

Lesson 12: Our Lady of Guadalupe

Please click twice to watch the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-u7SFLvz8Q>

Once upon a time, there was a good and humble Aztec Indian man named Juan Diego who lived in Mexico. He had just recently converted to the Catholic faith and every morning, he would wake up at dawn to walk fifteen miles to daily Mass.

One fine morning as Juan passed by a large hill named Tepeyac, he heard some beautiful music that made him stop in his tracks. Then he heard a woman's voice say clearly, "Juan! Little Juan Diego!" He immediately climbed the hill, at the top of which he found a beautiful lady dressed like an Indian princess. She smiled at him and let him know she was the ever-virgin Mother of God, and that she desired that he go to the bishop and tell him that a church should be built in the place where she stood.

Juan was unsure whether the bishop would listen to an Indian like him, but the beautiful Lady encouraged him. So Juan did as he was told, and met with the bishop on two separate visits. But as he had feared, the good bishop was cautious about believing him. The bishop asked Juan to ask the Lady for a sign.

Juan relayed this message to Our Lady, and she told him to return the next morning and she would give him a sign for the bishop. But the next morning, Juan's uncle was very sick. In fact, Juan feared that his uncle was dying. Instead of meeting the Lady as she had requested, Juan hurried to find a priest so his uncle could receive the sacraments one last time before he died.

But as he passed by the hill at Tepeyac, Juan again saw Our Lady. He apologized for not meeting with her as promised, and told her that his uncle was very sick and he was on his way to get the priest.

Our Lady then said, "My little son, do not be distressed. Am I not here with you who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Your uncle will not die at this time. There is no reason for you to engage a priest, for his health is restored at this moment. He is quite well. Go to the top of the hill and cut the flowers that are growing there. Bring them then to me."

It was winter and too cold for flowers to be growing, but Juan did as he was told. There, at the top of the hill, he found the most beautiful roses he had ever seen! He quickly cut them and brought them back to Mary, who arranged them with her own hands in his tilma, or mantle. She then sent him to show the bishop the sign he requested and remind him of her desire that a church be built. Juan, eager to show the bishop the beautiful sign, scurried away.

Standing before the bishop and all the important ambassadors, Juan proudly opened his tilma to show them the miraculous flowers. The beautiful flowers fell before the bishop, and the bishop and ambassadors gasped and fell to their knees in reverent awe. But it was not the flowers that they were looking at. They were looking at Juan's tilma. Confused, Juan looked down at his tilma as well. There, printed miraculously, was the image of the beautiful Lady that he had seen on Tepeyak Hill. The bishop had his sign.

Juan later learned from his uncle that while he was gone, a beautiful woman surrounded by a soft glow had cured him of his sickness. She told his uncle, “Call me and call my image Santa Maria de Guadalupe.”



The manner in which Our Lady appeared on the tilma was very significant to the Aztec Indians. God had her dressed in a way that they would understand who she was.

She was dressed in royal clothes that showed that she was a queen.

She also had the symbol of the cross at her neck which was the same symbol the Spaniards had on their ships and in the churches they built.

She had a sash tied around her waist which meant that she was with child, for this was the way the Aztec women dressed when they were pregnant.

And on her beautiful dress were all sorts of designs and flowers. But there was one flower on her dress that was very significant. It had only four petals. To the Aztecs, the four petal flower was the symbol for the true God, the God above all gods. This flower was located on her abdomen, right over the place where Jesus was growing inside of her.

The Aztecs immediately understood that this was the Mother of God! This appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe was very important to the history of our continent. The Aztec Indians and the Spaniards were on the brink of war. The Aztec Indians' culture and religion were very different from the Spaniards. The Aztecs worshipped gods, to whom they would offer human sacrifices, often killing 50,000 people a year. The Spaniards, who were Catholic, were naturally disgusted

by this. But they were cruel to the Aztecs too, treating them like animals and sometimes killing them for no reason. If a war had occurred, it would have been very brutal and the Spaniards and Christianity would have been totally wiped out.

Mary's appearance changed everything, however. It helped the Indians to embrace Christianity and it helped the Spaniards to treat the Indians with respect and as human beings. In the course of seven years, 6,000,000 Indians converted to the Catholic faith. Mary's appearance also put an end to the worship of stone gods and the ritual of human sacrifice.

This was the biggest conversion in the history of the Church! This is why Our Lady of Guadalupe is the Patroness of the Americas.

Juan Diego, the humble man to whom she appeared, was canonized a saint in the summer of 2002.

The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe remains miraculously preserved on Juan's tilma, which is on display in the cathedral that was built on the site of the apparitions; millions of people visit it every year. The colors have not faded and the cloth has not deteriorated. It has been on display in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe for all this time. It has been studied by many Church officials and scientists, who all agree that the image could not have been made by human hands at the time that Juan Diego lived.



Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Tilma of Juan Diego - Est. December 1531

EYES

Contain images of the scene with Juan Diego and the bishop that are visible only with modern technology.

HANDS

United in prayer. The left is darker and the right is lighter, representing the two races.

RIBBON

A symbol of virginity. Its placement indicates she is with child.

FLOWER

patterns are glyphs of the native language, contain various intricate messages.

TEMPERATURE

of the Tilma is constant at 98.6 degrees, the same as that of a living body

ENDURANCE

The colors of the image are miraculously fresh and bright for being more than 500 years old. The fabric the image is made on normally disintegrates in 15-30 years yet the Tilma shows no sign of fading or cracking.

RESILIENCE

The Tilma has survived a bomb attempt and also miraculously reconstituted itself after nitric acid solvent was spilled on it.

STARS

Are accurate to the actual constellations that would have appeared in the Mexican sky on December 12, 1531.

HEARTBEAT

A stethoscope placed below the black band detected rhythmic beats of 115 per minute, the same as a baby's in the womb

ORIGINS

No sign of paint, brush strokes, or underdrawing have been found; the image is irreproducible; and at 3-4 inches from the cloth, the image disappears

MOON

On a snake-skinned moon. A symbol of an Aztec serpent god of human sacrifices.

ANGEL

with feathered wings carries Mary to the people. The angel's red robe symbolizes the earth, while Mary's blue mantle symbolizes heaven.

