

Carry Nothing for the Journey

Homily for Thursday of the Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time for the Santa Misa of Jesús

Alatorre, César Izquierdo, and Jesús Mariscal

Hosea: 11:1-4,8a; Matthew 10:7-15

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson, Bishop of Yakima

Peace be with you! If there is a word that ties together our scriptures today with our celebration here at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, it can be summarized in one word: pilgrimage.

Why “pilgrimage?” Note the packing instructions Jesus gives his disciples when they go out to preach. He tells them they are to take nothing for the journey. Then he names the things they are not to take: No gold, no silver nor copper for the money belts. No sack, no second tunic and no sandals – not even a walking stick.

The list of what Jesus commands his disciples not to take is actually a list of what the well-planned pilgrim would take on a journey. Travel in the first century was by foot. One of the big reasons for travel would be pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem – the place where pilgrims could make sacrifices and prayers. Such travel often involved multi-day stays. This would require a sack for personal belongs, a second tunic, some coins for food purchase, a sturdy set of sandals and a good walking stick for the road.

Yet scholars suggest that when these same pilgrims arrived at the temple, the custom required that before entering the sacred space, they would leave all their personal belongings at the door: the sandals, the sack, the money belt, the extra tunic and the walking stick. Pilgrims entered the sacred areas of the Jerusalem temple with nothing but their tunic.

Jesus seems to be suggesting to his disciples that when they go to preach, they are to enter the homes of those they visit as though they were entering the sacred space of the temple. They enter the homes of those they serve with great reverence, great respect and great care. They uplift and highlight the sacrifices they see in the homes where they preach as if they were the holy sacrifices offered in the temple.

This is not only sage and sound advice for our three newly ordained priests here at the Basilica from the Diocese of Yakima in the United States of America as they embark on their life of service to our people. It is great advice for each of us who make this pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the most visited site of pilgrimage in the world.

The Church often speaks of the family home as a kind of “domestic church.” Thus, we are entering a kind of sanctuary, a protected place where God is at the center of all family life. The house becomes a home through placing Christ at the center of family life. When the priest visits the home, he can draw out this spiritual dimension to the common life of a family.

Likewise, as pilgrims, our time away on pilgrimage ought to help us return to our daily life with great reverence and awe for how God is working in our lives. We can return to our daily routines with a freshness and an appreciation that our desire for God, our task of placing God at the center of our lives, is not something we do alone. No. This great place of pilgrimage reminds us that there are, literally, millions of others all around the world who desire the same. They will never become famous. They will never become “breaking news.” But they will faithfully do what we desire to do. They will bring a sense of the sacred into the heart of their homes. They will create a “domestic church” out of their homes. They will turn their house into a home by putting Christ at the center of their lives.

May we give thanks for the ability to make the pilgrimage – not only this pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe – but the pilgrimage of faith in our daily lives. Let us ask God to assist us in traveling lightly, of not allowing ourselves to be overburdened with material goods and internal worries. Alongside the bread and the wine, let us place whatever burdens and needs we bring – be that our own – or the loved ones back home. May we stand – figuratively speaking – around this altar with only one tunic, trusting that the providential God will provide the rest. Peace be with you!