

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE



Including
9 Novena Prayers

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In Santa Fe, New Mexico, the variety of framed icons and figurines make a colorful statement.



“AM I NOT YOUR MOTHER?”

—Our Lady of Guadalupe, to peasant Juan Diego

*Our Lady of Guadalupe testifies
that her love persists beyond this life.
Flowers represent the beauty and
vibrancy of her message.*

On December 9, 1531, a Mexican Indian peasant named Juan Diego was walking through the countryside where Mexico City now lies. From the top of a hill, a beautiful woman called out to him, asking, “Am I not your mother?” She told him she was Mary, Mother of God, and that she would like a church to be built upon the ground on which she stood. As proof of her appearance, she imprinted her image on Juan Diego’s tilma, or cloak.

Today, nearly 500 years later, the cloth still defies scientific explanation of its origin. On view in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, it attracts up to 10 million pilgrims a year, making it the most



popular Marian shrine in the world. This cloth bears the only image of Mary on the North American continent that is officially recognized by the Catholic Church. And it made Our Lady of Guadalupe not only the patron saint of Mexico, but also the patron saint of the United States and the rest of the Americas.

The preserved cloth image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is famous throughout the world. It shows an Aztec woman enveloped in a womblike body halo and is most popular in Mexico, Southern California and the American Southwest. The image has spread beyond organized religion to become embedded in folk art in a variety of ways. Key chains, private altars, textiles, needle crafts, T-shirts, car decals, tattoos, stained glass windows, and statues, as well as the little painted tin retablos common in Mexico and the American Southwest, bear her picture. Our Lady of Guadalupe is treated like a member of the family in most Mexican homes. Both Catholics and non-Catholics have a fervent devotion to her. Many social activists honor her

for her commitment to the poor and downtrodden. Feminists and New Age religious groups honor her for her goddess roots. Indigenous people honor her for her Aztec roots. She is a symbol of motherly solace, offering protection to all people, weak or strong, rich or poor, making Our Lady of Guadalupe the most popular and best-loved incarnation of Mary.

Because of her broad-based popularity and immense following, we would very much like to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe by offering this novena box to those who want to pray to her on a daily basis. Novenas, or nine-day prayers, do not have to be for specific requests (though they frequently begin in this way). They are a form of meditation that clears the mind and stops the chatter and distraction of the material world. Many people pick a saint, angel, or incarnation of Mary they feel comfortable with and pray to it every day. We think of our novena box as a way to bring the ritual of praying with a saint in church into your own home.



La Basilica de Guadalupe in Mexico City was dedicated in 1709. The majestic church, towering over the vast central plaza of La Villa de Guadalupe, is now closed to the public.

THE STORY OF THE APPARITION

In 1519, the Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes landed in Mexico. By 1521, the small army he led had leveled the capital city of the Aztec Empire. By 1524, when the first twelve Franciscan missionaries arrived in what is now called Mexico City, disease, destruction, and misery were rampant. All Aztec places of worship were systematically destroyed and the Franciscans could make few converts to Catholicism under the repressive and brutal regime imposed by the Spaniards.

In 1525, a Mesoamerican named Cuauhtlatoatzin was baptized and took the name Juan Diego. In most historical accounts Juan Diego is represented as a poor and humble Indian. But at that time, the Spaniards had imposed a caste system under which all Aztec people, rich and poor alike, were reduced to the status of serfs. There are other testaments that say Juan Diego was of noble lineage and

an elder statesman of the Aztec people. By converting to Catholicism, he might have been engaging in the Aztec spiritual practice of co-opting and incorporating other religious beliefs into his own. By 1531, when the apparitions of Mary appeared to Juan Diego, the original Aztec citizens of Mexico City were depressed and demoralized and living in a state of material and spiritual deprivation. Reduced to practicing their native religion in secret, they had little interest in the beliefs of their conquerors. As word of the miraculous visitations at the hill called Tepeyac spread and people saw the tilma bearing the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Franciscans were besieged with new converts. Within eight years, ten million Mesoamericans living in Mexico converted to Catholicism.

The written account of the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe is called the *Nican Mopohua*. It was written in the Aztec language of Nahuatl (the language in which Mary spoke to Juan Diego) between the years 1540 and 1580 by an Indian scholar named Antonio Valeriano. The

original document has been lost. The Nican Mopohua was first published in 1649 by Luis Lasso de la Vega. There are many English translations of this story, each varying slightly from the others. We present to you the one below:

It had been ten years since the great city-state of Mexico-Tenochtitlan had fallen. The arrows and shields had been put down and peace was everywhere. Faith in the giver of life, the God with roots, *teotl Dios*, had begun to blossom among the people. At that time, in the year 1531, early in the month of December, it happened that there lived a poor Indian named Juan Diego, whose home was in the town of Cuauhtitlan, but in spiritual essence he belonged to the Catholic Tlaltelolco parish in Mexico City.

On Saturday, December 9, just before dawn, he was on his way to worship and do his errands. As he reached the base of the hill known as Tepeyac, there came the break of day, and he heard from atop the hill what sounded like the



Modern-day depictions of the Mother of the Americas such as this one are based on the “miraculous portrait” now kept in the new basilica, opened in 1974 in Mexico City.

singing of many beautiful birds. At times their voices quieted, and then the hill seemed to respond to their song.

Juan Diego stopped and said to himself, “Am I really this fortunate that I deserve to hear this? Am I dreaming? Am I imagining all of this? I must awaken from this dream. Where am I? Is this the place our great-grandfathers spoke of? The land of flowers? The flower earth flower place? The land of our sustenance? Is this the place where Heaven comes to earth, the Heaven earth place?”

He was looking toward the east at the top of the mound, from which the heavenly singing came. Then it suddenly ceased and there was silence. Someone called him from the top of the hill.

A woman called to him. “Ihuantzin. Ihuan Diegotzin.”

Juan Diego went toward the woman’s voice. His heart was not disturbed in any way. He wasn’t surprised or startled. He was not frightened in the least; on the contrary, he was overjoyed. When he arrived at the top of the hill, he saw a noblewoman who told him to come near. As he approached her, he was amazed at her radiance and splendor. Her clothes glimmered like the sun. Her brilliance shone on the rocks nearby, making them sparkle like

precious jewels. The crag on which her foot rested gave off rays of light and the earth sparkled like a rainbow. The mesquites, nopal cacti, and other weeds that grew there appeared like emeralds, their foliage burnished turquoise and their branches and thorns glistening like gold. Juan Diego bowed before her and listened to her words, spoken tenderly and courteously, as though to charm him and honor him highly.

She said, "Listen, my youngest child, precious Juan, where are you going?"

He replied, "My lady, my queen, and my little girl, I have to reach your church in Mexico City, Tlaltelolco, to pursue things divine, taught and given to us by our priests, who are delegates of our Lord."

She then said, "Know, my dearest, littlest, and youngest son, I am the forever whole and perfect maiden Saint Mary, honorable mother of the true God, honorable mother of the giver of life, honorable mother of the creator of men and women, honorable mother of the one who is far and close, honorable mother of the one who makes the heavens and the earth. My wish is for them to build my temple here, where I will give people all my love, compassion, assistance, and protection. I am the compassionate

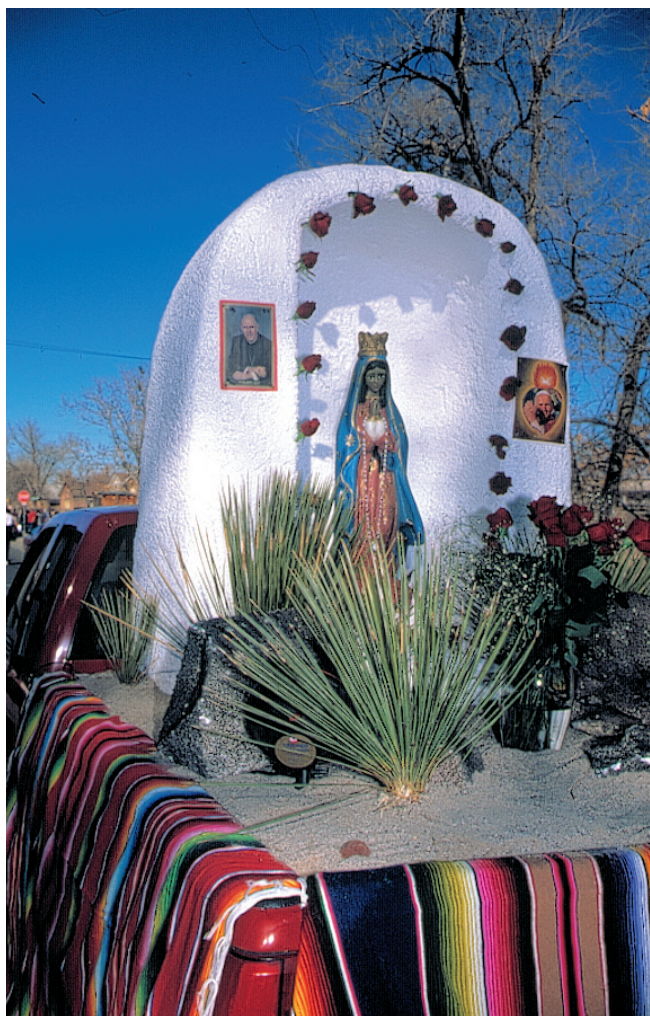


Tradition and devotion mix with daring colors and bold designs, reflecting the spirit of sacred art in the Southwest and Mexico.



Pilgrims honor the Virgin of Guadalupe in a three-day celebration in Tortugas, New Mexico.





Every year a street procession is held to celebrate the Feast of Guadalupe in Albuquerque's South Valley.

mother of you and your people here in this land, and of all the other people who love me, call to me, search for me, and confide in me. I will listen to their pain, suffering, and crying, and heal them from their misery. To bring about what my compassionate and merciful concern is trying to achieve, go to the bishop in his palace in Mexico City. Tell him that I have sent you to explain to him how I want a temple built for me here. Tell him every detail of what you have seen, heard, and experienced here with me. Be assured that I will be most grateful and will reward you. You will deserve very much the reward I will give you for your fatigue, your work, and the trouble that my mission will cause you. Behold, you have heard my mandate, my youngest child. Now go and make it so.”

Juan Diego bowed before her and said, “My lady, I am going to comply with your mandate. Now I must part from you.” Then he descended to complete the errand, going by the avenue that runs directly into Mexico City.

Juan Diego went to the palace of the bishop, Fray Juan de Zumarraga. He asked the bishop’s servants to announce him, and after a long wait, he was called and advised that the bishop had ordered his admission. As he entered, he bowed and, on bended knees before the bishop, delivered the message from the lady from Heaven. He also told him all he had experienced, seen, and heard.

After the bishop heard the story, he wasn't convinced. He asked him to come again so they could continue their discussion. The bishop said he would consider Juan Diego's report.

Juan Diego left the palace in grief. He had not completed his mission.

He went straight back to Tepeyac and climbed up the hill again. The heavenly noblewoman was waiting there for him.

He threw himself at her feet and said, "My dear little mistress, lady, and queen, my littlest daughter, my dear little girl, I went to the place you sent me to carry out your orders. Although it was difficult to get in to see the bishop, I was able to do it and I gave him your message. He was receptive and heard the whole story. But when he spoke, it didn't seem like he was convinced. It was clear that he thought I was making up the whole thing and that the message didn't really come from you. So I beg you, my lady, my queen, and my little girl, ask one of the nobility—someone who has a high position, is respected, and will be believed—to deliver your message. I'm just an ordinary person, a commoner. The bishop's palace isn't my place, my daughter, my youngest child. Forgive me if I'm burdening you or displeasing you in any way, my lady and my all."



Guadalupe follows those who invoke her in their worldly struggle.



The women of Villanueva, New Mexico, personalize their statue of Guadalupe by stich

The Blessed Virgin answered, "Listen, my youngest child, you must understand that I have many servants and messengers to whom I could entrust delivery of my message, but it is essential that you yourself solicit and assist, and that through your mediation my wish be fulfilled. I earnestly implore you, my youngest son, and with sternness I command that you go again tomorrow and see the bishop. You go in my name, and make known my wish, in its entirety, that he start erecting the temple which I ask of him. And again, tell him that I, in person, the ever-virgin, holy Mary, Mother of God, sent you."

Juan Diego replied, "My lady, queen, my little girl, may I not trouble you in any way. I will take your message there with all my heart. No matter what, I will not leave it behind. Although the path is painful and difficult for me, I shall manifest your will. I will go to do as you wish, but perhaps I will not be heard with liking, or if I am heard I might not be believed. Nevertheless, I will return to you with the bishop's reply tomorrow when the sun is going into the underworld. So, my youngest child, my daughter, special person, noblewoman, I go. May you be well."

He then left to rest in his home. The next day, Sunday,

so early in the morning that it was still dark, he went to Tlaltelolco to worship, be counted at mass, and visit with the bishop.

Mass ended at around ten in the morning. Juan Diego went right to the bishop's palace. He went before the bishop, weeping and on his knees as he relayed the heavenly noblewoman's message. But he still didn't know if the bishop would believe that the forever whole and perfect maiden wanted her temple built at the place she had clearly indicated.

The bishop asked Juan Diego many questions about the Virgin and where he had seen her. Juan Diego recounted the entire story in precise detail. He told the bishop everything he saw, heard, and experienced, and that he really believed her to be the forever whole and perfect maiden, the precious, honorable mother of our redeemer and worthy guide Jesus Christ. But the bishop still wasn't persuaded.

The bishop said he couldn't build the temple on Juan Diego's word alone. He needed a sign, some physical confirmation that the heavenly noblewoman was really the one who had sent him.



New Mexico has a rich heritage of artists who transform their personal responses to Guadalupe into unique creations.



Many home-made memorials to deceased friends and family bear the comforting image of Guadalupe.

Juan Diego said, “Sir Bishop, speaker for your people, what kind of a sign do you want her to produce? I will ask it of the heavenly noblewoman.”

When the bishop saw Juan Diego’s sincerity, he sent him away. When Juan Diego had gone, the bishop sent some of his trusted servants to spy on Juan Diego, to see where he went and with whom he spoke. But as they followed Juan Diego down the causeway, they lost him as he crossed the wooden bridge to Tepeyac. No matter how hard they searched, they couldn’t find him. So they turned back, annoyed not only because he had slipped out of sight, but also because he had frustrated them in their attempt to follow him. When they returned to the bishop, they told him Juan Diego was a liar, or that he was dreaming the things he talked about. They said that if Juan Diego showed up at the palace again, they would punish him to teach him a lesson so he would never lie again.

In the meantime, Juan Diego was with the most holy virgin giving her the bishop’s reply.

Upon hearing it, she said, “That is fine, my youngest and dearest son. You will return here tomorrow so that you may take the sign he asked for. Then he will believe and no

longer doubt or be suspicious of you. And know, my dearest son, I shall reward your care, work and fatigue on my behalf. Go now. Tomorrow I shall be here waiting for you.”

Upon arriving home Sunday, he found his uncle, Juan Bernadino seriously ill and in danger of death.

The next day was Monday. Juan Diego did not arrive at the bishop’s palace with the sign the bishop had requested because his uncle, Juan Bernardino, had become very sick. Juan Diego brought a doctor for his uncle, but it was too late. His uncle was going to die. That evening, Juan Diego’s uncle asked him to go out into the darkness of the very early morning to Tlalotelco to bring a priest to hear his confession and prepare him for death. He was sure that his time to die had come and he would not rise again.

In the darkness of Tuesday morning, Juan Diego set out to bring a priest from Tlalotelco. As he approached Tepeyacac on its western side, he thought, “If I continue along this path, the special lady might see me and ask me to take the sign to the bishop like she told me to do. But I have to help my uncle. I’ll go to get the priest first. My uncle can’t just lie there waiting.” Juan Diego believed that by going around the hill, she who sees everywhere wouldn’t see him.



Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patron saint and protector of the Americas.



New Mexico artisans, each with highly personal style, give their talents to depicting la Madrecita.

So Juan Diego went around the hill and came out on the eastern side to avoid being detained by the heavenly noblewoman. But she came down the hill from where she was watching to meet him.

“What is happening, dearest and youngest of my sons? Where are you going?”

Juan perhaps felt disturbed, ashamed, startled, or afraid.

He threw himself on the ground at her feet and said, “My little maiden! My youngest daughter, my girl, I hope that you are happy! Did you wake up well? Do you feel well? My words will disturb you. One of your humble subjects, my uncle, is very sick. A grave malady has come over him, and he is about to die. First, I need to rush to your home in Mexico City to call a priest to hear his confession and ready him, for he is about to face that for which he was born, the task of death. When I’ve done what I need to do, I’ll come back to take your message, special person, my daughter. Please forgive me and have patience with me. I’ll come first thing tomorrow.”

And the forever whole and perfect maiden said, “Listen, know it in your heart, youngest and dearest son, nothing should scare or concern you. Don’t worry. Don’t be afraid

of the sickness, or any other illness or hardship. Am I not right here who is your mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the foundation of your being, your sustenance, your happiness, peace, and effortlessness? Are you not in the fold of my garment? Do you need anything else? Don't allow anything to worry or disturb you anymore. Don't worry about your uncle's illness. He will not die. Be assured, he is already well."

And Juan Diego later discovered that Juan Bernardino had recovered his health at precisely that moment. Juan Diego was relieved to hear the heavenly noblewoman's honorable words. He pleaded with her to give him some kind of sign, some proof to take to the bishop so he would believe.

The heavenly noblewoman told Juan Diego, "My youngest child, go to the top of the hill where you saw me and I spoke with you. You'll see different kinds of flowers growing there. Go gather them together and bring them back to me."

Juan Diego climbed up the hill. When he got to the top, he was amazed by the variety of Spanish precious flowers there, all bursting forth in bloom. He was very surprised, because it was still the strongest, iciest part of winter. The flowers had a wonderful fragrance and the dew of the night glistened on them. The top of the hill at Tepeyac was no place for such flowers. It was overgrown with thorns, wild



Even simple depictions invoke adoration of Guadalupe throughout the Southwest and Mexico.



A mural in Española depicts Guadalupe on banners her devotees hold as they march through a northern New Mexico landscape.





Shrines to Guadalupe, large and small, are found everywhere throughout Mexico and New Mexico.

shrubs, nopal cacti, and mesquites. Even the medicinal herbs that grew there had been destroyed by the December frost.

He picked every flower, putting each into his cape, and brought them back down the hill to the heavenly noblewoman.

She took the flowers in her arms, then put them back into his folded cape, saying, “My youngest and dearest son, these different kinds of flowers are the bishop’s proof. Take them to him. Tell him for me that he should put my desire and will into action, and that you, as my messenger, can be trusted. Unfold your cape only in front of the Bishop. Show him what you bring. Tell him everything. Tell him how I told you to go to the top of the hill and pick the flowers. Tell him everything you saw, heard, and experienced. Inspire the bishop, so the temple I requested will be built at once.”

After the heavenly noblewoman told him what to do, Juan Diego went straight down the causeway to Mexico City. He had great confidence that he would be able to achieve what he set out to do. He was very careful with what he was carrying in his cape so he wouldn’t drop anything. He savored the fragrances of the different kinds of precious flowers.

When Juan Diego got to the bishop's palace, the servants came out to see him. He asked to see the bishop, but they ignored him. They pretended they didn't hear him.

Juan Diego waited for a very long time. The servants got curious when they saw him waiting there so patiently, his head down, doing nothing unless he was spoken to and so carefully holding what he had in his cape. They came close and tried to see what he was carrying.

Juan Diego realized he couldn't completely hide what he had from them or they would take it by force. They caught tiny peeks of the fresh and fragrant flowers he brought completely out of season. They were astounded. They were impressed by how fresh they were, how open their corollas were, how good they smelled, and how beautiful they were.

The servants tried to take the flowers away from him. Three times they tried and failed. But when they went to grab them, what they saw transformed into an image somehow imprinted on the cloak.

They went to tell the bishop what they had seen, and that the humble man who had come a number of times

before was now waiting to see him. When the bishop heard what they were saying, it struck him that Juan Diego had brought the proof. He told them that he would see Juan Diego right away.

When Juan Diego came in, he threw himself down on the floor as he had before. He once again recounted to the bishop everything he had seen, heard, and experienced.

Juan Diego said, “My lord, speaker for your people, I have completed the orders you gave me. I went to tell the person who is my mistress, the heavenly noblewoman, Saint Mary, precious Mother of God, that you requested a sign, some kind of proof, in order to believe me about building the sacred temple at the place she asked you to build it. I told her that I gave you my word that I would bring back the sign, the proof of her wish. She happily fulfilled your wish for a sign so her intention may be carried out. Today, in the darkness of the early morning, she told me to come see you again. I asked her for a sign so you would believe. She said she would provide one, and she did it immediately. She told me to go to the top of the hill where I had seen her before and pick several

kinds of Spanish flowers I would find there. When I had done so, I brought them back down to her. She received them into her arms and then put them back into my cape so I could deliver them to you personally. Even though I fully understood that the top of the hill at Tepeyac is no place for flowers, and that it is all overgrown with thorns, wild shrubs, nopal cacti, and mesquites, my heart did not waver. I did not doubt. When I came to the top of the hill, it was the place of flowers, the flower earth place. There were several kinds of precious flowers of the Spanish variety glistening in the dew. I picked them right away. She asked me to give them to you, from her. I am doing it, so that through them you can have the sign you wanted, manifest her desire, and understand that my word and my mission are true. Here they are. So receive them.”

Juan Diego opened his white cape and, as many flowers cascaded to the ground, the precious, revered representation of the forever whole and perfect maiden appeared imprinted on the cape, just as it is today at her sacred temple at Tepeyac, which has become known as Guadalupe.

When the bishop saw the image, he and all who were present fell to their knees. She was greatly admired. They arose to see her; they shuddered and, with sorrow, they



Votive candles light the darkened shrine room adjacent to the nave of the Santuario de Chimayó.



In New Mexico, devotion for Our Lady of Guadalupe is found in every corner of the state.

demonstrated that they contemplated her with their hearts and minds. The bishop, with sorrowful tears, prayed and begged forgiveness for not having attended to her wish and request. When he rose to his feet, he untied from around Juan Diego's neck the mantle on which the image of the lady from Heaven appeared. Then he took it and placed it in his chapel. Juan Diego stayed one more day at the bishop's house, at the bishop's request.

The following day the bishop said to Juan Diego, "Well! Show us where the lady from Heaven wishes her temple to be erected!" Immediately, he invited all those present to go and help build her "sacred little house." As soon as Juan Diego had pointed out where the lady from Heaven wanted her chapel to be built, he asked permission to leave. He wanted to see his uncle, who had been gravely ill when Juan Diego left for Tlaltelolco to call upon the priest to hear his uncle's confession and prepare him for death.

But they didn't let Juan Diego go alone; a number of people went with him to his house. Upon arriving, they saw the uncle was well and happy, without ache or pain. He was surprised to see his nephew accompanied by so many people and inquired about the reason for so much honor and attention. Juan Diego explained that when he left to get the priest to hear his confession and prepare him for dying, the lady from Heaven appeared to him on

Tepeyac and consoled him by telling him not to worry because his uncle was already restored to health. She then sent him to Mexico City to ask for a house to be erected for her on Tepeyac.

The uncle then revealed that at that same moment, he was suddenly restored to health when she appeared to him in much the same way as she had appeared to his nephew. She told him that she had sent Juan Diego to see the bishop in Mexico City. The lady also told Juan Bernardino that as soon as he saw the bishop, he was to reveal the miraculous manner in which she had effected his cure and to convey to him the proper name for her blessed image, the Perfect Virgin, Holy Mary of Guadalupe.

Juan Bernardino then went to see the bishop to give his testimony. Both Juan Bernardino and his nephew stayed at the bishop's residence for several days, until the chapel of the little queen of Tepeyac was erected where she had revealed herself to Juan Diego. The reverend bishop had the holy image of the beloved heavenly maiden transferred from the oratory to the main church so all the people could see and admire it. The whole city came to see her precious image and pray before it. They marveled at the miraculous way it had appeared, since absolutely no one on earth could have painted her beloved image.



The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe appears on all kinds of objects and surfaces.



A roadside shrine on a New Mexico backroad outside Las Vegas invites passerbys to enter the presence of Guadalupe.





Thousands of pilgrims flock daily to La Villa de Guadalupe. Some end their long journeys on their knees.



Children in the foreground kneeling on a large sheet depicting Juan Diego and his apparition.



Muralist Alexander Rokoff's work appears on the side of a building on Guadalupe Street, Santa Fe.



WHY GUADALUPE?

When the Virgin appeared to Juan Bernardino, Juan Diego's sick uncle, it is very likely that the Spaniards misinterpreted the name she called herself to be Our Lady of Guadalupe. "Guadalupe" was a difficult word for Indians to pronounce, and the Spaniards found the Aztec vocabulary to be almost beyond comprehension. Since there are similar-sounding Nahuatl names, scholars suggest Mary may instead have said *Tlecuauhtlaucepueh*, meaning "she who comes flying from the light like an eagle." To the Aztecs, an eagle is a sign from the gods, who live in the region of light. Another theory is that she used the name *Coatlaxopeuh*, meaning "she who crushes the serpent." The serpent is an Aztec religious symbol representing a demand for human sacrifice. The Catholic Church did not officially designate the name of these Mexican apparitions of Mary as Our Lady of Guadalupe until 1566.

Guadalupe, Spain, is in Extremadura, the region from which many of the conquistadors, including Hernan



Albuquerque colorfully establishes its historical connection to Mexico with its Azteca dancers.

Cortes, came. The word Guadalupe is a corruption of an Arabic word meaning “river of love, river of light.” A shrine there contains a black wooden statue of the Virgin Mary said to have been carved by St. Luke. During Spain’s 700-year occupation by Muslim forces, many Spanish pilgrims visited this shrine to appeal for liberation and unification of their homeland. Kings gave thanks there for successful battles against the Moorish invaders. Queen Isabel and her husband, King Ferdinand II, financiers of Cortes’s expedition and great devotees of this shrine (as were Cortes and many of his men), visited it in times of trouble. The year Cortes sailed for the New World carrying a copy of this statue, 1492, was also the year Spain was unified and freed from foreign occupation. Catholicism was credited for liberating the Iberian continent and was closely intertwined with Spanish culture. Therefore, the conquistadors were fierce in their Catholicism and considered religious conversion to be one of their main tasks in the New World.

Tepeyac, the hill where Mary appeared, was the site of the destroyed temple of Tonantzin, “Our Lady,” the Aztec corn and mother goddess identified with the moon.

Various peoples of Mesoamerica considered Tonantzin a “household god,” as opposed to a deity of the state religion. To the Aztecs, the vision of Mary on Tepeyac was just a new incarnation of Tonantzin, which is why belief in this vision was so widespread.

Using the name Our Lady of Guadalupe to identify this apparition of Mary enabled the Spaniards to accept it as a true vision of the Mother of Christ. They then had to confront the fact that the people whom they had treated so miserably were worthy of comfort from their adored and cherished Virgin. By speaking in Nahuatl and appearing with Aztec features, she declared that she, unlike the conquistadors, had the highest regard and love for the Aztecs. Though the Virgin of Guadalupe is also known by other names, her appearance announced the fusion of the cultures of the Spanish conquerers and the Aztecs and predicted the new face of Catholicism, one that was less European, more of a combination of all the peoples of the world. She also initiated gradual change in the dogmatic Catholicism the Europeans practiced by reintroducing and reminding the Spain of the Inquisition years the Christian concepts of unconditional love, charity, and protection.



Colorful headdresses in the shape of bishops' miters adorn the all-male dancers of Tortugas when they celebrate the Feast Day of Guadalupe.



THE TWO RELIGIONS

The Aztec people were not native to the Mexico City region. A religious vision made them migrate from North America and settle in Tenochtitlan in 1168. There, they were derided and ridiculed by the native tribes, who referred to them as “the people whose face nobody knows.” The inhabitants of the first Aztec settlement were slaughtered. Others then built a more secluded settlement on an island in Lake Texcoco, the site of present-day Mexico City. The Aztecs saw themselves as a chosen people; a race consecrated to the sun, and would not befriend or mix with other tribes. Their tribal god, Huitzilopochtli, could only be kept alive with human sacrifices. Therefore, the Aztecs were impelled to conduct wars with neighboring tribes not for conquest, but for sacrificial victims.



Dancers in festive costumes perform for the Virgin's Feast Day at La villa de Guadalupe in Mexico.



This paper faralito sack, like many household items in New Mexico, has an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Within a hundred years of settling in Mexico, the Aztecs had become the reigning culture. Superior to most civilizations in arts and sciences, they constructed a magnificent living environment unimaginable in scope to the Europeans. By the time the Spaniards landed in 1519, Tenochtitlan was a flower-filled, sophisticated city of more than 300,000 inhabitants. Entering the city, one conquistador wrote, "We were amazed and said that it was like the enchantments they tell of in the legend of Amadis. . . . And some of the soldiers even asked whether the things we saw were not a dream."

The Aztecs did not force the people they conquered to adopt their beliefs. It was part of their religion to adapt and incorporate rites and gods of conquered tribes. Soon, their pantheon included hundreds of gods. They believed that since the gods had sacrificed so much for mankind, mankind should sacrifice to the gods. They also believed death brought new life. Human sacrifices increased during the latter years of the Empire. When the great temple of Tenochtitlan was dedicated

in 1487, it is estimated that between 20,000 and 80,000 human sacrifices were made in a four-day period. As wars continued to feed the Aztec gods, the religious leaders elevated a greater number of male gods. The female gods, who had been strong, compassionate, and motherly, became monstrous, insidious characters. The demonic statuary, the smell of blood in the temples, the racks holding 100,000 human skulls, and the captives being fattened for sacrifice stunned the Europeans. They considered this religion to be satanic and destroyed Aztec places of worship.

Both Catholics and Aztecs believed in signs and visions. The Aztecs were aware of the legend of the fair-faced Mesoamerican god Quetzalcoatl, who had created all the arts. He had sailed away to the east in the twelfth century a.d.. It was prophesized that he would return in the year called One Reed, which, by coincidence, was the year Cortes landed. The Indians heralded him as the returning Quetzalcoatl, welcoming him into King Montezuma's kingdom.

In the months before Cortes's arrival, Aztec priests had seen omens of the destruction of their civilization. A comet hung in the sky for months, the owls hooted in sorrow.



This painting rests on a panel in a wall of the Santuario de Chimayó. It is signed by José Aragón, whose work dates from 1821 to 1835.



Tatoos of Our Lady of Guadalupe, mixing the sacred and the profane, not only decorate but may also protect the wearer.

Even though they greatly outnumbered the conquistadors, the Aztecs became fatalistic about their future. Cortes was able to amass an army of neighboring Indians who detested the Aztecs to join his men. The Mesoamericans did not try to kill in battle; they needed captives alive for sacrificing. Neither had they seen firearms or horses in battle, as the Spaniards used. Within two years of Cortes's arrival, the Aztec civilization was virtually destroyed.

The once beautiful, flourishing city was in ruins. The Spaniards felt it was their duty to force the remaining inhabitants to convert, so they built Catholic churches where Aztec temples had stood, using the same stones. What's more, disease brought by the Europeans plagued the native population. By 1531, the year Mary of Tepeyac appeared, few Aztecs had converted to Catholicism. After public display of the miraculous image of Mary, however, most of the remaining Indians embraced the religion they had resented and reviled. With Our Lady of Guadalupe, the feminine Aztec gods of love, compassion, and forgiveness reemerged, despite having been repressed or made hideous by the Aztec priests. The sick-at-heart at last had a deity to whom they could take their sorrow.

After adopting the Catholic faith as their own, the Aztecs saw the similarities in the two religions. Both had a Heaven and Hell. Both involved mystical occurrences, and Catholicism's array of saints easily translated into the Aztecs' many gods. Both religions baptized their infants, priests officiated at marriages, and divorce was almost impossible. An Aztec at the end of his life confessed his sins and was forgiven by a priest. In Catholicism, Communion wine represented blood and the Host represented flesh—similar to the Aztec belief in the powers of blood and sacrifice. In addition, the teachings of Quetzalcoatl and Christ were very similar. Quetzalcoatl was a Toltec king who introduced the idea of a supreme creator to be worshipped above all other gods. When he was forced to leave his throne, he promised, as Christ did, to return as a savior. The Aztecs believed he would. Coatlicue, the mother of the gods, delivered a baby when a virgin, as did the Virgin Mary. Christ sacrificed himself for mankind; in the Aztec religion, the people sacrificed themselves. Perhaps the only way this decimated, disheartened people could accept the new religion was through Our Lady of Guadalupe. In that image, the Aztecs read a secret message.



Under the influence of Guadalupe, faith becomes fashion, as in this jean jacket crafted by Hannah Wiseheart.



Stars on her cloak and rays coming from her silhouette are typical of depictions of Guadalupe, whether primitive or modern.

THE TILMA AND IT'S MEANING

Our Lady of Guadalupe's image may be analyzed in two ways: a spiritual image with meaning and a physical object to be studied scientifically. The tilma itself, an article of clothing common in Juan Diego's time, was woven on a backstrap loom as two panels of coarse maguey cactus fibers, which were sewn together with maguey thread. The seam divides the image in half.

Scientifically, a garment of this fabric should deteriorate within twenty years in Mexico City's humidity. Skeptical investigators have yet to explain its perfect preservation. Yet for the first 116 years, the tilma hung in its cathedral unprotected, constantly being touched and kissed by pilgrims and surrounded by lit candles whose smoke never blackened it. What kind of paint could



A display of objects for sale on the street or in a market almost always includes depictions of Guadalupe like these.



adhere to such fibers without deteriorating or flaking off? How could a painting of such detail be made on such a rough canvas? How is it that the front of the cloth is smooth while the back is rough?

Scientific investigations conducted from 1666 through the early 1990s have proven that paint on the picture's surface is flaking off. Experts surmise that art restorers applied the paint to perfect or protect the picture. The original image, however, appears to have been made with dye stamped into the fabric by an unknown process. A 1936 study could not identify the dye as animal, vegetable, or mineral. The scientific community has also failed to explain the absence of brush strokes and the smoothness of the image on rough canvas. The intricate gold-leaf pattern in the dress seems to lie not on the surface, but rather woven into the fabric.

The image is clearer and shows more detail when viewed from a distance, just as a large photograph does. Many skeptics argue that the image itself is merely a copy of a painting from Spain, and that the church somehow engineered it as a trick. But why would the Spanish clergy,

with all their contempt for native culture, depict Mary as an Aztec woman? In 1979, Philip Serna Callahan, Ph.D., a biophysicist and infrared-photography expert, examined and photographed the image. He wrote:

“It is a simple fact that if one stands close to the painting, the face is very disappointing as far as depth and coloring are concerned. At a distance of six or seven feet, however, the skin tone becomes what might best be termed Indian-olive (gray-green) in tone. It appears that somehow the gray and “caked” looking white pigment in the face and hands combines with the rough surface of the unsized hue. Such a technique would be an impossible accomplishment in human hands. It often occurs in nature, however, in the coloring of bird feathers and butterfly scales, and on the elytra of brightly colored beetles....By slowly backing away from the painting, to a distance where the pigment and surface sculpting blend together, the beauty of the olive-colored Madonna emerges as if by magic. The expression suddenly appears reverent yet joyous, Indian yet European, olive-skinned yet white of hue....”

Infrared scanning also revealed that parts of the original image have been painted over. The Virgin's hands, the Moon, and her hair have been altered. The angel, the Moon, and some of the rays are deteriorating. There is speculation that certain parts of the image were added in the 1700s to update the picture in the Spanish gothic style. Yet all of these elements are described in earlier accounts of the image. In an annual Aztec codex (a pictorial historical diary) from the sixteenth century, the appearance of Mary of Tepeyac is depicted in the year 1531 with a miniscule drawing that shows the image exactly as it appears today. The changes may have been made to stress or reinforce certain elements that seemed too delicately rendered. Callahan concluded:

“The original figure, including the rose robe, the blue mantle, the hands and face, is inexplicable. There is no way either to explain the kind of color pigments utilized or the maintenance of color and brightness over the centuries. Furthermore, when consideration is given to the fact that there is no underdrawing, sizing, or over-varnish, and the weave of the fabric itself is utilized to give the portrait depth, no explanation of the portrait is possible by infrared techniques.”



New Mexico cars like this one painted by artist Randy Martinez are like “rolling temples” to Guadalupe.



A tiny image of Guadalupe, painted by Victor Martinez, gleams from inside a hubcap, giving the driver “heavenly insurance.”

In 1929, the Basilica's official photographer, Alfonso Marcus Gonzalez, discovered a man's reflection in the right eye of the image. When he notified church authorities, they gave him strict orders to keep his finding secret. In 1951, Jose Carlos Salinas Chavez rediscovered the reflection in the right eye and noted a figure in the left eye as well. In 1956, a group of eighteen eye and vision specialists studied the images in the Virgin's eyes for several weeks. They found that the images were reflected not only from the corneas of both of her eyes, but also from the lenses. The normal human eye reflects what it sees three times: first, right side up on the front surface of the cornea, then right side up on the back surface of the lens, and third, upside down and smaller on the lens's front surface. The irises of the Virgin's eyes are so lifelike that during one examination, a doctor found himself saying, "Would you look up a little, please?"

In the official report of the 1956 examinations, one doctor wrote, "When you direct the light of an ophthalmoscope to the pupil of a human eye, a brilliant luminous reflection can be seen. When you direct the light of an ophthalmoscope to the pupil of the Virgin, the same luminous reflection appears. Then the pupil itself illuminates in a diffused form, giving the impression that it is

filled with liquid. This reflection is impossible to obtain on a flat surface, much less on an opaque one like the painting.”

In the 1970s, a Japanese optician fainted as he examined the eyes. When he recovered, he said that the eyes were alive and looking at him! IBM researcher Jose Aste Tonsmann, Ph.D., used computer scanning to study the image of the Virgin, magnifying her eyes up to 2,000 times, and confirmed that Juan Diego’s face is indeed there, as are many others. When the same techniques were used on eyes in other paintings, only shapeless blobs appeared.

As scientific testing becomes more sophisticated, the mystery of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe seems to deepen. But what was it about the image that made almost 10 million Aztecs convert to Catholicism in just eight years’ time?

The Aztec people felt that the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe spoke to them in a very personal way. The Mesoamericans had a complex, nonlinear writing style, using pictures instead of words. Their ancient documents are known as codices because a code is needed to understand their meaning. The sacred image of the Virgin served as a codex for both the Aztecs and the Europeans, triggering the same remarkable responses. Each culture recognized a different set of symbols in the image, but that duality



The Virgin of Guadalupe as a symbol mixes piety with the prosaic.

enabled both groups to come together in mutual agreement: The Virgin of Guadalupe was announcing a new age for humanity and human awareness.

The coded image as the Aztecs interpreted it is detailed. The womblike shape surrounding Mary, the rays of the Sun, the crest of the Moon, the folds of the robe, the subdued serpent, the colors worn by the Virgin, all delivered very direct messages to the Aztecs. The Moon symbolized fertility and procreation, and the oval brooch at the Virgin's throat represented the egg of creation. The belt Mary wears was one that Aztec women wore during pregnancy. Her robe touching the angel below her symbolized a kiss. Because the angel represented all of mankind, Mary's main message was interpreted to be one of love, protection, and affection. Gold leaf Nahuatl glyphs that symbolized plenitude appear on the Virgin's dress. The glyphs are arranged over Mary's womb in a pattern that represented the four points of the compass, a basic image in the Aztec faith.

It was thought that one of the announcements the Virgin was making with her image was the dawning of the age of the Sixth Sun. The Aztecs divided their history into solar ages, and the Fifth Sun, the Sun of Movement, they presumed to have ended with their conquest. During the new age, called the Sun of Flowers, the Aztecs believed that humanity would come into its own and bloom. In their

lore, the birth of a new sun always follows a time of great darkness, much as the sun rises after the night. For the Aztecs, the arrival of the Europeans resulted in the destruction of their culture, and the appearance of Mary after ten years of darkness signaled the dawn of the new age.

Christians interpreted the iconography of this image of Mary traditionally. The Apocalypse of St. John reads: "A great sign appeared in the heavens, a woman clothed with the sun...." This image was associated with the Immaculate Conception.

In 1531, December 9, the day Mary first appeared to Juan Diego, was recognized by both Eastern and Western Christian churches as the Feast of the Holy Conception of Mary. (In the Western church, it has since been moved to December 8.)

The eight-point stars on Mary's robe symbolized to Christians her heavenly origin and the concepts of baptism and regeneration. The belt she wears represented perfect chastity, and the brooch around her neck meant that she was sacred and protected against all profanation. She was exalted above all angels and was the Mother of God and the mother of all, offering protection and comfort to humanity.

GUADALUPE AND THE WORLD

Visits of Our Lady of

Guadalupe are not shrouded in sacred mystery, unlike other appearances of the Virgin Mary throughout the world. It is not necessary to make a special pilgrimage to her cathedral to be in the presence of the tilma (though millions do every year) in order to see this vision of Mary. Instead, her real image turns up everywhere in everyday life. The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is painted on the sides of buildings, tattooed on the backs of bikers, hung up in prison cells, decorating cars and displayed in the homes of many Mexicans and Americans of Latin descent. It is a common sight in the Southwest, particularly in California, and her cult is rapidly spreading throughout the Americas, of which she is the patron saint. Roman Catholics and non-Catholics alike consider her sacred and hold her in high esteem.



A Guadalupe bulto, a three-dimensional relief carving, is sometimes carried by hand, sometimes on a stand in a procession.

In 1754, when a reproduction of her image was unrolled before Pope Benedict XIV, he fell to his knees and declared, “To no other nation has this been done!” Our Lady of Guadalupe was then named the Patron Saint of Mexico, and December 12 was declared her official feast day.

Since the apparition, many miracles have been attributed to her intercession. Her Basilica is the most visited in Catholicism, attracting nearly 10 million pilgrims each year. In 1921, a bomb planted in a vase of roses beneath the image destroyed everything around it, but not the tilma. At the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, the Christian forces carried a banner bearing her image that had been touched to the original tilma. The Christians’ victory over the Ottoman Empire in that battle, freeing Europe from the threat of Turkish domination, was attributed to Mary. Her image has served as the symbol of Mexico’s liberation from Spain, the union of migrant farmworkers, feminist goddess groups and the right-to-life movement.

Perhaps the greatest miracle of Our Lady of Guadalupe was her influence on the violent Aztec and Spanish cultures. Estimates say that when the conquistadors arrived in Mexico City, the Aztecs were sacrificing one in five

children. Neighboring tribes reportedly viewed the Spanish conquest as payment for a karmic debt. The apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe was the first Christian image the native Mesoamericans could relate to. That Mary chose to appear on the hill dedicated to Tonantzin, the Mother Goddess, offered hope, love, and comfort. These qualities had been driven out of their own religion, and the message embedded in the image is credited with ending the practice of human sacrifice among the Aztecs.

The apparition of Mary softened the brutal, fundamentalist and dogmatic way that Catholicism was being practiced in Mexico. At the time of Mary's appearance, the Spaniards were looting Mexico City of its gold and subjugating the population.

The image itself is a fusion of Byzantine iconographic and Aztec art. By embracing both Aztec and Spanish cultures, it portrayed the Virgin Mary as a source of motherly love and compassion for all mankind. This depiction of Guadalupe gradually softened the boundaries between the Aztecs and the Europeans, helping them to merge into a new, mixed race of people who practiced their faith in a more loving and devoted way.



*Young would-be angels, wearing tinsel halos,
join the street procession during the Feast of Guadalupe.*



NOVENA PRAYERS

Novena prayers are to be said nine times in a row for nine consecutive days. Our Lady of Guadalupe can be invoked to help us pray over any matter. She is frequently called on to aid those in need of solving family problems.

NOVENA PRAYER#1

Our Lady of Guadalupe, according to your message in Mexico I venerate you as "the Virgin Mother of the true God for Whom we live, the Creator of all the world, Maker of heaven and earth." In spirit I kneel before your most holy Image which you miraculously imprinted upon the cloak of the Indian Juan Diego, and with the faith of the countless numbers of pilgrims who visited your shrine, I beg you for this favor:
(mention your request).

Remember, O Immaculate Virgin, the words you spoke to your devout client, "I am a merciful mother to you and to all your people who love me and trust in me and invoke my help. I listen to their lamentations and solace all their sorrows and their sufferings." I beg you to be a merciful Mother to me, because I sincerely love you and trust in you and invoke your help. I entreat you, Our Lady of Guadalupe, to grant my request, if this should be with the Will of God, in order that I may "bear witness to your love, your compassion, your help and protection."
Do not forsake me in my needs. Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.
Recite the Hail Mary (3 times).



Interior of Guadalupe Church, Santa Fe, New Mexico. ca. 1957

NOVENA PRAYER #2

God of power and mercy, You blessed the Americas at Tepeyac with the presence of the Virgin Mary at Guadalupe. May her prayers help all men and women to accept each other as brothers and sisters. Through your justice present in our hearts may Your peace reign in the world. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

NOVENA PRAYER #3

Remember, O most gracious Virgin of Guadalupe, that in your apparitions on Mount Tepeyac, you promised to show pity and compassion to all who, loving and trusting you, seek your help and protection.

Accordingly, listen now to our supplications and grant us consolation and relief. (Mention your request here).

We are full of hope that, relying on your help, nothing can trouble or affect us. As you have remained with us through your admirable image, so now obtain for us the graces we need. Amen.

PRAYER FOR HUSBANDS AND WIVES

Hail, O Virgin of Guadalupe. We place under your powerful patronage the purity and integrity of the Holy Faith in Mexico and in all the American Continent, for we are certain that while you are recognized as Queen and Mother, America and Mexico and our Matrimony will be saved.... Amen.

NINE-DAY NOVENA TO THE VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE

Day 1

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

Recite the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be.

Day 2

O Mary, conceived without sin, I come to your throne of grace to share the fervent devotion of your faithful Mexican children who call to you under the glorious Aztec title of Guadalupe. Obtain for me a lively faith to do your Son's holy will always: May His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Recite the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be.

Day 3

O Mary, whose Immaculate Heart was pierced by seven swords of grief, help me to walk valiantly amid the sharp thorns strewn across my pathway. Obtain for me the strength to be a true imitator of you. This I ask you, my dear Mother.

Recite the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be.

Day 4

Dearest Mother of Guadalupe, I beg you for a fortified will to imitate your divine Son's charity, to always seek the good of others in need. Grant me this, I humbly ask of you.

Recite the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be.

Day 5

*O most holy Mother, I beg you to obtain for me pardon
of all my sins, abundant graces to serve your Son more faithfully
from now on, and lastly, the grace to praise Him with
you forever in heaven.*

Recite the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be.

Day 6

*Mary, Mother of vocations, multiply priestly vocations and fill
the earth with religious houses which will be light and warmth for
the world, safety in stormy nights. Beg your Son to send us many
priests and religious. This we ask of you, O Mother.*

Recite the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be.

Day 7

*O Lady of Guadalupe, we beg you that parents live a holy life
and educate their children in a Christian manner;
that children obey and follow the directions of their parents;
that all members of the family pray and worship together.
This we ask of you, O Mother.*

Recite the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be.

Day 8

*With my heart full of the most sincere veneration,
I prostrate myself before you, O Mother, to ask you to obtain
for me the grace to fulfill the duties of my state in life
with faithfulness and constancy.*

Recite the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be.

Day 9

O God, You have been pleased to bestow upon us unceasing favors by having placed us under the special protection of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. Grant us, your humble servants, who rejoice in honoring her today upon earth, the happiness of seeing her face to face in heaven.

Recite the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be.

ORACION A LA VIRGEN DE GUADALUPE*

OH VIRGEN INMACULADA! Escucha la oración que te dirigimos y preséntala a tu Hijo Jesús. Da la paz, la justicia y la prosperidad a nuestro pueblo. Queremos ser totalmente tuyos y fieles siempre a Jesucristo en su Iglesia.

Virgen de Guadalupe, bendice a nuestras familias. Compadécete de nosotros y guíanos siempre a Jesús. Y así, libres de todo mal, podremos llevar a los demás la alegría y la paz que sólo pueden venir de tu Hijo Jesucristo. Amén.

* An exact copy, as found on prayer cards, of a Spanish prayer recited by the faithful who visit the Basilica de Guadalupe, Mexico City. Contributed by Jacqueline Orsini Dunnington.

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CREDITS

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