

THE APPARITIONS OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE:

December 9-12, 1531

† JUAN DIEGO (“Cuauhtlatoatzin”):

- Born around 1474—His indigenous name means “eagle that speaks” & he belonged to the Chichimecas people of the Toltec tribe whose wise men believed in only one God, not the polytheism of the Aztecs.
- He was a middle-class commoner who owned property through inheritance.
- At the age of 50, around 1524, he and his wife requested baptism from the Franciscan missionaries and received their Christian names: Juan Diego and Maria Lucia.
 - They were one of the first Catholic married couples of the New World, but 5 years later Maria died leaving Juan Diego alone with his uncle Juan Bernardino—also a recent convert.
 - 10 years before his baptism, Hernan Cortez conquered the Aztec Empire and laid waste to the Aztec capital and its main temple.
 - Human sacrifice was prohibited and temples were torn down.
- Every Saturday Juan Diego would walk 9 miles to the nearest place of religious instruction where he could attend mass and receive religious instruction. There was no church in his town.

† EVENTS PRECEDING THE APPARITION:

- 1487—The temple Tenochtitlan was dedicated and for 4 days 21-84,000 innocent people were sacrificed
- 1517—Martin Luther writes his Ninety-Five Thesis, commencing the Protestant Reformation.
- 1519-1521—Hernan Cortez lands in Mexico and conquers the capital city of the Aztecs
- 1528—The first civil government, called the “First Audience” arrives in New Spain headed by president Nuño de Guzmán.
- 1529—Problems arise between the First Audience officials and the evangelizing missionaries
- 1530—A failed plot to assassinate Bishop-elect Juan de Zumarraga—the First Audience blocks the bishops communications to the king of Spain reporting of their abuse, enslavement and killing of the natives.
- 1531—A series of natural events, including earthquakes, the appearance of Halley’s comet, and a solar eclipse, leads the Indians to believe the world is about to end—in part, because they had stopped sacrificing children to their gods which the Spaniards declared illegal.
- 1541—during a great drought and plague, a pilgrimage of young children goes to the Guadalupan shrine when they would have otherwise, under the Aztecs, been sacrificed to appease their gods.¹

† THE APPARITIONS:

- While walking to Church on Saturday and passing by Tepeyac Hill, as he always had to do, he heard the sounds of birds singing like he had never heard before. He looked to where the sound was coming from—eastward toward the top of the Hill. (Christ will rise/return from the East)
- Then he heard a woman’s voice calling him in his native Nahuatl language: “Juantzín, Juan Diegotzín”—an affectionate diminutive form of his Spanish baptismal name. She asked him where he was going. Juan Diego said: “To your little house in Mexico, Tlaltelolco, to follow the things of God.”

† THE FIRST APPARITION:

- She spoke to Juan Diego in his native Nahuatl and used native Texcocan religious phrases saying:
 - **“I am the ever-perfect holy Mary, who has the honor to be the mother of the true God by whom we all live, the Creator of people, the Lord of the near and far, the Lord of heaven and earth.”**

¹ <https://www.science.org/content/article/feeding-gods-hundreds-skulls-reveal-massive-scale-human-sacrifice-aztec-capital> & <https://www.history.com/news/aztec-human-sacrifice-religion> (2018 discoveries in Mexico city prove there were over hundreds of thousands of human sacrifices as well as proof of cannibalism committed by the Aztecs. The time when the major Aztec temple was dedicated, over 80,000 human beings were sacrificed!)

- Her reference “ever-perfect holy Mary” eludes to her eventual title and the dogma of the Immaculate Conception defined by Pope Pius IX in 1854—3 centuries later.
- Then she revealed the reason for her appearance:
 - **“I want very much that they build my sacred little house here, in which I will show Him, I will exalt Him upon making Him manifest, I will give Him to all people in all my personal love, Him that is compassionate gaze, Him that is my help, *Him that is my salvation*. Because truly I am your compassionate Mother, yours and that of all the people that live together in this land, and also of all the other various lineages of men, those who love me, those who cry to me, those who seek me, those who trust in me. Because there {at my sacred house} truly will I hear their cry, their sadness, in order to remedy, to cure all their various troubles, their miseries, their pains.”**
- She sent him to bring a message to Friar Juan de Zumarraga, head of the Catholic Church in Mexico City. He was a Franciscan and the Bishop elect and had arrived in Mexico City only 3 years earlier.
 - Zumarraga once wrote that he fought vigorously against idolatry of the time and declared in 1531 that he had caused some 20,000 idols to be destroyed and his agents burned countless native codices, including those in the royal repository at Texcoco.
 - Facing the Aztec religious practices, the Spaniards considered the religion diabolical for its violent sacrificial rites and they too resorted to violent displays in tearing down idols and statues. Such abrasive and reactionary tactic likewise proved ineffectual.
 - By prohibiting sacrifices and other religious practices, the Aztecs believed that their gods were being deprived of their necessary sustenance and so they anticipated an apocalyptic end of the world. Many became depressed and so worried over this that they committed suicide in large numbers.
 - Others who didn’t and waited to see what happened had their worldview undermined and began to question their faith when the world didn’t end as they expected.
 - Zumarraga, like many other missionaries from Spain, worried that the Indian’s understanding and conversion to Christianity would be confused—So they responded by destroying their sacred artifacts—A VERY DIFFERENT APPROACH THAN OLOG WOULD TAKE!
 - **By her apparitions, OLOG has replaced the top-down model of conversion with an evangelization rooted in a personalism independent of political and social hierarchy.**
 - MEANWHILE, IN EUROPE, an estimated 5 million Europeans left the Catholic Church for Protestantism. In the Americas, 9 million Indians converted to Catholicism by 1541, according to an early historian of New Spain (Mexico) Franciscan Friar Toribio de Benavente.
 - OLOG sent Juan Diego to tell him she wanted a Church to be built on the flatland of Tepeyac hill *where there was once an ancient temple dedicated to the pagan goddess Coatlicue*.

† THE SECOND APPARITION:

- The Bishop sent Juan Diego away and told him to come another time when he could listen more patiently.
- Juan Diego returns to Tepeyac Hill where he finds OLOG and begs her to send somebody else of more importance, greater influence and more credibility.
- But OLOG responds:
 - **“Listen, my youngest son, know for sure that I have no lack of servants and messengers to whom I can give the task of carrying my breath, my word, so that they carry out my will. But it is necessary that you, personally, go and plead, that by your intercession my wish, my will, become a reality. And I beg you, my youngest son, and I strictly order you to go again tomorrow to see the bishop. And in my name, make him know, make him hear my wish, my will, so that he will bring into being, build my sacred house that I ask of him. And carefully tell him again how I, personally, the ever-Virgin Holy Mary, I, who am the Mother of God, sent you as my messenger.”**

- The Bishop heard Juan Diego’s request and sent him away asking for evidence that would confirm he was telling the truth

† THE THIRD APPARITION:

- Juan Diego returned to Tepeyac Hill after meeting with the bishop and found OLOG waiting there for him. She thanked him and asked him to return the next day for the sign to give to the bishop.

† THE FOURTH APPARITION:

- But on the day he was to return for the sign from OLOG, his uncle Juan Bernardino was gravely ill and he spent the whole day getting a doctor to see his uncle only to learn that his uncle was dying.
 - In Juan Diego’s culture the elders like an uncle were highly regarded and deeply respected—all of their possessions and their entire family was entrusted to their uncle’s care and leadership.
 - Since their history was not written, knowledge of who they were and what they believed came from oral tradition—the “speech of the elders.
- Juan Diego headed to town to find a priest and had to pass Tepeyac Hill but did not want to be delayed by OLOG and so he went another way—BUT OLOG descended from the top of the hill and came to him! **“My youngest son, what’s going on? Where are you going? Where are you headed?”**
 - He apologized, explained and promised to come tomorrow, but OLOG said:
 - **“Listen, put it into your heart, my youngest son, that what frightened you, what afflicted you, is nothing; do not let it disturb your face, your heart; do not fear this sickness nor any other sickness, nor any sharp and hurtful thing. Am I not here, I who have the honor to be your Mother? Are you not in my shadow and under my protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need something more? Don’t grieve your uncle’s illness, because he will not die of it for now; you may be certain that he is already healed.”**
 - She then instructed him to go to the top of Tepeyac hill and collect a wide variety of flowers growing in the middle of the winter in an arid, rocky and dry place full of cacti, thorns and thistles. He brings the flowers collected in his tilma to her and she personally arranges them and tells him to show them to no one until he is in front of the Bishop.
 - **“My youngest son, these different kinds of flowers are the proof, the sign that you will take to the bishop. You will tell him for me that in them he is to see my wish and that therefore he is to carry out my wish, my will; and you, you who are my messenger, in you I place my absolute trust.”**
- After being made to wait for hours to see the bishop, while holding so many flowers in his tilma and trying to hide them from the Bishop’s staff, the bishop finally lets him in. Juan Diego opens his tilma and when the flowers fall to the ground, THE IMAGE OF OLOG IS REVEALED FOR THE FIRST TIME!

† JUAN DIEGO IMMEDIATELY RETURNED TO HIS UNCLE only to find him perfectly healthy. He explained to his uncle where he had been and his uncle told him that the virgin, exactly as Juan Diego described, appeared to him and healed him and told him to show himself to the Bishop and explain all that his nephew was doing for her.

- BUT TO JUAN BERNARDINO SHE REVEALED HER NAME FOR THE FIRST TIME: “THE PERFECT VIRGIN HOLY MARY OF GUADALUPE.” He was a keeper of ancient culture, elderly.
- Now there are TWO witnesses to her apparitions, verifying Juan Diego’s account.
- And Mary chose a name known to the Spaniards—In Spain there was a river named “Guadalupe” that ran through Extremadura, Spain; the name itself was of Arabic origin and meant “river of black gravel.” In the 13th century a statue of the Black Madonna was found on the banks of the Guadalupe River and the Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Guadalupe was built there in the virgin’s honor.

**All the above information is taken from: Carl Anderson & Eduardo Chavez, Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mother of the Civilization of Love. Penguin Random House, New York: 2009.*

THE TILMA OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE:

- † The Franciscan Missionaries were known for defending the Indians, learning their culture and language and trying to form future priests from among them; because they believed that “no one would convert the Indians more effectively than the Indians themselves.”
 - Plus, they had to contend with the horrific treatment of the Indians by their own people—the Spanish Conquistadores. PLUS, the diseases that were brought in from Europe devastated the local population and killed millions!
 - When the Europeans arrived, there were 25 million Indians. By 1531, there were only 17 million.
- † OLOG appears on the tilma as the “Morenita.” She appears as a mestiza, mixed Spaniard and Aztec with dark skin—at a time when social class and skin color dominated the scale of social classes
 - She appears as one of the poor, rejected, dark skinned, mixed peoples. She occupies the lowest rung of the New World’s social hierarchy!
 - And she sends the poor, native convert Juan Diego, not a Spaniard or a Franciscan priest, to go to the Bishop to tell him her wishes!
- † At the time of the apparitions, there were only 40 Franciscan missionaries and thousands of Indians would present themselves DAILY asking to be **baptized**—even from regions where the missionaries had never been. Sometimes 4-6,000 were baptized daily. One day, two priests baptized over 15,000 in Xochimilco. They had heard and/or seen the image of the tilma and it said everything they needed to know!
 - The Indians lived polygamous **marriages** according to their culture and religious beliefs. The Franciscans could only Sacramentally marry a handful of Indians who were willing to remain monogamous.
 - After the apparitions, they spontaneously abandoned polygamy by the hundreds of thousands and there were days where 500 couples would be married at one time in the Church.
 - The natives would sometimes walk 80 miles just to go to **Confession** at missionary centers.
- † THE TILMA: was used by natives to bring their children to temples to dedicate them to a god, it kept them warm in the cold, protected them from the sun, was used to carry their food, and was tied to a woman’s shirt in marriage to signify their mutual bond.
 - By appearing on a tilma, OLOG told the natives that she would care for their children, feed them, protect them and unite herself to the Aztec people like in a marriage.
 - If you correspond Mary’s womb with Tepeyac hill, the mountain flowers on the tunic correspond to certain volcanoes and mountains in Mexico like a map of the country.
- † 2 EARLY MIRACLES WITH THE TILMA:
 - 1. A man was pierced and killed by an arrow on Dec. 26, 1531 during a celebration of the tilma. They brought his deceased body to the tilma while everyone prayed and he miraculously came back to life.
 - 2. In 1545 there was an epidemic that broke out in the capital and surrounding neighborhood and the doctors could do nothing to save the lives of thousands of Indians that were dying. The Franciscans organized the pilgrimage of children to the tilma to beg for help and the epidemic quickly died out.
- † The four-petaled JASMINE FLOWER—is the only one of its kind on the tilma.
 - Symbolizes the four directions covering the universe (north, south, east, & west)
 - It represented for the indigenous people the “*Nahui Ollin*” meaning “always in movement.”
 - The fifth point circle in the middle symbolized the Fifth Sun—symbolizing in the theology of the wise men of the Toltecs the only living, true god, whom they called “*Ometeotl*”
 - This god was also called by them by the titles of: “Him for whom one lives,” “Creator of the people,” and “Lord of Heaven and Earth.”
 - OLOG USES THESE SAME TITLES FOR GOD IN HER DISCUSSION WITH JUAN DIEGO.

- The jasmine flower being just below her pregnancy belt and on her womb, symbolized that the child she was pregnant with is divine.
- † MARY'S FACE AND HAIR:
 - She was unmasked, unlike all the gods known to the Indians—therefore she was human like them.
 - But they knew she was the most powerful of all their gods because she stood on the moon and covered the sun with a bluish-green mantle which was reserved solely for rulers by the Aztecs. She was an empress! Human, NOT divine, but greater than all and any of the Aztec gods.
 - Her hair was loose, which in Aztec culture signifies virginity.
- † MARY'S EYES inwardly turned, symbolize contemplation and spiritual union with God.
 - The diameter of her irises are 5/16th of an inch and when first looked at by Ophthalmologist Dr. Javier Torroella Bueno through a special magnifying glass, her eyes reacted like the eyes of a live person and he could see a face of a bearded man in the pupil.
 - In 1979 Jose Aste Tonsmann was able to enlarge her eyes by as much as 2,000 times and discovered all the rules of optics at plan as in a live human eye.
 - The enlargements showed a bearded man and 12 other people in the irises of her eyes. Isolating the smaller details, he could make out a squatting Indian's sandals lances and his ornate earrings. They concluded that the image in her iris is of a person looking from the outside onto the moment Juan Diego opened his tilma. The bearded man is Bishop Zumarraga, with his assistant and translator behind him, then there is a black woman, plus a group of seven people which seems to be a family of 2 parents and 5 children whose identity is not yet known.
- † MARY'S SMILE expresses joy in being in the presence of the Creator.
- † MARY'S LIPS were perfectly created using added fabric naturally found in the tilma in that location.
- † THE STARS ON HER TILMA mirror perfectly the constellation of stars in the sky during the month of her apparition—December 1531.
 - The stars are arranged on her mantle as if the observer were on the sun rather than looking at the constellations from earth.
 - Only the priestly class of the Aztecs could decipher this and they did! As the Aztec priests converted, the people were further persuaded to follow their example.
 - The stars on her mantle indicate her title of the Queen of Heaven.
 - The stars on her tilma, properly arranged form the notes to a perfect musical harmony: Prof. Fernando Ojeda, a mathematician, divided the image into two on a computer monitor—exactly along the seam that ran down the middle of the image. As there were forty-six stars, he came up with a mathematical model according to which he aligned twenty-three vertical lines on each part of the image. He then transformed the parts into a staff and changed all the stars and flowers into notes. This was a purely mathematical operation that yielded a perfect musical harmony!
- † THE CLOUD around Mary signifies the invisible and inexpressible God.
- † THE GOLD BROOCH as a necklace around her neck is in the sign of the cross—the most important Christian symbol.
- † MARY COVERING THE SUN signifies that she is more powerful than the sun itself, the greatest life-giving force on earth.
- † THE PINK COLOR of the tunic recalls the red of self-sacrificing love.
- † THE LEAVES on the tunic are a symbol of paradise.
- † THE HANDS folded in prayer show honor, praise and worship to God. That there was someone more powerful than her.
- † MARY'S BENT KNEE signifies her humility before God and spoke of her praying to God like the Indians did—through dance.
- † MARY'S DARK COMPLEXTION—showed her as a Mestizo—a mixed race between an Indian and a Spaniard. Such children were abandoned by their parents and mistreated by the people as signs of Spanish conquest and rape to the natives or proof of the sin and debauchery of Spaniards. They were often left homeless to wander the streets and starve to death. Now Mary is one of them!

- † THE ANGEL waiting on Mary underlies her superiority over other beings and points to her humanity.
- † The eight-petaled flower—symbolized the beginning of a new age, indicated by the harmony among the cosmic spheres.
 - It symbolized the planet Venus, also known as either the “morning star” or the “evening star.”
 - The sun being eclipsed by the Virgin is now in harmony with the moon and the planet Venus—none of them dominate the other—and suggested harmony in the calendars that the Aztec peoples relied upon.
- † THE TILMA IS INDESTRUCTIBLE!:
 - The typical tilma of that time was of loosely woven agave thread, of low durability and often quickly wore out and fell apart after 20-40 years. This is how and of what the tilma was made of, yet. . .
 - It was displayed from 1531-1647 without protective glass, against the smoke of candles and incense and other atmospheric effects, kept in a marshy, moist terrain, close to a salt lake, above nitrate fumes—with no damage or change!
 - During that time and after, multitudes of pilgrims touches the tilma, kissed it and rubbed their rosaries and medallions on it and even pressed their faces into it with no damage.
 - In 1791 the 40 pound frame was being polished with nitric acid and the corrosive liquid spilt onto the upper part of the image—it should have burned a hole in the material and been damaged more when the person who spilt it whipped the image with a rag, but only a slight stain is visible with no damage to the material.
 - The weave of the tilma is so loose that you can see through it. It was not primed or prepared for paint. There is no protective varnish on it. Pieces of the tilma were sent to Germany to the head of chemistry at Heidelberg University, Prof. Richard Kuhn, who examined the colors and concluded that he could not identify any existing types of mineral or vegetable pigment on them nor did he find any trace of synthetic dye. He said that the fibers had not been painted; that they were quite simply “colored.” The scientists, to this day, cannot explain the technique used nor the source of the “paints.”
 - Examined under a microscope by Dr. Manuel Garibi Tortolero of the Institute of Biology from the National University of Mexico, he did not find even the slightest trace of a brush stroke.
 - Professor Callahan from the University of Florida in 1979 saw that Mary’s face had an optical effect on the tilma of diffraction—close up, Mary’s face seems to be white, but olive at a distance.
 - This occurs in nature depending on the viewing angle like on the smooth surfaces of a bird, butterfly or beetles’ wings.
- † THERE IS NO SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION FOR THE MATERIAL’S DURABILITY, COLOR, CREATION, INDESTRUCTIBILITY OR MINUTE DETAIL IN HER EYES. This was “painted” by the hand of Mary for all generations to see the hope of salvation she brings to us in her savior and ours—JESUS CHRIST!²

² The above information is taken from: Grzegorz Gorny & Janusz Rosikon, *Guadalupe Mysteries: Deciphering the Code*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2016.