

# **Celebrating Those in the Service of the WORD:**

*Thanking them through stories and reflections*

(Year B)

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## *Dedication*

**To St. Arnold Janssen:**  
*Father, Founder and Leader*  
*of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD)*

The Society of the Divine Word (SVD) is an international missionary congregation of priests and brothers serving in more than sixty countries all over the world. Through Logos Publications, the SVD in the Philippines aims to foster the apostolate of the printed word in the biblical, theological, catechetical and pastoral fields in order to promote justice, peace and human development. The opinions expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect those of the SVD community.

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# Introduction

Among the most frequently used and much-loved three words which young and old eagerly listen to are “Once there was....” With such a familiar opening we usually begin to tell a story.

Our Lord is widely acknowledged as the master in the art of story-telling. He does this in order to paint the kingdom of heaven, the central theme of his proclamation, in and with what the world today knows as the parables. Stories whether in the form of parables, legends, or fables wield unique power when carefully formulated, cleverly arranged in proper sequence, armed with a highly interesting plot, then masterfully told to an eager audience. Somehow each story goes out on an errand of giving a message that traverses the air, enters the mind through the senses, and strikes the heart in different and unpredictably wonderful ways. Later, the story moves the will into action.

Skilled story-tellers artfully saying what they mean, weaving with words the persons, places and events in the world they live can evoke the results they intend. Sometimes, even more. In ways more than one, stories richly color the fabric our lives are woven with. They fill our world and the lives we respectively lead with all so fond memories.

People, especially my confreres—religious missionary brothers and priests in the SVD, and the people dear to my heart, will be accorded, to the best of my intentions, with the honor due them with the stories and anecdotes told and re-told. Their memories are in way carved into the minds and hearts of the listeners and readers, for always.

Above all, the stories—together with some reflections—I chose to tell and re-tell will hopefully help in pointing to the SOMEONE, the All-time One True Master Story-Teller of the Kingdom that is His.

Divine Word Missionaries' Residence  
Bordentown, NJ  
– Easter 2017

# ADVENT

## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

1st Reading: Isaiah 63:16b-17.19b;64:2b-7

The Israelites were sorely disappointed when the Messiah did not come at the time they had expected. So, the prophet Isaiah assured them that in spite of the delays, the Messiah would surely come.

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

After his disappointing encounters with the learned and the powerful, Paul turns to and tells the humble people of Corinth that the Day of the Lord who is faithful will surely come.

Gospel: Mark: 13:33-37

The Lord admonishes his followers, “Be on your watch!”

*“Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!”*

### Reflection/Story 1 “Be Alert on Your Watch”

As hooded and masked figures furtively glided through the shadows under the mantle of the darkness of night, Filo and Pidia fearfully peered through the cracks of their doors to see what was going on. Earlier during the day, talk spread like wildfire across the colony of the city’s rag-pickers about masked men on motorbikes searching for petty criminals, like drug-users, pickpockets and even local drunks allegedly to “salvage” (summarily execute) them.

The woeful wailing of a child, the occasional frenzied barking of dogs forced Filo and Pidia, like many of their neighbors in the colony, to hold their breath and cower in fear. All the while a radio played Christmas carols, even though it was yet at the beginning of November; songs like “White Christmas” and “Jingle Bells” sounded totally out of place for their dank and dark place. Even the local song, “*Kasadya ‘ning takna-a*” (How Happy is this Moment) merely added an ironic twist to the misery of the people who watched and waited for that ever-elusive fairer tomorrow.

Advent ushers in the gentle and constant reminder to be on the watch, “with belts fastened” and “lamps burning,” for we do not know the day nor the hour of the Lord’s coming. To be curious about the exact time of his coming is but idle speculation. We just have to live knowing that he will surely come, even though unaware of when he comes.

Though living on the fringes of eternity and under the pall of uncertainty, we have really no reason to live in fearful or hysterical expectation. We just have to do our best to accomplish the tasks entrusted to us with the greatest love possible.

Advent, however, has taken a different twist in the lives of Filo and Pidia. Like many of their friends and neighbors living outside the pale of the city which received the faith nearly 500 years earlier, they have stopped wondering why society treats them unfairly despite their fair contribution to its welfare by their sorting out and recycling the enormous amounts of garbage piled daily beside their homes.

As the rich and powerful people, some of whom reportedly fund the dreaded vigilantes, go home to their sweet-smelling wives and neatly dressed children to celebrate early Christmas parties, the city’s neglected and often forgotten people go through the difficult times hoping, not only to see, but also to take part in the making of a new and better beginning.

With faith deeply etched into their hearts and somehow peeping through their grim faces barely lit that night by the flicker of so many Christmas lights, these humble people still managed to recall and thereby give thanks for the gift of life held precious and sacred by the Word of God who deigned to dwell among us.

## Reflection/Story 2 “I Can Sleep on a Stormy Night”

Father, later on, Bishop Simeon Valerio was one of the best in telling stories especially when he could stand and move about while doing so. It was as if, not only his mouth, but his whole body spoke. And with much flair at that. While his stories were a delight to listen to, some of them were serious and thought-provoking.

At the beginning of Advent, he addressed a group of seminarians with these words. “Gentlemen, be ready. Be like men who can sleep even when the winds or storms of life are raging around you.” This was his story to illustrate his point.

One day a farmer went to town to get a hired-hand to help him in the many tasks in his big farm. When he arrived at the market-place he saw a man standing idle. The farmer approached him and asked, “What farm-related skills do you have?” The man replied, “Well, sir, I can sleep on a windy night.” Irritated, the farmer retorted, “Why, what kind of skill is that?” So he went to look for another candidate. Late in the day, the farmer, failing to find the right helper, went back to the first candidate and proceeded to hire him.

Once they were back at the farm, the farmer told the hired worker to take care of the several tasks in the farm. Somehow satisfied at finally having a worker in his farm, the farmer went about with his normal routine.

One day, in the middle of the night a strong wind went howling through the farm bending trees and upending buckets and pails. Alarmed, the farmer rushed to the shack where the hired-hand stayed and knocked frantically at the door while shouting out the worker’s name with all his might. Despite his frantic knocking and loud shouting, all the farmer could hear coming from inside the shack was loud snoring.

Terribly worried, the farmer ran to the hen-house; there he saw all the chickens resting peacefully on their respective nests or perches. Next, the farmer rushed to the piggery, and to his great surprise he discovered all the swine snuggled serenely next to each other. Afterwards he bolted to the barn to check on the horses and cows. There inside the barn, the horses were fast tethered to their stalls; the cows were peacefully chewing their cud.

There and then the farmer saw the meaning of the hired-hand’s words, “I can sleep on a windy night.”

Advent is the time for us to think about the coming of the Lord at the end of time. All the opportunities are given to us to prepare. Would that we can also say, "I can sleep serenely on a windy night."

### Reflection/Story 3 "A Candlelight at Advent-tide"

In the remote barangay or village of Agape, somewhere in the hill-country of Dagohoy a lovely baby girl came to the family of Cesar and Dading. The proud and grateful parents chose for her baptismal name, Celia, for as poet once rhapsodized, the girl was "lovely as a dream she passes by, whose glances seem from a distant sky, vision of beauty, love and dream."

Besides her beauty, the young Celia was gifted with brains and with it the ambition of "one day to go and "conquer the world."

Shortly before finishing high school the young girl, fast blossoming into a beautiful woman, dreamed of hitting it big in one of the cities like Cebu or Manila. One day an acquaintance told her of the wonders in the city of Olongapo. In that place people from all parts of the country went in search of work in the big American naval base. Besides, there was a possibility for a young lady with native beauty, like Celia, to catch the eye of a young American sailor.

Upon learning of her plan, her father fumed with rage. Dading, her doting mother, could only cry her heart out. At night, she would be sobbing herself to sleep. The young Celia was head-strong, and one day she just said a hurried goodbye to her family. The mother was devastated.

Weeks, then months rushed swiftly by. News trickled to the barangay through the local grapevine: some bright, others dismal. All the while, Dading kept her hope alive that one day her beloved Celia would come back.

Advent came, and people in the barangay started putting up Christmas decorations and the traditional "*faroles*" (lighted paper lanterns). In their house the only change that could be noticed was a lone candle Dading lighted at night and placed at their window facing the street. All the while the good mother hoped and prayed that her Celia would come back. For her that would be the best Christmas gift of all.

## SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

1st Reading: Isaiah 40:1-5.9-11

Isaiah admonishes the Chosen People to prepare the way of the Lord who will come to save them.

2nd Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-14

The “slowness” of the Lord’s coming will give us time to prepare accordingly.

Gospel: Mark 1-1-8

The Lord’s herald, John the Baptist, calls on God’s people to be ready for the coming of the Lord.

*“The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:*

*“Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way*

*A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight his paths.”*

*And so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptized by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins.*

*John wore a garment of camel skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, “Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”*

### Reflection/Story 1 “Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord”

In the last century, missionaries in Papua-New Guinea relied for their vital supplies on the mission boat, the “Stella Maris,” which sailed for the different mission stations from the mother port in Alexishafen,

Madang Province. Bro. Paul, the veteran captain of the boat for more than two decades thanked the good Lord for the constellation, “The Magellan Cross,” which proved to be a steadfast and clear sign in the sky for seafarers plying the seas at night guiding them to their destinations in safety.

In Advent the figure of John the Baptist comes to the fore as a sign, being the forerunner of the Redeemer (the One who “buys us back” from a sinful and miserable state). The gospels present John as a herald whose voice, nurtured by the immense silence in the desert in which he grew up, was powerful as it was compelling.

So charismatic was he as a preacher of repentance that people went to him in droves to be baptized of their sins in the waters of the Jordan River. Repentant, they turned away from a life of sin and sadness. People listened to him because they saw in him a man who lived what he preached.

Many people initially thought he was the Redeemer, the much-awaited Messiah. In all humility, however, John the Baptist told them that he was not even worthy to untie the sandals of God’s Chosen One who would come baptizing not only with water in order to wash sins away but with the Holy Spirit to fill the baptized with a mission to go good following God’s will. John came as a voice and a sign pointing the way to the Lord.

Already now in Advent, signs get displayed in homes and many shopping malls to usher in a season of joy and plenty. Sad to say, however, certain groups, in their efforts to be allegedly politically correct, try to ignore, even deliberately eliminate Christ who is at the very heart of this season of joy.

Certain establishments gave out strongly worded memos instructing their employees to greet people with “Happy Holidays” instead of the usual and truly fitting “Merry Christmas” supposedly to avoid offending anyone. But will true Christians not be offended by the blatant and senseless removal of the real reason for rejoicing and giving thanks?

Our own preparations for Christmas need rethinking. While we worry about the gifts to give, parties to host and clothes to wear plus myriads of other distractions, John the Baptist stands out like the bright “Magellan’s Cross” even in the darkest of nights to help us steer clear of the dangers and more so, of the death-dealing pitfalls in life. While costumed “Santas” and a number of figurines in the traditional “*belen*” (crèche or Nativity

Scene) have places proper to them, we need signs like John the Baptist to lead us to the person of Jesus. Because he, the Word of God, “became flesh and lived among us” is the real reason of the season for giving thanks.

## Reflection/Story 2 “To Be A Voice Crying Out in the Wilderness”

The many islands in the Pacific are blessed with silence and peace. The rolling of waves and the rustling of winds in the forests that thrive luxuriantly on the abundance of rain and bountiful sunshine are hardly disturbed by rude noise.

The inhabitants of some of these islands show their deep respect to mother nature by taking only what they really need, as for example fish, animals, and plants which they have for food. Even the felling of trees is done following the revered traditional practice among these people.

So, when they need timber for building a boat or constructing a house, a representative of the tribe goes to the forest to look for the proper tree. Once he discovers the right tree, he goes back to the village and invites other men to go with him back to the forest.

Without using an axe or a saw, the men would climb to the top or crown of the tree, tie themselves around the tree’s crown, then at a given command shout with all their might at the tree. The shouting goes on for hours after which the men clamber down the tree. They wait for a couple of weeks, and without fail the tree they had selected and bombarded with their lusty shouting would die and fall to the ground.

In Advent we have the revered practice of keeping silence and of meditating on the meaning of the feast that will soon follow. So many voices and so much noise will hinder our ability to think about the important matters in life. Moreover, with so much noise around us, we run the risk of dying slowly until we, like the trees in the Pacific islands that are subjected to a constant barrage of loud noise, might fall down lifeless.

During this time, we also imitate the example of John the Baptist who, as a young man, went to the desert and kept silence, all the while trying to listen to God’s voice. Only then could his own voice be given power and strength. Only then could his words fit very well into the message of repentance, for the Lord would come with the hope of salvation.

It is our fervent prayer that during Advent we give ourselves space and silence so that we can truly say, “Speak, Lord, for we—your faithful—are listening.”

### Reflection/Story 3 “On the Importance of Being Prepared”

Confident that they had thoroughly humbled and greatly weakened the Germans after the bitter and bloody WWI, France thought that for the future they had made sufficient military preparations by constructing what they considered the impregnable “Siegfried Line”—a series of bunkers, barb-wires and anti-tank concrete columns designed to protect their eastern flank from attack.

Behind this protective wall the French soldiers waited, most of the time standing or sitting at their posts. For this reason their military posture at the “Siegfried Line” was promptly called “*Sitzkrieg*” (“sitting-down war”).

Having learned from their past mistakes where they lost thousands of soldiers in the bitterly fought “trench warfare,” the Germans developed their air force (*Luftwaffe*) and their armored, highly mobile Panzer divisions spearheaded by fast-moving and deadly tanks (panzers). They waited for the inevitable conflict to break loose, and they were very well prepared for the war that their people would have to engage in for the sake of survival.

We know the rest of the story.

Advent is the season to prepare and of being prepared by being active, not merely waiting and sitting on our haunches. The time we have is an important phase in our journey or pilgrimage towards our destined end and our final home. Things have to be readied, the evil around us has to be resisted and discarded, relations with others, if broken, have to be healed, and, above all, our friendship with and devotion to the Lord be renewed and strengthened. Only then will the feast of the Savior’s birth attain meaning, only then will we be fully conscious of the Coming of the Lord which is surely to take place.

## THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

1st Reading: Isaiah 61:1-2.10-11

The prophet tells his people that God has sent him with the good news that the time of salvation has come.

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

The disciples in Thessalonika learned from Paul to live while waiting for the Lord's coming.

Gospel: John 1:6-8.19-28

In all humility John the Baptist tells the people that he is not the Messiah; the Messiah is already in their midst.

*“A man came, sent by God. His name was John.*

*He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light.*

*This was how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, “I am not the Christ.”*

*“Well then,” they asked, “are you Elijah?” “I am not,” he said. “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” So they said to him, “Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?” So John said, “I am, as Isaiah prophesied:*

*a voice that cries in the wilderness:*

*Make straight the path of the Lord.”*

*Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, “Why are you baptizing if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?”*

*John replied, “I baptize with water; but there stands among you—unknown to you—the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal strap.” This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.”*

## Reflection/Story 1 “A Figure, Powerful Yet Humble”

John the Baptist, he with a booming voice and a commanding figure, roared, “Repent, turn away from your sins and be baptized!” People from all walks of life listened to his words and went to the waters of the river Jordan to have their sins washed away. His rugged figure, his unique attire and simple life-style added weight to his words, for he preached what he truly believed in and religiously lived by.

Yet, John the Baptist’s outstanding trait was his remarkable humility.

Centuries later, when asked what three characteristics should distinguish a follower of the Lord, St. Augustine replied, “First, humility, second, humility and, third, humility.”

St. Francis of Assisi, whom his mother originally called “John” (Giovanni) until his father changed it to Francesco (the little Frenchman) because the parent was enamored with everything French, told his original band of friars, “Brothers, when we place ourselves before the purity and absolute goodness of the Father, then we will see ourselves as unworthy.”

The word “humility,” in Latin *humilitas*, comes from the root word *humus*, the Latin word for the earth or ground from which we came. Compared with the purity and glory of God, we, earthly creatures that we are, are really nothing, were it not for the soul that God immediately creates and gives to us. For this reason, we are deeply humbled.

However, all this talk about humility remains on the conceptual level. Perhaps, to understand this virtue better, it will be good to go down to the experiential level, to the situation where we are humbled, and are made humble in order to serve others.

It happened that after giving a talk on humility, a priest invited some of his listeners to go with him and visit some residents in an old-people’s home where they would celebrate mass. When the time for giving the sign of peace came, the priest went around to greet the elderly patients. As he bent over the figure of an old lady, the woman hissed at him, “Why are you here, you a.. .e!” To which the priest replied, “That was not so nice of you, Maam. That was not lady-like.” Later, as they were leaving the old-people’s home, his companions tried to console him. One wryly remarked, “Father, don’t be too upset. Perhaps the old lady thought you were her husband!”

The voice of John the Baptist invites people to turn away from sin. As we look at him during Advent we are reminded to be humble and be reconciled with the Lord through the sacrament of forgiveness and penance. It is a sacrament involving confession of our sins to a priest who, like us, is also human, hence prone to error and sin. However, lest we forget, our Lord himself became man and, although he was and is without sin, still he submitted himself to be washed/baptized by John at the River Jordan.

Submitting himself to a figure far superior to his own, John the Baptist told his people that he was but a voice in the wilderness who was calling people to prepare the way of the Lord. Of his sandals, he was not worthy even to untie the straps.

John served his Lord humbly and faithfully even till death. Later, the Lord himself called John, “the greatest of all the prophets.”

## Reflection/Story 2 “The Humbling of Little John (Juanito)”

The mother, a great devotee to St. John the Baptist, named her first-born son Juanito or “little John.” A baby brother followed him after some years. Their home in the village rang with the joyful cries of two children the home was blessed with.

One day the mother, after gathering some vegetables from the garden and eggs from the hens’ nests, prepared for going to town where she would sell or barter with the products she had.

Before leaving the house she called Juanito to her side and told him to guard the house, take care of his baby brother and, finally, after cleaning the hen-house and piggery to feed the animals. A frown betrayed the boy’s unmistakable disgust.

Anyway, being obedient, he did as told. But in the afternoon, after having done the tasks assigned him, he sat down, took a piece of paper and a pencil, then proceeded to write a letter.

*Mahal kong Inay* (My dear mother)

Today, I did all you told me to do. But this time I have decided to ask for payment for the things I did in the house.

- 1. For cleaning the henhouse and feeding the chickens .....P20
  - 2. For sweeping the dirt in the piggery then feeding the pigs .....P20
  - 3. For waxing and scrubbing the floor of our house.....P30
  - 4. For taking care of my brother, feeding him and putting him to sleep..P30
- Total     P100

Your son,  
Juanito

Later that afternoon when she reached home from the market, the mother saw the letter and read it. After some time, she sat down and being the good and wise mother that she was, she also got a piece of paper and with a pen started to write her answer.

Dear Juanito,

I read your letter and appreciate what you have done for our home. Here inside this envelope is the P100 you deserve.

However, I would also like to list down the following things for you to know

- 1. For carrying you in my womb for 9 months ..... P .00
  - 2. For feeding you every day ..... P .00
  - 3. For washing your clothes twice a week ..... P .00
  - 4. For taking care of you when you were very sick ..... P .00
- Total     P .00

Your loving Mama Paulina

Early the next day, the young boy saw and read his mother’s letter. Afterwards he meekly went to his mother, embraced her and asked pardon for thinking only about himself.

In Advent, the figure of John the Baptist reminds us of a great man of God who readily acknowledged his rightful place in the divine plan for humankind. Gratefully he acknowledged his role as a herald, a voice of one crying out in the wilderness to prepare the way for one whose sandal straps he was not worthy to unfasten. Furthermore, as St. Augustine noted,

the powerful voice that was St. John would be without meaning without the Word which the voice would carry.

May we learn from the humble acceptance coming from John the Baptist to walk humbly and gratefully before the Lord.

### Reflection/Story 3

#### “Different Ways of Preparing for the Coming of the Lord”

The story goes that the Lord finally came and people were called to his presence one by one to give an accounting. First, there came a Leyteno, and when asked what he had done in his life, he answered, “Lord, I gave food to the hungry.” Jesus replied, “Well done, and welcome into the kingdom of heaven.” Next came a Cebuano, and when asked what would warrant his entry into eternal happiness, the man said, “Lord, I gave water, sometimes *tuba* (palm wine) to the thirsty.” “Well done,” the Lord replied, “and enter into the kingdom.” After him came a Boholano, and as this man scratched his head to recall what he had done in life, he finally blurted out, “Jesus, I told stories which made people laugh and sang songs which made people smile with happiness in their hearts.” And the Lord smiled saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant. *Padayon, Bol-anon* (Go on, you from Bohol) and enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Instead of wringing our hands at an imagined impending doom, the thought of the Last Day and the Coming of the Lord should fill us with excitement, deep hope and firm determination to be the persons the Lord wants us to be. Moreover, we should try as always to love ever so deeply and faithfully.

We know that the Lord who came, will come again. Although we do not know the precise moment the Lord of history will come again, we do know that we have to live accordingly in keeping with that certainty that he will return.

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

1st Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-5,8-11,14,16

Out of gratitude to God, David wanted to build a house for him. God did not agree. Instead, God promised David a dynasty that will not end.

2nd Reading: Romans 16:25-27

God's promise of salvation for all, Jews and Gentiles alike, finds fulfillment in Christ.

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

In Jesus, God's promise to David finds fulfillment.

*"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you" She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, "Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favor. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end."*

*Mary said to the angel, "But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?" "The Holy Spirit will come upon you," the angel answered, "and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, 'for nothing is impossible with God.'" "I am the handmaid of the Lord," said Mary, "let it be done to me according to your word."*

## Reflection/Story 1 “Advent’s Gentle and Lovely Lady”

Right above the entrance of the church which the Carmelite priests dedicated to our Lady stand the words written in bold letters, “**Mary, Mother more than queen.**” To honor her, hundreds of her sons and daughters—many of whom entered the country to work as domestic servants and menial workers, came in festive mood as they gathered to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

These simple folk identify themselves with the Lady who appeared as a lovely native Indian girl to a lowly peasant whom she fondly called, Juan Diegito (“little or dear Juan Diego”).

Some fifteen hundred years before Our Lady’s apparition in Mexico, Mary, as a young girl, received the wonderful news from an angel that she had been chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God. She had found favor with God and would bear a child who would be the Son of the Most High. To her valid concern that she was a virgin, that she had no relations with a man, the angel Gabriel replied that all this would happen through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In order to prove that what God had promised as a virgin birth would come true, the angel cited the case of Elizabeth, Mary’s cousin. Although barren for so many years Elizabeth finally conceived with child in her womb. Nothing, including the miraculous virgin birth of the Lord, is impossible for God.

This gospel text has been the basis of our firm belief in the virgin birth of Our Lord, a truth and a fact that only Mary could have known, shared with and revealed to the Evangelist St. Luke. The most extraordinary circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus go beyond space and time, beyond factual investigation. All these details we have to accept in faith.

Today, in a manner surpassing human understanding she continues to go birthing to millions of children all over the world. They, coming from different races and bearing so many different faces, but still of one faith and united in love, call her Mother.

Following her beautiful example of accepting the singular honor accorded her as Mother of the Son of the Most High by declaring herself “a servant of the Lord,” her children live and help others by their humble yet dedicated service.