

The Miraculous Image of Guadalupe

TO THE ONLY DISCIPLE of whom it is expressly said that Christ Jesus loved, John the Evangelist, who was to become Christian Rose Cross, to him the Crucified said, "Behold your Mother." And to Mary He said, "Behold your son."

Esoterically, Mary as the Immaculate Conception is she who gives birth to Christed consciousness. And in Revelation (Chapter 12) John wrote of the Lady who is figured in what is known as the Guadalupe Image, the miraculously produced representation of a woman clothed with sun, with a crescent moon under her feet, and stars on her mantle.

What is the origin of this image? On December 9, 1531, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, appeared to Juan Diego, an Aztec Indian, who, recently converted to the Christian faith, was on his way to Mass. Speaking in his native language, she said, "I wish and intensely desire that in this place [the foot of a hill in Mexico City called Tepeyac] my sanctuary be



erected. Here I will demonstrate, I will exhibit, I will give all my love, my compassion, my help and my protection to the people. I am your merciful Mother. The merciful mother of all of you who live united in this land, and of all mankind, of all these who love me."

Juan was told to go to the bishop to convey her request. The bishop said he needed a sign. In response Mary directed Juan to gather flowers, including Castilian roses, and take them to the bishop in his tilma, an outer garment akin to a poncho, woven of coarse vegetable fiber. When Juan unfolded his tilma, a profusion of out-of-season flowers cascaded to the floor revealing an image of the Blessed Virgin. The bishop fell to his knees and wept in joyous wonder at the Icon of the woman clothed in sun.

The sun of the Aztecs, frankly brutally pagan sun worshippers, was eclipsed by the Christ light of the Virgin. This was her first "Immaculate" appearance (1531), yet she appeared as Mother, and so proclaimed herself. To Juan she said, "Am



Fourth Appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Having gathered flowers as he was instructed, Juan Diego is told to show them to Bishop Zumárraga as a sign from Mary.

I not your mother?"

The call of the Mother of Tepeyac, the mother of life, is to build in one's soul a temple, the purified desire nature, for the Holy Spirit, that the king of glory may come in. The Immaculate Virgin, as the Mother of mankind, is the Mother of the Christed self. Blessed are those who behold their immaculate mother and, as the Son directs, take her into their "home."

Our Lady of Guadalupe is kept under the auspices of the Franciscan Order which, since its founding by St. Francis, has been recognized as a Marian order because its members strive to live the *hidden* life of Mary Immaculate and identify with the crucified Christ (St. Francis bore the stigmata). This Marian piety has been in formal existence for 750 years. The Franciscan Dun Scotus (1266?-1308) provided the theological argumentation for the Immaculate Conception, which eventually became doctrinal in 1854.

Guadalupe was Mary's gift to the native

American Indian: She spoke Nahuatl, the Aztec language, appeared dark-skinned (her apparition is sometimes called "the dark Virgin"), her raiment bore the flowers and plants familiar to them, and her portrait is impressed on one of their most important plants, the agave or century plant, a kind of cactus. A parochial setting, but with catholic (universal) repercussions and impact.

How did the image get on the tilma? In 1979, Dr. Philip Callahan, a biophysicist expert in infrared photography and himself a painter, declared that the genesis of the original figure is inexplicable. "In terms of this infrared study there is no way to explain either the kind of color luminosity and brightness of pigments over the centuries. Furthermore, when consideration is given to the fact that there is no underdrawing, sizing, or overvarnish, and the weave of the fabric is itself utilized to give portrait depth, no explanation of the portrait is possible."

Consider the following baffling facts and features:

- ★ The colorings of the Image were analyzed by Nobel prize-winning German chemist Richard Kuhn in 1936, who concluded that they are neither animal, vegetable, nor mineral.

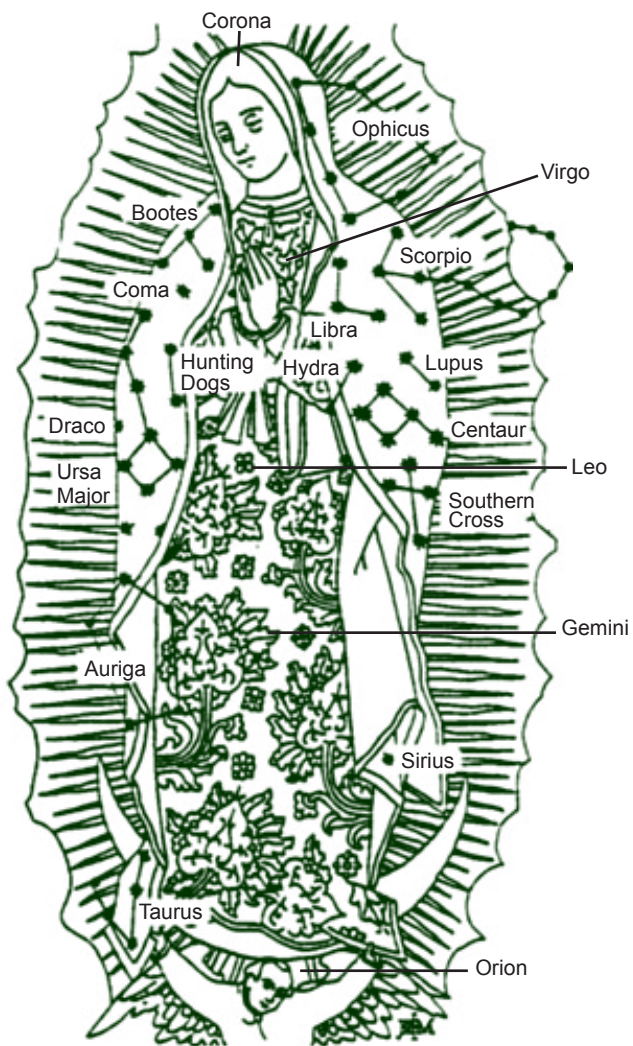
- ★ The Image's constitution on the tilma's surface was declared by Kodak of Mexico in 1963 to resemble a photographic film, explaining its lack of apparent brush strokes.

- ★ The Image was displayed above the high altar on which a powerful bomb hidden in a bouquet of flowers exploded in 1921, bending a large bronze crucifix but not even cracking the framed Image's glass.

- ★ The Image remains at an even 98.6° F., the normal human body temperature, no matter what the surrounding temperature is, suggesting a constant living bodily presence.

Admittedly, these are exceptional findings. Anything else? Yes. Father Mario Sanchez and Dr. Juan Hernandez, an astronomer, maintain the Image of Guadalupe is a codex filled with Christian teachings rooted in the Indian's own culture. A codex is a pre-conquest (before Cortez' invasion in 1519) or early colonial document composed of pictures.

Publishing their findings in 1983, Hernandez and Rojas propose that the disposition of the stars on



The heavenly constellations on the morning of the winter solstice, December 12, 1531, correspond to those depicted on Mary's mantle; more are shown by location were they to appear on the tunic as well (named on the right of the figure).

Mary's mantle correspond exactly to the stellar configuration over Mexico City just before sunrise on December 12, 1531, the morning of the winter solstice. The Julian calendar, still in use, was ten days behind actual sun time. Also overhead that day was Halley's Comet. The constellations are represented on Mary's mantle as seen from outside the dome of heaven, that is, in reverse. The correspondence is overwhelming. Who then is imaged? Truly, the Queen of the Heavens, the cosmic Mother.

Moreover, if stars were to appear on the tunic as well as the mantle, using the latter as reference or matrix, the Great Northern Crown, the Corona Borealis, lies visibly on Mary's temples; Virgo, the

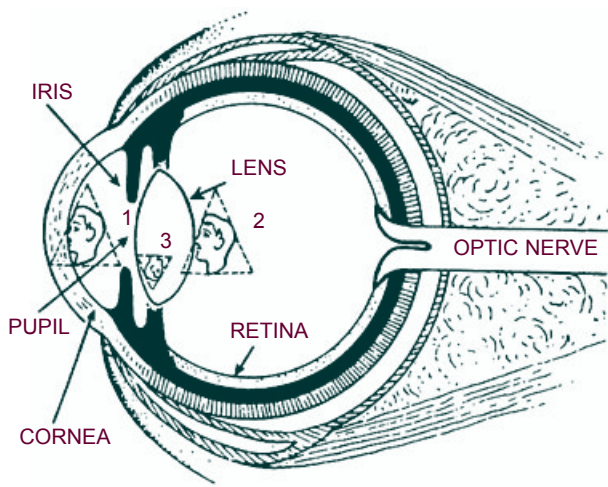
Virgin, is on her virginal heart; the Twins, Castor and Pollux, is on her knees; and Leo is over her womb, Jesus being the Lion of Judah, and the solar Christ being born in the Earth at the winter solstice.

Of all the manifestations of Mary's presence throughout the centuries, in this apparition alone does she appear in the manner of a pregnant mother. She appeared to a people who had been subjected to virtually unparalleled human sacrifice, where the blood of infants was often spilled to appease the thirsty demons of the old (Atlantean) pagan rite. Our Lady of Guadalupe brought a message of maternal compassion: "I am the merciful Mother, the Mother of all of you who live united in this land." Here in her gracious protection will the ravaged and terrorized natives find refuge and cessation to the slaughter of innocents..

Our Lady said to Juan, who was grieving for his uncle, "Listen and be sure, my dear son, that I will protect you; do not be frightened or grieve, or let your heart be dismayed, however great may be the illness that you speak of. Am I not here. I, who am your mother? And is not my help a refuge? Am I not of your kind? Do not be concerned." And Mary healed the gravely ill uncle, Juan Bernardino, who was miles away, even as she spoke, appearing before him in a feat of bilocation.

The seventy flowers and buds on Mary's tunic are adaptations of Nahuatl glyphs which easily conveyed Christian truths to the Indians whom the Mother of God was addressing as her own children, bypassing as it were, the Spaniards who did not respect the Indians as rational beings. The four-petaled flower over Mary's womb was the Flower of the Sun, a symbol of the plenitude of the cosmos. The eight-petaled flowers identify the Nahuatl symbol for Venus, who, as the morning star, was associated with the self-immolated culture-hero Quetzalcoatl. The Image then is a pictograph serving as a Christian document, an evangelistic tool.

Yet a more astonishing finding centers in Mary of Guadalupe's eyes. In 1951 an extensive examination by reputable ophthalmologists revealed that both her eyes contain the reflection of a bearded man, accompanied by the corresponding Purkinje-Samson reflections. That is, whatever is reflected in the normal human eye is reflected three times:



The triple reflection of Juan Diego in the eye of the miraculous Image is a demonstration of the Purkinje and Sanson effect which is produced by the retinal blood vessels.

1) on the front surface of the cornea, right side up; 2) on the back surface of the lens; 3) on the front surface of the lens, upside down and smaller.

Ophthalmologists have testified that even though they are opaque, both eyes in the Image show depth and become filled with light when the ophthalmoscope's light is trained into them. They have asserted that it would be impossible to produce with paint such perfectly placed reflections in eyes offering so little space with the Virgin looking down (as she does) and in such rough material as that of the tilma. The features of the bearded man in her eyes correspond to those of Juan Diego.

In 1981 Dr. Jose Tonsmann, a systems engineer, produced computerized blowups of photos of Mary's eyes revealing microscopically small figures who were at the scene of the revelation of the Image before the bishop. Is this improbable? Max Heindel, writing about pictures imprinted on the physical body's minute seed atom, states that the

picture of the Moon on the retina is less than 1/200 of an inch in diameter, yet we not only see it distinctly, but can note "a number of mountains and valleys on the moon with the naked eye" (*Web of Destiny*, p. 21). The greater wonder is that such minutia could have been committed to coarse maguey fiber. Juan Diego reported that Mary arranged the gleaned flowers in his tilma prior to his visit to the bishop. What else did she arrange?

What purpose does this Image and the entire context of its appearance serve? Obviously it has been a more potent instrument for Christian conversion than battalions of missionaries. Ten million Indians embraced the Catholic faith in less than a decade following the Guadalupe apparitions in 1531. Mary identified herself in her healing apparition to Juan Bernardino as "she who crushes the serpent," both referring to Genesis 3:15 and to the Aztec equivalent of the Immaculate Conception, Coatlicuepueh. The Aztec's worshiped a stone serpent, which demanded countless human sacrifices.



*The Fifth Appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Juan Bernardino, Juan Diego's uncle, is cured by the Blessed Virgin who identified herself as "she who crushes the head of the serpent."*

In the Lady of Guadalupe, as the emissary of the true God, the Aztecs knew that they had a saviour from this carnage, she who crushes the head of the serpent and all the other enemies who try to devour them.

The Blessed Mary is a mediatrix of Grace. In her life as Mother of Christ Jesus she demon-

strates and inspires a life lived in union with Christ through prayer and sacrifice. Seeing the sash about her waist, the native Americans immediately knew she was with child, and that Jesus, the God-saviour, was abiding in her.

Before printing came of age, Christian iconography was considered the "Bible of the Poor." The mystery of Our Lady of Guadalupe has its type in the Apocalypse of St. John, who writes of the great wonder that appeared in heaven. For this woman

clothed with the sun is also “with child.” She also does battle with the serpent (dragon). In iconography the woman clothed with the sun represents the Immaculate Conception. The date of her first appearance (she appeared five times in four days) to Juan Diego, December 9, is the day on which the whole Church, East and West, then celebrated the Feast of the Holy Conception of Mary. Another coincidence? How many are needed to warrant invoking the intervention of superphysical agencies?

It took Bishop Zumárraga and his helpers eight days to build the sanctuary requested by the Lady of Guadalupe. Rome’s recognition of this miracle took longer. In 1754 the Mexicans sent Father Juan Lopez, S. J. to Rome to petition Pope Benedict XIV for further formal recognition. When a reproduction of the sacred Image painted by the famous Mexican artist Manuel Cabrera, was unrolled before the pontiff, he too fell on his knees and exclaimed, “To no other nation has this been done,” spontaneously citing a passage from Psalm 147. From that moment on he was one of the most ardent promoters of Our Lady of Guadalupe and authorized the crowning of the Image. He also issued a Bull approving Our Lady of Guadalupe as Patroness of Mexico.

The Guadalupe Sanctuary was raised to Basilica status in 1904 by St. Pius X, who proclaimed Holy Mary of Guadalupe Patroness of the whole of Latin America. Pope Pius XII established nine shrines in Italy dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe and in 1945 he proclaimed Mary Empress of all the Americas. Pope John XXIII proclaimed a Marian Year from December 12, 1960, the day the Image was first shown, to December 1961, and extolled her as the “Mother of the Americas.”

The present Pope, John Paul II, made a pilgrimage to the Shrine in 1979 and paid homage to the miraculous Image, saying, “Ever since the time that the Indian Juan Diego spoke to the sweet Lady of Tepeyac, you, Mother of Guadalupe, have entered decisively into the Christian life of the people of



The supernatural origin of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is imagined by portraying the Trinity collaborating in its painting, the Father being the master Iconographer. Since 1680 the words Non Fecit Taliter Omni Nationi (Thou has not done the like for any other nation), the last verse of Psalm 147, have been applied to the Mexican nation, and in particular have become a leitmotif of Guadalupe’s liturgy.

Mexico.” Both Poland and Mexico claim Mary as their Queen and have consecrated their nations to her on a number of occasions. Mary’s apparition to the Polish is known as Our Lady of Czestochowa.

On his second pilgrimage in 1990, John Paul beatified Juan Diego (thus meriting for him the appellation *Blessed*). He called Mary the “Star of Evangelization” “who with her presence and protection continues nurturing faith and strengthening ecclesial communion.” Perhaps no apparitions of Our Lady (including Fatima and Lourdes) have received as much support from the Holy See as those of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The primary source of information about the

Guadalupan event is the *Nican Mopohuc* (“Here is told”), written in Nahuatl between 1548 and 1560. This document contains the text of Mary’s words to Juan Diego. Commenting on these words before the Mariological Congress of 1960 in Mexico City, the scholar and canon of the Basilica of Guadalupe, Dr. Angel Garibay, said “Either the person who writes this [what Mary spoke] in the Indian’s language and with so much harmony of style and manner and such a depth of theological meaning, has to be a genius, or what he wrote was said by someone who does know, even though [the writer] does not. The first is impossible for the people of the 16th century, not just Indians, but also Spaniards. The precision of terms, the division of the subject matter, the perfect inclusion of all the aspects require that the person who is saying this... knows what she is

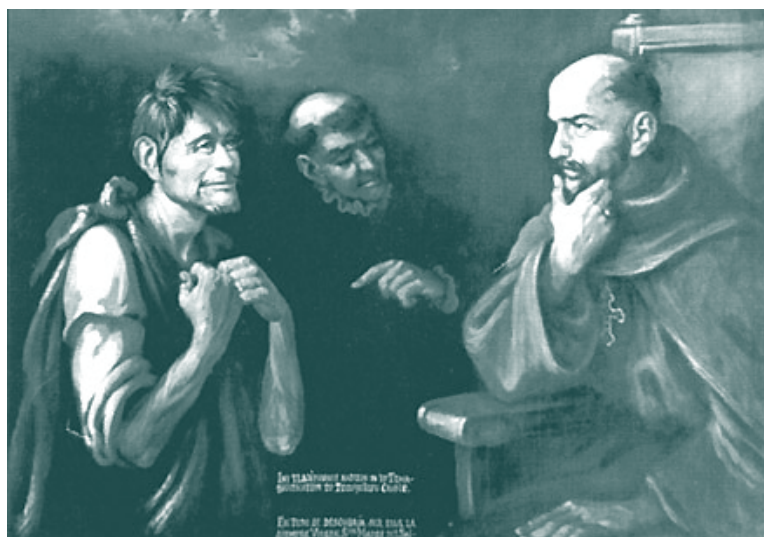
talking about. It is one more proof that it is not being invented, but transcribed. And it is one more indication that the person who is speaking is she who can be called a supreme “master” of the highest theology. In view of the tenor of this part of the message an extremely strong presumption [is justified] that Mary said it and that in it she declared herself to be a universal and true Mother, with all the functions that mothers have.

Immediately popular, the Image required larger churches to permit viewing and worshipping. By 1976 the Basilica was averaging 20,000 visitors a day. Yet it was too small and had sunk and was leaning precariously because its foundation was on a shifting lake bed. The new Basilica, built on 350

control piles to maintain verticality, regardless of how much the surrounding area may sink, accommodates 10,000 persons, and when the nine doors are opened to the plaza, 40,000 more can see the Mass celebrated at the main altar with the Image of Holy Mary of Guadalupe above it. Of the text and the Image itself the question may be asked, what does all this mean? Quoting Franz Werfel, author of *The Song of Bernadette*, an account of Mary’s apparitions to Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, France, “For those who believe, no explanation is necessary. For those who do not believe, no explanation is possible.” But we can be more specific. The following analogy may prove helpful: As Mary chose the poor, unprepared material of an ordinary Indian to produce the most authentic likeness of herself yet seen, so working in the same way with the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, the

Immaculate Virgin and Mother can impress upon the coarse texture of our lives and souls the likeness of her Divine Son.

Mary is the prototypic Mother, at once Virgin, Nurse, and Queen. Her role in the Christian faith has been most powerful as intercessor, for she is, next to Christ Jesus, the most holy instrument of God’s will. Other than He, none has demonstrated such absolute obedience, such radiant faith in the goodness of God’s direction. That sanctification of His will was not in the least compromised by foreknowledge of her son’s destiny. Though her soul was pierced by this knowledge, her love for God brought into subjection all other concerns, including her boundless maternal solicitude.



Oil on canvas, Jorge Sánchez Hernández

Juan Diego Before the Bishop

Juan delivers Our Lady of Guadalupe’s request to build a sanctuary and is met by Bishop Zumárraga’s understandably skeptical response. He wants a sign. In reporting this reaction to Mary, she replies: “That is fine, my youngest and dearest son; you will return here tomorrow so that you may take the sign he asked for. Then he will believe and no longer doubt or be suspicious of you; and know, my dear son, I shall reward your care, work and fatigue in my behalf; tomorrow I shall be here waiting for you.”

Mary's saintly love becomes a blessing and balm that embraces the entire community of Christian believers. As the mother of Christ Jesus she could but watch and pray as the divine will was being fulfilled. As the Mother of the post-Golgotha Christians, her power for consolation and grace has been immeasurably potentiated, so that she is the personification of the truth of the beatitudes whose presence is sought particularly by those who feel similarly powerless to alter onerous circumstances, the poor in spirit who must simply endure. Through Mary's fortifying example of Christ-devoted and God-based trust, and through her active intervention on behalf of the faithful, the meek are truly blessed, do see God, and as peacemakers are inheriting the Kingdom.

Like her Heavenly Father, Mary too gave her only begotten son to the world, and her suffering (as *mater dolorosa*) was sustained only by her God-centered love and was scarcely less than that of her son, with whom she was in perfect rapport. Soul affliction is not measured by what is done to one but by what one is capable of experiencing. None was purer than Mary, no heart burned with greater pathos and charity.

Her role, particularly in the Catholic church, is to bring reprieve from hurt, darkness and self-pity through her profound empathy, her effectual ministrations, and her assurances that holy suffering glorifies God through nurturing the individual Christed soul.

In Willa Cather's novel *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, a prelate reflects on his visit to the shrine at Tepeyac: "Where there is great love there are always miracles...one might almost say that an apparition is human vision corrected by divine love...The miracles of the Church seem to me to rest not so much upon faces or voices or healing powers coming suddenly near to us from afar, but upon our perceptions being made finer, so that for a moment our eyes can see and our ears can hear what is there about us always." Apparitions remind us of what may not be apparent: Divine help is available to us, here and now.

Mary speaks to the heart of the seeker of God. She is the mystic's paragon, for her knowledge is born of love and in her heart God's deepest and grandest mysteries are writ and revealed. So does love attain unto divine wisdom. □

—C.W.

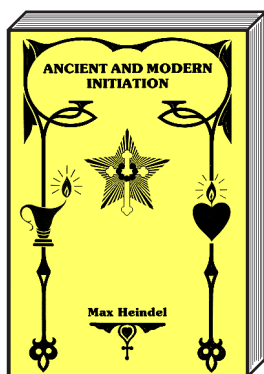
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