

DECEMBER 12, 2019
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas
Luke 1: 39-47

THE MOTHER OF THE TRUE GOD

“An elder Mexican man makes his way to Mass in the early morning twilight of December 9, 1531. He is a peasant, a simple farmer and laborer, and he has no education. Born under Aztec rule, he is a convert to Catholicism, and each step he takes this morning is a step into history. The morning quiet is broken by a strange music that he will later describe as the beautiful sound of birds. Diverting his path to investigate the sound, Juan Diego comes face to face with a radiant apparition of the Virgin Mary. Juan Diego is 57 years old. He has just encountered the Virgin Mary on Tepeyac Hill, the site of a former Aztec Temple. Why should this unlearned, man be chosen by Our Lady to carry a message to the Bishop? Perhaps because she would find none other as humble as Juan Diego. Juan Diego is dazzled by the incredible beauty and miraculous nature of Our Lady's appearance. She appears as a native princess to him, and her words sound more beautiful than the sweetest music ever made. Our Lady calms the startled traveler and assures him of who she is. She instructs Juan Diego to visit his bishop and ask that a temple be built on the site of her appearance, so that she will have a place to hear petitions and to heal the suffering of the Mexican people.”¹

Two times Juan Diego visited the Bishop and in all his visit, he failed. On his last visit, the bishop agreed that the Lady really appeared to him.

“Juan Diego is instructed to climb to the top of Tepeyac Hill where he will find flowers. He is to pick the flowers there, which are unlike any he has seen before, and he is to keep them hidden in his tilma until he reaches the Bishop. Juan Diego is skeptical

¹ www.catholic.org

again. It's December, what flowers could grow on the summit of the hill in this cold? Nevertheless, he obeys and atop the hill he finds a great number of flowering roses which he picks and hastily gathers into his cloak. For the third time, Juan Diego is ushered in to see the Bishop. The skeptical cleric has waited for two days to see what sign Our Lady has for him. Juan opens his *tilma*, letting the roses cascade to the floor. But more than the roses, both men are astonished to see what is painted on his humble *tilma* - an exquisite image of Our Lady. In the image, she stands as she appeared, a native princess with high cheekbones. Her head is bowed, and her hands are folded in prayer to God. On her blue cloak, the stars are arranged as they appeared in the morning darkness at the hour of her first apparition. She is brighter than the sun, more powerful than any Aztec god, yet she is not a god herself, and she prays to one greater than her. Her gown is adorned with stars in the correct position as in the night sky, and the gold fringe of her cloak mirrors the surrounding countryside. Millions of natives were converted at the news of what has happened. Millions more will make pilgrimages over the next five centuries to see the miraculous *tilma*, and to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe. Great miracles continue to occur, even today."²

Worth mentioning too, are the miracles behind the *tilma* of Our Lady: "a reflected images on the eyes of the Blessed Mother, namely, those of Juan Diego, Bishop Zumarraga and Juan Gonzalez, the interpreter for the Bishop, the image was not painted, and the color did not penetrate the fibers as would paint and not deteriorated for centuries. In 1921, during the fanatical reign of General Calles who outlawed Catholicism, a bomb was planted in the basilica in hopes of destroying the *tilma*. The bomb reduced to rubble the marble altar below the *tilma*, shattered the windows, and twisted the heavy bronze altar cross. Yet, the *tilma* and even its glass covering was untouched. Just as

² www.catholic.org

Mary's apparition testified to the triumph of true religion over the bloodthirsty paganism of the Aztecs, even in this case, she overcame the forces of evil."³

Our Lady of Guadalupe had this to say to Juan Diego, and to us today: "Know for certain, least of my sons, that I am the perfect and perpetual Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God through whom everything lives, the Lord of all things near and far, the Master of heaven and earth. It is my earnest wish that a temple be built here to my honor. 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 those who love me, of those who cry to me, of those who seek me, of those who have confidence in me. Here I will hear their weeping, their sorrow, and will remedy and alleviate all their multiple sufferings, necessities and misfortunes."⁴

My brothers and sisters let us ask Our Lady of Guadalupe to intercedes for us. Let us come to our Mother, she will help us because she loves us as her sons and daughters. Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.

³ www.catholiceducation.org

⁴ www.catholic.org