

Preparing for Guadalupe Sunday!

# The Little Flower Weekly

A Supplement to the St. Therese Parish Bulletin



## OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE ISSUE

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# Original Account of the Apparitions at Guadalupe



The following account of the Guadalupan apparitions by the editor of **A Handbook on Guadalupe** (published by the Franciscan Friars of Marytown, Ohio, USA), is based on several English translations of the Nican Mopohua, the original account written by Antonio Valeriano in Nahuatl, the language spoken by Juan Diego and the Aztecs.

Ten years after the fall of the city of Mexico, when arrows and shields were put aside and there was peace in the villages, the faith and knowledge of the true God had begun to put forth shoots and blossoms. At that time, in the year 1531, a few days after the beginning of December, there was a humble man of the people, Juan Diego, a native of Cauhtitlan, who worshipped at the chapel at Tlatilolco. He was on his way to pursue the study of God and His Commandments at the small church in Tlatilolco. It was still dark on Saturday when he set out. Dawn was breaking as he arrived at the foot of Tepeyac Hill. He heard singing from the crest of the hill, which sounded like the song of many birds. When at times the voices quieted, the hillside seemed to echo in response. The singing, very soft and pleasant, surpassed that of the coyoltotl and tzinican and other fine song birds. Juan Diego stopped to look and thought, "Could I be worthy of what I am hearing? Am I dreaming? Am I arising from sleep? Where am I? Perhaps in the earthly

paradise of flowers and corn, about which our ancestors spoke? Maybe already in Heaven?" He was looking toward the summit and to the dawning to the east of the foothill to see the source of the beautiful heavenly singing when, suddenly, it stopped and silence fell, and he heard someone calling him from the top of the hill, saying, "**Juan, dearest Juan Diego.**"

He then climbed the hill in the direction of the voice, not at all frightened, but rather, feeling extremely happy. Upon reaching the summit, he saw a lady standing there who told him to come closer. He was filled with awe and admiration by her splendor. Her clothing was radiant like the sun; the crag on which her foot was resting was giving off rays of light, and looked like a bracelet of precious stones; even the earth glistened like the mist of a rainbow. The mesquite bushes, prickly pears, and other lowly herbs and grasses which usually grow there seemed like emeralds, the foliage like fine turquoise, and the branches and thorns like shining gold. He bowed before her, hearing her very gentle, polite words which were delivered as to someone very respected. She said: "Listen, Juan, my dearest and youngest son, where are you going?" He answered, "My Lady, my Queen and my little Girl, I am going to your house in Mexico-Tlatilolco to continue the study of the divine mysteries taught us by the images of Our Lord, our priests." She spoke then, revealing her blessed will, saying: "Know, know for sure, my dearest, littlest, and youngest son, that I am the perfect and ever Virgin Holy Mary, Mother of the God of truth through Whom everything lives, the Lord of all things near us, the Lord of Heaven and

earth. I want very much to have a little house built here for me, in which I will show Him, exalt Him, and make Him manifest. I will give Him to the people in all my personal love, in my compassion, in my help, in my protection: because I am truly your merciful Mother, yours and all the people who live united in this land and of all the other people of different ancestries, my lovers, who love me, those who seek me, those who trust in me. Here I will hear their weeping, their complaints and heal all their sorrows, hardships, and sufferings. And to bring about what my compassionate and merciful concern is trying to achieve, you must go to the residence of the Bishop of Mexico and tell him that I sent you to show him how strongly I wish him to build me a temple here on the plain; you will report to him exactly all you have seen, admired, and heard. Know for sure, I will appreciate it very much, be grateful, and reward you. And you? You will deserve very much the reward I will give you for your fatigue, the work, and the trouble that my mission will cause you. Now, my dearest son, you have heard my breath, my word; go now and put forth your best effort.”

At this, he bowed low before her and said, “My Lady, I am going now to carry out your charge; for the present, I, your poor servant, take leave of you.” He then descended the hill, intent on fulfilling her command, and continued on along the causeway which goes directly to Mexico City. Once inside the city, he went without delay to the residence of the bishop, a new prelate, who had only recently arrived. His name was Friar Don Juan de Zumarraga, a religious of St. Francis. As soon as he got there, he tried to see him, begging the servants to announce him. After a long while they came to call him, the Bishop having ordered that he should enter.

Upon entering, he bowed and knelt before him and immediately gave him the message of the Lady from Heaven, telling him everything he had admired and had seen and heard. After hearing the story and the message, the bishop didn’t seem to believe him and said, “You will come again, my son, and I will hear what you have to say at greater leisure; I shall look into the matter carefully from the very beginning and give much thought and consideration to the request you have brought me.” He left feeling sad, because the message entrusted to him was not immediately accepted. He returned that same day, heading directly to the crest of the hill and found the Lady from Heaven waiting for him on the very spot where he first saw her. He fell to his knees before her saying,

“My dear little Mistress, Lady, and Queen, my littlest Daughter, my dear little Girl, I went where you sent me to carry out your order. Although it was difficult for me to enter the bishop’s quarters, I saw him and explained your message exactly as instructed. He received me kindly and listened with attention; but as soon as he answered, it was apparent that he did not believe it; he said: ‘You will come back some other time, and I shall listen to what you say at greater leisure; and I shall examine it from the very beginning and think about the request you have delivered.’

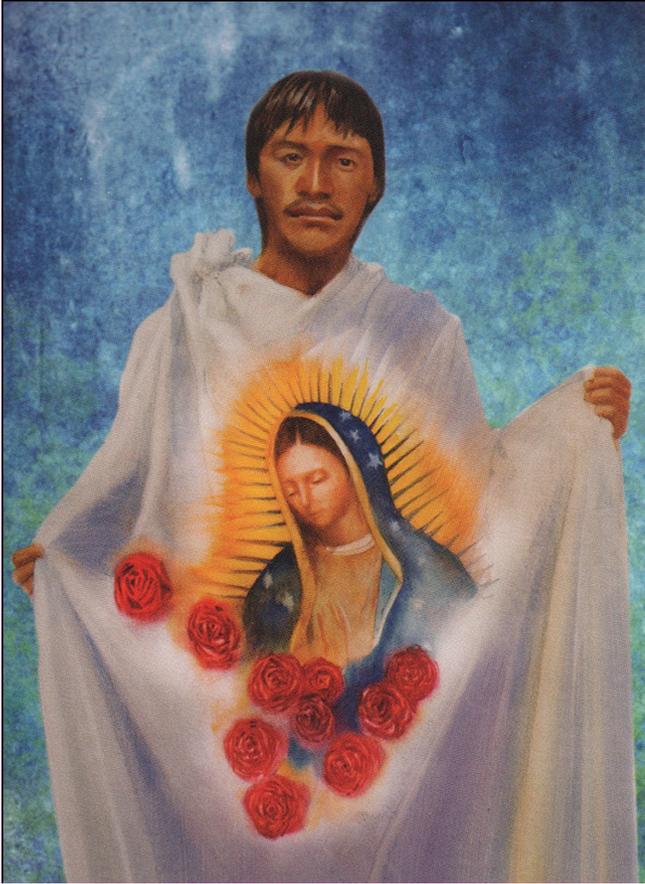
“The way he answered me I could clearly see that he thinks I may have made it up, about your wanting a little house built for you here, or that it is not from you. So I beg you, my Lady, Queen, and my little Girl, to send one of the nobles who are held in esteem and respected with the message, so that it will be believed; for I am a man of no importance, a backframe, a follower. You are sending me to a place that I am not used to spending my time, my little Virgin, my youngest Daughter, my Lady. Forgive me if I grieve you and you are angry with me.” The Most Holy Virgin, worthy of all honor and veneration answered:

“Listen to me, my youngest and dearest son, know for sure that I do not lack servants and messengers to whom I can give the task of carrying out my words, who will carry out my will. But it is very necessary that you plead my cause and, with your help and through your mediation, that my will be fulfilled. My youngest and dearest son, I urge and firmly order you to go to the bishop again tomorrow. Tell him in my name and make him fully understand my intention that he start work on the chapel I’m requesting. Tell him again that I am the ever-Virgin, Holy Mary, the Mother of God, who is sending you.”

To continue reading this very l-o-n-g article, click on the link toward the bottom of the e-blast cover, titled: **“ORIGINAL ACCOUNT OF THE GUADALUPE APPARITIONS (not abridged)”**.

# St. Juan Diego: Ambassador of Guadalupe

(This article is in *The Handbook on Guadalupe*,  
Franciscan Marytown Press, Ohio)



Montezuma was one of four nephews of the late emperor Ahuizotl. In 1503 Montezuma was made the new emperor, with his capital at Mexico City, Tenochtitlan, one of the world's largest cities at the time, with a population of 360,000 people. His empire stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New Mexico to Guatemala. The capital city was on an island in the center of Lake Texcoco, a large lake in the center of the Valley of Mexico. It was well laid out, with wide, straight, paved streets, many having canals on the sides of the streets (like Venice). One of the many towns in the Valley of Mexico was Cuauhtitlan (the place of the eagle), fourteen miles from the capital. Juan Diego was not an Aztec, but a Chichimeca, a tribe that arrived years before the Aztecs (the Aztecs came at the end of the 1200's). **Juan Diego was 29 years old when Montezuma became emperor in 1503.**

What was life in Aztec society like? The emperor was the highest authority, then came the kings of Texcoco, who ruled over the 29 larger states, and after that came the high nobles. The high nobles commanded the armed forces, whereas the lower nobles were the civil administrators. Then there was

the middle class, the *macehuals* (Juan Diego was one of these), and the priests and the merchants. Lower down were the laborers and servants (the *tlamaitl*). Finally there was the lowest class, the slaves.

Juan Diego was a *macehual*, a full fledged citizen. He was obliged to vote, since he was a landowner. Some property he inherited, other property he bought, thanks to his successful mat-making trade. (It is important to realize that Juan Diego's poverty in later life was *voluntary*.) He was educated, since schooling was compulsory. Boys had to go to school until they were old enough for work; girls had to go until they married. Juan Diego was liable for military service, but there is no record of his having served. Under Aztec law, Juan Diego had a fairly large amount of freedom. According to tradition, after his marriage he farmed the land next to his house. So he and his wife, Maria Lucia, ate well. He grew corn, beans, and assorted vegetables. He also hunted turkey and deer. Juan Diego was an enterprising person and had a good business taking reeds from along the shores of Lake Texcoco and working them into mats and furniture.

In his mature years, friends and neighbors described him as reflective, more and more given to meditating and speculating on philosophical and spiritual things. (His prosperity allowed time for these matters.) Aztec laws were quite severe, but all citizens above the slave class had a high degree of personal freedom to associate with other classes in their social and intellectual pursuits. So Juan Diego had the opportunity to talk to different people and grow in philosophical and spiritual knowledge. Let us remember that private revelations are usually given to persons able to receive them. There is a philosophical principle that "that which is received is received according to the mode of the receiver." So Juan Diego must have had good intelligence, good common sense, etc., by which God prepared him for the special revelations that were to help him lead his country into the Catholic Church.

God's religious preparation of the Aztec culture began before 1531. The True God had already revealed Himself to the King of Texcoco, Nezahualcoyotl, in 1464. This was the educated man of his day, educated in philosophy, astronomy, and literature. He had intellectuals at court with him. He reasoned that there was a Superior Intelligence responsible for the order in the world. He abandoned the pagan religion and instead built temples to the True God, praying before altars with offerings of flowers and incense. Before his death Nezahualcoyotl made a great speech which ended with these words: "How deeply I regret that I am not able to understand the will of the great God, but I believe the time will come when He will be known and adored by all the inhabitants of this land." (Juan Diego probably studied the past wisdom of great men like King Nezahualcoyotl, since his town, Cuauhtitlan, had been part of the Texcocoan empire before its conquest by the Aztecs in 1439.)

After Nezahualcoyotl, his son Nezahualpilli succeeded to the throne, the very image of his father, including his devotion to the True God. God rewarded him with a wisdom that made him the wisest man of his day. Then, just before his death in 1515, he terrified Montezuma with this dream: "a few days ago I dreamed that you, Montezuma, will lose your throne to invaders from across the sea, who will bring the True Religion." Meanwhile, Nezahualpilli's sister, Princess Papantzin, had already given him some similar prophecies. So, it is understandable that Nezahualcoyotl went on to surrender to Hernan Cortes in 1520, and then was stoned to death by his own people, who then drove the Spanish out. But then Cortes came back with his men and starved out the Aztecs, blockading the city and attacking with ships from Lake Texcoco.

Juan Diego must have been influenced by these events. After he was baptized, he showed a strong hunger to grow in his new Faith. He and his wife and uncle were among the first adults to be baptized by the Christian missionaries, who came in 1524. They all took Christian names: Juan Diego, Maria Lucia, and Juan Bernardino. Juan Diego and his wife continued to live in Cuauhtitlan and continued to receive instruction in the Catholic Faith. They would walk to Tlatelolco every Sunday for Mass and Holy Communion, and for Mass and catechesis on Saturdays. (The Spaniards had already destroyed the demonic temples to Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc and had built a new church of Santiago de Tlatelolco over them. (The third church, begun in 1573, stands to this day.)

Juan Diego and Maria Lucia's happy family life ended in 1529, when she became ill and then died. Juan Diego was very sad and lonely, and so turned to his Uncle Juan Bernardino, his only remaining close relative. Juan Bernardino lived in Tolpetlac (we do not know how far Tolpetlac was from Cuauhtitlan), so Juan Diego left Cuauhtitlan and built a house on some property he owned in Tolpetlac, not far from his uncle's house. His devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary helped him in his grieving, a devotion seen in his custom of getting up early on Saturday mornings to walk the nine miles to Tlatelolco for Mass in honor of the Blessed Virgin. (By the way, all the Native Americans of the area were taught from an early age to walk and trot for long distances.) On December 26, 1531, only two weeks after Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared, Spaniards and Mexicans worked side by side to complete the first chapel at the foot of Tepeyac Hill and thus provide a house for the Sacred Image of Our Lady.

After the chapel had been built for Our Lady, Bishop Zumarraga put Juan Diego in complete charge of the chapel and the Sacred Image. A room was added on to the chapel where Juan Diego spent the rest of his life (seventeen years). Juan Bernardino asked Juan Diego to enlarge it so that they could both live there, but Juan Diego instead asked his uncle to go back to Tolpetlac to take over his properties. Juan Diego, with his training in Nahuatl and Christian doctrine and symbolism, was able to explain the meaning of the Sacred Image to those who came to see it. With his help, about eight million people converted to the Catholic Faith in about seven years (while about five million were leaving the Faith in Europe after Luther's split with the Church!). His face and bearing seemed to acquire a new dignity, even though he never lost his deep humility. He was frugal and disciplined, plus cultured and learned, and led an ascetical life. He died in 1548 at the age of 74.

# 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 (tips) with which the center would render it to 9- in the indigenous Tona/Ipohualli makes reference to the “Birth of Quetzalcoatl, in 9 wind there where the hand can be seen”. Scientifically the stars on the mantle are in the same position as can be traced to their position on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, 1531, according to the computer analysis Distant Suns which studies the position of the stars. 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 Ixtlacihuatl (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.

## WANT TO READ MORE ABOUT THE TILMA’S SYMBOLISM?

Click on the link titled, “SYMBOLISM OF THE SACRED IMAGE,” located at the bottom of the E-blast cover . It includes these two pages PLUS three additional pages.