Mary as rich in mercy and God as lacking in mercy. I'm not one of the worried. I know it is not now, nor has it ever been, a question of mercy or love. For it is God, Scripture tells us, who is rich in mercy. God who is love.

It is a question, rather, of how we know or see or experience God. Consider her title: Mother of God, two nouns: mother and God.

Every one of us has an experience of mother and mothering. We either have, or had, mothers or we are mothers. But only one person who was born human and walked the earth had the experience of doing so also as God. Jesus of Nazareth alone has known what it is to be both human and divine.

When God tells Isaiah, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways," we understand that in our bones (Isaiah 55:8a). And in those same bones, we know mothers and mothering. We can't begin to understand what it would mean to turn water into wine, but we know what it is to tell a child, or to be told as a child, how to look to the needs of the guests. We can't begin to understand what it means to hang on a cross for the sake of the world, but we know what it is to watch a loved one suffer.

When our granddaughter was born last December during a long, difficult labor, I stood by my daughter and prayed. I asked Mary to help her, to be with her, to comfort her. I asked Mary to pray with me and for me that my daughter's child might soon be delivered and that both she and the baby might be healthy and well. I understood, and understand, that God alone heals.

It was Jesus, not Mary, who healed the woman with a hemorrhage. It was Jesus, not Mary, who raised Lazarus from the dead. But it was Mary, not Jesus, who conceived a child. It was Mary, not Jesus, who labored and gave birth far from home. It was Mary, not Jesus, who knew the fears and pains and perils of childbirth. So I asked her that night, and it is Mary I will be asking again when our newest grandchild is born this spring.

Devotion to Mary is an example of the deep ritual wisdom of the church. Night prayer is the quickest, quietest

END OF LIFE ISSUES

A DISCUSSION

An ethical reflection and response

Thursday, January 18, 2018

7:00—9:00 p.m.

St. Joseph's Parish Hall

Resource Person:

Rev. Mark Miller, C.Ss.R.

Fr. Mark Miller is presently Provincial of the Redemptorists of Canada and a Bio-ethicist. He worked for many years with the Saskatchewan Catholic Health Authority to develop ethical guidelines for health care. His information sessions are always informative, thought-provoking and compassionate.

Put the date in your calendar!

of the daily prayer. It depends upon familiarity and repetition, just as the best sleep science (long before there was such a thing as sleep science) recommends. The psalm choices are few. The readings are brief. The Cantic of Simeon is the shortest of the three daily canticles. All of night prayer is aimed at endings, closings, consummations. It speaks to us of the slipping away into both sleep and death. It concludes with the Salve Regina, a hymn to Mary.

Parents know who children want in the night. They want their mothers. Those who care for patients in the night of impending death hear it again and again, the cry for mother. And we who surrender to sleep are invited to think of Mary, to sing of Mary, to ask for Mary. We who are the children of God call out to the Mother of God.

Who made Mary to be the Mother of God? Who invited her into this mystery and this holy work?

It is God who knows the needs and desires of our hearts, who knows the cries of children in the night. It is God who knows the single familiarity that each person on earth, in every time, every place and every culture, shares — each one of us born of a woman, a mother.

I hear God's words to Isaiah. I know that God's thoughts are not my thoughts and God's ways are not my ways. But I suspect that God, who willed that Christ would come and be born a man, fully human and fully divine, knew that we would need help to stand before and look upward at the Son, the risen and ever-living Christ. So God asked Mary to be the Mother of God, and, just as truly, our own.

MELISSA MUSICK NUSSBAUM, Celebration Publications