



St Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin: *Thousands of people gathered in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe July 31, 2002, for the canonization of Juan Diego (1474-1578), to whom the Blessed Mother appeared. Pope Saint John Paul II celebrated the ceremony at which the poor Indian peasant became the Church's first saint indigenous to the Americas.*

First Reading: *(Isa 41:13-20)* For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I will help you." Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I will help you, says the Lord; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make of you a threshing sledge, new, sharp, and having teeth; you shall thresh the mountains and crush them, and you shall make the hills like chaff; You shall winnow them and the wind shall carry them away, and the tempest shall scatter them. And you shall rejoice in the Lord ; in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle,

and the olive; I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together; that men may see and know, may consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it.

Ps 144:1, 9-13

R./ The Lord is kind and full of compassion, slow to anger, abounding in love.

Gospel: *(Mt 11:11-15)* Jesus said to the crowds, "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

REFLECTION

In the gospel of today Jesus makes certain affirmations which are complicated for our understanding. Jesus praises John the Baptist as the "greatest born of women". One simple reason for this praise could be that John was anointed and filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. Another affirmation of Jesus is that "the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John". This affirmation of Jesus points to the fact that our final destiny is to be reunited with the Lord in the Kingdom of Heaven. As long as we are in our human body, we suffer the limitations, imperfections and sinfulness of humanity. That reality makes John the Baptist less great than the least in God's Kingdom. Another difficult saying of Jesus in the gospel today is about "violence suffered by the Kingdom of God" and "violent men taking it by force". St. Paul would refer to spiritual life and spiritual progress as a warfare (Eph 6:12). Jesus himself refers to his mission as to "bring fire on earth" (Lk 12:49). **We are to imbibe the spirit of John the Baptist who was anointed with the Holy Spirit from birth and continued his mission of preaching repentance with the violent and at the same time gentle force of the Spirit.**