

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent Year B 2008 – Guadalupe –  
Is 61:2a,10-11, Jn 1:6-8, 19-28

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1. In the New World in Mexico, in the first years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century there were few people more powerful than bishop Juan de Zumárraga.
2. And yet he had enemies;
  - a. Cortés, the famous conqueror,
    - i. had returned to Spain and was trying to have him removed
    - ii. Because of his tireless protection of the indigenous population
  - b. The auditors, who were royal representatives,
    - i. Resented his following among the population
    - ii. And the support he had from his religious order, the Franciscans.
3. Because of his many powerful enemies, he often found himself in a struggle just to survive.
  - a. Thus it is not surprising he did what he did when one day a poor Mexican by the name of Cuauhtlatoatzin came to the door babbling about a vision of a woman over on Tepeyac hill.
  - b. Who wanted a chapel built in her honor.
  - c. Bishop Juan would have known Tepeyac had been a pagan shrine to the mother goddess of the Mexicans
  - d. He probably thought this Mexican with the unpronounceable name
  - e. was just trying to get a chapel built to this goddess.
  - f. Thus Juan did what any of would have done;
    - i. He told him to go back to the lady and ask for a sign
  - g. Juan probably figured that was that.
4. However, Juan de Zumárraga, as powerful as he was, could not have realized
  - a. That this little man with the unpronounceable name,
  - b. Was also called Juan Diego,
  - c. And that he would be the key to a power far greater than anything he had or imagined.
5. But then that is not all that surprising.
6. Because while we might not be a bishop or nearly as powerful,
  - a. all of us know what it was like for bishop Juan de Zumárraga.
7. When faced with powerful problems,
  - a. He looked to people who were more powerful
  - b. He looked to the King of Spain,
  - c. He looked to his Franciscan leaders in Rome,
  - d. Because they with their power would certainly be able to protect him.
8. He did what the Jewish people in third Isaiah's day did,
  - a. Looking to their new emperor, king Cyrus of Persia
    - i. To give them back their country after they were forcibly removed from it a generation before.
  - b. He did what the Jewish people in Jesus day did,
    - i. Looking for a new King, a new Savior, a Christ a messiah
    - ii. To give them back their freedom after being conquered by the Romans a generation before.

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- c. He did what we did in those dark days after September 11<sup>th</sup>,
  - i. Looking to our powerful president and military
  - ii. To protect us
  - iii. And to exact vengeance from those who had attacked us.
- d. He did what anyone would do, when faced with dangers and pressing problems
  - i. He looked for those who had power, and asked that they use their power to protect him.
- 9. And yet what happened?
  - a. The people in Isaiah's day returned to their land,
    - i. Only to find it devastated and abandoned
    - ii. And to be left with the job of rebuilding it
  - b. The people in Jesus' day looked for a king
    - i. Only to find a string of second rate zealots and revolutionaries
      - 1. Whose failure only made their oppression worse.
  - c. We looked for victory after 9/11
    - i. Only to find ourselves quickly mired in a senseless war.
- 10. Because people who are powerful usually have their own agendas
  - a. People who are powerful are usually interested only in their own problems and not our own
  - b. People who are powerful usually disappoint us.
- 11. Surely this is why the prophet in today's first reading is almost desperate in his promise
  - a. that God will yet bring glad tidings to the poor, broken people Jewish people,
  - b. just scraping by after returning home to their land.
- 12. Surely this is why the priests and Levites questioned John the Baptist so carefully in today's Gospel reading
  - a. Demanding to know if he was the Messiah, the prophet Elijah returned from the dead or some other prophet.
- 13. They had been disappointed by power so many times before;
  - a. They did not want to be disappointed again.
- 14. But then, maybe their disappointment was exactly what God wanted.
  - a. It was only when they faced that disappointment that the people of Israel in third Isaiah's day realized that they had to take responsibility for their own future, and began to rebuild.
  - b. It was only when the people of Israel in Jesus' day faced the disappointment of Jesus of Nazareth, who was supposed to be the great king and messiah that they expected and whom John prepared for, but ended up killed like a common criminal,
  - c. That they realized that in Jesus God was doing something totally new.
  - d. God was revealing that God was so powerful,

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- e. God could use even weakness, poverty and disappointment to see to it that God's will was done.
15. We usually have to learn that lesson again and again in life.
  16. Bishop Juan de Zumárraga's turn to learn that lesson came
    - a. when that little Mexican named Juan Diego returned,
    - b. carrying in his tilma a bouquet of roses,
    - c. even though it was not the time for flowers,
  17. and when he released the roses from his tilma
    - a. Bishop Juan saw an image of the Lady Juan Diego saw;
      - i. An image that NO Indian could have painted.
  18. The image that came to be called Our Lady of Guadalupe.
    - a. Because of image,
      - i. Bishop Juan de Zumárraga built that chapel
    - b. Because of that image,
      - i. at a time when millions of people were leaving the Catholic Church in Europe and becoming protestants,
      - ii. Millions more were entering the Catholic Church through baptism in the New World.
    - c. Because of that image,
      - i. Juan de Zumárraga and millions of others learned once again what so many of us need still need to hear.
  19. That There is one whose power is not revealed among kings and prophets, generals and presidents,
    - a. But among those who are poor and oppressed like Israel was,
    - b. Those who are unjustly condemned, like Jesus was
    - c. Those who have suffered disappointment after disappointment in life;
      - i. like Juan Diego would have, like all too often, we have.
  20. And that one is the one whom even the Virgin of Guadalupe serves;
    - a. Her son Jesus, whose resurrection is a promise to us all
    - b. that everything;
      - i. even our disappointments,
      - ii. are moments where if our eyes are open,
      - iii. if our hearts are open, we can see God active, using those moments to reveal God's strength.