

Diocese of Las Cruces

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MARY, SERVANT OF THE REDEEMING WORD A message from Bishop Ricardo Ramirez

On December 12, we of the Diocese of Las Cruces celebrate the feast of our patroness, Our Lady of Guadalupe. We join Catholics throughout United States and Latin America as we honor the Mother of Jesus on this day. Throughout the history of our redemption, Mary has had the role of leading us to her Son and His redeeming message. She did so at Nazareth, at Bethlehem and at Cana. In a remarkable way, under the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, she inaugurated the preaching of the gospel of Jesus in the Americas in 1531, at Tepeyac, in Mexico City, where she appeared to the Mexican Indian Juan Diego.

She first received the Word at Nazareth of Galilee. After the angel explained that she was being called to be the Mother of Jesus, she said: "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say" (Lk. 1, 38).

After singing her praises to Our Father in heaven, she hastened to the house of her cousin Elizabeth who praised her for her faith and trust in God's words: Elizabeth said: "But who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me? The moment your greeting sounded in my ears, the baby leapt in my womb for joy. Blest is she who trusted that the Lord's words to her would be fulfilled" (Lk. 1, 43-45).

Later when the shepherds came to see the new-born Jesus at Bethlehem, she "treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart" (Lk. 2, 19). Something similar is said of her when she and Joseph found Jesus in the temple (Lk. 8, 51b).

In the light of these events, we can correctly surmise that Mary was anxious to keep hearing the word of her Son throughout her life while Jesus was going about preaching the Good News. At one time when Mary and others were looking for Jesus, he said: "My mother and brothers are those who hear the word of God and act upon it" (Lk. 8, 21). Mary is included in a special way among those authentic disciples of the Lord.

The Gospel of John places Mary at a very significant moment in the story of redemption. At the wedding feast of Cana, she confidently tells the servants, "do whatever he tells you" (Jn. 2, 5). There she practices her role as mother and teacher, who leads us to the fount of God's wisdom and life. She becomes at Cana the servant of the redeeming word, the word that renews, comforts and challenges.

When our Lady appeared in 1531, she came at the precise moment of the planting of the Word of God in the Americas. She came as an instrument of peace, as a reconciler since the conquest of Mexico had left terrible hurts and memories. She brought with her the promise of redemption and God's mercy, as well as his protection. "Am I not here, who am your Mother?", she assured us.

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After she came to the New World, the great period of evangelization began in the Americas. Latin America, the Philippines, what is now the Southwest of the United States, were among those regions of the world which in the sixteenth century first heard the Word of God and like Mary, kept it in their hearts.

We are called to imitate our Mother Mary, the faithful servant and disciple of the Word of God. She teaches us how to be attentive and anxious to listen to the Word. She shows us how to accept that Word, to trust in it and to treasure it in our hearts by allowing it to become deeply ingrained in our lives.

Join me in praying for Our Lady's intercession. "Holy Mary of Guadalupe, we thank you for having visited your children when faith was being born in the Americas. In a way you were once more giving birth to Jesus in our midst. We ask that you pray for us, that we might be faithful hearers and keepers of the Word of your Son. Be with us as our model in our journey through life as disciples of your Son. Help us love his word and be attracted to it and be made strong and joyful when we hear it. Pray for our infant diocese that we may continue the task of the redemption of your Son. Queen of Peace, pray that our world may soon enjoy freedom from the fear of war.

This our earnest prayer, O most holy Mother of God. Amen.