



FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

By Sr. Jeanne Fallon, CSJ

Today's Responsorial Psalm

You are the highest honor of our race.

Blessed are you, daughter, by the Most High God, above all the women on earth; and blessed be the LORD God, the creator of heaven and earth. ... Your deed of hope will never be forgotten by those who tell of the might of God.

You are the highest honor of our race.

JUDITH 13:18-19

The Guadalupean Event

In December 1531, ten years after the Spanish conquest of Mexico, the Mother of God appeared to Juan Diego, a Nahuatl Indian, who was on his way to Mass. She came as an Aztec herself, speaking to him in Nahuatl, the Aztec language, addressing him with dignity as if he were a prince.

The event described in Nahuatl writings is as follows: it was early dawn, and Juan Diego was passing by a hill at Tepeyac when he was distracted by beautiful birdsong. When it stopped, he looked up and he saw a barefoot woman who called him by name. She was as radiant as the sun, dressed in Indian garb covered in Aztec symbols. She identified herself as the Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of the true God. She promised to give her love and compassion to his people and to alleviate their sufferings. She sent Juan Diego to Bishop Juan de Zumárraga to give him the message to construct a church in her honor on the hill of Tepeyac. Juan Diego immediately did what she asked but was unsuccessful. Discouraged, Juan Diego returned the same day to ask Our Lady to send someone else. She assured him that it was Juan Diego himself whom she wanted to bring the message to the bishop, and she sent him a second time. At this visit, the bishop asked Juan Diego many questions, which he answered with confidence. Finally, the bishop demanded a sign as proof of her identity. Juan Diego returned to Our Lady and conveyed the request for a sign. She told him to return in the morning and she would give him a sign for the bishop.

When Juan Diego returned home that evening, he found his uncle Juan Bernardino near death. He cared for him, and the next day he walked a long distance to find a priest to hear his uncle's confession. Realizing he was missing his appointment with Our Lady, he took a different path near Tepeyac, yet Our Lady came down the hill to meet him. She consoled Juan Diego and promised that she would heal his uncle and gave him the sign: roses from Castile, Spain, to bring to the bishop. When Juan Diego opened his rough cactus tilma holding the roses, the image of the Virgin was imprinted on his tilma, a second miracle. At the same time, Our Lady herself went to the deathbed of Juan Bernardino and healed him, sending him to the bishop to confirm Our Lady's identity and Juan Diego's honesty.

This shortened story was translated from “Flor y Canto del Tepeyac” (Spanish) which was originally written in the Aztec language Nahuatl, “Nican Mopohua.”



Our Lady of Guadalupe
Photo by Alicia Rodriguez

For Pondering and Prayer

This amazing event happened during a time of great suffering and oppression

of the indigenous people of Mexico. The Mother of God appeared several times to Juan Diego, a Christian Nahuatl Indian, whom she sent to the Spanish clergy to show them God's tender love and respect for all people. The miracle of Guadalupe reminds us that the lowly of the land have great dignity and honor in God's eyes and deserve to be held in reverent esteem.

Our Lady's words to Juan Diego to console him: "Am I not here, I who am your Mother? Aren't you under my shade and protection? Am I not the source of your joy?"

- What do these words convey to you?
- What do you want to express to Our Lady of Guadalupe?

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