



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Using this Packet in Your Community

Options for Education Programs

Mary: From Jewish Maiden to Queen of the Universe

Using the Educational Resources written by Mary C. Athans, develop a multi-week series, tracing the of thought on Mary through history. You may also use the included Sample Education Program to host a four-session series.

Mary: In Her Own Place and Time

Invite a local church historian or expert in First Century Judaism to present on what Mary's life would have been like. With the permission of FutureChurch, offer the enclosed essays to attendees.

The Thousand Faces of Mary

Using the time periods and information outlined in the enclosed essays develop or invite a local art historian to develop an evening exploring images of Mary in art.

Rethinking Our Lady of Guadalupe

Using the essays by Jeanette Rodriguez and Judith Davis, present on Our Lady of Guadalupe. Have a large poster or individual sheets with the Our Lady of Guadalupe image available to discuss the symbolism. A PowerPoint presentation is also included with this pack. With the permission of FutureChurch, you may want to make either or both essays available to participants for further reading.

Small Faith Sharing Groups

Gather a group of people together to read and discuss the enclosed essays. Consider using the following questions for discussion: *what in the reading surprised me? what in the reading challenged my view of Mary? what in the reading supported my view of Mary? what impact will this reading have on my spiritual life/life of faith?*

This list of options is not meant to be exhaustive. Nor are the options mutually exclusive. They may be used in conjunction with one another. For example, you may choose to do an education series leading up to an Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration. Or you may wish to combine an education program and celebration or prayer service in one morning or evening. You could also combine several options together to make a retreat. If FutureChurch can be of any assistance to you as your make your plans please let us know by email or phone. We would love to hear what you're doing! Feel free to share your celebrations and pictures with us.

Options for Celebrations

Prayer Service Honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe

Use the prayer service included in this resource to celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12th or at any other time.

Mary and the Healing of the Americas

Work with a local peace and justice group or committee to develop a prayer service for healing and reconciliation among Americans. Some topics or themes to explore may be: immigration, economic justice, or fair trade. The enclosed prayer service has many readings and prayers that would work in this type of setting as well.

Mary: An International Celebration

Invite people of different ethnic backgrounds from your community or from neighboring communities to give short witness about their culture's experience and celebration of Mary. You may want to work with them and identify a relevant prayer or piece of music from their culture to be played or sung at the celebration. You could also invite people to make traditional dishes from their cultures for a reception afterwards. Use the enclosed listing of major Hispanic Marian Feast Days for suggestions.

MARY OF NAZARETH

Our Lady of Guadalupe



FutureChurch



Our Lady of Guadalupe is a title of the Virgin Mary associated with a celebrated pictorial image housed in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in México City. The basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe is the most visited Catholic pilgrimage site in the world, and the world's third most-visited sacred site.

Our Lady of Guadalupe¹ by Jeanette Rodriguez

Throughout the history of Christianity in Latin America, Mary has been portrayed in multiple manifestations (e.g., Our Lady of Charity in Cuba, *Nuestra Señora de la Altagracia* in the Dominican Republic, and *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* in Brazil). In the region, she is the official patron of countries, cities, and neighborhoods; and although the Mother of Jesus is only one person, she is known by many names in Latin American devotional practices.

The paradigm of the Latin American devotion to Mary is the phenomenon of Our Lady of Guadalupe, referred to by the indigenous as *Tonantzín* (Our Mother) Guadalupe. The message of Our Lady of Guadalupe calls those with political and ecclesiastical power to leave their palaces, move to the periphery and stand with the poor and the marginalized. Like Jesus, her presence and those of her followers are signs of God's healing and justice.

The Conquest and the Introduction of Mary to the People

The *Guadalupe Event* began in the sixteenth century, a decade following the launch of the European conquest. During the first generation of the conquest of Mexico, there was a great deal of violence within and against the indigenous people as well as against their culture and religion. Both secular and religious historians tell us that the indigenous population went from 20 million to 2 million in the sixteenth century as a result of infighting among the different indigenous groups, the

diseases encountered through European contact, and, of course, the disruption and devastation of the conquest.² Although there were three basic responses from the indigenous: resistance, acceptance, and indifference, "...the violence was multiple and all embracing: the brutality of the conquest, the degrading rape of the native women, the imposition of a totally new world order of the Spanish crown... and the attempts to discredit and destroy the ultimate root of the people's life: their religion."³

From the beginning of the conquest, the mantle of Mary accompanied the conquistadors and was seen as their great protector.⁴ Following the crippling of the indigenous peoples' social, religious, and political world, the process of acculturation and assimilation was initiated. The indigenous people began to adapt to this new worldview, which included Christianity. Evangelization in Latin America followed the pattern of empire and religious expansion employed by many cultures over the centuries and used by early Christianity in the Old World, that is: "...to Christianize pagan customs and temples and then use them."⁵ In the New World, all too often, indigenous places of worship were destroyed or built over by the Christians, so that a crucifix or church would show the triumph and truth of Christianity over indigenous religions.

The Nican Mopohua and Nahuatl Culture

Our Lady of Guadalupe retrieved and restored the Nahuatl's vital roots by



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appearing to them in their own cultural lens. Thus, understanding something about Nahuatl culture and language is essential to fully comprehend the narrative of the encounter and conquest. The original Nahuatl language of the *Nican Mopohua* was poetic and symbolic as well as direct, smooth and precise.

Nahuatl used what is known as *difasismos*, a way of communicating the most profound thought or feeling by using a complementary union of two words or symbols that expressed one meaning.⁶ *Disfasismos*, like poetry, intuit a different kind of knowledge and a different tool with which to access that knowledge.

The *Nican Mopohua* provides the basic elements of the narrative of Our Lady of Guadalupe’s encounter a Nahua Indian named Juan Diego. The account introduced a different kind of evangelization: “...it invited the evangelized to an experience of the divine, into a mystical experience; it produced security, joy and excitement. It did not just speak about God and the teachings of God; it invited the participant into intimate contact and friendship with God through the mediation of God’s mother.”⁷

The first encounter of Our Lady of Guadalupe is said to have occurred in 1531. In this apparition, Guadalupe took on the *rostro y corozón*—the face, the heart, and the language of the Nahua people. She affirmed those who had been vanquished, and perhaps more importantly, provided them with a way to interact and identify with the divine, giving them a place in a world that had otherwise rejected them.

The encounter of Juan Diego with Our Lady of Guadalupe was transmitted in a manner common to the Indians of that time. From person to person, community to community, the word of what had happened to Juan Diego at Mount Tepeyacac began to be told, along with the other marvels that took

place in the presence of the Virgin. The recounted deeds rapidly entered into the tradition of the people.⁸ Only later, however, was the narrative written down, first in Nahuatl and then in Spanish.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

According to popular tradition, ten years after the conquest, on December 9, 1531, a 52-year-old native of Cuauhtitlán named Juan Diego, a recently baptized Christian, encountered Our Lady of Guadalupe on his way to Tlatelolco for religious instruction. The story describes birds singing, the land glowing, and the air filling with music. Juan thought he was dreaming because the landscape around him was as brilliant as jewels. He heard a voice calling to him: “Juanito, the smallest of my children.”

In their encounter, Mary identified herself as the mother of the “One True God for Whom One Lives.” She described herself as “the Mother of the Giver of Life, of the Creator of Persons, of the Owner of What is Near and Immediate, the Owner of Sky, the Owner of the Land.”⁹ She told Juan that she would like a little house to be built on this sacred site so that she may show forth her Son by giving her love, compassion, help and defense to those who called upon her. Through her, many in what was referred to as the New World would come to know her Son.

After walking upon the sacred hill of Tepeyacac, Juan and Our Lady shared several moments of intimacy. She honored him by telling him who she was and asked him to be part of a mission. Juan Diego’s duty was to go to Bishop Juan de Zumárraga and tell him that the Mother of the One True God for Whom One Lives desired a sacred house to be built on the hill of Tepeyacac. The place was significant—Tepeyacac was located on the periphery of the

centers of political and religious power. Our Lady promised that if the people trusted her, loved her, and called upon her, she would listen to their pains and lamentations and would respond.

Juan Diego related what he had seen and heard to the bishop, who did not believe him, requesting a sign from the Lady. Juan returned home discouraged. On reaching home, he discovered that his uncle Juan was very ill. Juan Bernardino, also a Christian, realized that he was dying and asked Juan Diego to bring him a priest. Juan Diego went to find the priest, and as he approached the Mount of Tepeyacac, he took a detour, hoping that he would not have to confront the Lady. Nevertheless, she saw him, descended from the summit, and asked him: “Juan Diego, Juanito, where are you going?” Embarrassed, Juan explained his predicament and promised to return for the sign. At that point, the Lady of Guadalupe told him that his uncle would not die and said the most beautiful words in the *Nican Mopohua*:

Listen, be convinced in your heart, my youngest son, what frightened and afflicted you is nothing. Do not let it disturb your face and heart. Do not fear this sickness that afflicts and overwhelms.

Am I not here, I, who am your mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection?

Am I not the reason for your happiness? Are you not in my lap, in the crossing of my arms? Are you in need of anything else?

Let nothing else afflict and disturb you. Do not let your dear uncle's illness cause you anguish because he will not die of it now. Rest assured in your heart that he is already well.

(*Nican Mopohua*, 118-20).

Guadalupan scholars agree that

these words may be regarded as the quintessential words of the Marian message, for it is here that she articulated, demonstrated, and manifested the spiritual maternity of the mother of God.¹⁰ With this statement of solace and the presence of her reassuring love, Juan Diego was relieved and asked what he could do. In return, she told him to climb to the summit, where he would find flowers: *rosas de Castilla*, or roses from Castile. (What the Nahuatl people understood as flowers of Castile would be known today as carnations.) For this community, these flowers were a religious symbol of the deepest truth.¹¹ The significance of these precious flowers lies in the fact that it was December, a time of frost and cold when nothing grew on the hill of Tepeyacac. Yet with the Virgin's presence came the transformation of that hill, rough and sterile by nature, into a garden that resembled the feathers of the great god Quetzalcoatl.¹² Juan Diego picked the flowers and brought them back to her. She touched them and placed them in his *tilma*, or cloak, and instructed him not to show them to anyone but take them to the bishop.

Juan went to the bishop's palace. Before he released the flowers from his *tilma*, he related to the bishop everything he saw and heard: the music, the glowing landscape, the flowers, and his encounter with Our Lady. Guadalupan tradition states that at the moment when Juan Diego released the carnations, the image of the Virgin was miraculously imprinted on the *tilma*. Tradition then tells us that the bishop immediately fell on his knees, asked for forgiveness, rose, untied the cloak from Juan Diego, and placed it in his personal chapel. From that moment, in accordance with the Virgin's preference, Bishop Juan de Zumárraga of Mexico, and others in positions of political and religious power, were asked (as they are today) to leave their centers of power and stand

with the poor and the marginalized.

According to oral tradition, the imprinting of Our Lady's image on Juan Diego's *tilma* occurred on December 12, 1531. However, it is also said that the miracle took place on the first day of the Winter Solstice, which was December 22, 1531. It is on this date that “according to Aztec cosmology marked the triumph of the sun over the darkness on their calendar year.”¹³

The Symbolism of the Image on the *Tilma*¹⁴

The icon or image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is more than simply a picture. For indigenous peoples, the image contains ancient symbols that have a special meaning because they speak to the suffering of native peoples. The young face of Guadalupe, with mature eyes and a smile of compassion, reflects her inner being. Her “expression... appears reverent yet joyous, Indian yet European, olive-skinned yet white... It is a face that intermingles the Christianity of Byzantine Europe with the overpowering naturalism of New World Indian; a fitting symbol for all the peoples of the great continent...”¹⁵

Mary's hands are not poised in the traditional Western style of prayer, but in an Indian manner of offering, indicating that something is to come from her. Adding the gold and fur trappings of royalty makes it clearer that Guadalupe is an important figure, almost divine. Her pregnancy is indicated both by the position of her hands and the tassel or maternity band or *cinta* that she wears around her waist. Below the tassel there is a small flower called *nagvioli*, which to the Nahuatl was a symbol of the sun god.

Other significant aspects of the image are the stars, the gold sun rays, the moon, and the angel. Each of them relates directly to some aspect of Aztec divinity. Guadalupe's being carried



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The turquoise color of Guadalupe's mantle also connects her with Aztec divinity, and the color of her robe has been described as the color of the spilled blood of sacrifices, the color of Huitzilopochtli, the sun god who gave and preserved life. From an artistic viewpoint, the robe of Our Lady of Guadalupe is especially notable because of its unusual luminosity. This image is not simply a picture, but a story made up of a number of symbols which spoke to the Nahuatl people in the sixteenth century and still speak to twentieth-century people on two continents.

The significance of this story is twofold: (1) it was the foundation of Mexican Christianity and (2) it provided a connection between the indigenous and Spanish cultures.¹⁶

The Importance of Imagery in the Tonantzín Guadalupe Event

Mary, and in particular her manifestation as Our Lady of Guadalupe, transcends time, space, and culture because what

lives within the story is that which is deeply human. Everyone is ultimately in search of satisfaction for “an unquenchable fire, restlessness, a longing, ... a hunger.”¹⁷ Located in actual time and culture, the original Tonantzín Guadalupe experience transcends that particular time (1531) through the Mexican aesthetic of *flor y canto*, flower and song. That is, the original event is transmitted to and received by subsequent generations through narrative, visual images, and popular religious practice, including drama, symbol, fiesta, and other contemporary expressions. All of these live in the visceral, deeply felt dimension of traditional popular Catholicism. These practices impact people's hearts and draw people to experience their own relationships with Tonantzín Guadalupe. Thus, she becomes a vehicle for communicating God and drawing people to faith.

Every detail of her appearance held meaning for the people to whom she appeared: the rays of the sun, the standing on the moon, and the cloak of the stars all reflected the significance of the time, day, and date of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe. On Saturday, December

9, 1531, very early in the morning, Tonantzín Guadalupe appeared in the historical setting of the “post Guerra,” ten years after the conquest. For the indigenous, *muy de madrugada* (very early in the morning) referred not only to daybreak, but to the beginning of all time. Tonantzín Guadalupe appeared early in the morning, just as the day was coming out of darkness and night. This meaningful time delineated the Guadalupe event as foundational, equal in significance to the origin of the world and the cosmos.¹⁸ “Religious principles penetrated the very existence of the pre-Columbian people. Everything was under their domination: public and private life; every stage of each person's progress from birth to death; the rhythm of time; the arts and even games—nothing escaped.”¹⁹

At the time of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the indigenous people were not only disenfranchised and downtrodden as a result of the conquest, but, more importantly, they felt that their gods had abandoned them. Their attitude was that there was no longer any reason to live, because everything they did, they did with special attention to what the gods

wanted. During this encounter, this manifestation of Mary associated herself with *El Verdadero Dios, por Quien se Vive* (The True God for Whom One Lives). This expression is one of the names that the Nahuatl gave to their gods. When Tonantzín Guadalupe stated that she was from the One True God, the God Who Gives Life, the Nahuatl recognized this God to be their God. Thus, the encounter with Our Lady of Guadalupe restored in the Nahuatl people a reason to hope and to live.

The Nahuatl god (Ometeotl) was a god of duality, both masculine and feminine. This god was known by many titles: the Creator of All, the god who gives Life, etc. The identification of Guadalupe with phrases that paralleled the name of their gods was restorative for them as a people. This restoration acted as an empowerment of the people, with a power grounded in something greater than themselves, a power not *over* someone but having power *with* someone. This power and dynamism was centered on mutuality, trust, participation and regard as evidenced in the narrative of Guadalupe in the *Nican Mopohua*.²⁰ Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that devotions to Mary in Latin America throughout history have been powerful precisely because of their female representation of the divine. Unlike indigenous understandings of God, which contained both male and female attributes, the West has excluded the Marian attributes in its mainline perceptions of God. This resurrection of the female image of God migrated and attached itself to the figure of Mary, lending itself to a powerful, affectively-charged presence and fulfillment of divine intimacy.

Conclusion

In *Mary: Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, Ivone Gebara and Maria

Clara Bingemer provide evidence that many historical peasant movements throughout Latin America (e.g., Peru, Brazil, Bolivia) were “stimulated by the peoples’ love for the virgin who struggles with them for their liberation.”²¹ An example of this was seen in the peoples’ devotion to *La Purísima* (Immaculate Conception) in Nicaragua during the Sandinistas’ struggle against the Somoza regime. In El Salvador, the same love of the people for Mary led Archbishop Oscar Romero (now Blessed) to say, “The true homage a Christian can pay the Virgin, is, like her, to make the effort to incarnate the life of God in the trials of our transitory history.”²²

In all of these Latin American Marian expressions and manifestations, or encounters with Mary, the spirituality invoked speaks to a yearning, a hope transcending circumstances, and an experience of accompaniment within a world that often rejects and marginalizes.

In all of these Latin American Marian expressions and manifestations, or encounters with Mary, the spirituality invoked speaks to a yearning, a hope transcending circumstances, and an experience of accompaniment within a world that often rejects and marginalizes. Mary is hope, mother, protector, comforter, and mercy. In Latin America, “It is crucial to recognize what kind of human experience devotion to Mary or relationship with her is. In other words, we must ask to what kind of yearnings, manifest or latent, our relationship with Mary, who lives in God and lives in us, belongs.”²³ Perhaps more importantly Latin American spiritual practices teach us that devotion to Mary is, if

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anything, grounded within her shared status with so many of the poor and vanquished people in the world. She is often referred to as *mujer del pueblo*, or woman of the people. Blessed Monseñor Oscar Romero said in his homily of December 24, 1978, “Mary is the expression of the needs of the Salvadorians. Mary is the expression of the anguish of those who are in prison. Mary is the pain of the mothers who have lost their children and no one knows where they are. Mary is the tenderness that one looks for in a state of anguish...”²⁴

Devotion to the Virgin Mary must be a devotion that liberates; a devotion that does not turn its back on the poor. Monseñor Romero goes on to say that we must remember the prophetic side of the Virgin and “not forget that Mary, before anything else, is the prophetic message of Christ, and that in her Magnificat, she remembers the poor and hungry.”²⁵ This connection with the loving presence, with the merciful attentiveness of Mary in all of her manifestations, and with her commitment to the poor, must continue to be disseminated in our theology as well as in our sermons.

Whether we are looking at Latin America and/or its indigenous communities in particular, Marian devotions are about the heart. The heart, for these cultures,

is the dynamic and active part of the person. It is what brings pilgrims from far-off places to sing to their virgin, to bring her flowers, to light the candles, to burn the incense, and dance in gratitude. In conclusion we close with the prayer recited by Pope Francis, consecrating the world to the immaculate heart of Mary:

*We celebrate in you the works of God,
Who never tires of looking down with
mercy upon humanity...*

*We are certain that each of us is
previous in your eyes*

*And that nothing of all that lives in
our hearts is unknown to you...*

Hold our life in your arms:

*Bless and strengthen every desire
for good;*

Revive and nourish faith;

Sustain and enlighten hope;

Awaken and animate charity;

*Guide all of us along the path of
holiness;*

*Teach us your preferential love for the
little and the poor,*

For the excluded and the suffering,

For sinners and the downhearted;

*Bring everyone under your
protection...²⁶*

Our Lady of Guadalupe: Selected Bibliography

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Our Lady of Guadalupe

Jeanette Rodriguez's study of the role the symbol of Guadalupe played in the development of second-generation Mexican-American women offers an important reinterpretation of one of the New World's most potent symbols. Her conclusions dispute the common perception that Guadalupe is a model of servility and suffering. Rather, she reinterprets the symbol of Guadalupe as a liberating and empowering catalyst for Mexican-American women.


Future Church
17301 Madison Avenue
Lakewood OH 44107
216.228.0869
info@futurechurch.org
www.futurechurch.org

¹This essay is excerpted from a longer article, "Mary, Mother of Jesus: Consolatrice of the Americas," in *Handbook of Christianity in Latin America* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

²To access the larger scholarship related to New Conquest history, please see the following in the bibliography: Stafford Poole's *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol 1531-1797*, James Lockhart's *The Nahuas After the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth Through Eighteenth Centuries*, Justo Gonzalez's *Christianity in Latin America: A History*, or Stephanie Wood's *Transcending Conquest: Nahuatl Views of Spanish Colonial Mexico*.

³Virgilio Elizondo, "Mary and the Poor: A Model of Evangelizing Ecumenism," in *Concilium: Religion in the Eighties: Mary in the Churches*, eds. Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann (New York: Seabury Press, Inc., 1989), 59.

⁴Gebera and Bingemer, *Mary: Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, 29. See also Louise Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe: The Virgin Mary in Early Colonial Nahuatl Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁵*Ibid.*, 132.

⁶Clodomiro L. Siller-Acuña, "El método de la evangelización en el Nican Mopohua," in *Servir* 17 (1993-94): 255-293.

⁷Virgilio Elizondo, "Maria de Guadalupe Star of the First and New Evangelization," in *La Recepción Eclesial de la Doctrina Conciliar Sobre Maria* (2006): 356.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Mario Rojas-Sanchea, ed., *Nican mopohua Dn. Antonio Caleriano, traducción del nahuatl al castellano* (Mexico: Imprenta Ideal, 1978), 26.

¹⁰We need to be mindful of the controversy surrounding the 100 years of silence in the Guadalupe tradition. Important distinctions have been made among historians and theologians between the practice of Guadalupe devotion and the belief in an apparitions narrative. See Stanford Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol 1531-1797* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), and a response: Timothy Matovina, "A Response to Stafford Poole," *Catholic Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (2014): 284-291.

¹¹Thomas J. Ascheman, "The Conversion of the Missionary: An Interpretation of the Guadalupe Narrative" (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1977), 17.

¹²Clodomiro L. Siller-Acuña, *Para Comprender El Mensaje de Maria de Guadalupe* (Coyoacan: Editorial Guadalupeana, 1989), 23.

¹³Jose Luis Guerrero Rosado, *Nican Mopohua: Aqui se cuenta...el gran acontecimiento* (Mexico: Realidad Teoria y Practica, S.A. de C.V. Cuautitlan, Edo. De Mexico, 2003), 123.

¹⁴Condensed from Jeanette Rodriguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 22-30.

¹⁵Philip Serna Callahan, *The Tilma: Under Infra-Red Radiation*. CARA Studies on Popular Devotion, vol. 2: Guadalupe Studies no. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate [CARA], 1981).

¹⁶Rodriguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 45.

¹⁷Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday Publishing, 1999), 4.

¹⁸Clodomiro L. Siller-Acuña, *Flor y canto del Tepeyacac: Historia de las apariciones de Sta. Ma. De Guadalupe; Texto y comentario* (Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico: Servir, 1981), 37.

¹⁹Jacques Soustelle, *Daily Life of the Aztecs on the Eve of the Spanish Conquest* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), 119.

²⁰Jeanette Rodriguez, "Theological Aesthetics and the Encounter with Tonantzin Guadalupe," in *She Who Imagines: Feminist Theological Aesthetics* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 156-158.

²¹Trans. Phillip Berryman (New York: Orbis Books, 1989); rpt. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 136.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*, 26.

²⁴*Monseñor Romero: El Pueblo Es Mi Profeta*, Equipo de Educación Maiz (San Salvador: Equipo de Educación Maiz, 1994), 81.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 80.

²⁶"Prayer of Consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary," Zenit.org., accessed October 13, 2013, <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/prayer-of-consecration-to-the-blessed-virgin-mary>.

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Our Lady of Guadalupe



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Our Lady of Guadalupe is a title of Mary associated with a celebrated pictorial image housed in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in México City. The basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe is the most visited Catholic pilgrimage site in the world, and the world's third most-visited sacred site.

The Symbolism and Significance of Our Lady of Guadalupe: A reflection¹ based on the work of Jeannette Rodriguez by Judith Davis

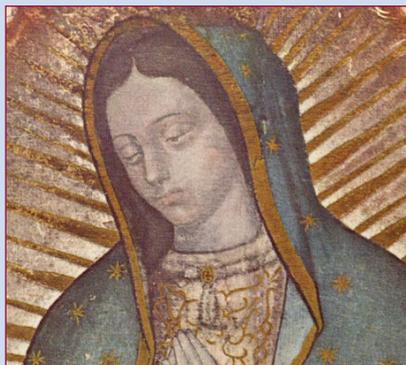
The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe shines from the rough brown fabric of maguey cloth that cloaked her messenger, Juan Diego. This resplendent image on a humble background joins heaven and earth, God and human, woman and man, Spanish and Aztec. As the greatest of divinities and the most humble of humans encounter one another, the figure of Our Lady of Guadalupe brings together God-out-there and God-among-us, reconciling opposites, abolishing stigmas of race and class. When Juan presents Our Lady's flowers to the bishop Zumárraga, the cloak that he unfolds reveals an image that speaks to each of them in his own language. The sudden spill of flowers from Juan's cloak and the instant genuflection of the bishop represent an ingathering of belief and a re-centering of consciousness for both the Nahuatl man and the Spanish prelate as together they acknowledge a miracle in the image before them.

The portrait of Our lady of Guadalupe presents an image of divinity, radiating love and compassion and a power that overcomes oppression and exclusion, creating a new people, *meztizaje*, who blend the different cultures and faiths of the Old World and the New. Each element of the image imprinted on the *tilma*—colors, shapes, objects—represents one of her attributes, as easily recognized by the Nahuatl people as the Spanish.

Our Lady of Guadalupe stands

surrounded by rays of gold, an aureole of light which originates within her and symbolizes not only royalty—as does her crown—but the sacred power of the sun, whose rays indicate the presence of the sun god, Quetzalcoatl. Gold also indicates her royal status, reflected in the edges of her mantle and the 46 stars which sparkle from its folds. (The stars are said to mark the position of the stars in the sky on the morning of 1531 when she and Juan had their first encounter.) Guadalupe stands on the moon, a reminder of the Nahuatl god of night. We see another suggestion of both royalty and divinity in the angel who supports the moon under her feet—Aztec royalty and representatives of the gods were carried by others.

The pink of Our Lady's robe or tunic may represent a dilution of the blood spilled in sacrifice to the sun god Huitzilopochtli, giver of life; pink—a combination of passion (red) and purity (white) is also associated with compassion, unconditional love and understanding. Guadalupe's tunic is covered with flowers that are outlined in gold, symbols of truth and the presence of divinity. Her mantle is turquoise, a color reserved for Omecihuatl, the great goddess of creation, and her twin/spouse who are the source of all life. She wears a kind of torque around her neck with a pendant that bears a cross at its center, a clear allusion to her Son. Like a noble indigenous woman, she wears a



maternity band around her waist, indicating her pregnancy; just below the tassel is a small flower that symbolizes the sun god. It is clear that she bears divinity within her womb.

The head of Our Lady of Guadalupe is bowed slightly, like that of so many European madonnas, and her hands are folded in an attitude of prayer—which is also a traditional Aztec gesture of offering, “indicating that something is to come from her.”² Unlike typical European madonnas, her face is not pale; it is the darker countenance of a *mestiza*. Her eyes are dark, too, giving her a look of love and compassion, and it is said that they reflect the images of those who look up to her. Her mouth is slightly curved in a gracious and tender smile. Her joined hands—one lighter, one darker—show the union of two cultures in one all-encompassing figure.

Deeply symbolic of the combination and reconciliation of two cultures, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe tells a story “of the restoration of human dignity in a voice once silenced and now restored the restoration of a lost language and a way of perceiving the divine.”

Like the Woman of the Apocalypse, Our Lady of Guadalupe is “clothed

with the sun, the moon under her feet.” Like Coatlicue Tonantzin, the indigenous mother of all Nahuatl gods, she is virginally pregnant; she is the Mother of the True God for Whom One Lives. She has appeared to Juan at the very break of day, a sacred time taken out of the timelessness which she shares with her Son. She has spoken from the top of a hill, a place for meeting the divine, and her voice echoes through *flor y canto*, flower and song, a universal and transcendent language that manifests the presence of the divine. Her image and her words continue to speak, particularly to the disenfranchised and the poor, words of understanding and support in every circumstance of their lives: “Am I not here, your mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not your fountain of life? Are you not in the folds of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else that you need?”³

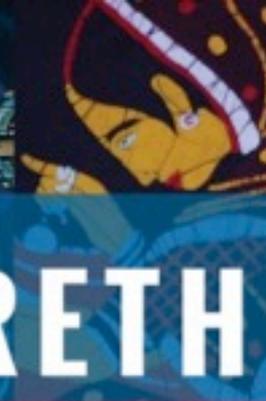
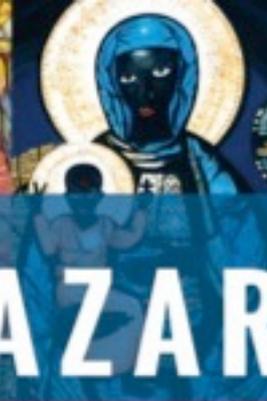
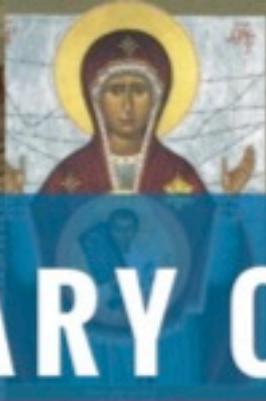
Deeply symbolic of the combination and reconciliation of two cultures, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe tells a story “of the restoration of human dignity in a voice once silenced and now restored... the restoration of a lost language and a way of perceiving the divine.”⁴ We are invited to listen to that story and respond with conversion and faith, believing in the poor, the immigrant, the abandoned, the neglected, the outcast—and the God who stands among them.

¹Based on the essay, “Our Lady of Guadalupe,” by Jeanette Rodriguez; and “Our Lady of Guadalupe: Story, Icon, Experience,” Chapter 2 of her book, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment Among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

²Rodriguez, Chapter 2, 27.

³Quoted in Jeanette Rodríguez and Ted Fortier, *Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith, and Identity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 22.

⁴Rodriguez, *Cultural Memory*, 23, 31..



MARY OF NAZARETH

Rediscovering Mary's Message for Today



Our Lady of Guadalupe



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Context of Conquest:

The indigenous people were downtrodden as a result of the conquest and felt that their gods had abandoned them

- European conquest of Mexico (1519-1521) and elsewhere in Latin America crippled indigenous peoples' social, religious, and political world
- Process of acculturation and assimilation was initiated
- Indigenous people were forced to adapt to a new worldview, including Christianity



Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Tradition

- Very early in the morning of December 9, 1531, Juan Diego, a 52-year-old native of Cuauhtitlan who had been recently baptized, encountered the Lady of Guadalupe amidst a brilliant landscape and music filling the air
- Walking up the hill of Tepeyacac, the Lady revealed who she was and asked Juan Diego to be part of a mission
- Juan Diego was to tell Bishop Juan de Zumarraga that *The Mother of the One True God for Whom One Lives* desired a sacred house to be built on the hill of Tepeyacac
- She promised that if the people loved her and called upon her, she would listen to them and respond



Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Tradition (continued)

- Juan Diego related what he had seen and heard to the bishop
- The bishop did not believe him and requested some sign from the Lady
- Upon returning home, Juan Diego's uncle, Juan Bernardino, asked Juan bring him a priest as he was very ill and dying
- Juan Diego went to find a priest and again encountered the Lady
- The Lady of Guadalupe told Juan Diego that his uncle would not die and reassured him of her loving presence
- In gratitude, Juan asked what he could do for the Lady
- She sent him to the summit, where he would find *rosas de Castilla* (carnations)

Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Tradition (continued)



- Juan Diego picked the flowers and brought them back to the Lady who touched them and placed them in his *tilma*, or cloak
- The Lady instructed Juan to return to the bishop and show him the flowers
- Juan once again related everything he saw and heard to the bishop and upon releasing the flowers from his *tilma*, the image of the Lady was miraculously imprinted upon it
- The bishop is said to have fallen to his knees, asked for forgiveness and taken the *tilma* and placed it in his personal chapel.



Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Significance of the Guadalupe Story:

- Foundation of Mexican Christianity
- Provided a connection between the indigenous and Spanish cultures



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Connecting Indigenous and Spanish Cultures

Muy de madrugada (very early in the morning)

- for the indigenous, 'very early in the morning' referred not only to daybreak, but to the beginning of time
- marked the Guadalupe event as foundational, as significant to the origin of the world and cosmos

The Mother of "The True God for Whom One Lives"

- This expressions is one of the names that indigenous people gave to their gods
- Made this God their God, restoring reason to hope and to live



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Connecting Indigenous and Spanish Cultures

Rosas de Castilla (carnations)

- For the indigenous, rosas de castilla were a symbol of truth
- That the flowers grew on the hill in the frost and cold of December indicates the Lady's transformative presence

Meeting on a hill in the presence of flowers and song

- Indication that this encounter is universal and transcendent
- The Lady of Guadalupe spoke to all peoples and times, particularly the disenfranchised and the poor in every circumstance of their lives

Our Lady of Guadalupe



The Symbolism of the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe

The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the tilma is more than a picture.

It is a collection of several symbols that were familiar to and held significance for the indigenous people of 16th Century Mexico



Our Lady of Guadalupe



Her head is **slightly bowed**, like so many European madonnas. Unlike European madonnas, however, **her face is not pale**. Rather, the tone of her face is neither European nor native Mexican, but an **intermingling of the two**.

The pendant around her neck bears a **cross, alluding to Jesus**.



Our Lady of Guadalupe



Her hands are folded in an attitude of prayer, which is also **a traditional Aztec gesture of offering.**

Her hands - **one lighter, one darker** - are joined, showing the **union of two cultures.**



Our Lady of Guadalupe

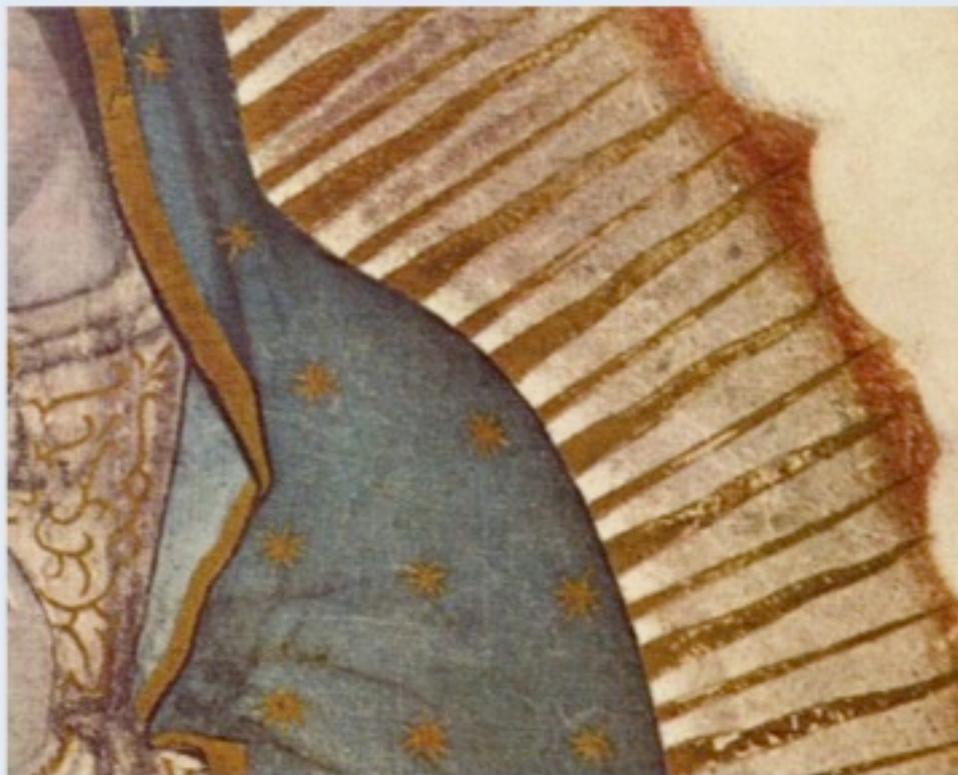


The **tassel** is that of a maternity band around her waist, worn by indigenous noble women, **indicating she is pregnant.**

The **flower** just beneath the tassel **is symbol of the Aztec sun god** and reveals that she bears divinity in her womb.



Our Lady of Guadalupe



The **gold** on the edges of her mantle and the 46 stars indicates her **royal status** and the **rays of gold** surround her indicated the **presence of the sun god**.

The **turquoise** of her mantel is traditionally reserved for the **goddess of creation** and her twin/spouse.



Our Lady of Guadalupe



The **pink of the tunic** - a mixture of red and white - is associated with **compassion, love and understanding.**

Her **tunic is covered with flowers**, traditionally associated with **truth and the presence of the divine.**



Our Lady of Guadalupe



Being **carried by an angel** connects her to **Aztec divinity** because royalty and representatives of the deities were carried by other.



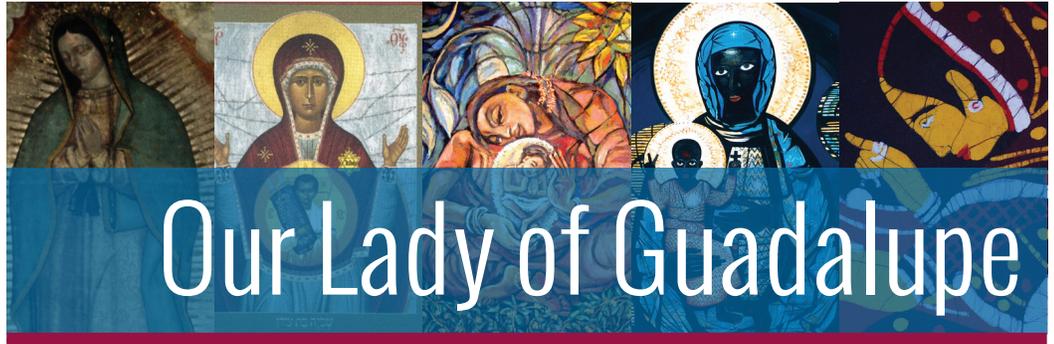
Our Lady of Guadalupe

This presentation is based on the work of Jeanette Rodriguez in her book *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment Among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

Jeanette Rodriguez and Judith Davis contributed significantly to the FutureChurch resource packet on Our Lady of Guadalupe, a part of the Mary of Nazareth Project. For more information about Our Lady of Guadalupe, including educational and resources see the FutureChurch Resource, Pack Our Lady of Guadalupe.



a FutureChurch resource. For more information, go to
www.futurechurch.org.



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Prayer Service Honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe

Celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12 or at any other time

If possible have a large painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe, either the face or the whole image prominently displayed. Include a large basket of roses or red carnations nearby. As people gather, have sacred music playing in the background (see hymn suggestions below). If both latino and anglo people are present make sure that both serve as readers and cantors.

- Welcome** *Presider welcomes participants and makes sure people are introduced.*
- Opening Song** *Song to Our Lady of Guadalupe vs. 1 and 2 sung to the melody of Pescador de Hombres (Lord You Have Come) by Cesareo Gabarain, Oregon Catholic Press, c. 1987 as found in Today's Missal Music 2014 # 511—Words Anonymous (Alternate: Holy is your Name/ Luke 1:46-55 (Music : Wild Mountain Thyme, Irregular; Irish traditional, arr. By David Haas ©1989 GIA. As found in Gather)*

You are the fountain of my life- Under your shadow, and in your protection,-I fear no evil, no pain, no worry...

- Refrain:** *Maria, oh most merciful Mother - Gentle Maiden, with the name, Guadalupe,- On a mountain,- we find roses in winter,- All the world,- has been touched by your love.*
- Here, in the crossing of your arms- Could there be anything,- else that I need?- Nothing discourages, nothing depress me.*
- You, are the Star of the Ocean My boat is small, and the waves are so high But with you to guide me, I'll reach my homeland.*
- You, are the Dawn of a New Day For you give birth to Jesus our brother. All of my lifetime, I'll walk beside you...*

- First Reader:** *At the time of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the indigenous people were not only disenfranchised and downtrodden as a result of the conquest, but, more importantly, they felt that their gods had abandoned them. Their attitude was that there was no longer any reason to live, because everything they did, they did with special attention to what the gods wanted. During this encounter, this manifestation of Mary associated herself with *El Verdadero Dios, por Quien se Vive* (The True God for Whom One Lives). This expression is one of the names that the Nahua gave to their gods. When Tonantzín Guadalupe stated that she was from the One True God, the God Who Gives Life, the Nahua recognized this God to be their God. Thus, the encounter with Our Lady of*



Guadalupe restored in the Nahua people a reason to hope and to live. (Dr. Jeannette Rodriguez, Introduction in FutureChurch's Our Lady of Guadalupe's Feast Day resource)

Sung Response: *Maria, oh most merciful Mother - Gentle Maiden, with the name, Guadalupe,- On a mountain,- we find roses in winter,- All the world,- has been touched by your love.* (alternative: use first refrain from Holy is Your Name, arr. By David Haas ©1989 GIA. As found in *Gather*)

Second Reader: ...the significance of Guadalupe is that she responds to the deepest instincts of the Mexican psyche; her [image] contains symbols indigenous [people] encounter, understand and honor. But Guadalupe represents even more than compassion, relief, and a means of reconciliation between different groups of people. By identifying herself as "Mother of the true God through whom one lives," Guadalupe connects herself with the supreme creative power, that is, the creative and creating presence. She is a symbol of a new creation, a new people. The drama of Guadalupe addresses a deep need for dignity and restoration of self - a self that reflects the image and likeness of the Creator. ... (Dr. Jeannette Rodriguez: Our Lady of Guadalupe essay in FutureChurch's More! Celebrating Women Witnesses)

Sung Response: *Maria, oh most merciful Mother - Gentle Maiden, with the name, Guadalupe,- On a mountain,- we find roses in winter,- All the world,- has been touched by your love.*

Third Reader: The Guadalupe encounter speaks of unconditional love and a people's place in salvific history. Perhaps most significantly, it affirms a need to experience the maternal face of God. This maternal face of God is partly made visible by the key words Guadalupe uses: she is here to demonstrate all of her love, compassion, help, and defense; she hears and heals all of our laments, miseries and sufferings. Initially, she does not bring her presence or message to the center of power and domination, but to the poor and abandoned. (Dr. Jeannette Rodriguez: Our Lady of Guadalupe essay in FutureChurch's More! Celebrating Women Witnesses)

Sung Response: *Maria, oh most merciful Mother - Gentle Maiden, with the name, Guadalupe,- On a mountain,- we find roses in winter,- All the world,- has been touched by your love.*

Fourth Reader: (a reading from Archbishop Oscar Romero) "For the church, abuses of human life, liberty and dignity are a heartfelt suffering. The church, entrusted with the earth's glory, believes that in each person is the creator's image and that everyone who tramples it offends God ... The church takes as spittle in its face, as lashes on its back as the cross in its passion, all that human beings suffer, even though they be unbelievers. They suffer as God's images. There is no dichotomy between [humankind] and God's image. Whoever tortures a human being, whoever abuses a human being, whoever outrages a human being, abuses God's image and the church takes as its own that cross, that martyrdom. (from *The Church is All of You: Thoughts of Archbishop Oscar Romero* by James R. Brockman, S.. Winston Press, Minneapolis, ISBN:086683-838-4 p.20)

Sung Response: *Maria, oh most merciful Mother - Gentle Maiden, with the name, Guadalupe,- On a mountain,- we find roses in winter,- All the world,- has been touched by your love.*

Gospel: [all stand] A Reflection on The Visitation Luke 1:39-56 (from *The Gospel in Art by the Peasants of Solentiname*, edited by Philip and Sally Scharper, Orbis, 1984)

ERNESTO: “The pregnant Mary had gone to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who also was pregnant. Elizabeth congratulated her because she would be the mother of the Messiah, and Mary broke out singing:”
My soul praises the Lord, my heart rejoices in God my Savior.

ESPERANZA: “She praises God because the Messiah is going to be born, and that’s a great event for the people. She calls God ‘Savior’ because she knows that the Son that he has given her is going to bring liberation.”

ANDREA: “She recognizes liberation ...We have to do the same thing. Liberation is from sin, that is, from selfishness, from injustice, from misery, from ignorance—from everything that’s oppressive. That liberation is in our wombs too, it seems to me...”

And from now on all generations will call me happy.

OLIVIA: “She says that people will call her happy...She feels happy because she is the mother of Jesus the Liberator, and because she also is a liberator like her son, because she understood her son and did not oppose his mission,”

He has shown the strength of his arms; he conquers those with proud hearts.

OLD TOMAS: (who can’t read but always talks with great wisdom): “They are the rich, because they think they are above us and they look down on us, since they have the money ...And a poor person comes to their house and they won’t even turn around to look. They don’t have anything more than we do, except money. Only money and pride, that’s all they have that we don’t.”

ANGEL: “I don’t believe that’s true. There are humble rich people and there are proud poor people. If we weren’t proud we wouldn’t be divided, and we poor people are divided.”

GLORIA: “She spoke for the future, it seems to me, because we are just barely beginning to see the liberation she announces.”

WILLIAM: “But the people can’t be liberated by others. They must liberate themselves. God can show the way to the Promised Land, but the people themselves must begin the journey.”

Gospel Response (ALL) *God will transform the desert into a garden; and God will bring forth flowers from the rocks. There will be rejoicing and songs of gladness. And God will make the desert bloom.* (Judith Davis in Future-Church’s Our Lady of Guadalupe’s Feast Day resource)

Reflection/Action *Prayer leader invites all to sit silently and reflect about what the readings mean to them. The following questions may be helpful:*

Hymn suggestions

Our Lady of Guadalupe

by Carlene Thissen

Lyrical ballad that tells the story of Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe. Could be used as background music as people gather, or a sung reflection between reading. Preview at <http://www.broadjam.com/artists/songs.php?artistID=34926&mediaID=303259>

Desde el Cielo / From the Heavens

Arranged by Ronald F. Krisman using the traditional tune *Aparaciones Guadalupanas* as found in *Oramos Cantando/We Pray in Song Hymnal* <http://www.hymnary.org/hymn/OC2013/page/799>

Song to Our Lady of Guadalupe (Text unknown – sung to the melody of *Pescador de Hombres (Lord You Have Come)* by Cesareo Gabarain, Oregon Catholic Press, c. 1987 as found in *Today's Missal Music* 2014 # 511

Como Estrella en Claro Cielo / As a Star on Cloudless Evenings

by Skinner Chavez-Melo, arranged by Richard Proulx, c. 2005, GIA Publications, Inc. as found in *Oramos Cantando/We Pray in Song Hymnal* https://www.giamusic.com/search_details.cfm?title_id=5102

Holy is your Name/Luke 1:46-55

(Music : Wild Mountain Thyme, Irregular; Irish traditional, arr. By David Haas ©1989 GIA. As found in *Gather*)

Ave Maria (©1995 Text and musical adaptation by Paul Ford, in *Today's Missal Music Issue*, OCP publication)

Prayer service created by Christine Schenk CSJ, for FutureChurch,



17301 Madison Avenue
Lakewood OH 44107

216.228.0869

info@futurechurch.org
www.futurechurch.org

1. What would the world be like if we all acted as if we were truly made in God's image?
2. What does "liberation" mean for me personally? For us as a nation or a people?
3. How is it for me to hear about "the maternal face of God?"

After about fifteen minutes, invite each person to take a rose or carnation from the basket before briefly sharing the fruits of their reflection. If the reflection needs to stay private, simply invite the person to take a rose and stand in silence. As each person finishes, all raise their right hand in blessing and say: "Blest are you, who believe that God's Promise will be fulfilled" If the group is large, ask people to share their understandings in two or three words or sentences only.

Closing Litany: **Side 1** Mary, hearer, bearer and doer of the Word, open our hearts and minds to the presence of God among us.

Side 2 Mary, Mother of the true God through whom one lives, make us a new creation.

Side 1 Mary, Mother of the Great Truth, help us to recognize and value all your daughters and sons, especially the poor and disenfranchised.

Side 2 Mary, Mother of the Giver of Life, protect your immigrant and refugee families, parents and children, far from the home of their hearts; inspire communities and generous souls to welcome them.

Side 1 Mary, Mother of the Lord of near and close by, find room for those who have no home. May all find room in God.

All Mary, Mother of the Lord of Heaven and Earth, fulfill your promise to be our protector and our consolation in life's struggles, our joy in life's blessings, and our haven at the hour of our death.

Amen. (Litany by Judith Davis in FutureChurch's Our Lady of Guadalupe's Feast Day resource)

Closing Song: *Holy is your Name/Luke 1:46-55* Music : Wild Mountain Thyme, Irregular; Irish traditional, arr. By David Haas ©1989 GIA. As found in *Gather*) OR *God Beyond All Names* (© 1990 Bernadette Farrell in *Today's Missal Music Issue* OCP Publications) OR *We are Called* (Text: Micah 6,8; David Hass, b.1957 - Tune: David Haas, b. 1957 © 1988, GIA Publications, Inc.)

My soul is filled with joy as I sing to God my savior: you have looked upon your servant, you have visited your people.

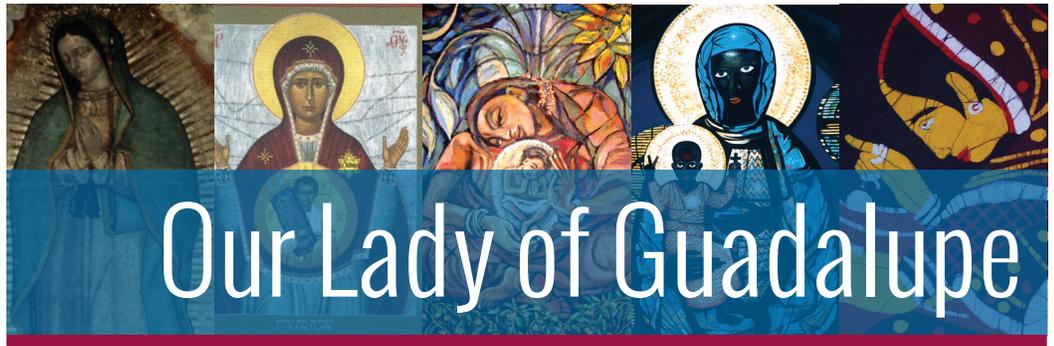
Refrain *And holy is your name through all generations! Everlasting is your mercy to the people you have chosen, and holy is your name.*

I am lowly as a child, but I know from this day forward that my name will be remembered, for all will call me blessed.

Refrain

I proclaim the pow'r of God, you do marvels for your servants; though you scatter the proud hearted and destroy the might of princes.

Refrain



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Thoughts on the Readings for the Feast of Our Lady Of Guadalupe, December 12 by Judith Davis

A little more than two hundred years after the encounters between Our Lady of Guadalupe and Juan Diego, Pope Benedict XIV approved texts for the Mass and the liturgy of the hours (breviary) for the celebration of her feast. Why so long a wait? It appears that Church officials were hesitant to approve the veneration of a figure who bore such obvious resemblance to the indigenous goddess Tonantzin. Popular devotion, however, had long ago enshrined both the tilma bearing her image and the devotion to her as “La Morenita,” the dark Virgin of the people. Liturgy served to formalize the example of individual prayer.

Our Lady of Guadalupe was given the title of Patroness of Latin America in 1910; in 1945, Pius XII declared her Queen of Mexico and Empress of the Americas. In 1999, the celebration of her feast attained the rank of solemnity, or highest-ranking feast day in the liturgical calendar.

Lectionary readings for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrate Mary as the “daughter of Zion” who is visited by the Lord (Zec. 2:14-17) who “stirs forth from his holy dwelling.” The alternate reading from Revelation depicts her as a pregnant “woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” This woman is opposed by a gigantic red dragon which threatens the child she is about to bear; she gives birth to a son, who is “caught up to God and his throne”; she flees into the desert “where she had a place prepared by God.”

The actual image of Our Lady of Guadalupe invites a comparison with the woman of Revelation only with respect to the description “clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet,” indicative of her proximity to the divine. The woman of Revelation, a symbol of the Church, is separated from her male child (Jesus), who is “caught up to God and his throne,” while her place is (down) in the desert after her confrontation with evil. Our Lady of Guadalupe, on the other hand, is the one who makes a deserted hilltop bloom and overcomes opposition with a shower of roses.

The two gospel readings, both from Luke, depict the annunciation and the visitation. They offer rich possibilities for homilies I have never heard.

One homily would talk about Mary’s questioning of the angel, asking Gabriel just how God will see that she bears a son; and after receiving the assurance of God’s presence with her and an example of another miraculous conception, she assents. I like the idea of Mary wanting to know how things will happen before she says that “Yes” that changes the world.

The other homily, on her visit with Elizabeth, would say something about Mary seeking out the company of her older cousin (perhaps unable to face the prospect of a Joseph



I like the idea of Mary wanting to know how things will happen before she says that “Yes” that changes the world.

¹Maxwell E. Johnson and the Monks of Saint John's Abbey, *Benedictine Daily Prayer, A Short Breviary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005).

²Eileen E. Freeman, "Roses in December," *A Short Breviary* 1700-1702.

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FutureChurch
17301 Madison Avenue
Lakewood OH 44107
216.228.0869
info@futurechurch.org
www.futurechurch.org

bewildered and angry at her changing figure), and about the solid relationship between of two women who give the first witness to the appearance of the Son of God on earth.

The Liturgy of the Hours¹ offers more possibilities. One option is taken from "a report by Don Antonio Valeriano, a Native American author of the sixteenth century," which gives an abbreviated version of Our Lady's visits with Juan Diego. Another option, from an article entitled "Roses in December,"² offers what could be described as a neocolonial interpretation of the symbolism of the image. In this essay, Eileen Freeman depicts Mary "standing in front of and blocking the sun, one of the most powerful of Aztec gods... The image makes it clear that she is not a goddess herself, for her head is inclined downwards toward her right, a posture of humility." There is no suggestion that Our Lady of Guadalupe bears divinity in herself. "Her hands are folded in prayer. She, who is more powerful than the Aztec gods, worships the Christian god Jesus... To the conquered Aztecs the Lady's meaning was clear. She was the Mother of all, but especially the mother of the Son whom she had come to announce. Within just a few decades almost the entire native population had embraced Christianity." Although I find this interpretation distasteful at best, I've cited it to draw attention to the need in the larger (Anglo) community for a fuller understanding of just what happened in the conquest of Mexico and the American southwest: the imposition of an exclusively white, predominantly male religion that eliminated any suggestion of a woman who represented godhead; that allied itself with a caste-oriented hierarchy which favored the light-skinned; and which exercised power over rather than accommodation of the indigenous people.

The liturgy for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe might employ the motifs of flower and song, use inclusive language, and emphasize the reconciliation, unity, compassion and mercy that Our Lady herself expressed.

The breviary readings for Our Lady of Guadalupe might be expanded to include litanies which would begin with a recollection of the flower and song which distinguished the encounters between the divine and the human on that hill in Mexico. For example...

Responsorial psalm God will transform the desert into a garden; and God will bring forth flowers from the rocks. V. There will be rejoicing and songs of gladness. And God will make the desert bloom.

Litany Mary, hearer, bearer and doer of the Word, open our hearts and minds to the presence of God among us

Mary, Mother of the true God through whom one lives, make us a new creation

Mary, Mother of the Great Truth, help us to recognize and value all your daughters and sons, especially the poor and disenfranchised.

Mary, Mother of the Giver of Life, protect your immigrant families, parents and children, far from the home of their hearts; inspire communities and generous souls to welcome them.

Mary, Mother of the Lord of near and close by, find room for those who have no home. May all find room in God.

Mary, Mother of the Lord of Heaven and Earth, fulfill your promise to be our protector and our consolation in life's struggles, our joy in life's blessings, and our haven at the hour of our death.

Amen.



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Madre Nuestra: Prayer by the Women of Honduras

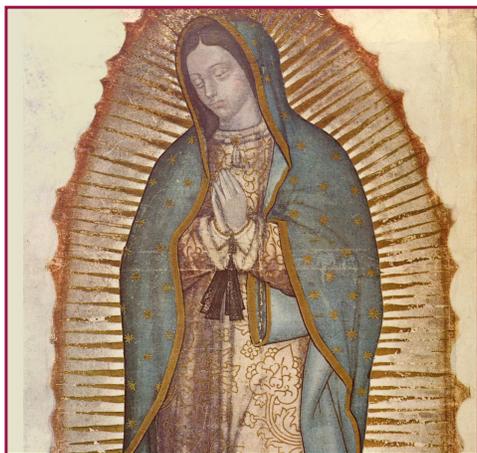
Our Mother,
you who are with us
ours, because you are all of us
You are not sanctified, but sacred, yes
like the mountains, the ocean,
the moon, the rainbow, the butterflies,
laughter and human bodies
Woman is your name,
a simple and beautiful name
Come with us to the reign of life,
and together, let us do our will
here, on earth, today
Let us attain and share today and always
our bread
And forgive ourselves
for all things
except our responsibility
Let us fall
into all temptations
that will build our hopes and dreams
And this way
together, strong and free,
let us move away from all evil



Our Lady of Guadalupe

*Santa Maria madre Dios
ruega por nosotros pecadores ahora
y en la hora de nuestra muerte amen
bendita tu eres entre todas las mujeres
y bendito es el fruto de tu vientre Jesus*

i
this is my holy mother
madonna of the *café con leche*—holy communion
she counts a rosary for nine days
against death, mind and hers
she gives me a gift of image and mystery
places where God is.
oh she is laughing mother
everything she touches is
mystery and celebration,
like a mother Midas,
the everyday sacrament.
she tells me “joy is a sure sign of the presence of God.”
when I come I take off my shoes
and can’t think of anything to say.
she throws her arms around me
—prodigal daughter—
she doesn’t look behind my ears
she doesn’t ask what I’ve done
but I always want to tell her
we go out for *café irlandés*
(with rum) and we dance.
from her I’ve learned what I know of God



*Holy Mary mother of God
pray for us sinners now
and in the hour of our death amen
blessed are you among all women
and blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus*

ii
this is my mother of the *mate*
she passes it to me—holy communion
she rocks me in the hammock of *caraguata*
chanting in Toba.
the acrid smoke from the *palo santo* fire
is the most beautiful smell I know
and I will always love morning
and the murmur of voices
around the fire as I wake unafraid.
she keeps me close to her body always,
her warmth and roundness
are constant and when I go away
they are with me like the earth.
from her I know the taste of the purple cactus tuna
and the tunnels of the ants
stretching for a meter or two
in diameter under the *algarrobo* tree.
when I come
i am embarrassed because she is so glad
and I have no prayer.
she prepares a table
and gives me the spoon first
we all eat from the same plate and spoon
at siesta she brings me
honey from an underground hive
still dripping on the comb.
from her I’ve learned what I know of grace and gratitude

iii
this is my mennonite madonna,
all martha and no mary.
her veil is a quilt and the squares
are scraps from dresses that Grandma
made for me, for mom, and
a piece from Emily’s pajamas.
from her I’ve learned what I know

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MARY OF NAZARETH

Hispanic Marian Feast Days

Some Major Hispanic Marian Feast Days

January 1	María, Madre de Dios* Solemnidad	September 7	Nuestra Señora de Regla Cuba
January 21	Nuestra Señora de Alta Gracia Republica Dominicana	September 8	1) Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobra Cuba 2) Natividad de María* Fiesta, USA and México
February 2	Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria* Fiesta, Puerto Rico	September 11	Nuestra Señora de Coromoto Solemnidad, Venezuela
March 25	La Anunciación del Señor* Solemnidad	September 15	Nuestra Señora de los Dolores* Memorial
April 20	La Dolorosa del Colegio Fiesta, Ecuador	September 24	Nuestra Señora de Merced Solemnidad, España; Fiesta, Peru y Argentina
April 27	Nuestra Señora de Monserrat Solemnidad, España	October 7	Nuestra Señora del Rosario* Memorial
May 5	Nuestra Señora Aparecita Fiesta, Brazil	October 12	Nuestra Señora del Pilar Fiesta, España
May 8	Nuestra Señora de Lujan Solemnidad, Argentina	November 19	María Madre de la Divina Providencia Solemnidad, Puerto Rico
May 31	Visitación de María Fiesta, México	November 21	Nuestra Señora del Quinche Fiesta, Ecuador
July 9	Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Chiquinquirá Fiesta, México	December 8	La Inmaculada Concepción* Solemnidad
July 16	Nuestra Señora del Carmen Memorial, Argentina, Colombia	December 12	Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Solemnidad, México ; Memorial, USA
July 27	Nuestra Señora de Perpetuo Socorro México	<i>Other Feast Days</i>	
August 2	Nuestra Señora de los Angeles Solemnidad, Costa Rica	February 2	Nuestra Señora de San Juan de los Lagos
August 5	Nuestra Señora de Copacabana Brazil	August 22	María Virgen, Reina
August 15	Asunción de María* Solmendencia		

*Celebrated world-wide