

Mantel: The predominant color in the image's mantle is turquoise, the blue-green color reserved for the great god Omecihuatl. Although the Indians had many "intermediary gods," Omecihuatl was considered the supreme god. It was a mother-father god who sometimes was represented as a man and sometimes as a woman. It was a source of unity for everything that exists.

Moon: The woman is standing on the moon, indicating that she is greater than the god of night, the moon god.

"Angel": The "angel" at the bottom of the image was seen by the Indians as an "intermediary god" carrying in a new era, the beginning of a new civilization. One era was at an end --had died -and a new one was beginning, was being born.

Pontifical Pronouncements on the Virgin of Guadalupe

With the Brief *Non est equidem* of May 25, 1754, Pope Benedict XIV declared Our Lady of Guadalupe patron of what was then called New Spain, corresponding to Spanish Central and Northern America, and approved liturgical texts for the Mass and Liturgy of the Hours in her honor. Pope Leo XIII granted new texts in 1891 and authorized coronation of the image in 1895. Pope Saint Pius X proclaimed her patron of Latin America in 1910. In 1935 Pope Pius XI proclaimed her patron of the Philippines and had a monument in her honor erected in the Vatican Gardens. Pope Pius XII declared the Virgin of Guadalupe "Queen of Mexico and Empress of the Americas" in 1945, and "Patroness of the Americas" in 1946. Pope John XXIII invoked her as "Mother of the Americas" in 1961, referring to her as Mother and Teacher of the Faith of All American populations, and in 1966 Pope Paul VI sent a Golden Rose to the shrine.

Pope John Paul II visited the shrine in the course of his first journey outside Italy as Pope from 26 to January 31, 1979, and again when he beatified Juan Diego there on 6 May 1990. In 1992 he dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe a chapel within St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. At the request of the Special Assembly for the Americas of the Synod of Bishops, he named Our Lady of Guadalupe patron of the Americas on January 22, 1999 (with the result that her liturgical celebration had, throughout the Americas, the rank of Solemnity), and visited the shrine again on the following day. On July 31, 2002, he canonized Juan Diego before a crowd of 12 million, and later that year included in the General Calendar of the Roman Rite, as optional memorials, the liturgical celebrations of Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin (December 9) and Our Lady of Guadalupe (12 December).

Source: *Notitiae*, bulletin of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2002, pages 194-195.

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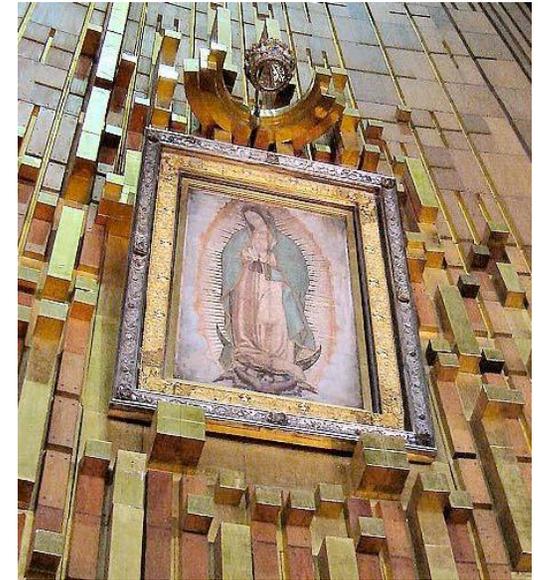
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Pamphlet 446

Our Lady of Guadalupe



Actual Tilma Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared in Mexico as the pregnant Mother of God to Saint Juan Diego, a Chicemeca Indian, on December 9, 10 and 12, 1531. She left a Miraculous Image of her appearance on his cactus fiber cloak, or "tilma", which still exists today for all to see in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

Background

Mesoamerica, the New World, 1521: The capital city of the Aztec empire falls under the Spanish forces. Less than 20 years later, 9 million of the inhabitants of the land, who professed for centuries a polytheistic and human sacrificing religion, are converted to Christianity. What happened in those times that produced such an incredible and historically unprecedented conversion?

Tepeyac Hill

In 1531 a “Lady from Heaven” appeared to a humble Native American at Tepeyac, a hill northwest of what is now Mexico City.

She identified herself as the ever virgin Holy Mary, Mother of the True God for whom we live, of the Creator of all things, Lord of heaven and the earth.

She made a request for a church to be built on the site, and submitted her wish to the local Bishop. When the Bishop hesitated, and requested her for a sign, the Mother of God obeyed without delay or question, sending Her native messenger to the top of the hill in mid-December to gather an assortment of roses for the Bishop.

St. Juan Diego

After complying to the Bishop’s request for a sign, She also left for us an image of herself imprinted miraculously on the native’s *tilma*, a poor quality cactus-cloth, which should have deteriorated in 20 years but shows no sign of decay 475 years later and still defies all scientific explanations of its origin.

It apparently even reflects in Her eyes what was in front of her in 1531.

Her message of love and compassion, and her universal promise of help and protection to all mankind, as well as the story of the apparitions, are described in the “Nican Mopohua”, a 16th century document written in the native Nahuatl language.

There is reason to believe that at Tepeyac Mary came in her glorified body, and her actual physical hands rearranged the roses in Juan Diego’s *tilma*, which makes this apparition very special.

An incredible list of miracles, cures and interventions are attributed to Her. Yearly, an estimated 14 million visit her Basilica, making her Mexico City home the most popular Marian shrine and the most visited Catholic sanctuary in the whole world.

Altogether 25 popes have officially honored Our Lady of Guadalupe. His Holiness John Paul II visited her Sanctuary four times: on his first apostolic trip outside Rome as Pope in 1979, and again in 1990, 1999 and 2002.

The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is celebrated on December 12th. In 1999, Pope John Paul II, in his homily from the Solemn Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, during his third visit to the sanctuary, declared the date of December the 12th as a Liturgical Holy Day for the whole continent.

During the same visit Pope John Paul II entrusted the cause of life to her loving protection, and placed under her motherly care the innocent lives of children, especially those who are in danger of not being born. (Source: <http://www.sancta.org>. Used with permission)

What do the symbols mean in the Our Lady of Guadalupe image?

The 450-year-old image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is more than simply a picture. It contains symbols --in a sense, hieroglyphics, or a story in pictures --that reveal part of the message the Blessed Mother brought through Juan Diego to the Indians of Mexico and to all the people of the Americas. But the symbols had a special meaning to the Indians, who because of their culture could decipher the code in the Image.

Eyes: The eyes of the image are looking down, a posture of humility, revealing that, as great as she is, she is not a god. Indian gods never looked down; they looked straight ahead.

Face: The woman’s face shows great compassion. The Indians felt that the face was the window of the inner person, a means by which one could read who a person was --the way a person would act. A good woman to the Indians was one whose femininity showed in her face. The head of the woman in the image shows her with dark skin and dark hair like that of the Indians.

Hands: Her hands are not poised in the traditional Western style of prayer, but in an Indian manner of offering, indicating that something is being offered, that something is to come from her.

Maternity Band: The maternity band around the woman’s waist was the sign of a pregnant woman, a mother who is about to give birth, it was a sign to the Indians that someone is yet to come.

Stars: The stars on the mantle are a sign that a new civilization, or era, is beginning. The Indian tradition recognized the end and the beginning of different eras throughout the ages, and the destruction of a particular civilization or era was always accompanied by a comet, or a body of stars. Indian prophets even before the arrival and conquest by the Spaniard Hernan Cortes had been predicting the end of their civilization at that time.

Sun Rays: The rays of sun in the image recalled for the Indians that the sun played a key role in their civilization. But the woman in the image is greater than even the sun. She hides the sun, and only the rays come forth. She hides the sun but does not extinguish it.