

- Perhaps it seems that our world has grown darker in the past two years.
- Certainly, there's been a lot more suffering.
- The evil one seems to have the upper hand in our society and in so many ways.
- Of course, the battle between good and evil, between light and darkness is nothing new.
- Since the day satan proudly proclaimed to God that he would not serve the Almighty, there has been a tension between good and evil, between light and darkness in our world, as they constantly battle for dominion one over the other.
- It's a battle that takes place within the movements of our society: in our media, in our politics, in our marketplaces and schools, in our courts, and sadly, even in the Church.
- And it's a battle that takes place within the souls of each of every one of us as we fight the battle against sin. For each of us must determine over and over again to whom we will give dominion over our souls, and consequently our salvation.
- This battle, this tension between light and dark, is especially pronounced in this season of Advent, the season in which we wait with longing expectation for the coming of the Light of the World, all the while the nights are ominously at their longest and exercise their greatest dominion over the daylight.
- And Holy Mother Church seizes upon this battle between good and evil that is symbolized by the contrast between darkness and light. She does not cower in fear. Rather, through Her liturgy and teaching, She proclaims truths eternal and yet ever new.
- Indeed, the candles of our Advent wreaths, that we light one-by-one as we near the birth of our Savior, is Mother Church's way of proclaiming to the darkness of evil: You shall not win. You shall not conquer. Christ will come and vanquish all darkness.
- Indeed, in this still and silent hour before the world has fully awoken, the lighted candle we bear in our hands is a sign of our hope for the coming of the Light of the World, Who will deliver us from all darkness.
- It's a sign of our desire not only to greet Him when He comes, but of our hope to live with Him eternally in the noontime sun of Heaven.
- Of course, if we truly desire for the Light of the World to take dominion over our souls and banish the darkness that is within them, we must be confident in God and willing to fight and suffer the wounds such warfare invariably brings.
- This is a battle we fight not with our own strength, but with the strength of God that comes us through recourse to prayer, the Sacraments, fasting and penance. And it's a battle that will press upon us as long as we have breath.
- Yet know this: we are not alone in the battle! For our Lady is at our side!
- Again, we see a symbol of her protection on this day as we find ourselves nestled providentially between the awesome Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, and the glorious Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.
- For in her Immaculate Conception, we are given to know of Mary's humble and perfect purity, which enables her to crush the proud head of our ancient foe.
- And in the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we see Mary's power against evil played out against the demonic culture in which she appeared, a culture that practiced human sacrifice among other unspeakable evils.

- Yet, in less than a decade after Mary appeared to St. Juan Diego, more than 9 million people converted to Catholicism, leaving behind that religion of death and doom.
- And so as we prepare to honor the Light of the World, Who is soon to be born, we also offer praise to God for the gift of Our Lady, whose *fiat* in Nazareth secured our redemption and dealt the devil a fatal blow.
- While we know her to be meek and humble of heart like her Son, it is by that meekness and humility that Mary is both the fairest honor of our race and more awesome than an army in battle array!
- All we need do is turn to her in prayer, and she turns to us with her love and protection, procuring unseen graces that sustain us and keep us in union with her Son.
- It is Mary who strengthens our faith, bolsters our hope, and enlivens our charity.
- It is Mary who protects us from the evils plaguing our world, if we devote ourselves to her as her true children.
- Yes, there is darkness in our world that we must yet endure, but let us not despair. The Light that conquers the darkness will soon be borne unto us.
- In imitation of our Lady, whose virtues shine like the stars in the heavens, may we hold fast to this Light, trusting that by His grace, the darkness will not overcome us.