



The Americas' Greatest Treasure

This issue is devoted to Our Lady of Guadalupe and her miraculous appearances in Mexico. Much of the information has been taken from the 1972 Mindszenty Report which has been edited for timely reading and inspiration.

For more than 400 years, a perpetual miracle has existed in the North American continent that has been all but ignored by historians of the New World. Catholics outside of Mexico have shown minimal interest in sharing perhaps the most magnificent gift heaven has ever bestowed upon man; it is a gift that belongs as much to the whole western hemisphere as it does to Mexico.

On December 12, 1531, only 39 years after Christopher Columbus reached the Americas, the Virgin Mary appeared to Juan Diego, a native Aztec who had been converted to Christianity, promising her protection and help to all who would call upon her. As a sign, and to prove that she had indeed instructed Juan Diego to tell his bishop to build a church at the sight of the heavenly apparition, Our Lady had Juan gather a bouquet of Castilian roses, which did not even grow in Mexico, and take them in his cloak to Bishop Juan de Zumarraga. When the wrap was thrown open and the roses fell to the floor, there on Juan Diego's cloak was the beautiful picture of Our Lady just as she had appeared to him.

The cloak, which remains intact today and hangs for all to see above the high altar at the Basilica of Guadalupe, defies explanation. In the words of the late Father James T. Meehan: "Who would ever choose a worn cloak, spoiled with a seam, as the base for a masterpiece? What portrait artist would attempt the instantaneous creation of a picture, without brush strokes, on loosely woven cactus cloth? In 1531 the only forms of painting were oil, tempera, wet plaster and water colors. Experts in painting shake their heads in puzzlement."

Continuing, Father Meehan said: "The very durability of this painting for 468 years is a wonder beyond natural explanation. For the first 116 years this picture of Our Lady was exposed to the

acid fumes of chemical marshes, the smoke of incense and candles, the touches of countless faithful who pressed not only their hands and lips to it, but rosaries, pictures, medals, crosses in veneration. Other paintings there in oils and on prepared canvas have long since blackened, peeled, cracked and rotted. Yet Our Lady of Guadalupe remains entrancingly beautiful."

In 1955, just before the feast of Guadalupe, came the announcement that a special scientific commission, which had been studying the painting of Our Lady, had identified the reflection of a man in the cornea of the right eye of the painting as Juan Diego. The other images also seen in the cornea were later identified as persons who presumably had been in Bishop Zumarraga's quarters when the cloak filled with roses was opened. Other experts in the field of ophthalmology—including (in 1962) the late Dr. Charles Wahlig of New York—have testified to the authenticity of the images discovered in the cornea of Our Lady's eye. *Kodak of Mexico* contends that the process that produced the Guadalupe painting is somewhat like the chemical wash of photography; of course, there was no such thing as film or camera in 1531.

"These reflections," said Father Meehan, "bring to the skeptical modern age an authenticity that would have not been possible if Our Blessed Mother had appeared to Bishop Zumarraga. Had she done so, we would have written testimony. The hard fact is we have proof as strong as photography, discovered today by science but placed in the image 468 years ago, on the winter day of December 12, 1531. That same date of December 12 has been set aside each year to celebrate the marvelous appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe."

Historical Importance

The appearance of Our Lady to Juan Diego was a most important historical event for the western hemisphere as well as the entire world. In England Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon was setting the stage for the Great Protestant Revolt (and the loss of 5 million to the faith). The year after Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared, St. Thomas More resigned as the King's Lord Chancellor and three years later was beheaded for refusing to denounce the Holy Father.

In the New World the pagan Aztecs of Mexico—who had sacrificed human beings to their gods the sun and moon—were growing more and more resentful of their Spanish conquerors and were on the verge of revolt. Our Lady's appearance in the New World before any national boundaries were drawn was a sign that she came as the Mother of all who inhabited the hemisphere. To the Aztecs, however, it was a very special sign—and herein lies the relationship of the miracle of Guadalupe to today's resurgence of Satanism.

The Aztec's language was written in picture words similar to the hieroglyphics used by the Egyptians. Imagine the visual impact of the miraculous picture of Our Lady when viewed by the Aztec. Our Lady's image on Juan Diego's cloak blocks out the sun except for the solar rays completely surrounding her. She is standing on a footstool moon, which to the Aztecs was a symbol of their flying or feathered serpent-god. Here truly was an apparition from heaven: a beautiful woman, brighter than their sun-god and more powerful than their god of darkness represented by the moon, here crushed beneath Our Lady's feet.

Scholars tell us that the real name given Our Lady in the Indian tongue was "The Victress of the Stone Serpent"—the Devil—which the Spaniards thought sounded like "Guadalupe", one of their famous Madonna shrines back in Spain. No matter, in seven years after the 1531 apparition, at least 8,000,000 Aztec Indians were converted to Christianity with as many as 15,000 a week asking for Baptism. The conversion of the Indians more than compensated for the loss of five million to the faith in northern Europe's Protestant revolt, occurring more or less in the same period of history.

As a footnote, it should be remembered that the Aztecs were considered a particularly bloodthirsty race prior to conquest by Spain. We are told by historians that they sacrificed as many as 20,000 human victims each year, cutting their hearts out, as appeasement to their sun and moon gods. In fact, when Cortes rode into Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City) for the first time, he saw

the blood of sacrifice victims flowing like a stream down the steps of the city's great temple. Compare this figure of 20,000 to the number of unborn infants who have been legally murdered in the U.S. since the liberalization of abortion laws. The pro-abortion Population Council Inc. puts the figure at 1.4 million abortions every year since 1973. Can it be that the Aztec's serpent-god of darkness—Satan—is with us here today?

Our Lady's Promise

Our Lady appeared on the North American continent only one time in history in the series of four apparitions to Juan Diego. One of her promises to Juan was this: "I am your merciful Mother. The merciful Mother of all of you who live united in this land, and of all mankind, of all those who love me, of those who seek me, of those who have confidence in me."

Father Meehan noted: "To the sanctuary of Guadalupe millions come, because they know she does indeed 'hear their weeping, their sorrow' [he quotes from another of Our Lady's conversations with Juan Diego] and that she does 'remedy and alleviate' all their multiple sufferings, necessities and misfortunes." It is estimated that more than 5 million pilgrims visit the Holy Shrine of Guadalupe each year. Next to the Vatican itself, it is the largest center of pilgrimage in the Catholic world.

Those U.S. pilgrims who have gone to Guadalupe are deeply impressed by the devotion of native Mexicans to Our Lady. Many approach on their knees, sometimes bleeding, to the altar over which hangs the miraculous picture. To most observers, it is one of the greatest religious experiences they have ever witnessed.

Why such devotion? Because Our Lady has remained for all those who seek her, just as she promised Juan Diego she would. She not only came to the New World before our own pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, she has remained, glowing and unfading, through some of the most turbulent history the Church has known.

When Pope Pius XI issued his famous Encyclical on Atheistic Communism, *Divini Redemptoris*, he spoke not only of Red persecution in Russia but also *in Mexico*. Under the ruthless Mexican dictator Calles (who claimed to be "strongly attracted to socialism" just as the Bolsheviks so claimed in Russia) the Church was severely persecuted during the 1920s.

Earlier in November 1921, someone who was determined to destroy the miraculous picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe, planted a bomb in a vase of roses beneath the picture. When it exploded the impact shook loose the bolts from the frame, destroyed an oil

painting that was behind the Virgin's picture, broke windows throughout the church, blew chunks of marble from the main altar, twisted and hurled to the floor a bronze altar crucifix in front of the picture, but did not so much as splinter the glass enclosing Our Lady.

Many martyrs for the Church died or were tortured for their faith during the days of Calles' persecutions. One of the most memorable was the Jesuit priest Father Pro who, disguised as a mechanic, travelled around the country giving the last rites, hearing confessions and saying Mass in private homes. Father Pro, arrested as a "potential assassin" of dictator Calles in November 1927, was taken behind police headquarters and without benefit of a trial, shot to death.

Through all this chaos and terror, Our Lady of Guadalupe remained for those who turned to her in their sorrow and despair.

On one occasion of Our Lady's appearance to Juan Diego, she told him:

"Know for certain, littlest of my sons, that I am the perfect and perpetual Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God through Whom everything lives, the Lord of all things near and far, the Master of heaven and earth. I wish and intensely desire that in this place my sanctuary be erected. Here I will demonstrate, I will exhibit, I will give all my love, my compassion, my help and my protection to the people."

Our Lady's Role Today

Twenty-two Popes have directly or indirectly approved of devotions founded upon the apparitions at Guadalupe. Pope Pius XII's favorite place for prayer was at the Guadalupe shrine in the Vatican Gardens. While still a Cardinal, this staunch opponent of Communism unveiled nine shrines to Our Lady of Guadalupe in different parts of Italy.

In 1962, the last time Pope John XXIII went outside the Vatican before his final illness and death, he dedicated the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the Via Aurelia.

All the circumstances connected with the miracle of Guadalupe took place in the New World in the same century as the Church in the Old World was in a state of crisis. Some strong and astonishing parallels can be seen between events in 1531 and today:

"It was another Pope Paul who had to contend with nearly the same situation as Pope Paul VI. The Protestant Reformation of the 1530s became in effect a religious revolt. Early in the 1500s so-called reformers began to denounce the Church because of widespread abuses that had grown from within. Emboldened by

the encouragement they received, these leaders proceeded to question the doctrine of faith and the powers of Apostolic Succession. They called for a Church Council which they expected to control. They hoped to establish a new Church to take the place of the old, founded on novelties they had devised."

This analysis by Dr. Wahlig reads like today's headlines. The Church survived the crisis of the 1500s. Will it survive the current crisis? It will, of course. But not without help from Heaven. That is why Our Lady of Guadalupe is still with us, and why more than ever we must beg her intercession and aid. That is why the Miracle of Guadalupe will never be finished: why Guadalupe can truly be called "The Americas' Greatest Treasure."

To read the full thrilling story of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we recommend the soft-cover book **A Handbook on Guadalupe** by Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, issued in 1997 with 226 pages. Order from the Academy of the Immaculate, P.O. Box 667, Valatie, NY 12184 at \$12.50 plus \$3.00 postage/handling. Tel/Fax 518-758-1584.



Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe

*Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mystical Rose,
make intercession for Holy Church,
protect the Sovereign Pontiff, help all
those who invoke thee in their necessities,
and since thou art the ever Virgin Mary
and Mother of the true God, obtain for
us from thy most holy Son the grace of
keeping our faith, of sweet hope in the midst
of the bitterness of life, of burning charity,
and the precious gift of final perseverance.*

Amen.

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Chrm. Susan Stanzel Tel: 214/521-8779

Speakers:

Phyllis Schlafly
Bowie K. Kuhn
Rev. George William Rutler, S.T.D.
Richard Doerflinger

- **ANAHEIM, CA**—March 25
Sheraton Anaheim Hotel
Chrm. Marge DeClue Tel: 714/838-5289

- **CHICAGO/OAKBROOK, IL**—April 8
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ST. MATTHEW 1:21

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.

Christmas Blessings

Dear CMF Friends:

The Christmas message of Divine Love and Peace has been proclaimed now for 2,000 years. Yet for 2,000 years enemies of this message have tried to silence it even in our own century when countless have been slaughtered for their faith and present-day Holy Innocents have been killed in and outside the womb.



It was at Christmas that Cardinal Mindszenty was arrested and dragged away to begin his long ordeal of torture, imprisonment and exile. **The Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation** has been speaking out for Communist enslaved people long before others were raising their voices. Let us rededicate ourselves to the struggle for their freedom.

With your support, prayers and sacrifice, as Our Lady of Fatima requested, we will not abandon this dream that peace will be restored to families and nations! Many nations have been freed, many more—China, Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea—still suffer under the heavy yoke of Communism, yearning for the day when they too will be able to celebrate Christ's birth without fear.

As a CMF Council Member, I ask you now to remember the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation with a special Christmas gift so we can continue our activities to build the Faith, strengthen Family Life and work for Freedom for millions still under atheistic Communism.

With each one of CMF's Council Members, I will offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for you and your intentions this Christmas season.

May the newborn Christ Child grant you Peace and Love that only He can give!

Rev. Hermann-Joseph Rettig

The Reverend Hermann-Joseph Rettig, O. Praem.
CMF Council Member

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