

Column120422

Companions on the Journey

December 4,2022

Dear Friends,

Next weekend we will celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadeloupe here at Saint Anthony's. As you know we have a growing Mexican Catholic populace as parishioners here at Saint Anthony's. It has been over ten years that we have been celebrating Mass in Spanish once a month. We have conducted funerals and weddings and quinciniera's and baptisms. For the early years Msgr. Vincent Walsh would come to celebrate with our Mexican community. Advanced age slowed his ability to continue to serve us in this way.

By then I had studied some Spanish and was blessed to be able to spend three months in the winter of 2019 in Mexicali, Mexico living at Sant Isabel du Portugal parish under the leadership of Padre Francisco Godinez Maldonado. I was able to learn how to pray in Spanish and eventually to preach in Spanish even though my ability to hear and discern what was being spoken never really took hold, I love being able to pray in Spanish.

Next Sunday evening we will have a Mass honoring Our Lady of Guadeloupe. The church will be decorated with thousands of roses because of the miracle of the roses when Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego and filled his tilma (cloak) with beautiful Spanish roses. The tilma was presented to the Bishop of Mexico as a sign that the apparition Juan spoke of was real. Our Lady herself had filled his tilma with eh roses and the roses fell out before the bishop. And on the tilma itself was this beautiful representation of Our Lady as a young Aztec princess who was in the early phase of pregnancy.

This was in 1531, December. Almost five-hundred years ago. What happened to that cloak, that tilma? First off, a tilma was an outer cloak to protect the person from the inclement weather and provide heat if necessary (Mexico City is over seven-thousand feet above sea-level.) The tilma is made out of strands of cactus fiber that is woven together in a tight weave. Such a cloak might typically last twenty or twenty-five years before it disintegrates, the cactus fiber wearing out.

Juan Diego's tilma is on display in the Basilica of Our Lady in Mexico City. It is behind bullet-proof glass and visitors view it in large numbers every day of the year. Our celebration next Sunday begins a five-o'clock. All will be in Spanish including the homily but even without knowing any Spanish you can grasp a lot of what is transpiring. Afterwards there is wonderful food downstairs in Friendship Hall. You are welcome to come to pray and to eat. You are most welcome to join in these festivities. There will be dancers in authentic Mexican dress to entertain us. See you there.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry