

Companions on the Journey

December 12, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

A woman clothed with the sun. The moon under her feet; stars clustered around her head. Large with child. Awaiting to give birth. In danger. The red dragon seeking to devour her offspring. These are images so vivid and alive that they frighten us today. What happens to the woman? What happens to the child? What happens to the dragon?

The woman does give birth. The dragon is ready. And the dragon suddenly pounces. But not quickly enough. God intervenes and snatches the child to the safety of the heavenly kingdom. The child is out of danger. The woman. She is suddenly taken to the desert, to that place of testing of the Jewish people. She too will be tested. But she will not fail like the original Eve failed. She will not be killed. She has been rescued. The evil one is very angry but has failed.

Is the child the Christ child? Yes. Yes, it is. And even though the child will grow to adulthood and become a man, in the end the man will be killed as the result of fear, envy, murderous threats and hatred. But the child will not remain in the grave because the grave is not able to hold or contain the dead Jesus. Jesus is shivering with life still even though they killed him. There is something about him that cannot die forever. But the child is more than the Christ child. The child is also the Church, the Body of Christ. We are the Body of Christ.

The story of the dragon seeking to devour the newborn child is our story. It is the story of every human being. And the truth communicated in the Book of Revelation is that our God intervenes to save us from being devoured by the evil of this world. And the woman large with child is our story too. Each of us carries Christ within us. No matter whether we are male or female. We carry Christ. And our task is to find a way to bring him to birth. To find a way to have his way of living come alive in our world. And the Father expects us to play a role in making this happen.

Our Lady of Guadeloupe first appeared in 1531. In what is now Mexico. She came to the people of that great land and she made herself known over those four days. Her presence, her compassion, her miracles and her love in those few days have literally changed the world. Twenty-five million pilgrims visit her shrine each year. There are so many miracles that happen because of those who pray to her, asking for help.

Mary gave birth to Jesus in her own unique way. Each of us is to do the same. Our DNA is unique. Our fingerprints are unique. The retina of our eye is unique. And the way you or I give witness to Jesus Christ is also unique. We are pregnant with Christ as the Aztec maiden of Guadeloupe was pregnant. That was her turn to bring Christ to us. Now it is our turn to bring Christ into this world of today.

Peace, Msgr. McHenry