

Sacred Heart Advent Mission: Homily 1
Our Lady of Guadalupe
December 12, 2011

Good evening. I'm Father Brandon Jones, the pastor of Holy Redeemer Church in Andrews, NC. I would like to convey my thanks to Father Putnam and Father Roberts for extending the invitation to join you this week to take some time and reflect together upon the mysteries of our salvation as we prepare to celebrate the Incarnation and birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. On a personal note, I am grateful to be back in Salisbury because my dear friend and mentor, the priest who fostered my vocation was laid to rest in your lovely cemetery in July: Father Conrad Kimbrough. In his later years I was privileged to visit him in his home here, sometimes on a weekly basis. As I stand here tonight I give thanks to Almighty God for the remarkable apostolate of this holy priest and for the encouragement he provided that led me to be here right now.

Have you ever thought about the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary received Holy Communion? Pope Blessed John Paul II, in his encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, gave the Church a profound mediation upon this great mystery: "The account of the institution of the Eucharist on the night of Holy Thursday makes no mention of

Mary. Yet we know that she was present among the Apostles who prayed “with one accord” (cf. *Acts 1:14*) in the first community which gathered after the Ascension in expectation of Pentecost. Certainly Mary must have been present at the Eucharistic celebrations of the first generation of Christians, who were devoted to “the breaking of bread” (*Acts 2:42*).

But in addition to her sharing in the Eucharistic banquet, an indirect picture of Mary's relationship with the Eucharist can be had, beginning with her interior disposition. *Mary is a “woman of the Eucharist” in her whole life.* The Church, which looks to Mary as a model, is also called to imitate her in her relationship with this most holy mystery.” (EDE, 53).

What exactly was this relationship between our Lady and the Holy Eucharist? “In a certain sense Mary lived her *Eucharistic faith* even before the institution of the Eucharist, by the very fact that *she offered her virginal womb for the Incarnation of God's Word.* The Eucharist, while commemorating the passion and resurrection, is also in continuity with the incarnation. At the Annunciation Mary conceived the Son of God in the physical reality of his body and blood, thus

anticipating within herself what to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives, under the signs of bread and wine, the Lord's body and blood.” (Ibid., 55).

“As a result, there is a profound analogy between the *Fiat [let it be done]* which Mary said in reply to the angel, and the *Amen* which every believer says when receiving the body of the Lord. Mary was asked to believe that the One whom she conceived “through the Holy Spirit” was “the Son of God” (*Lk 1:30-35*). In continuity with the Virgin’s faith, in the Eucharistic mystery we are asked to believe that the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, becomes present in his full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine.

“Blessed is she who believed” (*Lk 1:45*). Mary also anticipated, in the mystery of the incarnation, the Church's Eucharistic faith. When, at the Visitation, she bore in her womb the Word made flesh, she became in some way a “tabernacle” – the first “tabernacle” in history – in which the Son of God, still invisible to our human gaze, allowed himself to be adored by Elizabeth, radiating his light as it were through the eyes and the voice of Mary. And is not the enraptured gaze of Mary as she contemplated the face of the newborn Christ and cradled him in her

arms that unparalleled model of love which should inspire us every time we receive Eucharistic communion?” (Ibid.).

What a beautiful image! For nine months Mary was a living Tabernacle. On the slopes of the hill of Tepeyac, Mexico on the morning of December 9, 1531, this Tabernacle appeared to a peasant, St. Juan Diego. That date in the Spanish empire of the time was the feast of the Immaculate Conception. It in turn, was based on the feast of the Conception of the Most Holy and All Pure Mother of God celebrated in the Eastern Churches on...December 9th. What did this apparition say that morning? “Know and understand well, you the most humble of my sons, that I am the ever virgin Holy Mary, Mother of the True God for whom we live, of the Creator of all things, Lord of heaven and the earth. I wish that a temple be erected here quickly, so I may therein exhibit and give all my love, compassion, help, and protection, because I am your merciful mother, to you, and to all the inhabitants on this land and all the rest who love me, invoke and confide in me; listen there to their lamentations, and remedy all their miseries, afflictions and sorrows.” (<http://www.sancta.org/nican.html> Accessed 5 December, 2011). In the cold of that winter in that barren place, the Mother of God came to her humblest son to bring the world a message, a message that resounds

even to this day, a message we still need to hear.

Even after beholding this vision on a Saturday morning, Juan Diego became absorbed in worldly concerns, albeit in his case a legitimate one: his uncle took sick and lay dying. In order to avoid a conversation with the Lady, on Monday morning Juan Diego decided to walk around the hill. It did little good as our Lady found him on the side of hill, approached him and said to him: “Hear me and understand well, my son the least, that nothing should frighten or grieve you. Let not your heart be disturbed. Do not fear that sickness, nor any other sickness or anguish. Am I not here, who is your Mother? Are you not under my protection? Am I not your health? Are you not happily within my fold? What else do you wish? Do not grieve nor be disturbed by anything.” (Ibid.)

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord of history. He became incarnate in a specific time and place. His Mother, our Lady of Guadalupe, the one who crushes the serpent, appeared in a specific time in the liturgical calendar and in a specific place in need of her message. In the sacred liturgy, the Lord Jesus comes to meet *us* in a specific time and place, and his Mother is intimately involved in this event.

Let us listen again to the words of Pope John Paul II: “What must Mary have felt as she heard from the mouth of Peter, John, James and the other Apostles the words spoken at the Last Supper: “This is my body which is given for you” (Lk 22:19)? The body given up for us and made present under sacramental signs was the same body which she had conceived in her womb! For Mary, receiving the Eucharist must have somehow meant welcoming once more into her womb that heart which had beat in unison with hers and reliving what she had experienced at the foot of the Cross.

“Do this in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19). In the “memorial” of Calvary all that Christ accomplished by his passion and his death is present. Consequently *all that Christ did with regard to his Mother* for our sake is also present. To her he gave the beloved disciple and, in him, each of us: “Behold, your Son!”. To each of us he also says: “Behold your mother!” (cf. *Jn 19: 26-27*).

Experiencing the memorial of Christ's death in the Eucharist also means continually receiving this gift. It means accepting – like John – the one who is given to us anew as our Mother. It also means taking on a commitment to be conformed to Christ, putting ourselves at the school

of his Mother and allowing her to accompany us. *Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist.* If the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united, the same ought to be said of Mary and the Eucharist. This is one reason why, since ancient times, the commemoration of Mary has always been part of the Eucharistic celebrations of the Churches of East and West.” (EDE, 56-57).

The sacred liturgy is an action of the entire mystical body of the Church. The angels are here, the saints are here, and the Blessed Virgin Mary is here in a fashion in which, according to the Pope John Paul, is unique. The flesh handed over for us to redeem us and received in the Blessed Sacrament is the very flesh taken from the Virgin Mary. Tonight let us draw near to Her, confiding in her our troubles and desires, for never was it known that anyone who did so would be left unaided. Amen.