

HOMILY-OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE 2018
Diocese of San Bernardino Pastoral Center

A few facts about the tilma of Our Lady of Guadalupe:

- The image has remained intact with all its original vibrancy for 475 years. The natural life span of a cloak made with cactus fiber is only about 15-30 years.
- Our Lady appears as a beautiful young Indian maiden and Queen.
- Her eyes are looking down with humility and compassion. She is human, not God.
- She is wearing a blue-green mantle (the color worn by royalty) covered with stars.
- The stars signify she comes from heaven – the Queen of Heaven. The constellations are in the exact position as appeared before dawn on the morning of December 12, 1531.
- In the center of her robe, overlying her womb, is a four petal flower in the shape of a cross which is the sign of the Divine and the center of the cosmic order to the Aztec. The Virgin's Baby, Jesus, is Divine and the new center of the universe.
- Her hands are joined in prayer and, therefore, she is not God but clearly there is one greater than she.
- Her fur cuffs symbolize royalty.
- She wears a black maternity band signifying she is with Child.
- She stands in front of the sun. The sun symbolizes the greatest Aztec god. She announces the God who is greater than their sun god.
- She stands on the moon. The crescent moon symbolized by another Aztec god, the feathered serpent moon god. She has clearly crushed and defeated him.
- An angel with eagle's wings supports the Mother of God. The eagle was the "bird of the sun." Here the eagle is the servant of the Virgin. She holds her mantle in one hand and robe with the other, signifying the Son she bears is from both heaven and earth.
- To date the image cannot be explained by science.
- The image on the tilma was able to do what up to that time the missionaries were not able to do significantly. Namely, clearly explain Christianity to the Indian people. The proof is in the fact that after the apparitions, eight million natives of Mexico converted to Catholicism from 1531 to 1538.
- In 1921, an anti-clerical activist hid a bomb containing 29 sticks of dynamite in a pot of roses and placed it before the image inside the Basilica at Guadalupe. When the bomb exploded, the marble altar rail and windows 150 feet shattered. A brass crucifix was twisted and bent out of shape. But the tilma and its glass case remained fully intact.
- No matter what the surrounding temperature, season, or weather, the image remains at an even 98.6°F, the normal temperature of the human body

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Ever since Mary first set out in haste to the household of Zechariah and Elizabeth in response to the message of the Angel, "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end", she hasn't stopped traveling. From Bethlehem to Egypt, from Jerusalem to Ephesus, from Fatima to Knock, from La Salette to Loreto, from Lourdes to Guadalupe, just to name a few, Mother Mary has set out carrying both the presence and message of her Son, Jesus. The message is the same that she uttered at the Feast of Cana, "Do whatever He tells you."

Mary is not a distraction from the Lord. She is neither worshipped nor adored for that is reserved to God alone. She is honored and celebrated for her faithfulness and example. She is a humble handmaid of the Lord who said to the Angel, "May it be done to me according to your word.". She is the new Eve who crushes the head of the serpent. She is our Mother given to us by the Lord at the foot of the cross. She helps us to grow deeper in love with Jesus! She brings a motherly message to us, her children, as she did to San Juan Diego nearly 500 years ago: "Listen and understand, my humblest child. There is nothing to frighten and distress you. Do not let your heart be troubled, and let nothing upset you. Is it not I, your Mother, who is here? Are you not under my protection? Are you not, fortunately, in my care?"

I end with the words of our Holy Father Pope Francis who reminds us that the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe is one of embrace. A message we need to hear in our world at this time:

"When the image of the Virgin appeared on the Tilma of Juan Diego, it was the prophecy of embrace. Mary's embrace of all the people's of the vast expanses of America, the people's who already lived there and those who were to come. Mary's embrace showed what America-North and South is called to be. A land where different peoples come together, a land prepared to accept human life at every stage, from the mother's womb to old age, a land which welcomes immigrants and the poor and the marginalized in every age. A land of generosity!" This is the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the message of the Church. I ask all people of the Americas to open wide their arms like the Virgin, with love and tenderness. Is this still our Message? Do we carry the presence and message of Jesus to all we encounter? Who do we like Mary still need to go out in haste to carry the presence of Jesus and to offer a warm embrace?"

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!