

Homily – Federation of Guadalupanas

December 4, 2016

Isaiah's words in our first reading address a time of great crisis for God's chosen people -- widespread fear and anxiety about the future, our future! The prophet reassures us that our lives are in God's hands. God will raise up a righteous king who will be fully committed to justice for all people, ushering in a time of peace. Earthly kings are often given to pretensions, greed, and power. However, God sends a Messiah who reigns with humility and a firm commitment to justice. Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy. His coming as man, as John the Baptist points out, ushers in the kingdom of God – which is already present but not yet fully here.

Advent prepares us for Christmas. We celebrate the birth of the Lord over two thousand years ago, look ahead to his Second Coming as judge, and are challenged to recognize his presence among us here and now – in a time of great crisis, anxiety, and fear about the future. There are deep divisions in the world, our nation, and even the Church. God's plan for his chosen people – everyone without exception – is that we learn to live in justice, unity, harmony, and peace – with God, with one another, and with our environment.

John the Baptist tells us how we are to prepare to recognize the kingdom in our midst and to help build and spread the kingdom in our world: **repent!** This does not mean merely being sorry for our sins. It means a thorough change or conversion of our minds, our attitudes, our way of life. Conversion means a return to God and a commitment to walk in his ways. The word of God calls us to justice, peace, harmony and unity – and as Pope Francis often says: reconciliation, dialogue, inclusion. The word of God calls us to build bridges – not barriers -- to all of God’s children – without exception!

You and I have a special devotion, a special place in our hearts for Our Lady of Guadalupe, *la Morenita*. At a unique moment in the history of this American continent God intervened through the Virgin Mary to open up the possibilities for the eventual unity of all peoples. Our Lady is at one with all people, she is the Mother of us all, the Mother of the New Evangelization, the teacher of a new dialogue. She promises to be with us, her people, telling us not to fear the darkness, the violence, the hatred that is so much a part of our world. She is the protector and liberator of the poor, the downtrodden, the neglected, the detained and deported, the children unborn and born!

May Our Lady of Guadalupe teach us, by her image and her example, true Christian witness, authentic discipleship.