

**@ Our Lady of Guadalupe National Shrine
(Joel Dubois, Fall 2012)**



I visited the National Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I got into the shrine and what caught my attention was the gigantic image of Our Lady of Guadalupe in one of the sides of the shrine. It was so beautiful with a lot of colors on it. After, contemplating the image I got inside the shrine where the Catholic mass was about to start. The shrine was big enough for about 500 people and on the right and left side's walls from the entrance there were images of saints and the Virgin Mary. As well, images from Jesus childhood through his death were in the left and right wall of the shrine. Moreover, there was a path from the entrance to the altar with benches on both sides of the path. Yet, the path only reached until the table where the priest stands behind during the mass and behind the priest the altar with the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. According to my interview the location of the benches in front of the table and the altar symbolize lunch time as a family during the mass. Furthermore, the benches were full and when the priest got into the Shrine everybody stood up and remains quiet until the chorus started to play praise. After the chorus and people finished the singing of the praise the priest said these words while drawing a cross into the air, "in the name of the father the son and the holy spirit amen" and everybody repeated the same words while they drew the cross through their forehead, lips and chest. According to priest Jose Veltra the symbol of the cross in the forehead symbolizes the opening of the human mind to receive the word of god, and the cross in the lips symbolizes that the word of god should be distributed through words, and finally the cross in the chest symbolizes that our body is a church where god is located in the hearts of everyone.

The Mass continued and after the priest welcomes the believers he paused for a moment and then the chorus started to sing “gloria al señor que reina en el cielo,” which means glory to God that lives in heaven. After, that everybody took a sit and got ready to listen to two readings from the bible and a psalm. This moment is where the believers listen to the word of god through the reading that one of the attendants reads and the psalm that the chorus sings. After that the attendants make the symbol of the cross through their body to prepare to listen to a small portion of the gospel read by the priest. According to Margarita one of the attendants this part of the mass is a moment of spirituality for the attendants to open their minds and apply the word of the gospel into their daily lives. Furthermore, after the pries finished reading the gospel he made a signal to the attendants to take a sit.

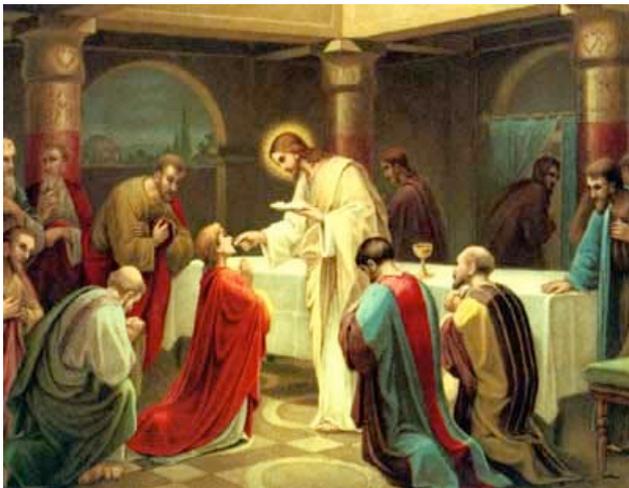


Next, the priest gives a sermon based on the reading from the bible and the gospel to the attendants. However, he used personal experiences to relate his and the attendants daily living to the readings. Moreover, according to Ernestina a catechist from the shrine this is the moment of reflection for the attendants, which they can apply a change to their daily life by listening to the priest.

After the sermon, everyone sat down and the priest started to set the table for the offerings and the presentation of the body of Christ. According to priest Veltra a priest can only invoke the Holy Spirit after a bishop has consecrated the hands of the priest. Moreover, priest Veltra told me that after he stretches his hands over the goblet, he as a priest has the ability to invoke the Holy Spirit to descend to the wine and bread. After that the priest did the presentation of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Yet, giving the alms came next. Moreover, I felt a special emotion after the collecting of the alms because according to my interview giving alms represented a sacrifice, for god and the ancestors. As well, there was moment of silence which created a deep feeling into my soul because it was the time that the priest pointed out for everyone's individual necessities. The offering was made by everyone going on their knees for a short time and it's also made for adoration to God. With that it concludes the presentation and the adoration of the body of Jesus Christ as a family of Christians representing what Jesus did in the last supper with his spiritual presence.



Further, "El Padre Nuestro," comes, which is the Lord's Prayer. The attendants raised their hands while doing The Lord's prayer as a family. Furthermore, the priest points out the brotherhood of the Christians by introducing the hand shake as a symbol of peace that the attendants do to wish peace to themselves and to everyone. According to Margarita that is a moment were she as an attendant doesn't care of who is standing next to her or peoples sins, but what matters is the faith that as brothers of Christianity they all have. After that a moment of silence is made and while



the priest gets ready to distribute the holy bread and wine to people that have done the sacrament of their First Communion, which consists of a process of preparation in spirituality to be able to prepare the heart as a pure house for Jesus Christ after confessing your sins to a priest and receiving with it the absolution to receive the communion. According to priest Veltra not all people receive the communion by the bread and wine, but also by invoking the spirit of god into your heart. The purpose of the mass is that everyone leaves with something even if you're not allow to receive the communion because of the lack

of the sacrament or because of sins. Anyone can still receive god's body through the spiritual invocation. Finally, after the participants receive the communion according to priest Veltra people go on silence for a few moments to gratify god for the gift of the communion. Last, after the gratification for the gift received the mass concludes when the priest as an instrument of god gives a special blessing in the name of god to all the attendants according to priest Veltra.

The similarities I see between Puja and the Catholic Church is the presence of the spirit of God. For example, in the Catholic Church the spiritual presence is felt by the invocation of the Holy Spirit through the bread and wine. On the other hand, in Puja the presence is felt with the bathing ritual of the images. For instance, “The priest presiding over the ritual, assisted by others, first removes the clothes and garlands from the images of Minakshi and Somaskanda in preparation to the bathing ritual, known as abhisheka.” (RDR, 21) This also shows another similarity between both worships with it’s the worship of images. According to my interview, priest Veltra told me that the worship of our Lady of Guadalupe was very strong because her image represents a pregnant women standing in front of the sun symbolizing that the sun is not a god, but the child she was going to give birth is the god for who people lives.



Both the worship of Durga and the Catholic Church recognize their God as the power that underlies life in general. According to Kinsley, David R, “In the forms of the navatrika and the ghata (pot) Durga reveals a dimension of herself that primarily has to do with the fertility of the crops and vegetation and with the power that underlies life in general.” At the shrine the recognition of god as the main source of life was through the communion which symbolized the sacred food that will keep believers to the eternal life.

Last, but not least both in Puja and at the shrine sacrifices were made to please the gods. According to C. J. Fuller, “The presiding priest continuously rings a bell while sprinkling water around the plate, whose lid is slightly raised by the assistant. In this way the priest offers the food to the god and goddess.” On the other hand, in the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe the giving the alms were the offerings that the believers did to please god according to priest Veltra.

