

THE APPEALS
OF OUR LADY
APPARITIONS
AND
MARIAN SHRINES
IN THE WORLD

Apparition of the Virgin Mary at GUADALUPE



Mary appeared several times to Juan Diego, an Aztec converted to Christianity, on the hill of Tepeyac, north of Mexico City. It seems that the name "Our Lady of Guadalupe" was dictated by Mary herself to Juan Diego and it is speculated to be the Spanish transcription of the Aztec expression Coatlicaupeuh, "she who crushes the serpent" (cf. Genesis 3, 14-15).

First apparition

On Saturday December 9, 1531 Juan Diego, early in the morning, was going from his village towards Santiago Tlatelco. As he was passing by the hill of Tepeyac he was captivated by an harmonious song of birds. Intrigued, he climbed towards the top and saw a radiant white cloud surrounded by a rainbow. Taken by amazement he heard a voice that was calling him affectionately, using the indigenous language, "Nahuahtl": "Juanito, Juan Dieguito!". And behold he saw a beautiful Lady heading towards him and saying: "Listen, my son, my little one, Juanito, where are you going?" Juan Diego answered: "Lady, I must go into your house [temple] of Mexico-Tlatilolco, to listen to the things of the Lord that our priests, delegates of Our Lord, teach us." The Lady then said to him: "Know and remember well, you the littlest of my children, that I am the ever Virgin Holy Mary, Mother of the true God through Whom everyone lives, of the Creator Who is everywhere, Lord of Heaven and Earth. You will receive much merit and recompense for the work and the effort by which you will do what I recommend to you. See, this is my command, littlest of my children, go and do all that you can." The Blessed Virgin asked Juan Diego to go to the Bishop of Mexico City, to tell him her desire that on that hill a small church be built, from where she would give help and protection to all the Mexicans. Juan Diego agrees immediately and after respectfully saying goodbye to the Lady he goes to the Episcopal Palace. Here he was made to wait a long time, until the Bishop, Juan de Zumarraga, received him, but after hearing his account the Bishop did not believe Juan Diego and so dismissed him. Thus Juan Diego, discouraged, started on the way back.

Second Apparition

Towards evening of that same Saturday, December 9, Juan Diego arrived to the top of Tepeyac and there he met again the Blessed Virgin. Sorrowful he informed her about the failure of his task, with expressions typical of his Nahuatl language: "Lady, the littlest of my children, my little girl! I went where you have sent me to do what you have asked me... [The Bishop] received me kindly and listened to me attentively but, when he replied to me, it seemed to me that he did not believe my words... I understood perfectly by the manner in which he had spoken to me, that he thinks perhaps it is my invention... that perhaps it is not an order from you...". And Juan Diego then asked her to turn to a person more capable than him, more important, so that he could more easily convince the Bishop. But the Lady confirmed her choice, saying: "Listen my son, my little one, know that there are many of my servants and messengers whom I could entrust to communicate my message and my will. But I beg you much, my son, the littlest among my children, and with firmness I request that still another time, tomorrow morning, you go to visit the Bishop, to speak to him in my name and let him know entirely my will, that is he must strive so that the temple I am asking for is built. And tell him that it is I in person, the ever Virgin Holy Mary, Mother of God, who sends you." Juan Diego, filled with awe in realizing that yet another time the Blessed Virgin herself had spoken to him, assured that the following day he would do what she was asking, then he left her and returned to his village.

Third apparition

The next day, Sunday, December 10, after attending Mass, Juan Diego presented himself for the second time to Bishop Zumarraga. He, upon seeing Juan Diego's insistence, told him to ask the Lady for proof that she was the Mother of God, and when Juan Diego left he ordered that he be followed to obtain more information. Those entrusted by the Bishop however, once reaching the area of Tepeyac, lost sight of him, and Juan Diego, after arriving to the top of the hill, met the Blessed Virgin for the third time. She was waiting for him, then after hearing what the Bishop was asking, told him to return the next day. But the following day, Monday, Juan Diego could not go to the appointment because his uncle, Juan Bernardino, fell gravely ill and he had to assist him.

Fourth apparition

In the morning of Tuesday, December 12, Juan Diego, grieved by the illness of his infirm uncle, decided to call a priest to help him in the final moment of death, that all considered to be imminent. The road he had to take passed by Tepeyac, but Juan Diego tried to avoid the meeting with the Blessed Virgin and decided to take a different path. But behold suddenly he saw her in front of him, and Mary with her usual sweetness said to him: "My son, my little one, where are you going?" Juan Diego, ashamed of his missed appointment of the day before, explained his concern for the infirm uncle, and heard as a response of the Blessed Virgin this most tender expression: "Am I not here who am your dear Mother? Do not grieve yourself for anything." Comforting him, Mary assured him that his uncle was already healed. Then she asked him to climb to the top of the hill of Tepeyac, where he would be able to collect some flowers to bring to the Bishop. Juan Diego promptly obeyed, and indeed found some beautiful Castilian roses, something unexplainable in that season when winter had just begun! So he stopped to gather them, arranged them in the front part of his Tilma (rustic cloak made from plant fibers), and hurried to reach the Episcopal Palace. Once before the Bishop, he opened in front of him his cloak, and so much was the astonishment of him and of those present when the image of the Blessed Virgin miraculously materialized on that poor fabric! At this time the Bishop, amazed for the marvel of the roses and for the miraculous image, fell on his knees and with him the other people who were present. This is the famous image of the "Virgin of Guadalupe" that we all know and that preserved itself intact until today. This too is a miracle, because these plant fabrics used by the poor natives unraveled after a few years. And this is only one of the numerous "mysteries" of the event of Guadalupe that - despite the current and sophisticated scientific research - remain unexplainable.

The apparition to Juan Bernardino

A fifth apparition was the one witnessed by the uncle of Juan Diego, who as mentioned above was gravely ill. He saw the Blessed Virgin as he was lying in his poor bed and was miraculously healed by her. The Blessed Virgin presented herself to him saying of being called "Holy Mary of Guadalupe" and also to Juan Bernardino she communicated her desire that a temple be built from where she would meet the necessities of the Mexican people. This is origin of the famous Shrine of Guadalupe, center of a living and profound devotion which still continues today, not only on the part of the Mexican people, but also on the part of all the Latin American people. Juan Diego was canonized by John Paul II on July 30, 2002.



MEXICO, 1531



Apparition of the Virgin Mary to Juan Bernardino

Painting depicting the moment in which the image of Our Lady is miraculously imprinted on the cloak of Juan Diego

Claudio Salinas and the artist Juan Ruiz Troncoso, after making the copy of the Virgin of Guadalupe, discovered inscriptions in the area of the Virgin all in the area of the Virgin all the people present during the experience to Juan Diego

Enlargement of the image present in the eyes of the Virgin seen by Juan Diego



Ancient paintings depicting the events of the apparition of the Virgin Mary to Juan Diego

The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Shroud of Turin, is an image not made by human hands, but have demonstrated by scientists J. B. Smith and P. S. Callahan, who have analyzed it with infrared rays. Their conclusion is the following: "The origin of the image of Guadalupe is not man-made!"

In Mexico the devotion to the Virgin is deeply felt



Interior of the Basilica

Image of the Virgin that appeared on the cloak of Juan Diego

On May 6 of 1988 John Paul II went on pilgrimage before the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe