

Symbolism of the Sacred Image

“A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child . . .” — Revelation 12:1-2

Introduction: The four-and-a-half-foot-tall image of Our Lady of Guadalupe imprinted on Juan Diego’s cloak in 1531 depicts a young pregnant woman encircled by rays of sunlight. With her dark complexion and mixture of indigenous and Spanish features, Our Lady of Guadalupe represents the unity of all people. She gazes downward with the tender, loving expression of a mother gazing at her child. For Mexico’s indigenous people, the image contained rich symbolism, as follows:

Clouds: For the Aztecs, the clouds that surround the image are associated with height, the elevation of the spirit and they announce that which is divine. “The beginning of the New Era,” in which Ometeotl descends to Mexico in which the “Word became flesh and dwelt among us;” in other words, “The arrival of Jesus Christ, Son of God”. These clouds may very well also represent the Lake of Tenochtitlan.

Hieroglyphics on the Tunic: The stems on the floral arrangements originate on the Virgin’s mantle (which signifies Heaven), according to the Aztecs which in turn signifies a River which plows the fields that they might be watered and nourished and given life. The leaves and flowers which spring from the river-stem in the new hieroglyphic *Atl-Tlachinolli* “Burnt Water,” a metaphor used to signify war, this hieroglyphic takes on all its past, because in it arises a new people guided by Mary, who is the Mother of Ometeotl, triumphant is She over the war which does not destroy. The stem has a flower (sprout) which signifies the insistence of the message and ends with a big leaf in the shape of Tepetl.

The Tunic has five kinds of flowers:

1. One with four petals—the most important one, which represents the Child-Sun.
2. Eight flowers with eight petals, which represent the union of the sun and Venus.
3. Three Sprouting Flowers
4. Flowers which are being born on the border/edge of the Tepetis.
5. Flowers which represent Venus.

The Virgin’s Tunic The tunic is rose-colored and represents earth. It has images painted in gold, the divine metal, within which are found nine flower arrangements, which may signify the nine villages which spring forth from Aztlan to found the great Tenochtitlan, according to the codex of 1576.

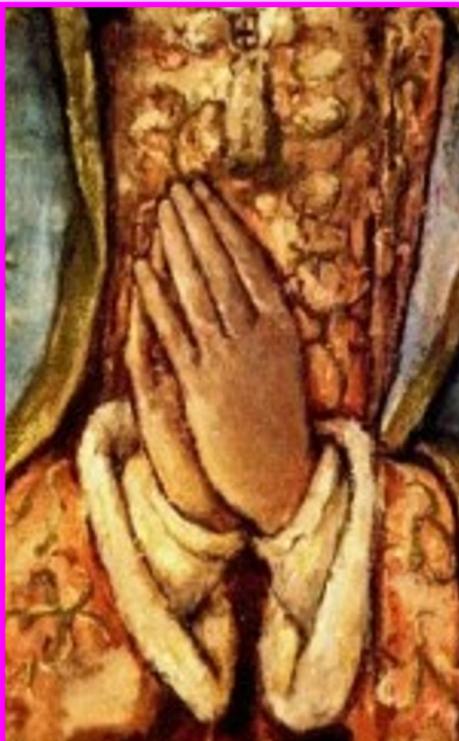
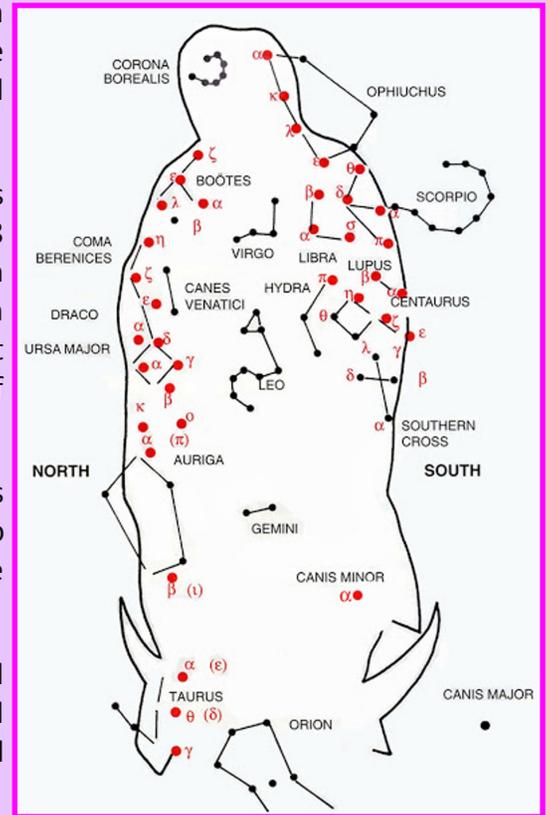


There is a surplus of fabric trimmed in gold adornment and there is a similarity with the mantle which at its furthest end is held by the angel and which signifies the union between the earth (tunic) and Heaven (mantle).

The Mantle (blue-green): The blue of the mantle adorned with stars represents the firmament. There are 46 stars, each of which has 8 points, with the center making it 9 points. Scientifically the stars on the mantle are in the same position as can be traced to their position on the 12th of December, 1531, according to computer analysis. It coincides with the birth of the Sun and with the return of Quetzacoatl.

Ribbon: The ribbon or black band around the waist signifies pregnancy. Indigenous women tie a ribbon on their waist area to allow space for the bulge in the womb. It is also a symbol for the end of a cycle.

The **Tepetis** that are on the sleeves of the Tunic could be considered an Aztec codex in scale. When a map of Mexico is superimposed over it, one can see on the left-hand side in the east Ixtlaciuhatl (white woman) and to the right Popocatepetl (hill that smokes).



Hands of the Virgin: Her hands signify refuge and protection. They are in a gesture of constant prayer, interceding for us with her beloved Son. It is believed that she is forming a little house with her hand alluding to her "Sacred House at Tepeyac," the beginning of a new nation, the fusion of two cultures. From her hands, it seems as though we see the Tepetl (hill) hieroglyphic, crowned with the Cross of Christ. Theologically, Christ's position is one of greater importance, for this reason He is in a higher place.

Mouth: Our Blessed Mother's mouth is on a very defective area of the cloth, but is nonetheless perfect. It is small and appears to initiate a small and tender smile.



Rays of the Sun: They are enclosed in a luminous aura that surrounds the Virgin, as if protruding from her womb to announce the arrival of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. For the Aztecs, "ollin Tonatiuh" (the sun in movement) and the Virgin Mary make it radiate for the good of all creation. The rays in the shape of an arrow are related to elevation and to spirituality, and the wavy ones to Quetzalcoatl (serpent) rays of Venus.

Paint: Under the auspices of Mexico's archbishop, Don Manuel J. Rubio y Salinas Miguel Cabrera, we come to understand that the image has four paint mediums: Oil on the head and hands; Tempera on the tunic, angel, clouds, and the rays of the sun; and Water color on the mantle. It is important to note that, up until 1531, none of these mediums had been used or even imagined. The highly intelligent German, Richard Kuhn, after having been commissioned by Dr. Ernesto Sodi Pallares, stated that the paint contains no synthetic colorings. Incredibly surprising! On the tilma of Juan Diego, paintbrushes not of this world left a "very sweet image," so described by Pope Pius XII.

Importance of the date of the apparition: In the year 1531, the year of the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe, also referred to in Nahuatl as the “Año Matlactli ihuna yei Acatl,” which means “Year Thirteen of the Reed,” which runs from the February 2, 1531, to February 1, 1532. The prior return of Quetzacoatl happened in the year 1519 when the Spaniards arrived; in 1531, the union of Venus Quetzacoatl would achieve fullness at the end of thirteen days and at the end of thirteen years. For the Aztecs, the number “13” is the perfect number, filled with the “fullness” of the doubly “13”. It would indicate the birth of the Sun.

Tilma (Ayate): Juan Diego’s tilma, apparently made from cactus fiber, measures 5.5 yards by 1.2 yards (width), making for a very inadequate and inappropriate canvas. Despite the fact that the Sacred Image lacked a glass covering for over 116 years, there has been very little deterioration to the cloth—although you can see traces of the damage from the acid spilled on the left side of the image.

Virgin’s Hair: Her hair is free flowing and parted in the middle, worn like the local maidens, while married indigenous women wore two braids interweaved at the sides.

The Eyes of the Virgin: Through scientific modes of investigation and using the most up-to-date computer digital technology, Dr. J. Aste Tonsman discovered imprinted on the iris and the pupils of the image’s eyes a highly detailed picture of at least 13 people. The same people are present in both the left and right eyes, in different proportions, as would happen when human eyes reflect the objects before them. Tonsmann said he believes the reflection transmitted by the eyes of the Virgin of Guadalupe is the scene on December 9, 1531, during which Juan Diego showed his tilma, with the image, to Bishop Zumárraga and others present



in the room. The small diameter of the corneas and the rough material of the tilma make it impossible to paint these details by hand. In her loving and tender eyelids is reflected the pulsing of life.

Pendant On her neck, we find a pendant similar to that worn on the chest by the statues of the gods—surrounded by a black line with a black cross in the center. The cross reminds us of Nahuollin, the fourth movement produced by the sun, the greatest energy of the Anahuacans. The black cross serves to remind us of Quetzacoatl, who turned into a black ant in order to obtain the corn possessed by the red ants on Tonacatepetl, the hill of sustenance, thus forming the fifth humanity of Quetzacoatl, who gave his blood to knead the powder of the bones brought from Mictlan. The Tenochcan and Mayan priests painted themselves black, indicating that a priest gave his life so that humanity could have life forever. It is the sacrifice of Christ who gave His life for all of us.

Four-petal Flower: This flower found on the womb symbolized to the indigenous cultures the four cardinal points, the four stations of the year, the four eras gone by. They also saw in this flower the symbol for Omeyocan (the dwelling place of God: Father and Mother), which symbolized for the Indian that the Virgin carried within her the Birth of Christ, that He might be born here and give life. Everything was highly symbolic on the Holy Image.



The Face of the Virgin: Her face is neither Spanish nor Indian, but that of a mestizo girl around the age of 16; it is the noble prophecy of two cultures coming together. In 1531, there were no young mestizas of that age; her brown-skinned face lulls the newborn kids to sleep; it is a symbol of the cosmic race. In her eyes, we can perceive a palpitation that gives life and which communicates all of her love. For the indigenous people, to look into each other's eyes was offensive; for this reason she looks at us with respect, with her head bent. She tells us that we are not her slaves, that she is always thinking about us and that she loves us.

Eight-petal Flower: There are eight flowers which have eight petals, conjunctions of the Sun and Venus, which coincide every 104 Solar years, equivalent to 65 Venetian years. The holy 260-day year, as well

as the solar 365-day year, as well as the Venetian 548-day year, all coincided with the arrival of the Holy Saint Mary Virgin and, thus, on the 12th of December, man and universe found one another beginning anew.

Moon: The Virgin is seen standing with one foot on the Moon. The Moon alludes to the name of "Mexico-Tenochtitlan," with a non-enslaving nobility which gives us the bench for the sixth sun to the Mexican people. The meaning of Mexico in Nahuatl is Me tzli, which means Moon.

Angel: The little angel might be an eagle-warrior who belonged to the military of the sun and who represents the people of the sun. It has the wings of an eagle, the bird which soars the highest; symbolic of the founding of the Great Tenochtitlan (the eagle devouring a serpent). With one hand, he holds the mantle and with the other, the tunic. With this he connects earth and Heaven, and it is a symbol for Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin (the man who speaks like the eagle), "the true and faithful man" who shows us the way to the "Little Brown Virgin of Tepeyac" (words of St. Pope John Paul II). The colors of his plumage and tunic are similar to the colors worn by the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe.

The Angel's Hair: A characteristic of the "macehuales" (people of the village) was to shave their heads to signify that they were "worthy of the Blood of God". Those who were newly baptized in those days were shaven in some religious orders. In order to distinguish social classes, the indigenous shaved their heads in different ways. The illumination of the Angel is coming directly from the body of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the lighting hits the upper part of his head and arms.

SUMMARY OF THE IMAGE AS AN AZTEC PICTOGRAPH

THE LADY STOOD IN FRONT OF THE SUN: She was greater than their dreaded sun-god "Huitzilopochtli".

HER FOOT RESTED ON THE CRESCENT MOON: She had clearly vanquished their foremost deity, the feather serpent "Quetzalcoatl".

THE STARS STREWN ACROSS THE MANTLE: She was greater than the stars of heaven that they worshipped. She was a virgin and the Queen of the heavens, for Virgo rests over her womb and the northern crown upon her head. She appeared on December 12, 1531, for the stars that she wore are the constellation of stars that appeared in the sky that day!

THE BLUE-GREEN HUE OF HER MANTLE: She was a Queen for she wears the color of royalty.

THE BLACK CROSS ON THE BROOCH AT HER NECK: Her God was that of the Spanish Missionaries, Jesus Christ her Son.

THE BLACK BELT: She was with child for she wore the Aztec Maternity Belt.

THE FOUR-PETAL FLOWER OVER THE WOMB: She was the "Mother of God." The flower was a special symbol of life, movement, and deity—the center of the universe.

HER HANDS ARE JOINED IN PRAYER: She was not God but clearly there was one greater than Her, and she pointed her finger to the cross on her brooch.

THE DESIGN ON HER ROSE-COLORED GARMENT: She is the "Queen of the Earth," for she is wearing a map of Mexico telling the Indians exactly where the apparition took place.

THE IMAGE AND SCIENCE

The image, to this date, cannot be explained by science.

The image shows no sign of deterioration after 450 years! The tilma of Juan Diego on which the image of Our Lady has been imprinted, is a coarse fabric made from the threads of the maguey cactus. This fiber would normally disintegrate within twenty to sixty years!

There is no under-sketch, no sizing, and no protective over-varnish on the image.

Microscopic examination revealed that there were no brush strokes.

The image seems to increase in size and change colors, due to an unknown property of the surface and substance of which it is made.

According to Kodak of Mexico, the image is smooth and feels like a modern-day photograph. (It was produced 300 years before the invention of photography.)

The image has consistently defied exact reproduction, whether by brush or by camera.

Several images can be seen reflected in the eyes of the Virgin. It is believed to be the images of Juan Diego, Bishop Juan de Zummaraga, Juan Gonzales, the interpreter, and others.

The distortion and place of the images are identical to what is produced in the normal eye, which is impossible to obtain on a flat surface.

The stars on Our Lady's Mantle coincide with the constellation in the sky on December 12, 1531. All who have scientifically examined the image of Our Lady over the centuries confess that its properties are absolutely unique and so inexplicable in human terms that the image can only be supernatural!

