Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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“Be it done unto me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Zec 2:14-17; *Luke 1:26-38*

The story of Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe is the story of a subjugated people who reconquered their conquerors by capturing and retelling the core faith of both cultures, Spanish and Aztec. The apparition of a pregnant mestiza princess to a

poor Indian in 1531 represented a profound turning point in the history of the Americas, appropriating Spanish devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and transforming it into the maternal concern of God already present within Aztec religion and culture.

The beautiful lady's commission to Juan Diego to go tell the bishop to build a church on the site of the apparition -- confirmed by the miracle of the image imprinted on the peasant's cloak -- effectively merged two spiritualities into one, altering the story of Mexico, Latin America and ultimately the Western Hemisphere.

No less than Mary's Magnificat, the story of Guadalupe contains an explosive call for justice for the poor and a warning to the powerful who would oppress them that they will be "pulled from their thrones and sent away empty" if they do not recognize God's saving activity in the world. The implications of this reversal and potent promise in current events today are considerable. The historic exploitation of Latin America, first by European colonial powers, then by the United States, which declared that the sovereignty of millions of people fell within U.S. geopolitical interests, has already begun to come to an end.

The migration of refugees and the poor throughout the world, driven by violence, climate change and economic exploitation, must be met with common sense and compassionate immigration laws that acknowledge the real causes for this uprooting. The soul of the United States as a nation of immigrants will be saved or lost by how it resolves this crisis.

Marian devotion has often served wealthy religion, whose adherents are eager to build shrines to Mary as model for passive, silent obeisance to church authority. Mary of Bethlehem and Nazareth, forced by imperial decree to travel while pregnant to be counted for purposes of taxation, does not fit this model. Mary was witness to the murder of innocents by King Herod. The Holy Family was driven to find refuge in Egypt to escape violent threats. Mary was the mother of Jesus, who was tortured and executed for his gospel of peace and reconciliation How can she be expected to bless the prayers of any status quo that oppresses the poor, and how will she countenance the privilege of the few at the expense of the many, especially its most vulnerable victims — women and children?

Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, pregnant with the future, compassionate to the poor, is the patroness of the Americas, both south and north. We celebrate her feast with joy and apprehension. What is she asking of our generation toward the vision of

justice first revealed to Juan Diego over 500 years ago? Do we have the humility and courage to welcome her now?