

Our Lady of Guadalupe

When I was growing up in Kansas City, my father rode a bus every day to his office downtown, and my mother stayed home to keep the house and raise the six of us children. Our home had three bedrooms and one bathroom for 8 people. We had food to eat and clothes to wear, but nothing fancy. Some years at Christmas we kids received gifts of underwear and socks because our parents could not afford all the toys that we wanted, and they wanted to put gift-wrapped packages under the Christmas tree. Eventually my mother learned how to drive, and she also got a job. My parents sacrificed a lot, and I'm still not completely sure how they paid the bills and kept us happy, but somehow they did. All six of us have even more blessings now, but when we were kids, we did not know that we would see better days.

Zephaniah prophesied to the people of Jerusalem that they would see better days. Their enemies had oppressed them. Their misfortunes had spread. Their fear had increased. They were discouraged about the future. But Zephaniah promised them that God was in their midst, and that God, like a loving mother, would keep them restful and quiet. He says that Jerusalem is God's daughter.

Juan Diego represented a people who suffered oppression from foreigners who had entered their land with power and authority. Their misfortunes had spread. Their fears had increased. They were discouraged about ever receiving power again. Juan Diego called himself a poor Indian. When Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to him, he said, "I am a nobody, I am a small rope, a tiny ladder, the tail end, a leaf." However, appearing to him, Our Lady implied a different message: "You are somebody. You are a child of God, and you are my child. God is in your midst. Your faith matters. You have something important to say to those who have more power."

Sometimes each of us feels poor, oppressed, and lowly. At times we feel that we will never see better days. Yet each of us is a child of God, and a child of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Just as God came among the people of Jerusalem, so God comes to our city, our neighborhood, and our homes. You may think that you will never see better days, but you can.

Today the prophet Zephaniah speaks to our lowliness: "The Lord has removed the judgment against you; he has turned away your enemies; the King of Israel, the Lord, your God, is in your midst." Zephaniah even says that God "will sing joyfully because of you." Imagine that. We sing hymns to our Lady and hymns to God, but God sings with joy because of us, and Our Lady, like a loving mother, sings lullabies to help us sleep secure. Even when we feel that there is no way out of our sorrows and oppression, the Virgin of Guadalupe has a different message: Rejoice. You are somebody. You are a child of God.