

Archbishop Smith: Mary, our Mother, is Here. Be at Peace.

On Saturday, December 12th, I had the great privilege and blessing of celebrating the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe with representatives of the First Nations Peoples of the Archdiocese. Her appearance in 1531 to St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin demonstrated with the utmost clarity the Blessed Mother's special love for the original peoples of the Western Hemisphere. For this reason, December 12th has been designated by the Bishops of Canada as our National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples. I love this annual event, and took delight in gathering at our Cathedral with representatives of the First Nations.



This year, our mass was celebrated in the midst of the great – and growing – anxiety gripping the hearts and minds of many people due to the pandemic and its consequences. It was thus an opportunity to recall a particular message Mary gave to Juan Diego when he was anxious and afraid. What she said was simple and straightforward, yet changed everything for him. I believe she is offering the same message to us in our present need. If we accept in our hearts what she says, everything will change for us, too.

Here's the context. One of Mary's appearances to Saint Juan Diego occurred while he was deeply worried about the very poor health of his uncle. What she said to him at that time are words that, I happily admit, I recall often: "Am I not here who am your mother? Are you not safe in the shadow of my protection?" In other words, "Why are you worried? I am your mother, after all, and I am

with you.” Juan Diego placed his trust in Mary’s maternal love and powerful intercession. Sure enough, his uncle was restored to health.

What is it about the comforting words of a mother? When a child is afraid, the most natural thing in the world is to run to his or her mother. Even without “Mom” saying anything, her nearness is enough to calm the child and ease the anxiety. When she adds the words, “everything is going to be okay; you’ve nothing to be afraid of; you’re safe”, the child knows it is true, even without understanding how Mom will fix things. The mother’s presence and promise is all that is necessary.



Truth to tell, we grown-up children need the same assurance. Many helps are on offer right now to assist people in dealing with the enormous mental stress impacting the population. These are good and we should not hesitate to avail ourselves of them as necessary. As a people of faith, we also know there is a person we can turn to who loves us beyond imagining, who loves us as a mother loves her children, and who has the ability to “fix things” even though we may not understand how. That person is Mary, the mother of our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, the mother of the Church and, therefore, our mother.

She is saying to us now what she said nearly 500 years ago to St. Juan Diego: “Am I not here, who am your mother?” Let’s not forget to turn to her, and take comfort from her loving presence and the unfailing power of her prayers. We are safe in the shadow of her protection.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.