

## Our Lady of Guadalupe

### Overview

Have you ever seen a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary? If you have seen the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe (OLG), you have seen the image of Mary.

### The history at the time of the apparition

When Mary appeared in 1531, there was no Mexico, America or Canada – as we know it today. Mexico did not exist and the Colonies would not be founded until 1776. The Spanish had been the occupying force over the Aztec population since 1521. The cruelties and human sacrifice were rampant during this period and God's timing could not have been more perfect.



To Juan there was no question that he had seen the mother of God. In fact, when he told his story and pointed to the picture – it was to proclaim that the image was what Mary actually looked like.

### The Apparitions

Mary first appeared to Juan Diego on 9 Dec 1531 near Tepeyac when he saw a lovely woman surrounded by a brilliant light. Mary told Juan that she was the Mother of God and asked Juan to build a chapel for her on this place. He was to go the Bishop and make this request. Later, he returned to the hill and advised Mary that he was not successful and Mary merely told him to return to the Bishop.

The next day Juan went to the surprised Bishop and repeated Mary's request. The Bishop told Juan that he required a sign from the Lady before he would consider building a chapel.

Juan went home – finding his uncle gravely ill and he spent the day looking for a doctor. The next day - thinking his uncle was near death -he went off looking for a priest to give him the last rites. Mary appeared again and told Juan not to worry about

his uncle and told Juan to return to the top of the hill to collect the flowers for the Bishop.

On 12 Dec 1531, Juan went to the hill finding it filled with beautiful Castilian Roses. Men at the time wore a long cloak (*tilma*) that was made of a cactus plant fiber. Juan placed the roses inside of his tilma and rolled it up. Returning to Mexico City Juan opened up his tilma to present the roses – but they were looking at the image of Mary, which was appearing before their very eyes. With great reverence the Bishop took the tilma to his private chapel.

### The miracles of Guadalupe

The Tilma still exists and is displayed in the shrine in Mexico City when it should have decayed after 20-25 years. It is a visible miracle that has defied scientific analysis to determine how it was made.

At the time Mary appeared, human sacrifice was the norm of the day. The Aztecs had learned the meanings of the symbols found in the Catholic churches and immediately saw these images especially as she had appeared as looking like one of them. Almost immediately, the human sacrifice stopped.

Equally important was the mass conversion to the Catholic faith by the local people and Aztecs as Mary represented the all-powerful God of the Spanish. Legend has it that exhausted priests spent 15-20 hours every day receiving new converts. Over the period of seven years, nearly 8-9 million were baptized.

Anyone who has visited the Basilica comes away in awe at what they have seen. On any given day – massive celebrations are going on – inside the church and in the courtyard. Many people make promises to Our Lady for special favors and return to give thanks.

### Mary's message is to all of her children

To the hundreds of thousands who visit the shrine, Mary's message is the same today as she told Juan Diego in 1531. Mary said, "I am your merciful mother."