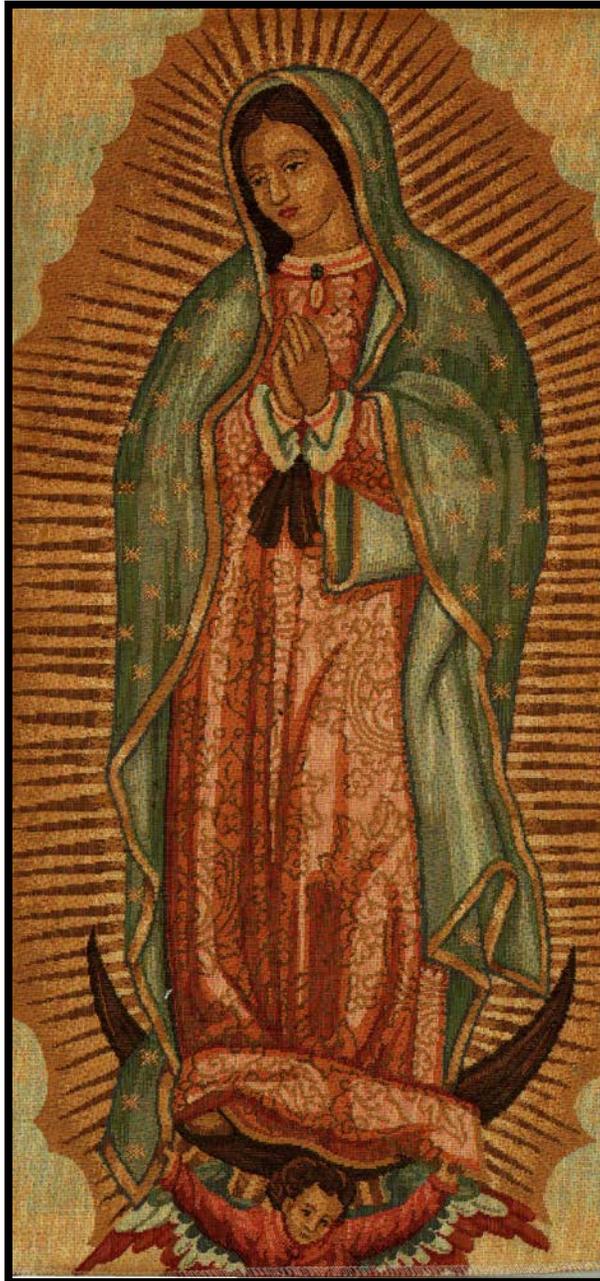


**THE MIRACULOUS IMAGE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE  
GOD'S GIFT FOR US ALL**



By Mary Joan Wallace

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### ***The Miraculous Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe - God's Gift for Us All***

Was written by Mary Joan Wallace (Mary Jo)

She may be contacted at [mjo2@charter.net](mailto:mjo2@charter.net) and at (805) 466-6044

# **THE MIRACULOUS IMAGE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE GOD'S GIFT FOR US ALL**

By Mary Joan Wallace

## **Introduction**

The life-sized original Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared suddenly and miraculously December 12<sup>th</sup> in 1531 on the long tilma (an apron-like cloak) of a 57-year-old humble Indian whose Christian name was Juan Diego. This took place at the center of the American continent in the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlan, now present-day Mexico City. Scientific studies, including those done in 1979 with infrared light, have proven that the tilma fabric was not treated beforehand with special techniques, such as sizing and sketching, and that paintbrush strokes were not used in the creation of this unusual and significant original image.

For over 480 years most Mexicans and those from Latin American countries have revered the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Juan Diego's tilma. However, little was known about it by those in the United States and elsewhere until research and scientific studies greatly increased around the middle of the 1900's. Unfortunately, sometimes what is written about the image, and especially on the internet, is not fully accurate. The article you now are reading has been written with the desire to accurately and succinctly tell much more about this amazing and wonderful image and the messages it conveys.

After Hernando Cortes and his soldiers finished conquering the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlan for Spain between 1519 and 1521, they named it Mexico City and its vast surrounding empire New Spain. Missionary outreach began there in 1524, following the arrival of 12 Franciscan priests. Shortly afterwards, Juan Diego, his wife Maria Lucia and his uncle Juan Bernardino were among the first Indians to become Christians. It is believed that they were baptized around 1525. Maria Lucia passed away two years before the sudden appearance of the miraculous image in 1531. Following its appearance, nine million Indians became baptized within ten years, according to Franciscan records.

Juan Diego's original name was Cuauhtlatoatzin, meaning "*He who speaks like an eagle.*" His new Christian name meant John James in English, with Diego being one of several Spanish names for James when translated into English. He was a middle-class landowner and farmer and had a successful business of constructing and selling mats made from reeds. Juan Diego lived most of his life in Cuautitlan, about 12 miles north of the Aztec capital city. Some time after becoming baptized Juan Diego moved to a village called Tulpetlac, so that he could live closer to his beloved uncle and closer to the Franciscan church that he attended.

On Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, which was then the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Juan Diego was about half way on a walk between his home in Tulpetlac and the Church of Santiago in Tlatelolco, which was close to the center of the Aztec capital city. It was his practice on Saturday and Sunday mornings to walk about nine miles to attend Mass and religious studies there. At dawn that morning Our Lady appeared to him at the top of a small hill called Tepeyac, northwest and now a part of Mexico City.

Juan Diego felt led to climb to the top of this hill from its western side after hearing heavenly sounds, like a chorus of birds, but more beautiful. As later shared with his bishop and many others, including a close friend who wrote an account that is now available in a manuscript called *The Nican Mopohua*, a lovely young woman appeared to him. Her clothing shone like the sun and seemed to send out waves of light. The earth was shining with the brilliance of a rainbow in mist, stones under her feet gleamed like jade and precious jewels, and foliage of surrounding plants looked like turquoise, with trunks and thorns shining like gold. Juan Diego wondered if he might be dreaming, in the land of his ancestors, or perhaps in Heaven.

The beautiful lady asked him to go to his bishop and request that a sacred little house of God (which she also called a temple) be built for her at the foot of that hill. In attempting to convey Our Lady's petition to his bishop, on three separate days Juan Diego walked about four miles from Tepeyac Hill to the residence of Bishop-elect Juan de Zumarraga. Initially the bishop did not seem to believe him at all, and on their second visit on December 10<sup>th</sup> he asked for a heavenly sign as confirmation.

The bishop's request was dramatically answered on December 12<sup>th</sup> two days later, when Juan Diego presented him with a gift of flowers from Our Lady being carried by

Juan Diego within his tilma. Suddenly and unexpectedly then Our Lady's image appeared on his tilma and was witnessed by the bishop and all gathered around the two of them.

Because of the miraculous nature of Our Lady's image on his tilma and what it represented in Indian picture writing, approximately eight million Indians were baptized in the next seven years; and nine million Indians received baptism within ten years. Information about the many baptisms was recorded for New Spain in 1541 by a Franciscan friar and historian by the name of Toribio de Benavente.

Although the Indians came from many different tribes and spoke a variety of languages and dialects, they learned much about the image and its messages by means of the Nahuatl language used throughout the huge Aztec empire from which they came. From areas as far away as present-day New Mexico and Guatemala, they quickly gathered in large numbers to gaze at the miraculous image and become baptized.

Because Our Lady's appearance on her image seemed to be of mixed Indian and Spanish background, that of a mestiza, she soon became accepted and loved by both Indians and Spaniards. The Aztecs had been planning to overthrow and kill the conquering Spaniards, whose harsh treatment often had involved stealing, enslavement and rape. Such plans ended, and so did Aztec sacrificing of 20,000 to 50,000 or more victims a year (often Indian prisoners) for appeasing their gods.

Pictured around the full-length portrait of Our Lady that suddenly and miraculously appeared on Juan Diego's tilma on December 12<sup>th</sup>, bright rays of sunlight seemed to glow from behind her, and heavenly clouds surrounded her. Perhaps such signs provided confirming evidence of the Divine child that this obviously pregnant mother appeared to be carrying within her womb. The Indians understood that she was pregnant from pictures and symbols on her gown. On her Guadalupe image, Our Lady seemed to be about four feet eight inches in height. She was like a biblical description in Revelations 12:1: "*the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet...*" Clothing for her was similar to what was worn in the Holy Land 1,500 years earlier, at the time of the birth and earthly life of her son Jesus.

Excavations within recent years reveal that the Mexican site where Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego is where Indians worshiped a hideous mother goddess named Tonantzin. Her grim statue had snake heads on top and a garment covered with writhing

serpents. Darkness representing evil was being replaced by heavenly light from a new mother, the mother of Jesus Christ.

In the Aztec Nahuatl language, *the Nican Mopohua* was written around the middle of the 1540's and possibly earlier by Don Antonio Valeriano. It beautifully provides detailed descriptions and vivid word for word accounts in ways then spoken in the 1500's about Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe. Understood to have been born in 1520 and baptized in 1524, Don Valeriano was a well-educated young mestizo nobleman related to Montezuma, most likely his nephew. He was close friends with Juan Diego and many of those present when the miraculous image first appeared. The style of his manuscript in his own hand writing indicates that it may have been prepared with assistance from two others.

Don Valeriano was a college professor and dean for about 20 years, a judge, and governor of Mexico City for over 30 years under Spanish viceroys. What is considered to be the first copy of *the Nican Mopohua* is now kept in the New York Public Library. It was purchased at an auction in 1880. Father Mario Rojas Sanchez, a Mexican expert in understanding the Nahuatl language, translated *the Nican Mopohua* into Spanish in 1978. Descriptions and quotations from *the Nican Mopohua*, as in this present article, tend to provide more accuracy than other summarizations often used.

My treasured English copy of the *Nican Mopohua* was a gift from Dr. Jose Aste Tonsmann of Mexico at a 2002 California conference where he was a featured speaker. For over 20 years, starting in 1979, he had used IBM equipment to enlarge up to 2,500 times reflections seen in both eyes of Our Lady's image. There he discovered 13 people from 1531. Under a separate heading towards the end of this article more will be shared.

Providentially I had become acquainted with Dr. Aste Tonsmann and his wife Cucha earlier, after learning that they were related to one of my good friends, Teresita Villasenor. The two of them have been very helpful in reviewing my writings about the image, and I was able to arrange for their speaking at the conference near San Francisco.

In Mexico, a man's last name is followed by his mother's maiden name, as with names of Fr Mario Rohas Sanchez and Dr. Jose Aste Tonsmann. In frequent reference to each of them in the remainder of this article, the maiden names of their mothers will not be used, and they will be referred to as Fr. Rojas and Dr. Aste.

**Our Lady's Words to Juan Diego, from *the Nican Mopohua*,**  
**and Happenings Following Her Requests**

“KNOW, KNOW FOR SURE, MY DEAREST AND YOUNGEST SON THAT I AM THE PERFECT EVER VIRGIN HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF THE ONE GREAT GOD OF TRUTH WHO GIVES US LIFE, THE INVENTOR AND CREATOR OF PEOPLE, THE OWNER AND LORD OF WHAT IS AROUND US AND WHAT IS TOUCHING US OR VERY CLOSE TO US, THE OWNER AND LORD OF THE SKY, THE OWNER OF THE EARTH. I WANT VERY MUCH THAT THEY BUILD MY SACRED LITTLE HOUSE HERE, IN WHICH I WILL SHOW HIM. I WILL EXALT HIM ON MAKING HIM MANIFEST. I WILL GIVE HIM TO THE PEOPLE IN ALL MY PERSONAL LOVE, IN MY COMPASSIONATE GAZE, IN MY HELP, IN MY SALVATION.

BECAUSE I AM TRULY YOUR COMPASSIONATE MOTHER, YOURS AND OF ALL THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE TOGETHER IN THIS LAND, AND OF ALL THE OTHER PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT ANCESTRIES, MY LOVERS, THOSE WHO CRY TO ME, THOSE WHO SEEK ME, THOSE WHO TRUST IN ME, BECAUSE THERE I WILL LISTEN TO THEIR WEEPING, THEIR SADNESS, TO REMEDY, TO CLEANSE AND NURSE ALL THEIR DIFFERENT TROUBLES, THEIR MISERIES, THEIR SUFFERING.

AND FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF THE INTENTIONS OF MY MERCIFUL COMPASSIONATE LOOK, GO TO THE RESIDENCE OF THE BISHOP OF MEXICO. AND YOU WILL TELL HIM HOW I AM SENDING YOU, SO THAT YOU MAY REVEAL TO HIM THAT I VERY MUCH WANT HIM TO BUILD ME A HOUSE HERE, TO ERECT MY TEMPLE FOR ME ON THE PLAIN. YOU WILL TELL HIM EVERYTHING, ALL THAT YOU HAVE SEEN AND MARVELED AT, AND WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD.

AND KNOW FOR SURE THAT I WILL APPRECIATE IT VERY MUCH AND REWARD IT, THAT BECAUSE OF IT I WILL ENRICH YOU, I WILL GLORIFY YOU. AND BECAUSE OF IT YOU WILL DESERVE VERY MUCH THE WAY THAT I REWARD YOUR FATIGUE, YOUR SERVICE IN GOING TO

REQUEST THE MATTER THAT I AM SENDING YOU FOR. NOW, MY DEAREST SON YOU HAVE HEARD MY BREATH, MY WORD. GO, DO WHAT YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR.”

After relaying Our Lady’s message to his bishop and when seeing her later that same day, on December 9<sup>th</sup> near Mt. Tepeyac, Juan Diego sadly told her that his bishop did not seem receptive. Our Lady offered this encouragement: “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, HE WILL BUILD MY HOUSE OF GOD THAT I AM ASKING HIM FOR. AND CAREFULLY TELL HIM AGAIN HOW I, PERSONALLY, THE EVER VIRGIN HOLY MARY, I WHO AM THE MOTHER OF GOD (Jesus) AM SENDING YOU.”

Descriptions from *the Nican Mopohua* relate that before Juan Diego visited his bishop on December 12<sup>th</sup> Our Lady asked him to climb to the top of Tepeyac Hill and pick for her flowers from there. Included was a type of Castilian rose grown in the bishop’s homeland in Castile in Spain but not believed to have been seen in Mexico. It seemed especially unlikely that these flowers could have grown on such a high, barren and stony place as the top of Tepeyac Hill during those cold winter months. Our Lady then carefully arranged and wrapped in his tilma the flowers that he had picked and asked that his bishop be the first one to be shown her floral gift.

Juan Diego quickly walked about four miles to his bishop’s home while clutching the fresh flowers within his tilma. Finally he was allowed to see his bishop, after servants kept him waiting for a long time. When he opened his tilma so that he could present these flowers to his bishop, still-fragrant Castilian roses cascaded to the ground. Then suddenly, to the surprise of everyone, the full Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared on his tilma. In amazement and awe, the bishop and those present fell to their knees. Bishop Zumarraga saw to it that the image of Our Lady was first placed and displayed in his own private chapel, and he invited Juan Diego to be a guest within his own home.

With the bishop’s assistance and guidance, a small chapel of white adobe was completed quickly within the next two weeks, in time for Christmas and for a huge procession to the new chapel on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December. Drums and trumpets accompanied

those in procession carrying the image, and the bishop walked along with bare feet. It was reported that all within the city turned out for this special event. Bishop Zumarraga blessed the new chapel and celebrated Mass there, and the Indians provided worshipful dances. It is understood that on Catholic feasts honoring Our Lady Indians continue to provide their ancient worshipful dances at churches throughout Mexico. Such dancing agrees with Psalms 149 and 150, which encourage praising God with dancing.

One jubilant Indian on December 26<sup>th</sup> accidentally was fatally wounded in the neck by an arrow. However, when his body was brought before Our Lady's image and prayed for by those assembled he came back to life, his wound disappeared, and he was healed. Because of this remarkable healing many more Indians became enthusiastic about becoming Christian.

Juan Diego became custodian and caretaker for where Our Lady's image was kept, referred to as the Hermitage. He lived in a small room next to the chapel for the rest of his life, sharing about Our Lady and her son Jesus and interceding for pilgrims until his death 16½ years later in 1548, at the age of 74. After Juan Diego's death and in the mid-1500's a slightly larger chapel was built to replace the original one. Housing for the image continued to be enlarged and expanded in following years.

In 1709 a huge fourth church was built for celebrating Masses and for viewing and honoring the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 1904 this church was declared to be a Basilica. After it began sinking another Basilica of round-like shape was built nearby and dedicated in 1976. It was built to look like a tent, to remind those coming of tents used by early travelers on pilgrimage in the Holy Land.

The newer Basilica was constructed over 350 piles, for controlled support and so that the Basilica could remain level, even if sinking might occur all around. With no need for church columns that tend to block views, the main altar and the framed image of Our Lady hanging on a wall behind the altar can be seen by well over 10,000 people when seated inside for Mass. When the nine Basilica doors are open, an additional 40,000 people in the surrounding plaza also can see the altar and Our Lady's image during Mass.

It has been estimated in a variety of internet articles that 10 to 20 million people make annual pilgrimages to this Basilica each year, more than to any other church in the world, except for St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

In 1961 Pope John XXIII proclaimed Our Lady of Guadalupe as Mother of the Americas, including North, Central and South America and the Caribbean. In 1981 for the 450th anniversary of the 1531 appearance of her image, photographic replicas of the original size were prepared. In 1991 Mexican bishops blessed and sent one to the United States and one each to various other countries. They prayed that these Missionary Images would help bring about not only conversions to Jesus, but the ending of abortions.

In a book called *A Handbook on Guadalupe*, it states that before 1531 the Aztecs killed one out of every five children annually, while in the United States over one and one half million babies had been killed by abortions each year. When the United States Missionary Image was temporarily lost when overseas, Mexican bishops provided a second one. Under leadership from Dan Lynch, lawyer, former judge and author of a recommended book, *Our Lady of Guadalupe – Hope for the World*, each image has helped in ministering at right to life and spiritual gatherings, abortion facilities, etc. See [www.jkmi.com](http://www.jkmi.com), email [jkmi@jkmi.com](mailto:jkmi@jkmi.com), and/or phone (802) 524-5350.

Pope John Paul II prophesied that “The light of the Gospel of Christ will shine out over the whole world by means of the Miraculous Image of His Mother.” Shortly after becoming pope he visited the Guadalupe Basilica in 1979, and he went there again in 1990. During a 1999 visit there this pope declared December 12<sup>th</sup> as the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. When at the Basilica in 2002 he canonized Juan Diego as a saint of the Catholic Church. His feast day is December 9<sup>th</sup>, the date he first saw Our Lady. As a layman, he is honored for his holiness, dedication to God and evangelistic outreach. In the remainder of this article he will be referred to as *St. Juan Diego*.

In *the Nican Mopohua*, Our Lady spoke of ONE GREAT GOD OF TRUTH, which for a long time had been the belief of St. Juan Diego and other Indians like him that were influenced by the spirituality of the Toltecs, who had lived in their area many years earlier. However, most of the Aztec Indians around them believed in many gods.

Our Lady’s explanations about herself that have been presented here and taken from *the Nican Mopohua* provide interesting similarities to four dogmas proclaimed by the Catholic Church: (1) In 431 at the Council of Ephesus she was declared to be **Mother of God (Theotokos) and truly the Mother of God the Son made man.** “The Holy Virgin is the Mother of God since according to the flesh she brought forth the

Word, God made flesh.” (2) In 649 the Lateran Council officially referred to **the Perpetual Virginity of Mary**. “She conceived without seed, of the Holy Spirit...and without injury brought Him forth...and after His birth preserved her virginity inviolate.”

(3) In 1854 Pope Pius IX recognized her as **the Immaculate Conception**. “The Most Holy Virgin Mary was in the first moment of her conception by the unique gift of grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of mankind, preserved free from all stain of original sin. (4) In 1950 Pope Pius XII officially presented the dogma of **the Assumption of Mary**, stating, “Mary the immaculate perpetually Virgin Mother of God, after the completion of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul in to glory of heaven.”

### **Our Lady’s Coming to Juan Bernardino and Giving Him the Name by Which She Wished to Be Called**

On December 12<sup>th</sup> in 1531 Our Lady also appeared to Juan Bernardino, St. Juan Diego’s uncle, at his home in Tulpetlac. He then was healed from his serious and life-threatening health problem. Around that same time and when hurrying to find a priest to help prepare his uncle for death, St. Juan Diego was met by Our Lady at the eastern side of Tepeyac. There he was reassured by her that his uncle was being completely healed.

In a fascinating and well-researched book by Dr. Charles Wahlig, O.D. which he has called *Past, Present and Future of Juan Diego – Heroic Figure of the Natural and Supernatural*, it is interesting to learn that Juan Bernardino’s life-threatening health problem probably was related to his having been injured shortly beforehand by an arrow from an Indian wishing to harm him and other Christians.

Within Tulpetlac many early writings and stories were passed on for generations by local residents referring to such an injury by an arrow, according to the now-late Helen Behrens, who carefully did research there and provided related information for Dr. Wahlig. Remains of a cross on the outskirts of town that marked a place believed to be where St. Juan Diego found his uncle’s wounded body were rediscovered after an earthquake in the 1950’s. Painting on the cross helped to authenticate it. This cross has been kept at a shrine attached to a church in Tulpetlac, which was visited by Dr. Wahlig.

It was Juan Bernardino who was given the name by which Our Lady wished to be called. Some believe that she actually used the name “Guadalupe,” which was derived from Arabic and which pointed to herself as the same Blessed Virgin Mary venerated by Spaniards at Guadalupe, Spain. Sounds of “d” and “g” were not pronounced by Indians that spoke Nahuatl. When Juan Bernardino told his interpreter Our Lady’s name in his own language, some understood that he said “Coatlaxopeuh.” It sounded like he said “*Santa Malia te Quatlaxupe,*” meaning “*St. Mary of the Stone Serpent Crushed (or Stamped Out).*” This reminds us of Genesis 3:15, which states that the offspring of the woman would crush the head of the serpent (the devil). The Aztecs had worshiped a stone serpent god, and copies of it still can still be seen on Mexican buildings and monuments.

*A Handbook on Guadalupe* published by Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate in 1997 contains articles by many well-informed authors about the miraculous image and St. Juan Diego. In one article there Fr. Rojas is quoted as saying that in the Nahuatl language Juan Bernardino may well have declared that Our Lady actually said that her name was Tlecuautlapchupeh. In Nahuatl this would mean “*She who proceeds from the region of light, like the fire eagle.*” Fr. Rojas explained that for the Indians the region of light is where God lives, and the fire eagle is a symbol of the sun and divinity.

Santa Maria de Guadalupe was the well-known name of a small statue in Spain of Our Lady with the Christ child. This statue was believed to have been carved by St. Luke and was a pope’s gift to a bishop in Spain. Frequently it was venerated (honored) there in the 600’s and early 700’s, until an invasion by Moslems. Then, along with an explanatory note, the statue was buried for protection within an iron casket in an unmarked location in the northern province of Extremadura in Spain. It remained there and was considered lost for about 600 years.

A Spanish cow-herder by the name of Gil discovered the highly revered statue in 1326, after Our Lady reportedly appeared to him and provided directions for its location and for having a chapel built for housing and honoring it. Referred to as Our Lady of Guadalupe, the statue was found near a small village named Guadalupe.

The Guadalupe name in Spain originally was provided in Arabic by conquering Moors, who probably were referring to a nearby river as *Wadi al Lub* (pronounced Loop), meaning *River of Black Gravel, or River Channel*. The original name may also have

meant *Wadi al Hub* (pronounced Hoop), meaning *River of Love*. After the rediscovery of this treasured statue, many Spanish leaders, including Columbus, Cortes (originally from Extremadura), Bishop Juan de Zumarraga and others had made prayer pilgrimages to the church where it was kept before they sailed away from Spain.

The use of both Nahuatl and Spanish names for the image on St. Juan Diego's tilma seems significant and appropriate, and it has resulted in increased respect and collaboration between both Indians and Spaniards. The Nahuatl name has been a reminder from Genesis 3:15 of the woman (understood to be Our Lady) and the crushing of the serpent (the devil). Use of the Guadalupe name has resulted in those from Spain remembering more their deep love for the mother of Jesus and her revered statue in Spain, with its Arabic name related to a river.

Partly because the appearance of Our Lady's image reminds many people of the biblical description of "*the woman clothed with the sun*" in Revelations, 12:1, they refer to her as *A River of Light*. Others, including Msgr. Eduardo Chavez, who provided much historical information to the Vatican for the canonization of St. Juan Diego, have called her *Our Lady of the River of Love*.

### **More Background Information about the Bishop,**

#### **St. Juan Diego and His Chichimeca Indians, and the Aztecs**

In Dr. Wahlig's book mentioned earlier he tells of great difficulties experienced by Bishop-elect Zumarraga after his arrival in New Spain in 1528 and his appointment then by the king of Spain as Defender of the Indians. Seeing much serious mistreatment of Indians by Spaniards and by their corrupt governing body called the First Audience, Bishop Zumarraga smuggled letters by ship to his king in which he asked for a change in government. It was reported that his messages were secretly hidden in wax in a barrel floating among buoys, in bacon in a barrel of oil, and in a hollowed-out crucifix.

In efforts to stop the bishop from notifying the king, an unsuccessful assassination attempt was made on his life in 1530. With assistance from sailors, messages did successfully reach the king, who then designated and sent an additional bishop. He had just arrived to help lead a new Second Audience government when the image of Our Lady suddenly appeared at the end of 1531, also helping both Indians and Spaniards.

According to *A Handbook on Guadalupe*, St. Juan Diego was not Aztec, as commonly believed. He was a member of the Chichimecas, a group of Indians that migrated from the north to the Valley of Mexico many years before the Aztecs began arriving there around the end of the 1200's. St. Juan Diego and other Chichimecas lived in a town called Cuauhtitlan, referred to as *the Place of the Eagle*. It was about 12 miles north of the newer Aztec capital city. He had lived there most of his life, and his neighbors considered him to be "a most holy man." The Chichimecas frequently visited St. Juan Diego at the Hermitage and were helpful in its original building and for many years in its upkeep.

In earlier years Aztec priests prophesied that their own nomadic Indians, who originally came from a place to the north called Aztlan, would some day settle where they would find an eagle perched on a nopal cactus. After seeing an eagle perched on a nopal cactus on a rock in Lake Texcoco (presently at the heart of Mexico City), they began building their city on a small island there in 1325. This beautiful city was near the western side of the lake, and it was connected to land by several large causeways. The city was artificially expanded over the lake, and it eventually reached the size of about five square miles. Named Tenochtitlan, *Place of the Nopal Cactus on a Rock*, when conquered by Cortes in 1521 it had become one of the world's largest cities, with a population of between 200,000 and 300,000.

On its flag, coins and official seals, today the national emblem for Mexico shows an eagle on a nopal cactus on a rock and clutching a serpent in its beak. Despite traditional beliefs that a serpent or snake was spoken of in the early Aztec prophecy, this was not mentioned in original Aztec accounts. In his writings, Dr. Courtenay Bartholomew states that the serpent was introduced as part of the national emblem only after the Spanish Conquest, as Spaniards considered the serpent to be a symbol more in keeping with the idea of evil being crushed by an eagle.

Before Spanish missionaries arrived, St. Juan Diego and some other Indians followed earlier Toltec ways of believing in one true god that did not desire human sacrifices. However, for them their god seemed far away and impersonal. Aztec Indians also felt that their many gods were impersonal. They tried to appease these gods by offering them blood from the hearts of thousands of Indians, even up to 80,000 Indians

that were sacrificed for four days in 1487 during the dedication of a new temple, which took place when St. Juan Diego was about 13 years of age.

By offering such sacrifices the Aztecs were attempting to achieve survival for themselves, for their gods and for the universe. After the sudden appearance of the Guadalupe image, increasingly the Indians became aware that their offerings of human sacrifices were no longer needed, especially because Jesus in his own sacrificial death had shed his blood for their sins, out of great love for each one of them.

### **Indian Picture Writing on Our Lady's Gown and Star Constellations on Her Image**

In his book referred to earlier, Dr. Wahlig wrote that Aztec and other Indian youth had compulsory education. They learned to read and write with Indian pictograms, called glyphs. As a result, the Indians understood the abundance of symbolic picture writing on the gown of Our Lady's image, which quickly led to millions of them drawing close to "THE ONE GREAT GOD OF TRUTH WHO GIVES US LIFE," as described to St. Juan Diego by Our Lady. From vast distances and through rugged terrain they quickly came by the thousands, to gaze upon her image, learn about Jesus, and seek baptism and the sacrament of confession.

In chapter three of *Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of the Civilization of Love*, an informative, accurate and up-to-date book published in 2009 and written by Carl Anderson and Msgr. Eduardo Chavez, these authors beautifully share much about the extensive Indian picture writing called glyphs on Our Lady's gown. Because inaccurate information about the Image of Our Lady's Guadalupe often has been circulated on the internet and elsewhere, books like this one are very important for providing truth.

Carl Anderson has been chief executive officer and chairman of the board for the Knights of Columbus, the largest organization for lay men in the world. Msgr. Chavez of Mexico is one of the more renowned and well-informed experts on Our Lady Guadalupe. He served as chief postulator for providing to the Vatican extensive background information for the canonization of St. Juan Diego, and he has been cofounder and rector for the Superior Institute of Guadalupan Studies (SEG) in Mexico.

In their book they describe Our Lady's gown as being significantly decorated at its center and over her womb with one four-petaled Mexican jasmine flower, shown only there. It is considered the most sacred flower in Aztec culture, telling of divinity, new life, and what is beautiful and good. Called the Flower of the Sun, its center represents the sun and divinity, while its four petals remind one of the four directions for the universe, and much more. Articles by Janet Barber, I.H.M. within *A Handbook on Guadalupe* also tell of picture-writing explanations by Fr. Rojas. He has said that in Nahuatl this very important jasmine flower is referred to as the Flute Player Flower, which stands for "*flower and song*" and truth and divinity.

In their book, Carl Anderson and Msgr. Chavez describe eight flowers on Our Lady's gown that each have eight-petals and are similar, yet unique. It is understood that these flowers indicate future harmony in the cosmos, influenced by what some Indians considered to be one of their important gods in the sky, represented by Venus.

Nine additional groups of flower clusters on the gown of Our Lady of Guadalupe have many more symbolic meanings. When looked at upside down, some magnolia plants there appear as hearts now seen to be under Our Lady's maternal care. Shown among these flower clusters in the Indian picture writing are hills recognized as places of protection and worshipful contact with God. Nearby images on her gown also depict life-giving rivers within their land. Together, the hills and rivers represent towns, additional communities and a much larger civilization. Some designs there are like glyphs written on Aztec codices found throughout Mexico. When viewed from different directions, the designs present added words and spiritual reflections. On her gown the designs proclaim new life coming from God and from Our Lady.

While most of the Guadalupe image appears to be three dimensional, pictogram designs on her gown are only two dimensional. Because of not falling into material folds of her gown, these designs can be seen easily. As a result, Indians and others studying the tilma have been helped in their understanding of the picture-writing messages from Heaven about unity, harmony, and new life from God. In particular, messages on the tilma show the caring, protective and personalized love of God and of Our Lady.

Flowers and music were of utmost importance to Aztecs and nearby Indians as signs of truth. In her flower-covered gown, the image of Our Lady appeared to be

dancing to music, with her left knee raised and her right foot down, a sign for the Indians of the highest form of worshipful adoration to God.

Because Our Lady's hands seemed clasped in prayer and also clapping, as in a worshipful dance, the Indians did not consider her to be a goddess. To one side of the hand-stitched center seam of St. Juan Diego's tilma, her head was humbly and respectfully bowed, showing reverence and adoration for God. Her brooch was decorated with a small and plain black cross, similar to crosses used by Spaniards to let others know that they were followers of Jesus Christ. Quickly the Indians became convinced that, like the Spaniards, they were to become Christians.

The dark and purple-like ribbon above Our Lady's waist represented an Indian maternity band. Its height and the folds of her clothing showed them that she was pregnant and about to give birth. As understood from picture writing within Indian codices, the style of her hair indicated that Our Lady was still a virgin, just as she had told St. Juan Diego. For the Indians, it seemed apparent that her image revealed that she was a virgin mother about to give birth to a Divine being.

Then in 1531 Our Lady truly was about to give birth in a new way, to Jesus as the Son of God entering into the lives of millions of Indians as his followers. This new birth of Jesus was soon to be recognized not only at Christmas, which was about to be celebrated shortly after her image first appeared, but also after Christmas in the lives of many Indians that would soon be baptized.

Because Our Lady's image was shown blocking out the sun and standing over a crescent moon, the Indians considered her to be greater than their Aztec gods. A similar crescent moon was in the sky when her image first became visible, and also Halley's Comet. Having a golden shoe and wearing a mantle of royal turquoise-blue, a color usually worn only by Indian emperors, Our Lady seemed like a royal queen mother.

According to Dr. Bartholomew, after arduous research by Dr. J. Canto Yilla and Dr. Armando Garcia de Leon of the National University of Mexico it was discovered that stars on Our Lady's mantle corresponded to main constellation patterns on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December in 1531, when her image first appeared. Northern constellations could be seen on her right side and southern ones on her left, including the Southern Cross.

Three stars on the extreme lower right portion of Our Lady's mantle signify continuing new life. It also is understood that in their Indian calendar system the year when her image first appeared can be seen there in the picture writing of the Aztecs.

In a 2007 research paper called *New Discoveries of the Constellations on the Tilma of Our Lady of Guadalupe*, Robert Sungenis shared about scientists superimposing over Our Lady's total image a picture of actual matching constellations in the sky December 12<sup>th</sup> in 1531. Stars from the Corona Borealis, a small constellation with a Latin name meaning *Northern Crown*, could then be seen over the forehead of Our Lady, as a queen. In addition, the constellation Virgo (Latin for Virgin) appeared over her heart. One can read more about this at the web site of [www.thedivinemercy.org/news/3439](http://www.thedivinemercy.org/news/3439) .

### **More Amazing Scientific Findings** **about the Guadalupe Image**

The unknown means of coloration for the original Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, its sudden and unexplainable appearance on St. Juan Diego's tilma and its continuing excellent preservation remain a mystery. The coarse, porous and loosely woven material of Juan Diego's tilma normally would not be expected to last more than 20 to 30 years. Previously it was believed that material for his tilma was from the cactus plant, as often described earlier. More recently it is said to be from a succulent vegetable plant. At [www.truthsoftheimage.org/tr/en/claims](http://www.truthsoftheimage.org/tr/en/claims) in an article called Claims and Truths, the tilma has been reported to be from agave popotule fiber from the ixtle plant.

Dr. Aldofo Orozco, a researcher and physicist who spoke at the International Marian Congress on Our Lady of Guadalupe in 2009, agreed that the tilma is from agave popotule fiber. He said that a well-known Mexican researcher had reported that the tilma is from a species called zaac. Dr. Orozco shared that when the tilma was closely examined in 1666 and again in 1751, even though its back side was found to be rough and coarse its front side seemed as soft as the most pure silk. Originally this information was from [www.mariancongress.org](http://www.mariancongress.org), which is a web site with excellent changing articles on the Guadalupe image that have been provided by the Knights of Columbus.

The Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe first appeared 39 years after Columbus discovered America and 10 years after Cortes completed conquering Mexico City for

Spain. Before sailing to the new world each dedicated his endeavors and this new land to Our Lady. For 116 of its first years, the Guadalupe image was not protected by glass. Constantly it was exposed to salt-water breezes and to humidity from an ocean-fed lake near its mainly open-air chapel. Touched and kissed by millions of pilgrims, the image also was exposed to smoke from millions of votive candles. Considering these facts, the good condition of the tilma has been considered amazing.

Philip S. Callahan, a biophysicist and professor of entomology from Florida and an accomplished painter and photographer, carefully studied the image in 1979. He declared that exposure to so much ultraviolet light from millions of candles normally should have faded coloring on Our Lady's image, and especially the blue pigments. He believed, too, that the lack of surface preparation should have added to deterioration of colors. Nevertheless, colors remain bright, vivid and intact on the original image.

In his 1979 research, both Mr. Callahan and Jody B. Smith, a Florida philosophy professor, were permitted to view the image up close for several hours and without the bullet-proof glass covering. For further study, infrared-ray light was used by Mr. Callahan. This is done for examining old paintings and seeing through layers of added paint. It can provide information about surface preparations, sketching, pigments and original art work. Jody Smith wrote about Mr. Callahan's research in a 1984 book entitled *The Image of Guadalupe - Myth or Miracle?*

Although it was discovered that some paint had been added over the original image in attempts to accent and enhance it, and especially over its lower third, Mr. Callahan found the original portrait to be as "fresh and crisp as the day it was formed." Original portions of Our Lady's image that were not painted over include her face, hair, blue-green mantle and rose-pink gown. Beneath all of these, Mr. Callahan could find no evidence of sizing, sketching or brush strokes.

After the miraculous image first appeared, unfortunately some golden embellishments were painted over the existing stars, mantle border, floral designs on her gown and rays surrounding her image. Our Lady's hands also had been touched up to appear smaller. Although paint from such additions obviously was cracking and falling away, on the original image there was no evidence of cracks or fading.

An especially amazing feature of the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is the way it appears to change when one moves further away. Although Our Lady is seen as being only about four feet eight inches tall, from a distance she appears much taller. Her complexion, coloring and clothing then also seem to change, taking on more of an overall green color from six to seven feet away. Her close-up gray-white complexion becomes at a distance more of a beautiful Indian-olive tone, and her blue robe more turquoise.

Mr. Callahan explained that such coloring changes often occur in nature, as for bird feathers and butterfly scales. Pigmentations combined with surface sculpturing diffract and appear to change in color from a distance. He considered the beauty and unique execution of coloring for the face of Our Lady of Guadalupe to be “inexplicable” in terms of present-day science. He did not believe that human hands could have accomplished such diffraction in the creation of this image.

Other researchers discovered later that, when they looked at constellations of stars on Our Lady’s mantle as viewed from outer space and the heavens, they were able to see the winter solstice as it was at 10:40 a.m. on December 12<sup>th</sup> in 1531--when Our Lady’s image first was appearing. Within the Julian calendar system used then, this was at the end of the shortest and darkest day of the year and at the beginning of a new year of light. For learning more, a 1998 book by Professor Courtenay Bartholomew, M.D. is highly recommended. It contains eight extremely well-researched chapters about the Guadalupe image and the history of the Mexico City area. Entitled *A Scientist Researches Mary, Mother and Coredeptrix*, it was published by The 101 Foundation.

Dr. Bartholomew explained that the word *Coredeptrix* in his title does not imply being co-equal, but actually cooperating with, just as a co-pilot is subordinate to a pilot. Within scriptures Mary is quoted as saying, “I am the handmaid of the Lord.” At the same time, declared Dr. Bartholomew, she has been made worthy of intimate and unique cooperation with Jesus in helping to draw souls to him and to Heaven.

Within his book Dr. Bartholomew expressed his belief that most Aztecs did not know about angels when the Guadalupe image first appeared. He has believed that the small person seen there bearing his heavenly queen on a litter is not an angel, but actually a representation of St. Juan Diego, whom Our Lady addressed earlier as “Little Juanito.” Previously the Aztecs and other Indians carried their royalty on litters, as indicated in the

lower portion of the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Clothing for the little person there is similar to that of an Aztec eagle warrior.

An interview with a Fr. Anthony explained that when an Aztec would win a battle the general would mark the great victory by processing with eagle feathers on his armor and carrying on a litter the Aztec princess. “So here in this image is the warrior carrying Our Lady in a great victory procession for all to see,” declares Fr. Anthony. “But of course it’s a different kind of victory, because she is being carried through the heavens, so it means it’s an even greater victory than anyone could imagine.” This sharing is from [www.thedivinemercy.org/news/3439](http://www.thedivinemercy.org/news/3439), referred to earlier in this article.

Juan Diego’s original name meant “*He who speaks like an eagle,*” or “*Talking Eagle.*” Revelations 12:14 refers to eagle wings for a woman’s flight from a serpent. Wings shown beneath the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe are like those of an eagle. While some may think that the little figure below her image represents an angel, perhaps St. Michael, it has been increasingly believed and written about that the little person bearing Our Lady might well be St. Juan Diego. He is seen holding with one hand her turquoise mantle representing the heavens and with his other hand her rose-pink and flower-covered gown representing earth. He is shown helping to unite Heaven and earth.

A fascinating article by Vicente Diaz telling about his research regarding the eyes of Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared in a December 1985 issue of Columbia Magazine, published by the Knights of Columbus. Of Mexican descent and formerly a nonbeliever, Mr. Diaz wrote that research for his article led to his own conversion. In 1929 an official photographer at the Guadalupe Basilica discovered that he could see a person reflected in one eye of Our Lady’s image. Perhaps because of political unrest at that time, this photographer was asked not to share anything then about his important discovery. It was not until the 1950’s that a series of scientific investigations began to take place to study reflections in both eyes of the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Then, in meticulous examinations by numerous eye specialists, ophthalmologists discovered that they could see reflections in both eyes of her image in positions, angles and proportions similar to what could be seen in the eyes of living persons. Specialists agreed that distorted reflections in the eyes of her image conform to the Purkinje-Sanson law of optics. Such distortions have to do with reflected images of people and objects

being seen three times, twice right side up and once upside down, as a result of eye curvatures. After his direct examination when the image was not under glass, a director of a hospital for ophthalmology exclaimed, “The total sensation is that of seeing a living eye, and really it cannot be thought less than something supernatural.”

**Thirteen People from 1531 Seen Reflected  
in Eyes of Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe**

Starting in 1979 and for over 20 years, Dr Jose Aste Tonsmann worked many hours enlarging up to 2,500 times and carefully studying the eyes of the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In his meticulous research he was able to identify and photograph images of 13 people reflected from the highly magnified eyes. Dr. Aste has emphasized that Our Lady may have intended as a prophetic message her following words to St. Juan Diego, as expressed in his own copy of *the Nican Mopohua*: “...FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF THE INTENTIONS OF MY MERCIFUL COMPASSIONATE LOOK (or gaze), GO TO THE RESIDENCE OF THE BISHOP OF MEXICO.”

A Peruvian engineer who has been living near Mexico City, Dr. Aste is a computer systems analyst and computer photography enhancement expert who was employed by IBM for about 20 years. Although IBM was not a sponsor of his research related to the eyes of Our Lady of Guadalupe, IBM representatives permitted the use of their newer and improved enhancement equipment for his research. To avoid possibilities of error and/or fanciful speculation, Dr. Aste had photographic enlargements broken down into numerous shades of white and gray colors, including 256 shades of gray. He studied enlargements up to 2,500 times more than those of normal eye sizes with photographic sections as small as 6/1,000,000 of a meter. He used methods similar to those applied for analyzing Saturn from photographs sent back to earth in space probes.

One of the first persons discovered by Dr. Aste in the eye reflections was an Indian sitting in prayer. His details are so precise that even his numerous body muscles and sandal straps are evident. His forehead appears to be unusually high, typical of how Aztec priests shaved their heads as a sign of rank. Next to him is a white-bearded man with high cheekbones and an aquiline nose. Anthropologists have identified his sharply outlined features as being Basque. He is understood to be Bishop-elect Juan de

Zumarraga, of Basque origin. A young man close to him and appearing to be speaking is believed to be Juan Gonzales, who translated for him from the Nahuatl Indian language into Spanish. He later became a priest and traveled as a missionary among the Indians.

Others reflected in Our Lady's eyes include an Indian considered to be St. Juan Diego. He has a large nose and is wearing a tall and cone-shaped hat similar to what was then worn by many Aztec Indians that worked in the fields. Also reflected is a man fondling his beard with his right hand. Most likely this was a newly arrived visiting bishop from Santo Domingo by the name of Don Sebastian Ramirez y Fuenleal. He was sent there to help lead a new civil government replacing the existing corrupt governing body of five called the First Audience. He served in this capacity until 1533. Being rather old, he may then have needed to retire. In addition, in the background one can see a black woman. A secretary of education for the Archdiocese of Mexico confirmed that two black slaves were living in the bishop's household at that time and later freed.

Images of people reflected from Our Lady's eyes appear to be in agreement with historical research, documentation and past paintings. A well known painting by Miguel Cabrera that is understood to have been completed in 1756 depicts those present when the Guadalupe image first appeared. It is believed that Miguel Cabrera had access to earlier art from the 1500's and 1600's as a guide for his painting. Personal characteristics and attire of St. Juan Diego, his bishop and others within the Cabrera painting closely resemble what can be seen in recently discovered reflections from the eyes of the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, as greatly magnified by Dr. Aste.

An unusual detail is the fact that for two of those reflected, Bishop Juan de Zumarraga and what appears to be his translator, only their heads and not their bodies are shown. "I personally am convinced that there is something extraordinary in all of this," Dr. Aste has emphasized. Because of these two not being completely visible, one can see the praying Indian and, in smaller dimensions, what has been called "the family group." Included there is a beautiful woman with an infant strapped to her back by a "rebozo" (shawl) and with two children nearby, a girl and a boy. The young woman is facing a man in a wide-brimmed "sombbrero" hat, probably her husband. An older couple behind the woman and children might well be the grandparents.

“The size of all those reflected is so small that only the utilization of an advanced computerized photographic process could have brought them to light and proved their existence,” Dr. Aste has declared. “Even with the most advanced technology in the world, it would be impossible to paint images of these dimensions in such precise detail, above all on a surface as coarse as that of the tilma on display at Tepeyac.” According to Dr. Aste, the seven smaller members of the family group are seen in the area where roses fell to the ground when St. Juan Diego opened his tilma before the bishop, and when the miraculous image suddenly appeared on his tilma at the same time.

When speaking at the 2002 San Francisco International Marian Conference sponsored by St. Raphael Ministries, the Astes pointed out that the eyes of the image indicate that Our Lady actually was specifically looking then at the seven people shown in the family group (not only in her image on the tilma, but most likely also in her invisible presence). Findings discovered with the use of modern-day enlargement equipment and methods seem intended for our present times. These findings emphasize how important families are to Our Lady and to God, who sent her. Because Our Lady’s eyes were focusing in particular on the family group, in their Guadalupe presentations frequently the Astes emphasize the importance of families. In a variety of countries and within groups both large and small they often share about family-related needs and solutions for becoming more close, loving, supportive and encouraging.

Dr. Aste received his doctorate from Cornell University in the United States. Both he and his wife speak English. She has been a supportive and encouraging wife, helpful to him for expressing just the right words in English and in promoting their added ministry of furthering family closeness, which they feel Our Lady would desire.

In Mexico City Dr. Aste founded a computer systems development company called QUIPUS. He provided material for a video in Spanish about the eyes of the image. He also prepared in Spanish *El Secreto de Sus Ojos (The Secret of Her Eyes)*, a book published in Peru in 1998, and printed in Mexico. It no longer is available for sale. A larger new book by Dr. Jose Aste Tonsmann also showing enlarged reflections from Our Lady’s eyes recently became available at: Instituto Superior de Estudios Guadalupanos, Quintana 26 bis. Col. Gustavo A. Madero, Del Gustavo A Madero, Mexico, DF., CP 07050. The phone number from the United States has been given as 00-52-55-5750-0730.

**Additional Signs, Wonders and Answers to Prayer**  
**Guiding Many to Conversion and Eternal Life**

*The Wonders of Guadalupe* written by Francis Johnston and published in 1981 provides numerous accounts of “signal graces” resulting after prayers being said for the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 1571 at the famous five-hour Battle of Lepanto at sea off the coast of Greece, Islamic Turks from the Ottoman Empire were defeated, thus preventing their control over the Mediterranean Sea and their taking over Europe. The huge victory of Christian forces there was attributed not only to the praying of many rosaries then encouraged by the pope, but also to the carrying of a small copy of an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on a ship within the winning Christian fleet.

Plagues of typhus in Mexico in 1545 and 1736 quickly ended after increased prayers requesting the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 1785 (and not in 1791 as some have reported, according to Msgr. Chavez), nitric acid accidentally was spilled on the tilma during the cleaning of its picture frame. While a mild streak resulted in its upper left-hand corner and a dark stain appeared beneath that stain on the back of the tilma, no damage resulted to the image or to its fabric.

For more explanations by Msgr. Chavez about true and false claims, a helpful web site has been [www.traditioninaction.org/Questions/13410\\_Guadalupe.html](http://www.traditioninaction.org/Questions/13410_Guadalupe.html). Msgr. Chavez has been founder and director the Superior Institute of Guadalupean Studies (SEG) that provides continuing investigation about the Guadalupe image. Its web site with information in Spanish is [www.iseg.org.mx](http://www.iseg.org.mx), and the email address provided for this organization has been listed as [guadalupe1531@hotmail.com](mailto:guadalupe1531@hotmail.com). Msgr. Chavez also has served as rector of the Catholic University Lumen Gentium in Mexico and as an honorary canon at the Basilica of Guadalupe.

In 1921 during anti-Catholic persecution by government officials in Mexico, a bomb hidden in a flower vase violently exploded on the altar directly beneath Our Lady’s image. Although it shattered windows throughout the church and did extensive damage there, even to windows of some nearby homes, no harm resulted to those present, to the image or to its thin glass covering.

A bronze crucifix that was on the altar below Our Lady's image at the time of the violent 1921 bomb explosion has been prominently displayed inside the Basilica near one of its nine entrances. As a result of the intense explosion, this heavy metal cross with the body of Jesus on it became greatly bent. For many people viewing the image of Jesus there, so extremely stretched out, it has seemed that at the time of the explosion he was protecting from this bronze cross the treasured image of his beloved mother. This crucifix also reminds us of Jesus being stretched out on another cross slightly over 2,000 years ago, to die with great love in reparation and atonement for the sins of everyone.

Within the modern newer Basilica that replaced in 1976 the former nearby sinking Basilica at the foot of Tepeyac Hill, Our Lady's framed image remains prominently displayed high on a wall in back of the main altar. Even while Mass frequently is being celebrated there, it is possible for many to privately view her image up close within a separate passageway behind the main altar, where several rather short ramps move in two directions. While in this passageway in 2003 I felt moved almost to tears when observing 15 to 20 little girls wearing shirts that displayed the logo of an orphanage. Riding back and forth on these ramps directly beneath her image, they were looking up in awe and appreciation as they gazed in rapt attention at the image of their loving heavenly mother.

The validity and significance of the miraculous nature and continuing preservation of the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe have become increasingly apparent for more than 480 years. In view of so many amazing facts presented here, it does seem evident that the image and messages of Our Lady of Guadalupe are gifts from God, not only for those who lived in the 1500's, but especially for those of this present generation. It appears that Our Lady was sent from Heaven to help draw everyone much closer to her merciful son, Jesus, and to the very deep love of God, in this world and eventually in Heaven--*God's Gift for Us All*.

In closing I wish to share some final reassuring words from Our Lady of Guadalupe spoken by her to St. Juan Diego on December 12<sup>th</sup> in 1531, when he was very concerned about the health and well-being of his uncle. Her following motherly words of encouragement, as taken from the English translation of the *Nican Mopohua*, seem to be meant not only for St. Juan Diego, but also as a gift from God and from Our Lady--words for us all:

“LISTEN, PUT IT INTO YOUR HEART, MY YOUNGEST AND DEAREST SON, THAT THE THING THAT FRIGHTENED YOU, THE THING THAT AFFLICTED YOU IS NOTHING. DO NOT LET IT DISTURB YOU. DO NOT FEAR THIS SICKNESS, NOR ANY OTHER SICKNESS, NOR ANY SHARP AND HURTFUL THING. **AM I NOT HERE, I WHO AM YOUR MOTHER?** (This last boldfaced sentence appears in Spanish in large letters over one outside entrance to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.) ARE YOU NOT UNDER MY SHADOW AND 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? LET NOTHING ELSE WORRY YOU, DISTURB YOU...”

+ + +

Prepared by Mary Joan Wallace (Mary Jo)

10025 El Camino Real, #32

Atascadero, CA 93422

[mjo2@charter.net](mailto:mjo2@charter.net)

(805) 466-6044

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## About the Author

After majoring in journalism and social work in her home town of Missoula at Montana State University (now called the University of Montana), Mary Joan Wallace (known as Mary Jo) earned her master's degree in social work from Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania. After working in foster care and adoptions, she lived in Adaban in southern Iran from 1960 to 1967, where her husband Jack was an economic analyst at a large Iranian oil refinery. Then they were able to travel within 35 countries, enjoying studying different cultural and religious beliefs and practices.

Between 1974 and 1979 they were part of a small team in southern California that planned and presented 240 weekly Catholic TV programs--*It's a Brand New Day*--for Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN). Programs featured personal testimonies of guests. Mary Jo participated in weekly meetings to plan programs, obtained background information for program hosts, handled publicity, and answered letters from viewers.

She is the author of *Medjugorje, Its Background and Messages*, published by Follow Me Communications. Its second edition, with 87 illustrations, has been available for purchase for those phoning (818) 830-0724 or contacting Spirit Enterprises at [www.spiritenterprises.com](http://www.spiritenterprises.com).

On this site viewers have been able to read several of her writings, including: (1) her Medjugorje book, (2) *Mary's Life and Reflections - As Seen in the Mystical City of God* (a summarization of highlights from a 17<sup>th</sup> Century classic by Ven. Mary of Agreda), and (3) *The Miraculous Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe - God's Gift for Us All*. This web site also has shown pictures of 13 people from 1531--reflected from enlargements up to 2,500 times of both eyes of the original Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. These pictures were made available by Dr. Jose Aste Tonsmann, after his extensive use of special IBM equipment for over 20 years of preparing the enlargements, starting in 1979.

After moving to Atascadero in the central coast area of California, Mary Jo and her husband became Benedictine oblates of the Monastery of the Risen Christ. Later, in 2013 she became a secular Franciscan ((OFS). She is the mother of four children (including two step children whom she partly raised), and she is a grandmother and great grandmother. Her husband Jack passed away in 1996.