"A Blessed Year..."

*D*ear *Friends,*

  December was a busy month at the Parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in the Diocese of Carbayllo, on the northside of Lima where our families and parishioners participated in several sacraments and celebrations. Additionally, we also celebrated the 18th anniversary of our parish. Our celebrations commenced on November 29th with an opening Mass and culminated on the 12th of December, the feast day of our patroness, Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Mass on November 29th was an opportunity to give thanks to God for the many graces He bestowed upon this parish during the past year.

Diocesan priests serving the poorest of the poor in Latin America since 1958.

We have had a blessed year as we have provided faith formation and catechesis programs to many youth in our parish. Over the previous nine months, our catechists and animators prepared our young people for the sacraments, instructing them in their faith. On Sunday, Dec. 1st, fifty-four young men and women committed themselves to God in the Sacrament of Confirmation. This was a day of great joy for our young people, their parents and godparents, and our catechists and animators who volunteered many hours guiding and joining them on this journey of faith. We continued with the sacraments the following weekend. On December 7th, ninety-five children of the parish received their First Holy Communion. This was our largest group of Communicants to date, so we decided to have two First Holy Communion Masses, that day. On the following day, December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, we also celebrated our patron, Our Lady of Guadalupe, after Mass when we carried the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe around one of the areas of the parish. We stopped at many homes to say a prayer and to give a blessing to the families there. We were very fortunate to have a musical band accompany us, playing music to help us give glory and praise to God on our procession.

After the procession, we arrived back at the parish to enjoy a full day of entertainment with bands, singers, dancers and even a clown to entertain the children. Each group in the parish prepared a Peruvian meal. Ceviche, a specialty dish of Peru which is made with fish or shellfish and citrus seasoning, went down very well with most of the parishioners, as did another specialty called "pachamanca". This is a meat dish which is baked on hot stones, or baked in the ground. "*Pacha*" is a Quechuan word meaning "earth" and "*manca*" means "pot" so this dish is named for how it is prepared and it is a very tasty dish!

It was wondeful to see such involvment from so many people in the parish. These celebrations concluded on Thursday, Dec 12th, with a Mass to celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe. Many of our parishioners attended this mass in her honor, and it was a joyous and an uplifting experience for our parishioners as they gave thanks to God for the powerful intercession and protection of His blessed Mother, under the patronage of Our lady of Guadalupe. The sanctuary came alive with music and song provided by our two choirs and the hymn to our Lady of Guadalupe was sung with great gusto! As this feast originated with our Lady's appearances in Guadalupe, Mexico, we had our own Mariachis, an ensemble of musicians with their guitars and sombreros, also giving praise to God for our patron. Once again, as we did on Sunday, we had a very short

procession through the Sanctuary and outside to share more food and to listen to the lively guitar music of the Mariachis. We are very grateful for our beautiful sanctuary dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe. During this Mass on her feast day, we specifically asked in prayer, that our celebrations would be a special time of grace for our parish and its families.

The feast of Our Lady of Gudalupe is widely celebrated in South America and the iconic image of Our Lady, with bowed head, dressed in a blue-green robe, studded with stars is visible in so many churches in Peru. We recall how Juan Diego, an Aztec peasant, saw the Blessed Virgin Mary on the Hill of Tepeyac on December 9, 1531. She asked him to ask the bishop to build a church, where she had appeared. The bishop, in turn, asked for proof that it was the Blessed Mother. In response to the bishop's request, Our Lady instructed Juan Diego to gather roses from the top of the hill - roses which were neither native to the area nor in season - and take them to the bishop.

Upon arriving at the bishop's residence, Juan Diego opened his tilma (cloak) to reveal the miraculous roses to the bishop and something even more miraculous was revealed: an image of the Virgin Mary on the inside of his tilma. Millions quickly converted to the Catholic Church as a result.

These fourteen days of celebrations, in our parish, were a very special time of grace for all our parishioners and was soon followed by the holy season of Christmas. We hope you, our benefactors, enjoyed a happy and holy Christmas and we continue to pray for you and thank you for your support and generosity.

--*Fr. Michael Sharkey*

~ *Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe* ~

Remember, O most gracious Virgin of Guadalupe, that in your apparitions on Mount Tepeyac you promised to show pity and compassion to all who, loving and trusting you, seek your help and protection. Accordingly, listen now to our supplications and grant us consolation and relief. We are full of hope that, relying on your help, nothing can trouble or affect us. As you have remained with us through your admirable image, so now obtain for us the graces we need. Amen.
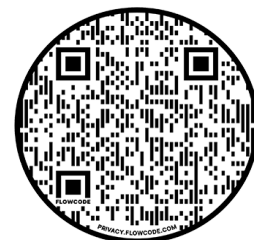
With Every Good Wish in Christ,

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