

ON THE RIGHT SIDE



Fr. Paul J. Cuddy

Did you go to Guadalupe?

Yes. The second day of the tour our two VW buses, with eight persons in each, took us to the Basilica of our Lady of Guadalupe. Father Lane had celebrated Mass earlier in the hotel, but I had planned on the Shrine. When we got there I said to our two guides, "I will go in and arrange for Mass. The group can join there." Arrangements were simple. The sacristan gave us an altar next to the main altar. The church was in constant motion with pilgrims, devout Mexicans and curious visitors, and from Masses continuing at the main and secondary altars. After Mass, our group wandered about the church and chapels and museum and store, and I explained what I could.

After an hour of this I thought with some pique: "This doesn't make sense. Our guides are paid to explain these things." So in

some dudgeon I stalked to the buses and beheld the vision: Juan and Chico playing chess in the bus! "Will one of you come and explain the shrine, the pictures, history, customs for our group?" Juan came cheerfully enough, but manifested neither devotion nor enthusiasm for Our Lady or for the Church. The same thing had happened the day before at the magnificent cathedral in Mexico City. And at the city of Puebla, the guides dropped us off at the Cathedral to wander about a complicated historic building. A young collegian in white slacks was sitting in a pew watching the passing scene. He spoke English, so I asked him: "Could you explain the cathedral to us?" He counted the group quickly, and said, with an interrogative inflection: "Five pesos each?" (One peso equals 8 cents. We were 16 persons) "All right." He explained well. From then on, our official guide became better guides, instead of just being bus drivers.

Regarding Guadalupe: Our Lady appeared five times to an Indian, Juan Diego, outside Mexico city in 1531. She told him to go to the bishop and say she wanted a church built there. Thanks to Cortes and the Franciscans, the Mexican Indians had a great devotion to Our Lady. Poor Juan had to go to the chancery office which was more formidable even than our modern one. To give a sign, Our Lady directed Juan to gather a bouquet

of roses for the bishop, even though it was not the season for roses. Juan wrapped the roses in his six-foot long tilma. When he unwrapped it before the bishop, a miraculous picture of the Virgin, depicted an Indian girl, was on the tilma. For four centuries, chemists, artists, scientists have been unable to discover how the painting was made to adhere to the coarse cloth. But there it is, in a glass case over the main altar of the Basilica, the object of a veneration matching Moses' at the burning bush. During the Calles persecution of the Church in the thirties, a bomb was planted and exploded in the church near the picture, but the picture was undamaged. A visit to Lourdes is an inspiration. A visit to Guadalupe is equally so, especially because of the devotion of the Mexicans for the Virgin of Guadalupe.

OHD GRANT

Elmira — A check for \$200 from the small grants program of the diocesan Office of Human Development was presented Oct. 28 to representatives of Neighborhood House. The money will be used toward the expense of equipping a special room for teenagers, they said.

Father Valentine Jankowiak, pastor of St. Cecilia's, made the presentation on behalf of OHD to Delmar Rouse, director of the community center, and Raymond Watson Jr., its youth activities director. Neighborhood House is near St. Cecilia's, and serves eastside city residents.

WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 23: 35-43; (R1) 2 Sm. 5:1-3. (R2) Col. 1:12-20.

Did it not strike you, as it first did me, that the Gospel chosen for the Feast of the Kingship of Christ is that of His crucifixion? But the more I thought about it, the more I saw how fitting this choice was.

Doesn't the true character of a person really come out in times of crisis? Somebody said, "To find out how saintly a person is, step on his toes and note the reaction." Ella Wheeler Wilcox wrote: "The test of the heart is trouble/ And it always comes with the years/ And the smile that is worth the praises of earth/ Is the smile that shines through tears."

Sure, it is easy enough to be pleasant when life flows by like a song, but the man worth while is the one who will smile when everything goes dead wrong.

How did Jesus act on the cross? No cursing the day of His birth, like holy Job. No complaints. Only seven words and each a thought for someone else. His kingliness so struck a thief that the thief believed Him to be a king and asked for a remembrance when He entered His reign. And with regal munificence, the dying Jesus promised a paradise for a piteous plea.

The two thieves flanking Jesus give a true picture of human nature. Difficulties, dangers, death are the test of character. People can be divided into four classes: the truly good and the truly bad; the seemingly good and the seemingly bad. In times of crisis, of stress or distress, here is what happens.

The truly good, like Mary and John, become better.

The truly bad, like the bad thief, become worse.

The seemingly good, like the Scribes and the Pharisees, become bad.

The seemingly bad, like the good thief and the Roman centurion, become good.

The good thief was a good psychologist: he reasoned no man, but a superman, a king among men, could die the way Jesus was dying. He confessed His kingship and was saved that day.

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