



The Holy See

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF
GUADALUPE

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Vatican Basilica

Monday, 12 December 2016

[Multimedia]

“Blessed is she who believed” (Lk 1:45). With these words Elizabeth anointed Mary’s presence in her house. Words that were born of her womb, that come from within; words that managed to echo all she experienced with her cousin’s visit: “when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed” (1:44-45).

God visits us in a woman’s womb by moving the womb of another woman with a song of blessing and praise, with a song of joy. The Gospel scene bears all the dynamism of God’s visit: when God comes to encounter us, he moves us inwardly; he sets in motion what we are until our whole life is transformed into praise and blessing. When God visits us, he leaves us restless, with the healthy restlessness of those who feel they have been called to proclaim that he lives and is in the midst of his people. This is what we see in Mary, the first disciple and missionary, the new Ark of the Covenant who, far from remaining in the reserved space of our temples, goes out to visit and accompany the gestation of John with her presence. She also did so in 1531: she hastened to Tepeyac to serve and accompany the people who were gestating in pain, becoming their Mother and that of all peoples.

With Elizabeth, today we too wish to anoint and greet her by saying: “Blessed is she who believed” and continues to believe in the “fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord” (v. 45). Mary is thus the icon of the disciple, of the believing and prayerful woman who is able to accompany and encourage our faith and our hope in the various stages through which we must pass. In Mary we have the faithful reflection “not [of] a poetically sweetened faith, but [of] a strong faith above all in a

time in which the sweet enchantments of things are broken and there are conflicting contradictions everywhere” (R. Guardini, *The Lord, Meditations on the Life of Christ*).

Certainly we must learn from that strong and helpful faith which characterizes our Mother; learn from this faith that is able to enter our history so as to be salt and light in our lives and in our society.

The society we are building for our children is increasingly marked by signs of division and of fragmentation, leaving many “out of play”, especially those who find it difficult to obtain the minimum necessary to lead a dignified life. It is a society which likes to boast of its scientific and technological advances, but which has become blind and insensitive to the thousands of faces who have fallen behind on the path, excluded from the blinding pride of the few. A society which ends up creating a culture of disappointment, disenchantment and frustration in so many of our brothers and sisters; and even anguish in so many others who find it difficult to remain on the path.

It would seem that without realizing, we have become used to living in a “society of distrust” with all that this entails for our present and especially for our future; distrust that gradually generates states of apathy and dispersion.

How difficult it is to boast about a society of wellbeing when we see that our dear American continent has become accustomed to seeing thousands and thousands of children and young people on the streets, begging and sleeping in railway stations, in the subway or wherever they manage to find a place. Children and young people exploited in illegal work or compelled to seek coins at the street corners, by cleaning the windshields of our cars and feeling that there is no place for them on the “train of life”. How many families are scarred by the pain of seeing their own children victimized by the merchants of death. How hard it is to see how we have normalized the exclusion of our elderly by leaving them to live in solitude, simply because they are not productive; or to see — as the Bishops in Aparecida stated well — “the precarious situation that strikes at the dignity of our women. Some, since childhood and adolescence, have been subjected to many forms of violence inside and outside the home” (Fifth General Conference of the Episcopate of Latin American and the Caribbean, *Aparecida Document*, 48). They are situations that can paralyze us, that can cast doubt on our faith and especially on our hope, on our way of looking towards and facing the future.

Faced with all these situations, in this way we all must say with Elizabeth: “Blessed is she who believed”, and learn from that strong and helpful faith that characterized and characterizes our Mother.

Celebrating Mary is, first and foremost, remembering our mother, remembering that we are not and never will be an orphaned people. We have a Mother! And where there is a mother, there is always the presence and flavour of home. Where there is a mother, brothers and sisters may fight,

but the sense of unity will always prevail. Where there is a mother, the struggle for fraternity will not be lacking. It has always impressed me to see, in different Latin American peoples, those struggling mothers who, often alone, manage to support their children. This is how Mary is. Mary is this way with us: we are her children: a woman who fights against the society of distrust and blindness, the society of apathy and dispersion; a woman who fights to strengthen the joy of the Gospel, who fights to give “flesh” to the Gospel.

Looking to Our Lady of Guadalupe reminds us that the Lord’s visit always passes through those who manage to “make flesh” his Word, who seek to embody the life of God within themselves, becoming living signs of his mercy.

To celebrate the remembrance of Mary is to assert against all odds that “in the heart and life of our peoples there beats a strong sense of hope, notwithstanding the conditions of life that seem to overshadow all hope” (Fifth General Conference of the Episcopate of Latin America and the Caribbean, *Aparecida Document*, 29 June 2007, 536).

Because Mary believed, she loved; because she is the handmaid of the Lord and a servant of her brothers. To celebrate the remembrance of Mary is to celebrate that, like her, we are invited to go out and to encounter others with the same gaze, with the same mercy within, with the same gestures. To contemplate her is to feel the strong invitation to imitate her faith. Her presence leads us to reconciliation, giving us strength to create bonds in our blessed Latin American land, by saying ‘yes’ to life and ‘no’ to every kind of indifference, exclusion, and rejection of peoples and persons.

Let us not be afraid to go out and look upon others with the same gaze. A gaze that makes us brothers and sisters. We do so because, like Juan Diego, we know that our mother is here, we know that we are beneath her shadow and under her protection, which is the source of our joy, that we are within her embrace (cf. *Nicam Mopohua*, 119).

Grant us peace and grain, our Lady and Child, a homeland that unites home, church and school, a bread that may be for one and all a faith set alight through your clasped hands, your celestial gaze. Amen.