

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Installation Mass of Knights of Columbus Maryland State Officers

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Votive Mass of Our Lady of Guadalupe

St. Michael the Archangel Parish, Overlea

July 2, 2016

By Archbishop William E. Lori

It is a pleasure to offer this Mass of Installation for the Maryland State Council of the Knights of Columbus. I offer my warmest congratulations to you, my brother Knights, chosen by your fellow Knights to lead the Order here in Maryland. With you, I pray that the coming fraternal years will be a time of growth – growth in membership that is prompted by our own spiritual growth in the principles of charity, fraternity, and unity.

Since that is the intention we bring to this holy Mass, I thought we should celebrate a votive Mass of Our Lady of Guadalupe, to whom our Supreme Knight, Carl Anderson, dedicated his administration. What, then, can Our Lady of Guadalupe teach us about living the principles of the Order more fully and leading others to do so?

Let's begin with our first principle, charity. The blessed Virgin Mary is a model of what it means to accept God's love in our lives. Thanks to God's special favor, she was free of all sin and so her heart was completely open to God's amazing love and she readily cooperated with God's plan of salvation. So it was that she conceived God's Son in the power of the Holy Spirit with love beyond all telling. She gave birth to the One whom we claim as "Mercy Incarnate" – the Lord Jesus who fully revealed the Father's love for us.

Mary cooperated with God's loving plan and in the process showed us how to be people of charity. We think of how she went out of her way to visit her cousin Elizabeth or how she helped the newly married couple who ran out of wine at their wedding. Mary continued that pattern of helping those in need when she appeared to the humble Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill in 1531 and through him ignited the evangelization of the New World.

She is present whenever Holy Mass is celebrated and all of us can think of many times when we've relied on her prayers for us.

Let us ask Mary to pray for us and for our newly elected State Officers. Under your leadership, dear brother knights, may the Order here in Maryland be a living sign of God's love in our midst as we strive to live the command to love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves. With Mary's help let us bear witness to God's mercy and charity in our own lives by engaging in a charity that evangelizes - good deeds of service that help those who are unchurched to open their hearts to God's love.

Mary also models that deep spiritual unity that must be ours as Knights. Mary was completely united to God in prayer. Ancient Christian writers often said that Mary conceived God's word in her heart before she conceived the Word of God, that is, the Son of God, in her womb. There was no "daylight" between God's will and hers. And she gave birth to Jesus, who came to do the saving will of his Father, for as Jesus himself said, "the Father and I are one." We see the union of Mary's heart with her Son as she stood beneath the cross and shared in his sacrifice in fullest measure. That is why Jesus entrusted her through the Apostle John as our spiritual mother.

When Mary appeared to St. Juan Diego, there was much disunity in the land. Mexico was a place of conflict between the Spanish conquistadores and the Aztecs, and there were also many bloody conflicts between the native tribes. Add to the brutal conflicts, the practice of human sacrifice to appease the gods. With the appearance of Mary, not all conflicts ended but there was a new unity of faith and culture emerged as the Gospel began to spread in Mexico and throughout the American continent. And we continue to pray to Mary to unite us all to God's will so that we will be one in bearing witness to her Son Jesus and united in the mission of spreading the Gospel.

Let us ask Mary to pray for us and our newly elected State Officers. Dear brother knights, may you help instill in the K of C family here in Maryland a deep spiritual unity that is based not merely on friendship or shared plans but rather a deep spiritual unity rooted in our Catholic faith. May we be one with one another in professing and spreading the one faith and in this way build a solid foundation for our plans and projects.

Mary also models the fraternity that is at the heart of the Knights of Columbus. Mary came from a loving family - we know her parents, Joachim and Anne. We think also about her friendship with and support for the Apostles during Jesus' public life, at the time of his death and resurrection, and after Pentecost, as they began to spread the faith far and wide.

For example, Mary was with the Apostles when the Spirit came at Pentecost and in the Acts of the Apostles we read how Mary joined with them as they gathered to celebrate the Eucharist, the Breaking of Bread.

In her appearances, Our Lady of Guadalupe also modeled fraternity. Mary "accompanied" the Spanish missionaries and the Native Americans by adopting

elements of both cultures. She gave great encouragement to Juan Diego to fulfill his mission and she also gave great encouragement to Bishop Zummáraga, the first bishop of Mexico city, to fulfill his mission of spreading the Gospel. So too Mary accompanies us as a loving Mother as she leads us to Jesus amid the cares and responsibilities of our daily lives.

Let us pray to Mary for ourselves and for our newly elected State Officers. Dear brother knights, may you help instill in Knights here in Maryland an ever greater sense of fraternity, "in service to one, in service to all." In particular, let us be brothers to one another by seeking to meet the deep spiritual needs that so many husbands and fathers experience today. As you know so well, it is not easy in today's world to live the vocation of marriage. Many younger men in particular are looking for guidance and support in doing so. Many need the support of other men in living their faith and avoiding temptation. As we seek to bring new men into the Order, let us show we are their brothers who welcome them warmly, involve them in our projects, and join with them in seeking to live as the Lord's disciples and active members of his Church.

Finally, on this 4th of July weekend, let us not overlook the principle of patriotism so characteristic of the Fourth Degree of our Order. Mary teaches us to value what is good in our culture and to heal what goes against human dignity. She helps us discern what is most noble in our culture and what helps our country and our state to be a place of peace and justice, even as she invites us to look eagerly to our true homeland in heaven. Let us call upon Mary's intercession, dear friends. Through her prayers, may you, the Officers of the Maryland State Council, be agents of that charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism taught to us by the Venerable Father Michael J. McGivney, principles that spring the pages of the Gospel!

May God bless you and keep you always in his love. Vivat Jesus!

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