

A Reflection for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

By Bishop David J. Malloy

December 12, 2020.

A woman, clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet – bearing a crown of stars. That woman given that special glory gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and his throne. The woman herself fled into the desert where she had a place prepared by God.

These words taken from the Book of Revelation draw our hearts to see the connection between this description of that mystical woman and the tilma and image of Mary left by Our Lady of Guadalupe.

We know the famous story from 1531 in Mexico. Mary appears to St. Juan Diego in December and sends him to Bishop Zumarraga. She asks for a Church to be built in her honor at that very spot. That church of course will become the place for Mass – for Jesus to be among the indigenous people of Mexico in their faith and in the sacramental reality of the Eucharist. There confessions will be heard and many will convert. That place and Mary's special image will even now, nearly 500 years later, have a special place not only in the faith of Mexicans and Mexican Americans – but in the faith of Hispanic Catholics and Anglo Catholics also.

How well did Pope St. John Paul II see this role of Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, in uniting people and cultures. He called her the Mother of the Americas – America in his mind being from the northern tip of Canada to the southernmost point of Argentina, and everything in between. Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe is the mother of all of us.

That's why here in Rockford we have constructed and dedicated a new prayer garden on the grounds of St. Peter Cathedral Parish. And at the heart of that garden, where all can come to pray, is the image of the Guadalupana. Mary is here enshrined, looking out on all of us. She standing looking toward the Cathedral Church – praying for the Diocese of Rockford and for the faithful. We

ask her intercession for our faith and as she has done for centuries in Mexico, that she might unite us – Anglos, Hispanics and others, - into one faithful Church.

I know that this year, with the COVID pandemic, the celebrations of December 12th will be limited like so many aspects of life and even of our prayer. We need to continue to use safe practices of masks and distancing. So I ask for your continued cooperation to limit the spread of the virus.

But let's still try to honor the Virgin of Guadalupe. Perhaps it will be as a family with virtual celebrations coming from our parishes. Maybe as a family we can dress our young Juanas and Juanitos and then say our prayers together in front of an image of our Blessed Mother.

I hope that someday all of you from all over the Diocese might perhaps drive here and visit this image of the Virgen of Guadalupe, offering a prayer to her on this spot.

Our special prayer to her at this time is for the sick and for the medical personnel who serve those who have contracted the virus. We ask for Mary's intercession to end the scourge of the virus – and to keep our faith and especially the faith our young people strong.

May we all have a Happy celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Mary, Mother of the Americas, pray for us!