

**“Our Lady of Guadalupe: Immigrant for Us”**  
**Homily on the Occasion of the Archdiocesan Mass for Our Lady of Guadalupe**  
**By the Most Rev. Salvatore Cordileone, Archbishop of San Francisco**  
**December 10, 2016; Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption**

**Introduction**

It is always a joy to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe. I want to congratulate all of you who took part in the procession, especially those of you who walked the entire way. You braved the elements, the rain and the fatigue of this journey in order to give honor to our Blessed Mother.

**God with Us**

I believe this procession is a powerful symbol for our life as Christians in this world. As Christians, we are on a pilgrimage, a pilgrimage to our final destination. This is because our true home is not here; our true home is heaven, and so while we are in this world we are far away from home. At times this can be hard, but the hard times are turned into joy when we walk together – just as you all experienced the joy of walking together to honor our Lady, even with all of the hardships involved. But while we are far away from home, God is not far away from us. We heard this message from the prophet Zechariah in the first reading. There we heard God say to His people: “I am coming to dwell among you.” And the prophet also tells us: “the LORD ... stirs forth from his holy dwelling.” That is, He comes forth from His holy dwelling in heaven, in order to dwell with us.

We know well that all this was fulfilled in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is through her that God took the form of a human body, that His Son clothed Himself with human flesh in order to walk with us. Notice how she reacts at hearing the news from the Archangel Gabriel. St. Luke tells us that immediately after receiving this news, “Mary set out and traveled to the hill country *in haste* to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.”

Our Blessed Mother *hastens* to be with her cousin Elizabeth to keep her company. And so it is with us: our Mother hastens to be with us, to walk with us, and to accompany us on this journey to the Kingdom of her Son.

**Our Immigrant Mother**

This is precisely what she did at Tepeyac: she came forth from heaven, lowering herself to be with us in this world, in order to introduce a new people to her Son, and to accompany them in their journey of faith. When you think about it, what this means is that our Blessed Mother became an immigrant for us. Yes, an immigrant: she left her heavenly homeland in order to be with us in this foreign land, so far from the destination of this earthly pilgrimage of ours. And so she continues doing for us: she accompanies us, she supports us, and she introduces us to her Son always anew.

In so doing, she is also an example for us: we ourselves have to accompany each other as well. And we, the leaders in our Archdiocese, take this seriously.

As Christians, we are all spiritual immigrants in this world, and in a spiritual way we suffer all of the hardships of immigrants, because here in this world we are far from home, we are in spiritual exile. But many of you are also immigrants in the literal sense, and I know there is much anxiety these days – anxiety for the harsh anti-immigrant rhetoric we have all been hearing recently. But I want to assure you: rhetoric is one thing, and reality is something else – you all have lots of support here in our community, and we are here to accompany you, to help you, and, if it becomes necessary, to protect you.

You are all very important to us, you are very much loved in our Catholic community, and by me personally. Yes, there is much anxiety, but I want to emphasize that it is important to have accurate information, and the Archdiocese is here to help you with this. We will be providing opportunities for you to have the information that you need, and the help that you will need. So I can assure you that you can be at peace.

### **Conclusion**

We must always remember: our true citizenship is not here in this world – it is in heaven, in the Kingdom of God. And for God, papers do not count for anything. For God – and to belong to His Kingdom – what counts is the love that one has in one’s heart, what counts is compassion for others. Yes, for the Kingdom of God it is different than here in this world, this world of so much politics and so much controversy.

For the Kingdom of God, permission to enter is not a card, but faith. For the Kingdom of God, yes, documents are needed, but they are not of paper but of action, that is, faith put into action. Good works are the documents that God looks for. And the sign of our citizenship is love: in fact, love can be called the passport to heaven.

It is possible to begin to know this heavenly life already now in this world, even if only a little bit. But yes, it can be known, even in the midst of so much uncertainty – uncertainty, yes, but fear, no – there is no cause for fear when we walk together, accompanying each other, helping each other, hastening to share the love of Jesus, as the Blessed Mother does for us.

In the Responsorial Psalm that we have just chanted, we proclaim the Blessed Virgin Mary “the highest honor of our race.” And so it is: she is the most beautiful creature that God has ever made. It is she who intercedes for us before the throne of her Son; it is she who accompanies us, and it is through her that God dwells among us. Let us give thank God for this great grace, and always honor our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe.