

## Homily – 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Grotto

December 7, 2016

Today's gospel announces the coming birth of Jesus, the Son of God, the Prince of Peace. We gather today to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the erection of this beautiful grotto. It was dedicated on December 7, 1941, the very day of the attack on Pearl Harbor, a day that President Roosevelt said was "a day which will live in infamy." The attack led to the entrance of the United States into the Second World War, the deadliest conflict in human history.

War or peace? That is the challenge for us. We gather at a time of fear and anxiety. World events seem to be spiraling out of control. There is conflict, violence, polarization in the world, in our nation, in the Church. But we gather in faith and hope because of the response of one young woman to God's will: "May it be done to me according to your word." With that, the Savior of the world was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. As Pope Francis has said, "the beginning of the history of sin in the Garden of Eden yields to a plan of saving love." As believers, we understand the history of sin only "in the light of God's love and forgiveness." The Holy Father has pointed out that "the fullness of grace can transform the human

heart and enable it to do something so great as to change the course of human history.” That is precisely what Mary did.

Generations have gathered here to pray to the Mother of God, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Guadalupe. But it is not enough to pray here! We must also learn from Mary’s example how to be missionary disciples of her beloved Son. Pope Paul VI pointed out that Mary is “an attentive person who receives the word of God with faith” – as mysterious and challenging the message to her is! When she visits Elizabeth, she prays her *Magnificat*. Mary “did not hesitate to proclaim that God vindicates the humble and the oppressed, and removes the powerful people of the world from their privileged positions.” She is the model of “the disciple who works for that justice which sets free the oppressed and for that charity which assists the needy; but above all, the disciple who is the active witness of that love which builds up Christ in people’s hearts.”

Our Lady promises to be with us, telling us not to fear the darkness, the violence, the hatred that is so much a part of our world. She is the protector and liberator of the poor, the downtrodden, the neglected, the oppressed, the vulnerable! Hail, Mary, full of grace! Show us the way to be missionary disciples!