

Huitzilopochtli. Their moon god, Tezcatlipoca, likewise lost stature, since the Lady stood upon the moon's crescent. The broach at her throat with its small black cross reminded the Indians of the crucifixes of the Spanish friars and the symbol on the banner of Captain Hernando Cortes. They understood by this cross that the Lady was bringing the true religion to the Mexicans. That she was held aloft by a child with wings singled her as a heavenly being, yet her hands joined in prayer meant that there was one who was greater than she. The white fur at the neck and sleeves was taken as a mark of royalty, as were the 46 golden stars and the border of gold. The bluish-green of the mantle was taken as a color reserved to divinity. It was the reading of the picture that converted whole tribes to the Faith.

The origin of the name Guadalupe has always been a matter of conjecture. While many strongly believe that the portrait was named for the statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Spain, it is, nevertheless, also believed that the name came about because of the interpretation of the words used by the Blessed Virgin during the apparition to the ailing uncle of Juan Diego. An account of the apparition written by Don Antonio Valerano three years after it occurred is translated:

"Here is told how he, Juan Bernardino, had seen his nephew and he said to him how she, the Blessed Virgin, had asked him to explain to the bishop, to set before him and to relate what he had seen and the manner in which marvelously she cured him and will thus be known, or named, or called, Entirely Perfect Virgin Holy Mary of Guadalupe, her precious image . . ."

Since Guadalupe is Spanish, and the Lady spoke in the Indian dialect, the word was taken to be the Aztec Nahuatl word "*coatalocpia*," which is translated "*coatil*" for serpent, "*tlaloc*" for goddess, and "*tlalpia*" for watching over. Another version is the Aztec word "*te coatlaxopeuh*," which is pronounced "*te quatlasupe*" : "*te*" meaning stone, "*coa*" meaning serpent, "*tla*" being the noun ending which can be interpreted as "the," while "*xopeuh*" means to crush or stamp out. Both words when pronounced rapidly sound remarkably like Guadalupe. Whichever is the valid Aztec word, both words refer to the feathered serpent god Quetzalcoatl, whose images are found on many Aztec ruins. To this fierce serpent god the Indians annually offered 20,000 men, women and children in bloody sacrifice. The significance of the name Guadalupe was understood by the Indians to mean that the Virgin would crush their fearsome serpent god. This went far in converting eight million Indians in the seven years following the apparitions.

*(excerpted from: Joan Carroll Cruz *Miraculous Images of Our Lady*)

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Our Lady of Guadalupe

Mexico City, Mexico—1531

Feast Day: December 12th

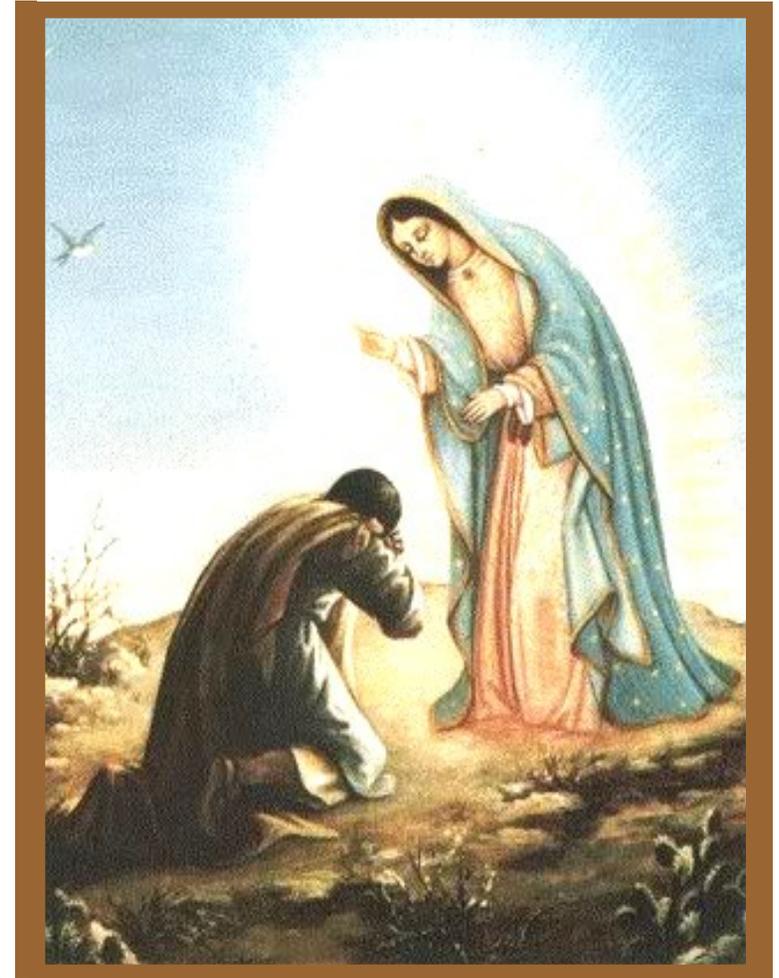


Image of Our Lady speaking to Juan Diego, she is asking for a church to be built at that site in her honor. A miraculous sign was needed for proof of this apparition. The Blessed Mother told Juan to gather some flowers from atop the hill. He did so and our Lady arranged them herself...when he opened his tilma, the miraculous image of Our Lady was imprinted on the fabric.

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

*The miraculous image of the Blessed Mother on a piece of 480-year-old fabric constantly intrigues its viewers, puzzles artists and baffles scientists. Its history began on September 9, 1531 when the Mother of God appeared to a 55-year-old Indian named Juan Diego. While hurrying on Tepeyac Hill to attend Mass at a Franciscan mission, Juan Diego heard a woman's voice calling him, not by his name, but by the affectionate diminutive, "*Juanito, Juan Dieguito.*" After a tender dialogue she requested that he visit the Bishop, tell his Excellency about the apparition and ask that a shrine be built in her honor.

The visions occurred five times, four to Juan Diego and once to his ailing uncle when the Lady effected his cure. The last apparition to Juan Diego occurred on Tuesday, December 12. To provide the Bishop with the sign he requested that would identify the apparition and confirm the supernatural aspect of what Juan had alleged, the Lady asked Juan to walk higher up the hill and to collect the roses found there—this in spite of the rocky nature of the place and its unsuitability for the growth of any type of vegetation. Nevertheless, Juan picked the roses that he found there. The lady arranged the flowers inside the scoop of the tilma, a cloak worn by the Indians, and cautioned him against disturbing or revealing his burden except in the presence of the Bishop.

When Juan opened his cloak for the prelate, he found not the rejection and skepticism he had received before, but the Bishop kneeling among the flowers, looking in reverential awe at a picture miraculously applied to the cloak—an exact likeness that Juan Diego identified as the Lady he had seen four times on Tepeyac Hill.

News of the miracle spread rapidly. Crowds continually gathered at the Bishop's house, forcing the ecclesiastic, who had kept the tilma in his private chapel, to remove the tilma to the cathedral of the city. There it was placed above the altar for all to see.

Juan Diego, the visionary of Guadalupe, lived 17 years following the apparition. During this time he was appointed as the official custodian of the tilma and was ever ready to relate the apparitions and to answer all questions concerning the image. He lived in a small room attached to the church and died at the age of 74, in the year 1548.

When the Spaniards and Indians completed the building of the church where the Lady had requested it, the image was transferred and was placed atop the altar, much to the satisfaction and rejoicing of the people.

The tilma itself is cactus cloth made from the maguey plant. It is a fabric similar to sacking that usually disintegrates within 20 years. Artists confirm that it is a fabric wholly unsuited to the application of paint. The garment is made of three strips, each one measuring 21 inches in width by 78 inches in length, with the image imprinted on two of the strips. In its golden frame the third panel, which hung on Juan's back, is folded behind the two front panels. Another source states that the tilma was made of only two straight pieces sewn together. Regardless, it is certain that two pieces are seen, and these measure 78 inches in length by 42 inches in width. They are joined with the original loose stitching that can be seen running the length of the panel along the left ear of the figure, down the left wrist to the knee and passing to the side of the angel's head. The figure of Our Lady measures four feet, eight inches in height.

Many who have closely examined the face of the portrait have reported seeing the image of a man reflected in the Lady's eyes. A bearded face is seen, a shoulder, and part of a halo in a three-quarter image. This likeness matches exactly the contemporary portraits of Juan Diego. This phenomenon was first discovered in 1929 by Alfonso Marcue Gonzales while he was examining photographic negatives. Carlos Salinas made a similar discovery in 1951, although the findings were not immediately made known. Only after the conclusions of a commission were presented to him did the Archbishop give permission for the discovery to be made public by a radio broadcast on December 11, 1955, the eve of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Confirmations of this discovery were made in 1956 by Doctor Javier Torroello Bueno, an oculist, and by Dr. Rafael Torija Lavoignet. Optometrists who examined the eyes more recently have observed that, in addition to the image of the man, the eyes reflect light rays, just as human eyes do when examined optometrically.

The natives who first studied the image read messages that were not apparent to others. Since the Lady stood in front of the sun, they understood that she was greater than their sun god