

Faith in Five – Adults
Our Lady of Guadalupe
December 9, 2022



1. A poor man and widower, Cuauhtlatohuac was given the name Juan Diego upon his baptism into the Church. He lived in a small town near Mexico City. On December 9, 1531, he was on his way to attend Mass in honor of Our Lady when she appeared to him on Tepeyac Hill. Mary asked Juan Diego to speak with the bishop of Mexico, a Franciscan named Juan de Zumarraga and request that a chapel be built where they met. Juan Diego made the request as he was told, but the bishop asked for proof, a sign of the vision.



Juan Diego returned to the hill where roses were still in bloom; he picked some of the flowers and brought them in his cloak to the bishop. On December 12th, Juan Diego opened his cloak (tilma) in the presence of the bishop. The flowers spilled out onto the ground and an image of the Blessed Mother was left imprinted on the tilma. The bishop believed and gave his blessing for the chapel to be built according to Our Lady's request.

2. St. Juan Diego's tilma was eventually placed in the chapel, where he spent the remaining years of his life in prayer. Upon his death in 1548, he was buried in the chapel. St. Juan Diego was canonized in 2002 by Pope St. John Paul II, at the Basilica of Santa Maria de Guadalupe in Mexico City. He is the first Roman Catholic indigenous saint from the Americas. Mary's apparition in Mexico to St. Juan Diego aided the Catholic Church's effort to bring the Gospel to the Americas. **Our Lady of Guadalupe's feast day December 12th commemorates the apparitions of Mary to St. Juan Diego.**

3. **The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe** is rich in symbolism. The painting depicts Mary with native features and dressed as an Aztec princess. The meaning of some of the symbols is depicted in this graphic ([Image, Catholic News Agency](#)).

Mary's hands are folded in prayer with her head inclined toward her womb, showing reverence to the one in her womb. Her eyes are looking down with humility and compassion. The sun and moon played prominently in Aztec worship; Mary's position in front of the sun and on the moon demonstrates her unique role and divinity, bringing forth Christ, the one true God.



4. The Church has allowed various scientific studies to be done on the tilma since 1929, and science has not been able to explain its extraordinary features:
 - a. The inferior quality of the cloth of the tilma is due to the composition of the cactus fiber which should have deteriorated long ago. The properties of this fiber last 15 years, yet the tilma has lasted for well over 400 years. The cloth has been exposed to the open air, dust, humidity, heat, smoke, candlewax, touched and handled by many people.
 - b. Infra-red studies reveal that the image was not painted, and the colors do not penetrate the fibers. There were no synthetic paints in the 1500's and the pigments on the tilma did not come from a natural source. Due to the roughness of the fiber, any painted image would appear crude, but the image on the tilma is clear. Microscopic examination revealed that there are no brush strokes.
 - c. There is no under sketch, no sizing and no protective over-varnish on the image. There is no fading, cracking or deterioration of the image.
 - d. Repeated studies reveal upon close inspection of Our Lady's eyes, that there are reflected images of St. Juan Diego, and two other figures. This image follows the natural curvature of the eye. It is theorized that the tilma acted like a photographic plate that captured Our Lady's image when St. Juan Diego revealed the tilma to the bishop. Some scientists explain the image must have been produced in a single moment.
 - e. In 1921, the tilma miraculously survived a bomb explosion, which caused heavy damage to the cross and altar rail next to it.
 - f. Attempts to reproduce the image by camera or brush have been futile. The scientific conclusion is that this unique event cannot be explained, is of supernatural origin and for especially for Catholics, a miracle!

5. **Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patron saint of the Americas and Mexico.** The Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel at the Basilica is inscribed with the following prayer, requesting the intercession of the Blessed Mother under her title as the Patroness of Latin America:

Dearest Lady of Guadalupe, fruitful Mother of Holiness, teach me your ways of gentleness and strength. Hear my prayer offered with deepfelt confidence to beg this favor....

O Mary, conceived without sin, I come to your throne of grace to share the fervent devotion of your faithful Mexican children who call to you under the glorious Aztec title of "Guadalupe" the virgin who crushed the serpent. Queen of Martyrs, whose Immaculate heart was pierced by seven wounds of grief, help me to walk valiantly amid the sharp thorns thrown across my pathway. Queen of Apostles aid me to win souls for the Sacred Heart of my Savior. I plead this through the merits of your merciful Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.



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