

Stephanie Paulsell: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Stephanie Paulsell: And welcome to morning prayers. Would you join me in responsive reading number 157 on page 80, in the thin black Appleton Chapel Psalter in your pew? Number 157. For wisdom moves more easily than emotion itself. She pervades and permeates all things because she is so pure.

Congregation: Like a fine mist, she rises from the power of God, a pure effulgence from the glory of the Almighty.

Stephanie Paulsell: She is the brightness that streams from everlasting light, the flawless mirror of the active power of God and the image of his goodness.

Congregation: She is but one, yet can do everything; herself unchanging, she makes all things new; age after age, she enters into holy souls and makes them God's friends and prophets.

Stephanie Paulsell: For nothing is acceptable to God, but the man who makes his home with wisdom.

Congregation: If riches are a prize to be desired in life, what is richer than wisdom, the active cause of all things?

Stephanie Paulsell: If prudence shows itself in action, who more than wisdom is the artificer of all that is?

Congregation: If virtue is the object of man's affections, the fruits of wisdom's labors are the virtues; temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude, these are her teachings and the life of all. There is nothing of more value than these.

Choir: (Singing).

Stephanie Paulsell: A reading from the gospel according to Luke. And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God, my savior. For he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on, all generations will call me blessed. For the mighty one has done great things for me and Holy is his name. God's mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. God has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the crowd in the thoughts of their hearts. God has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. God has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. God has helped his servant, Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants, forever."

David Carrasco: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

David Carrasco: I once heard to Toni Morrison, the African-American winner of the Nobel prize, speak about the deeper contributions that immigrants often make to the country they migrate to. And the talk she gave in Guadalajara, Mexico, called the foreigners' home, she voiced the hope and gifts of migrants. She said, quote, "After the, 'Please, please, please let us in,' comes the other thing, the creative energy that is carried inside." One example of this potent combination of, "Please, let us in," and the creative energy that is carried inside is the story and the popular devotions to the immigrant mother of Mexico, Our Lady of Guadalupe.

David Carrasco: In three days it will be December the 12th, which most of us identify as one more day in the march toward Christmas break or as part of Hanukkah or the holidays. But Mexicans bring another meaning to this day, filling it with spiritual significance and power. For we remember when the Virgin of Guadalupe had to beg to be let in to the new world of the Americas. And when refused, she persisted and presented her gift of beauty and boundless love and political wisdom for everyone.

David Carrasco: Immigrants from Latin America bring more than hunger and hands, drugs and defeat, baseball and bongos. They bring spirit and spirits, imaginations and determination to bring out the creative energy that is carried inside in wombs, in hearts, in minds, in bones and brains. Yes, they're picking the food, serving our meals, cleaning our dorms, taking care of children, and cutting our hedges. And they're young teachers, organizers, judges, doctors, singers, actors and professors, but they bring more. They bring the gift of her story on this week.

David Carrasco: In 1531, when Indian peoples were sickened by European diseases and cruelty, and dying in heaps in Mexico city, the Aztec, Juan Diego, was walking just before dawn by the Hill of Tepeyac, where the Indians had worshiped their mother goddess before the Spaniards came. Beautiful songs of birds drew him up the hill, where the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared and spoke to him in Spanish and [inaudible 00:10:20]. The Brown-skinned virgin said to him in his own language, "Go to the Spanish Bishop and tell him to build me a little chapel here among the people, so that I can give my love, protection and compassion to all the peoples of this land. All the peoples of different ancestries who suffer and who would speak with me."

David Carrasco: Juan Diego went to the Bishop's palace in the city where he reported that the Virgin Mary had sent him to the Spanish authorities with a message to build a chapel of love and affirmation. His message was utterly dismissed because he was an Indian. Returning to the hill where Our Lady of Guadalupe was waiting. He implored her saying, "Don't send me. I'm a poor Indian, a back frame, a piece of rope, a wing, a nobody, and nobody will listen to me." She answered, "I could

send a noble, but you, my most abandoned one, are in the hollow of my mental, in the crossing of my arms, and my love will be mediated through you."

David Carrasco: Juan Diego worked up his courage, went back to the Bishop's palace and again, he was rejected and ordered by the Bishop, not to return without a miraculous sign from the so-called Virgin Mary of Guadalupe. When he reported his failure to Our Lady of Guadalupe, she told Juan Diego to climb to the top of the hill where beneath winters' cloak, beautiful flowers had appeared and blooming out of season. He wrapped the flowers in his tilma, his Indian cloak, and took them to the Bishop's palace. In unraveling the cloak, with flowers falling to the ground, the miraculous beautiful image of the dark-skinned Virgin Mary of Guadalupe appeared, driving the Bishop to his knees as he wept for shame and joy. And the text ends, absolutely, this entire city, with no exception, was deeply moved and came to see her precious image.

David Carrasco: There are two messages that this story has for us today. The first is sacred love has to beg sometimes to be let in because it appears in the form of a woman of color, speaking in a foreign language. Appearing first to an indigenous man of the lowest social standing. The second message that crosses the border between our heads and hearts and the political borders of our democracy is that this immigrant mother spreads her garment of compassion for all the peoples, all the different groups of peoples in the land. She does not defend one group alone, but stands up against all the born-again fascism's, antisemitism, anti-Arabism, anti-gayisms, anti-Latino Americanisms, anti-African-Americanisms.

David Carrasco: Yet, you notice she has color and what of that? It's an ambiguous color. Is she Indian or Mestizo? Red or Brown? If we were to ask her how dark or light she was, she might answer, "I am dark. I'm darker than the other dark. I'm the dark inside the dark. How light am I? I am light. I'm lighter than the other light. I'm the light inside the light. What colors am I? I am colored. I'm more colorful than the other colors. I am the colors inside the colors." This is the Guadalupe version of what Morrison calls, the other thing, the creative energy that is carried inside. She's both a foreigner at home among us and she's one of the very few homes in which all of us are welcome to dwell together, but a togetherness symbolized by our gathering here today.

David Carrasco: Isn't it strangely wonderful that the story of this brown mother, Guadalupe, who my daughter calls the number one mother, has migrated to Harvard today with the plea to let her in so that we can release the creative energy of love for everyone that is inside of us? Amen.

Congregation: Amen.

Stephanie Paulsell: Would you join me in the Lord's prayer printed on the reverse of your order of worship? Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Stephanie Paulsell: Our hymn is number 109, People Look East. Let's sing the first and the last verse.

Congregation: (Singing).

Stephanie Paulsell: David, we're so grateful to you for that beautiful meditation on Our Mother of Guadalupe. May we be as welcoming and as open and generous as she has been. Friends, this is our last morning prayers meeting of this semester. We will miss being together, but we look forward to seeing you again when school begins again in January. Choir, we are so grateful for all the ways you have lifted our prayers in these early morning hours. And now made the movement of God's spirit awaken our imaginations enliven our senses and lead us more deeply into life. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.