

MOTHER OF THE CIVILIZATION OF LOVE

By Carl A. Anderson, Supreme Knight

For nearly 500 years, millions of people have shown great devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe, struck by her words to Juan Diego, "Am I not your Mother?" From her first appearance at Tepeyac in 1531, she has bestowed on humanity a tender motherly concern, and this remains an important part of her message today. If we approach Our Lady of Guadalupe as our mother, then she is not only a mother to us, she is a mother to everyone. That means that we are all one family, despite our different countries and cultures.

Blessed John Paul II referred to this fact when he wrote in *Ecclesia in America*: "The appearance of Mary to the native Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac in 1531 had a decisive effect on evangelization. Its influence greatly overflows the boundaries of Mexico, spreading to the whole Continent. America, which historically has been, and still is, a melting-pot of peoples, has recognized in the *mestiza* face of the Virgin of Tepeyac, 'in Blessed Mary of Guadalupe, an impressive example of a perfectly inculturated evangelization.' Consequently, not only in Central and South America, but in North America as well, the Virgin of Guadalupe is venerated as Queen of all America" (11).

He also wrote that the "renewal of the Church in America will not be possible without the active presence of the laity. Therefore, they are largely responsible for the future of the Church" (44).

So we must ask ourselves, what is the meaning of Our Lady of Guadalupe today? Does she play the same role in our countries' history as she has for nearly 500 years? How do we respond to the great commandment of our Lord – love our neighbor as our self? This is the real message of Our Lady of Guadalupe's motherly concern for each of us – that each person is actually a member of our family. And as Pope Benedict XVI told us in his first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (*God is Love*): In a family no member must go hungry or lack the necessities of life (25).

With this truth in mind, the Knights of Columbus has embarked on a pilgrimage with Our Lady of Guadalupe, bearing her image from council to council, from parish to parish, to spread her message and her love. Through this Marian Prayer Program, we have a chance to gather as a family before the mother of humanity and offer our prayers and intentions. I know that this will be a time of grace for all our members and their families, and I pray that Our Lady of Guadalupe will bring us closer together as an Order, as a Church, as a community and as a world in need of her words of peace and unity.