

Jesus † Mary † Joseph
Part Three - Temptation

God tells us that man is born imperfect and that he must use the opportunities and events in his earthly life to perfect himself as far as possible. He must use them according to the directions of his intelligence and according to the wisdom of God's law.

It is not, however, easy to act always with this holy moderation. Man's feelings, moods, sentiments, appetites, and desires are not always willing to obey his intelligence. He sometimes feels too strong a love for some things and too weak a love for other things. This continual tendency to go to extremes is called temptation. Temptation is not sin. It tends to draw a man to do what he knows is wrong, or seeks to hold him back from what he knows is right.

Temptation simply brings out what is in a man. One knows himself better when he has dealt with temptation. It proves his faults and tests his virtues. Just how much he really desires to earn Heaven, is seen by what he does to reach it. How much he really loves God, is seen by how much he is willing to do for God. The first safeguard against temptation is to recognize it, to see it as it really is without its attractive camouflage.

December 12th

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of Latin America (†1531)

One of the most beautiful series of apparitions of the Queen of Heaven occurred on the American continent on a December day of 1531, only ten years after the Spanish conquest. A fervent Christian Indian in his fifties, Juan Diego, a widower, was on his way to Mass in Mexico City from his home eight miles distant, a practice he and his wife had followed since their conversion, in honor of Our Lady on Her day, Saturday. He had to pass near the hill of Tepeyac, and was struck there by the joyous song of birds, rising up in the most melodious of concerts; he stopped to listen. Looking up to the hilltop, he perceived a brilliant cloud, surrounded by a light brighter than a fiery sun, and a gentle voice called him by name, saying, "Juan, come." His first fear was transformed into a sweet happiness by this voice, and he mounted the slope. There he beheld the One he had intended to honor by hearing Her Mass. She was surrounded by a radiance so brilliant it sent out rays that seemed to transform the very rocks into scintillating jewels.

"Where are you going, My child?" She asked him. "To Saint James to hear the Mass sung by the minister of the Most High in honor of the Mother of the Saviour." "That is good, My son; your devotion is agreeable to Me, as is also the humility of your heart. Know then that I am that Virgin Mother of God, Author of Life and Protector of the weak. I desire that a temple be built here, where I will show Myself to be your tender Mother, the Mother of your fellow citizens and of all who invoke My name with confidence. Go to the bishop and tell him faithfully all you have seen and heard."

Juan continued on his way, and the bishop, Monsignor Juan de Zumarraga, a Franciscan of great piety and enlightened prudence, heard him kindly and asked questions, but sent him home without any promises. Juan was disappointed, but on his way past the hill, he once again found the Lady, who seemed to be waiting for him as though to console him. He excused himself for the failure of his mission, but She only repeated Her desire to have a temple built at this site, and told him to return again to the bishop. This he did on the following day, begging the bishop to accomplish the desires of the Virgin. Monsignor said to him: "If it is the Most Holy Virgin who

sends you, She must prove it; if She wants a church, She must give me a sign of Her will.” On his way home, Juan Diego found Her again, waiting, and She said to him, “Come back tomorrow and I will give you a certain mark of the truthfulness of your words.”

The next day Juan was desolate to find his uncle, with whom he lived, fallen grievously sick; the old gentleman was clearly on the brink of death. Juan had to go and find a priest in the city. As he was passing the hill, Our Lady again appeared to him, saying, “Do not be anxious, Diego, because of your uncle’s illness. Don’t you know that I am your Mother and that you are under My protection? At this moment your uncle is cured.” “Then please give me the sign you told me of,” replied Juan. Mary told him to come up to the hilltop and cut the flowers he would find there, place them under his cloak, and bring them to Her. “I will tell you then what to do next.” Juan found the most beautiful of roses and lilies, and chose the most fragrant ones for Mary. She made a bouquet of them and placed it in a fold of his cloak or tilma — a large square of coarse cloth resembling burlap. “Take these lilies and roses on My behalf to the bishop,” She said. “This is the certain sign of My will. Let there be no delay in raising here a temple in My honor.” With joy Juan continued on to the city and the bishop’s residence, where he had to wait nearly all day in the antechamber. Other visitors noted the fragrance of his flowers, and went so far as to open his mantle to see what he was carefully holding in it, but found only flowers pictured on the cloth. When finally he was admitted to the presence of the prelate, he opened his cloak and the fresh flowers fell on the floor. That was not the only sign; on his cloak there was imprinted a beautiful image of the Virgin. It remains today still visible in the Cathedral of Mexico City, conserved under glass and in its original state, having undergone no degeneration in 470 years.

Juan found his uncle entirely cured that evening; he heard him relate that Our Lady had cured him, and had said to him also: “May a sanctuary be raised for Me under the name of Our Lady of Guadalupe.” The bishop lost no time in having a small church built at the hill of Tepeyac, and Juan Diego himself dwelt near there to answer the inquiries of the pilgrims who came in great numbers. In effect, nearly all of the land became Catholic in a few years’ time, having learned to love the gentle Lady who like God their Father showed Herself to be the ever-watchful friend of the poor. In 1737 the pestilence ceased immediately in Mexico city after the inhabitants made a vow to proclaim Our Lady of Guadalupe the principal Patroness of New Spain. In 1910 She was proclaimed by Saint Pius X “Celestial Patroness of all Latin America.” Recent studies of the image of Our Lady on the tilma have discovered in one of Her eyes the portrait of Juan Diego, the son She chose to favor by this triduum of heavenly apparitions and conversations.

Source: Message Marial, by the Brothers of the Christian Schools (FEC Press: Montreal, 1947).

~*~*~ Today is also the Feast of Saint Valery, and of Saint Finian ~*~*~

Preparing the Stable - December 12th - Water

Bring fresh, clean water to the crib. Avoid every untruthful word and every deceitful act.

Ejaculation: Dearest Mary, obtain for me true contrition for my sins.

Jesus † Mary † Joseph

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