

Juan went around the hill to avoid Our Lady, but she cut him off, with, of course, a smile: *What is it, smallest of my sons?*

Where are you heading?

Fourth Apparition (morning of Dec. 12) Juan Diego was flummoxed. He prostrated himself and stammered out a greeting: “My Little one, my smallest Daughter, my Child. I hope you are happy, how are you this morning? Did you sleep well, my Lady ... my Child?” He explained why he was avoiding her: his uncle was dying and needed a priest. “I beg of you to forgive me, because I am not deceiving you, my Youngest Daughter. Tomorrow without fail I will come in haste.” And now Our Lady speaks to “her smallest son” words that burn in our hearts, seen by millions every year who approach her Basilica on their knees: “**No Estoy Yo Aqui Que Soy Tu Madre?**” *Listen, and keep in your heart, my youngest son, she told him, that there is nothing for you to fear, nothing to afflict you. Do not fear this nor any other illness, nor anything ... Am I not here, who am your mother? Are you not in my shadow, under my protection? Am I not the fountain of your joy? Are you not in the fold of my mantle, in my crossed arms? Don't let anything afflict you or perturb you. Let not the sickness of your uncle cause you pain. Be assured that he is already well. She told Juan to climb the hill and pick the roses he would find on that desert rock. She would arrange them herself in his tilma, his rough corn fiber cloak, and he was to bring them to Bishop Zumarraga. Juan did so, and when he opened his tilma, the roses spilled onto the floor, revealing the Mother of God who had spoken to Juan. The bishop fell to his knees.*

Mother of the Americas

In 1531 the Spanish realized that they were in a war of extermination with the Aztec nation. Bishop Zumarraga had pleaded with the Spanish government to withdraw from Mexico, because there was no way to win the native peoples over. The Spanish had stupidly destroyed the Aztec temples and rituals without having converted them to Christ. The Aztec people, stripped of their philosophy and religion, had lost the will to live. There was no military or political solution to the cultural disaster, other than completely annihilating the people or pulling out, much like what the United States faced in



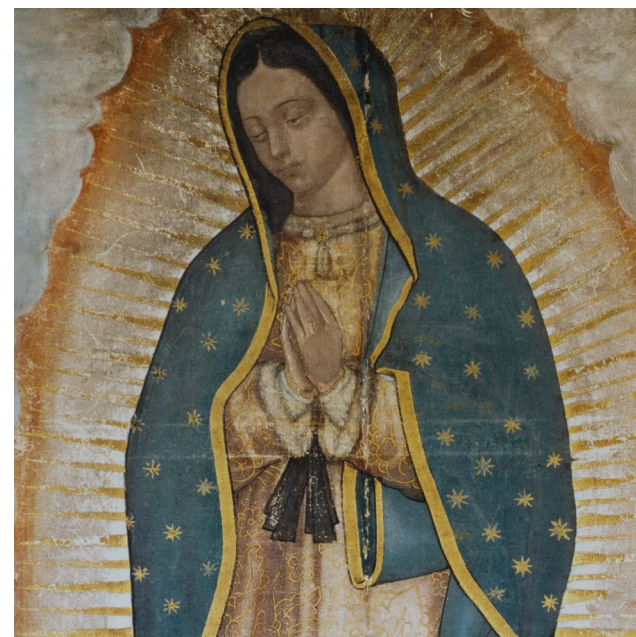
Juan Diego finding roses on Tepeyac hill, which in Nahuatl means “the nose”

Vietnam in 1970. Then Our Lady came, a *mestiza*, with both Indigenous and European features. She spoke to Indian and Spaniard alike as a *mother*. Unlike in North America, where the indigenous races disappeared, in South America the two races reconciled, forming *La Raza*, the race of all men.

Recommended reading

Much of this pamphlet is from the original narration, the *Nican Mopohua*, written around 1550. Modern books explain Guadalupe’s historical, cultural and theological significance abound. You should read the *Nican*, but two modern books are *The Wonder of Guadalupe* by Francis Johnston, and *Our Lady of Guadalupe* by Carl Anderson and Eduardo Chavez.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Historical Facts and Essential Messages of Our Lady in 1531



Welcome to Our Lady’s Shrine here in San Francisco. In this pamphlet, prepared by our pastor, Fr. Joseph Illo, you will learn the basic facts and message of this apparition. You are encouraged to spend some time in quiet prayer and perhaps go to confession. Please keep a reverent silence in the Church, especially when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

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What: Four apparitions of Our Lady
Where: Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City)
When: December 1531
To Whom: Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin

The visions, messages, and image of Guadalupe led to one of the greatest mass conversions to Christianity in history (8 million in ten years). Our Lady of Guadalupe is the great Evangelizer of the New World, the Mother of the Americas. The image itself is unexplainable by any scientific analysis, and it draws more pilgrims every year than any other Marian shrine.

Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin (1474-1548)
Not much is known of St. Juan Diego before 1531. He was a poor man of the Chichimec (Nahuatl) people, among the first to be baptized Christian, at age 50. He was 57 years old when Our Lady appeared, and he spent the rest of his life tending the small chapel that housed the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. He is described as a *Macehual* (a “little Indian”) who went to Mass at the parish of Tlatelolco (six miles from Mexico City).

First Apparition (early dawn, Dec. 9)
Juan Diego was on his way to catechism class before dawn on Saturday, December 9, approaching Tepeyac Hill, when he heard beautiful bird song. He looked up the hill and wondered: “Where am I? Could this be the place that our ancestors spoke about: the land of flowers, of corn, of our meat and our sustenance? Could this be the heavenly land?” He heard a voice calling him sweetly amidst the beautiful bird song:
Juanito, Juan Dieguito!

When he came to the summit of the little hill, a Maiden was standing there. She told him to come closer. Her dress shone like the sun, and the rock on which she was standing seemed to be sending forth beams of light. Her splendor looked like that of precious stones, and the ground sparkled as the rays of a rainbow in the mist. The mesquite bushes, the cactus, and other plants that grew there looked like emeralds. Their foliage was like turquoise, and their stems, thorns and leaves shone like gold.

She said, *My son, my little one, Juanito, where are you going?*

Juan answered: “My Lady, Queen, littlest of my daughters, I am going to your house in Tlatilolco, to follow the things of God.”

She replied, *Know for certain, my son, my littlest one, that I am the perfect and ever virgin holy Mary, mother of the true God, through whom all things live, the creator of mankind, the sovereign of all that is near and far, the maker of heaven and earth. I ardently desire that they build me here my sacred house, where I will show Him, I will exalt Him and make Him manifest. I will offer Him to all the people with all my love, because I am truly your merciful mother, yours and mother of all who live together in this land.*

Juan went off to Mexico City to find the bishop, Juan Zumarraga, but he did not give the poor little Indian much credence. Juan Diego returned in sadness to Tepeyac Hill. Our Lady, clothed in light, was waiting for him.

Second Apparition (late afternoon, Dec. 9)
Juan explained that the bishop, though polite, did not believe him. He said, “I beg you very much, my Lady, Queen, my little daughter,

entrust one of the noblemen, someone who is esteemed, who is known, respected, honored, to carry out your amiable wish, so that they will believe him. Truly I am a man of the fields, I myself need to be led; I am like a beast of burden, like a tail. It is not up to me to decide where I go or where I stop.”

But Our Lady insisted: *Listen, the smallest of my sons, be assured that those who serve me, who accomplish my will, are not few in number. But it is very necessary that you personally go, and request that my wish be carried out, through your intercession. I beg you earnestly, youngest son of mine, and solemnly do command you, that once again tomorrow you go to see the bishop.*

Third Apparition (late afternoon, Dec. 10)

Juan Diego spent all morning trying to see Bishop Zumarraga. When he got past the guards, the bishop questioned him at length and finally told Juan to bring back a sign from the Lady. Juan returned to Tepeyac to report to the Lady, who said: *Well done my littlest son; you will return here tomorrow so that you may take the bishop the sign that he has asked for. Know, little son, that I will repay you for the trouble, the labor, and the weariness that I have caused you. There now, go. For tomorrow I will await you here.*

When Juan Diego reached home that evening, he found his uncle, Juan Bernardino, very ill. He spent the whole next day, when he was to have returned to the Lady, fetching a doctor and attending to his uncle. Very late that night his uncle begged him to find a priest to prepare him for death. Juan Diego started out before dawn on Dec 11 to do so.