

A WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

AN ADVENT RETREAT GUIDE ON OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

COMPANION GUIDE

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FIRST MEDITATION

A New-World Christmas

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION/GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How firmly do I believe that God is interested in the struggles I am facing, just as he was interested in the struggles being faced by his people in Mexico in 1531?

2. How deeply am I convinced that God chooses every Christian (including myself), no matter how humble or limited, to be his messenger in this world and to help spread his Kingdom, just as the Virgin Mary chose Juan Diego?

3. The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe depicts Mary with features and clothing familiar to and approachable by the native Mexican people. How personal and relevant to my day-to-day life is my own Marian devotion? What can I do to make it more personal and relevant?

QUOTATIONS TO HELP YOUR PRAYER

> He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God. And the Word became

flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

—John 1:10–14
NABRE

At the birth of Jesus, the Magi came from the East to Bethlehem and "saw the child with Mary his Mother" (Mt 2:11). At the beginning of his public life, at the marriage of Cana, when the Son of God works the first of his signs, awakening faith in the disciples, it is Mary who intervenes and directs the servants towards her Son in these words: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). In this regard I once wrote that "the Mother of Christ presents herself as the spokeswoman of her Son's will, pointing out those things which must be done so that the salvific power of the Messiah may be manifested". For this reason Mary is the sure path to our meeting with Christ. Devotion to the Mother of the Lord, when it is genuine, is always an impetus to a life guided by the spirit and values of the Gospel.

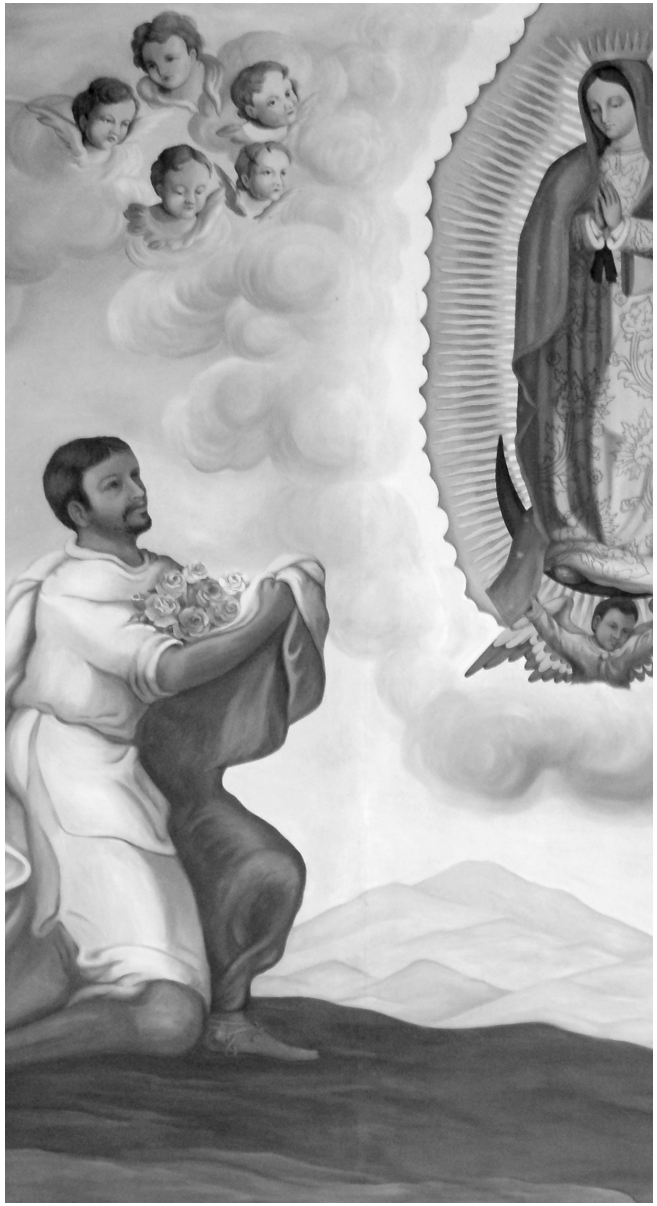
—*Ecclesia in America*, 11
ST. JOHN PAUL II

My son, perform your tasks in meekness;
then you will be loved by those
whom God accepts.
The greater you are, the more you must
humble yourself;
so you will find favor in the sight of the Lord.
For great is the might of the Lord;
he is glorified by the humble.
Seek not what is too difficult for you,

nor investigate what is beyond your power.
Reflect upon what has been assigned to you,
for you do not need what is hidden.

—Sirach 3:17–20
NABRE

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SECOND MEDITATION

Words of Comfort and Joy

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION/GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What struck me the most from the words that she spoke to St. Juan Diego and why?

2. God chose to bring Jesus into the world through Mary, giving him a real, human mother, and giving all his followers in Mary a spiritual mother. In my own words, why do I think God made that choice?

3. How would I describe my personal devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary? What could help bring it to the next level?

QUOTATIONS TO HELP YOUR PRAYER

> I want very much that they build my sacred little house here, in which I will show Him, I will exalt Him upon making Him manifest, I will give Him to all people in all my personal love, Him that is my compassionate gaze, Him that is my help, Him that is my salvation. Because truly I am your compassionate Mother, yours and that of all the people that live together in this land, and also of all the other various lineages of men, those who love me, those who cry to me, those who seek me, those who trust in me. Because there [at my sacred house] truly will hear their cry, their sadness, in order to remedy, to cure all their various troubles, their miseries, their pains.
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> —The Nican Mopohua, 26–32

Listen, put it into your heart, my youngest son, that what frightened you, what afflicted you, is nothing; do not let it disturb your face, your heart; do not fear this sickness nor any other sickness, nor any sharp and hurtful thing. Am I not here, I who have the honor to be your Mother? Are you not in my shadow and under my protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need something more? Let nothing else worry you, disturb you …

—The Nican Mopohua, 118–119

God dwells on high, yet he stoops down to us … God is infinitely great, and far, far above us. This is our first experience of him. The distance seems infinite. The Creator of the universe, the one who guides all things, is very far from us: or so he seems at the beginning. But then comes the surprising realization: The One who has no equal, who "is seated on high", looks down upon us. He stoops down. He sees us, and he sees me. God's looking down is much more than simply seeing from above. God's looking is active. The fact that he sees me, that he looks at me, transforms me and the world around me … In looking down, he raises me up, he takes me gently by the hand and helps me—me!—to rise from depths towards the heights … That night in Bethlehem, it took on a completely new meaning … The Creator who holds all things in his hands, on whom we all depend, makes himself small and in need of human love.

— Christmas Homily, 25 December 2008
POPE BENEDICT XVI

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CONFERENCE

A Picture Worth a Thousand Words

1. Which symbols from the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe strike me most deeply? Why? How is the Lord hoping that I will respond to them?

2. How is God reaching out to me personally—in the events and contexts unique to my life—this Advent? How am I responding?

3. One of Mary's titles in Catholic spirituality is "Queen of Apostles." In my own words, how does the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe show that Mary is a model Christian apostle/missionary?

4. How am I being a Christian apostle/missionary in my own family? What lessons from Our Lady of Guadalupe can help me be a better one?

5. How am I being a Christian apostle/missionary in my work/community? What lessons from Our Lady of Guadalupe can help me be a better one?

6. How am I being a Christian apostle/missionary in my society/culture? What lessons from Our Lady of Guadalupe can help me be a better one?

7. The Church's liturgical calendar—including seasons like Advent and feasts like Our Lady of Guadalupe and Christmas—is meant to help all Catholics live their faith deeply and experience the joy of God's love in the midst of their daily lives. How much am I

benefiting from this gift (the liturgical calendar) that God wants to give me?

8. What can I do so that my life is more in harmony with the rhythms of the liturgy?

9. What can I do to help my family life be more in harmony with the rhythms of the liturgy?

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FURTHER READING

If you feel moved to continue reflecting and praying about this theme, you may find the following books helpful:

Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mother of the Civilization of Love,
by Carl Anderson and Msgr. Eduardo Chávez

The Wonder of Guadalupe
by Francis Johnston

"Apparitions and Private Revelations"
Colin B Donavan, STL
https://www.ewtn.com/expert/answers/apparitions.htm
(referenced 9 March 2018)

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