



est. 1531

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

HER EYES
contain images
visible only
through modern
technology

WOMAN
clothed with the
sun, with the moon
under her feet.”
(Rev. 12:1)

STARS
are accurate to
constellations
that would have
appeared on
12.12.1531

RIBBON
is a symbol of
virginity. Its
high placement
indicates she is
with child.

FLOWER
clusters are glyphs
of the native language
containing
various intricate
messages

COLORS
of royalty. Green
is symbolic of
heaven. Pink
symbolic of the
earth.

STANDS
on snake-skinned
moon, a symbol of
an Aztec serpent
god of human
sacrifices

THUS
she reigns
over the entire
cosmos

“The LORD
said to the serpent
... He will crush your
head and you will
strike his heel.”
(Gen. 3:15)

Our Lady of Guadalupe Image on St. Juan Diego's Tilma

By Mary Ann Collett

Ralph Martin encourages us to learn more about the incredible symbolism above in the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We celebrate this Feast every year on December 12th. She is the Patroness of the Americas. A miracle which sparked a mass conversion hangs, frozen in time, in Mexico City

The humble Aztec Juan Diego and his wife, Maria Lucia, had accepted baptism from the Franciscan missionaries laboring in Tenochtitlan (Mexico City), the greatest city of Spain's most impressive colony, the future Mexico. After his wife died in 1529, Juan moved to the home of his Christian uncle, Juan Bernardino, on the outskirts of Mexico City.

On Saturday, December 9, 1531, Juan Diego arose very early to walk to Mass. It was a quiet, peaceful morning. As he walked by the base of a hill called Tepeyac, Juan heard the gentle singing of many birds. He looked up. On the top of the hill was a radiant white cloud encircling a beautiful young woman. Juan was confused. Was this a dream? Then the gentle, bird-like singing ceased, and the mysterious young woman spoke directly to him: "Juanito, Juan Dieguito! I am the perfect and always Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God." Mary went on to say many beautiful things to Juan, concluding with her desire that a church be built in her honor on that very hill of Tepeyac.

The Virgin Mary, a faithful Catholic, placed herself under obedience to the local bishop. She would not build the shrine herself, or work directly with the nearby faithful. She required the bishop's cooperation and support, and so told Juan, "...go now to the bishop in Mexico City and tell him that I am sending you to make known to him the great desire that I have to see a church dedicated to me built here." There followed meetings with the good but incredulous Bishop Zumárraga, more brief apparitions, and more drama until matters culminated on Tuesday, December 12, 1531. Juan was waiting patiently in the bishop's parlour for hours. The bishop's aides wished he would just go away. But Juan carried a secret gift for the bishop in his coarse poncho. It was stuffed full of fragrant Castilian roses. Juan had gathered them from Tepeyac despite the cold December weather. Mary had told Juan to present the roses to the bishop as a sign.

After a long wait, Juan was finally brought into the presence of His Excellency. He recounted his conversations with Mary and then proudly unfurled his poncho. The fresh and dewy roses fell gracefully to the floor. Juan was content. But there was a gift within the gift. There were more than gorgeous roses.

Everyone in the room fell to their knees in wonder. Juan was the last to see it. A gentle image of the Virgin Mary was impressed on Juan's poncho. Could it be? Who could have possibly...? It was a miracle! The bishop immediately took possession of the poncho and placed it in his private chapel. Events now moved quickly. The miraculous image was put in the Cathedral. It was then brought in holy procession to a quickly built shrine on Tepeyac. Then there were more and more miracles. Then there were more and more pilgrims.

It is that very same poncho which hangs to this day in the shrine built for and at the request of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. The miracle first unfurled in the bishop's office in 1531 has been frozen in time. It is perpetually 1531 in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Everyone who gazes on the image stands in the shoes of Bishop Zumárraga. The image teems with mysterious symbols and meanings.

The wholesale conversion of the tribes of old Mexico, a missionary effort that until 1531 had been a struggle, was directly attributable to Mary's miraculous intercession. It was the greatest and most rapid conversion of a people in the history of the Church. It is Mary to whom we turn on this feast. She made herself a humble, indigenous, local, expectant mother to bring a good but pagan people into the embrace of her Son and His Holy Church. She models the precious gift of life and the costs required to protect it from harm.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, your miraculous image was made possible because of the humble cooperation of Saint Juan Diego. May our work in the mission fields of everyday life be as fruitful as your own. May we cooperate with you just as Juan did.

Excerpted from: My Catholic Life Inc. and Renewal Ministries.