

"DO NOT BE AFRAID OF BECOMING THE SAINTS AND APOSTLES OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM!"

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Foundress

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Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We are daily confronted with the battle for our hearts...We face the battle for the heart of the family, the heart of society... the heart of nations, even of continents. With great sorrow, we see how so many hearts in our Continent are not heeding the important call we received from the Holy Spirit in 1992, when John Paul II called America: "the Continent of Hope...the Continent of Life." (Inaugural Address, CELAM, October 12) The same words were said to us during his visit to Mexico in 1999. I believe the words of the Servant of God urgently called us to stand firm in our convictions and to recognize that the American Continent plays an important role in the battles of our times. Our role can only be understood if we gratefully assume the gift we have been granted, and that is: we are a Marian continent, we have a clear Marian history, we have a Marian mission and we have been entrusted with a Marian gift. Our continent has been imprinted with Mary's maternal face and heart: to us has been granted the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This is not only a sublime gift, it also brings with it great responsibility: we are called to be witnesses to love and to life, to build a new civilization by embracing our Marian charism with courage. We need to dispose ourselves to be instruments of God's love in our historic moment.



In the Fullness of Time

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman" (Galatians 4:4). The fullness of time which Saint Paul refers to in this passage relates to our human history. God, by becoming man, entered time and transformed our history, converted time into time of salvation. This history contains all the joys and sorrows, all the victories and defeats of the world and of humanity - from Creation to the end of the world.

Brothers and Sisters, history also involves each one of us today. We too are part of this history which the God-made-man has transformed and continues to transform into salvation history. We are, therefore, protagonists of our present, we are the actual builders of this history; and, just like the Blessed Mother, we should all say: "Let it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

God wants to write through our hearts, through our lives and fiats the history of salvation, a history of love, of grace, of life, of communion and of holiness. This is, therefore, our time to make history. I thus present to you the same words which our John Paul II addressed to us at the end of the Jubilee Year: **"Do not be afraid of becoming the Saints and Apostles of the Third Millennium!"**

Just as God intervened in history 2000 years ago by coming to the world through Mary's maternal womb, today He wants to form in the maternal Heart of Mary, the Saints and Apostles who will cooperate - by opening their hearts to the power of His grace - to become the architects of history for this new Millennium. This is why during his visit to Mexico in 1999, John Paul II entrusted and consecrated us to the Maternal care of our Lady of Guadalupe: **"I have come to the Marian Heart of America to entrust and offer the future of this continent and of the world to the Most Holy Virgin, Mother of Christ and of the Church."** (Homily, January 23, 1999) He is telling us that it is precisely from the maternal womb of the Blessed Mother that the Apostles of the New Evangelization, the witnesses of love and the builders of this New Civilization are born - for the heart of the Church and for the heart of the world.

Similar to the missionaries who came to the New World to transmit the faith, today, all of us - as the protagonists of this historic time, at the beginning of the Third Millennium - should ask ourselves: What are the challenges which we confront? I believe that the greatest challenge we face today is the building of a new civilization and a culture, which generally seems to be in ruins because it has separated itself from God, its center. As a consequence of this separation, our culture has turned into a culture of selfishness and death. Today's world seems to forget the significant value of the human person, because it has forgotten the reason for its existence: the love of God.

The task of building a New Civilization goes hand-in-hand with an even greater task - that of committing ourselves in the New Evangelization: to the re-Christianization of the world. "The new evangelization will be the seed of hope for the new Millennium" (John Paul II, Address, January 25).

In 1531, Our Lady of Guadalupe came to Mexico, and to all of America, as the Star of the First Evangelization. She came as star and as protagonist. It will not be different today in this New Evangelization. She, the Mother of Christ, the bearer par excellence of Christ to the world, will be the star and the protagonist of this new civilization of love and life. This mission will require men and women who are willing to dispose themselves to allow love to triumph, beginning with their own hearts, in order to become witnesses of love, life, mercy and

truth - to a civilization in decadence and ruin with regards to faith and morals." This generation has the mission to take the Gospel to the humanity of the future. You are the witnesses of Christ in the new Millennium. Be aware of this reality and respond with prompt fidelity to this urgent call. The Church is counting on you" (John Paul II, November 21, 2000).

Our Lady of Guadalupe entrusted to the most humble of her sons - Saint Juan Diego, a particular task, which he found too big for his poverty. Today, perhaps we all feel the same as he, since before us we have an arduous mountain to climb: the promotion of a civilization of love and life in a world which has allowed itself to be overcome by selfishness and death. However, let us be strengthened by recalling what the Angel said to the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation: "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). She believed in the Word revealed to her and she opened herself to the power of that Word. In her the Word became Flesh, the promise was fulfilled. From that moment on, the Blessed Mother became the most eloquent witness of the power of God. When our current tasks seem impossible to fulfill and the goals way too difficult to reach, she - the woman clothed with the sun, crowned with twelve stars and about to give birth - appears on our horizon in order to remind us that God became man to intervene in history, in order to transform it into a history of salvation.

Let us ask our Lady of Guadalupe that each one of us may know how to cooperate with her maternal mission to build a new civilization, a new home, a new heart for our world. May she teach us to be witnesses to love by proclaiming to the world the primacy of love and the primacy of life. Let us not be afraid to be the saints and apostles of the New Millennium. Let us entrust ourselves into the maternal heart of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

"I have come to place at the foot of the Virgin of Guadalupe, star of the first and new Evangelization, the future of the Church and all of her evangelizing mission. The Church of America is the Church of Hope, that is why I entrust to the Mother of God, Mother of Life, the future of the evangelization" (John Paul II, Inaugural Address at CELAM, 1999).

In the love of the Pierced Hearts,
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