

# Original Account of the Apparitions at Guadalupe



The following account of the Guadalupan apparitions by the editor of **A Handbook on Guadalupe** (published by the Franciscan Friars of Marytown, Ohio, USA), is based on several English translations of the Nican Mopohua, the original account written by Antonio Valeriano in Nahuatl, the language spoken by Juan Diego and the Aztecs. Note: The tender, motherly expressions and words of Our Lady to Juan Diego—as well as his words to her—are a literal translation from the Spanish by Janet Barber, I.H.M.

Ten years after the fall of the city of Mexico, when arrows and shields were put aside and there was peace in the villages, the faith and knowledge of the true God had begun to put forth shoots and blossoms. At that time, in the year 1531, a few days after the beginning of December, there was a humble man of the people, Juan Diego, a native of Cauhtitlan, who worshipped at the chapel at Tlatilolco. He was on his way to pursue the study of God and His Commandments at the small church in Tlatilolco. It was still dark on Saturday when he set out. Dawn was breaking as he arrived at the foot of Tepeyac Hill. He heard singing from the crest of the hill, which sounded like the song of many birds. When at times the voices quieted, the hillside seemed to echo in response. The singing, very soft and pleasant, surpassed that of the coyoltotl and tzinizcan and other fine song birds. Juan Diego

stopped to look and thought, “Could I be worthy of what I am hearing? Am I dreaming? Am I arising from sleep? Where am I? Perhaps in the earthly paradise of flowers and corn, about which our ancestors spoke? Maybe already in Heaven?” He was looking toward the summit and to the dawning to the east of the foothill to see the source of the beautiful heavenly singing when, suddenly, it stopped and silence fell, and he heard someone calling him from the top of the hill, saying, “Juan, dearest Juan Diego.”

He then climbed the hill in the direction of the voice, not at all frightened, but rather, feeling extremely happy. Upon reaching the summit, he saw a lady standing there who told him to come closer. He was filled with awe and admiration by her splendor. Her clothing was radiant like the sun; the crag on which her foot was resting was giving off rays of light, and looked like a bracelet of precious stones; even the earth glistened like the mist of a rainbow. The mesquite bushes, prickly pears, and other lowly herbs and grasses which usually grow there seemed like emeralds, the foliage like fine turquoise, and the branches and thorns like shining gold. He bowed before her, hearing her very gentle, polite words which were delivered as to someone very respected. She said: “Listen, Juan, my dearest and youngest son, where are you going?” He answered, “My Lady, my Queen and my little Girl, I am going to your house in Mexico-Tlatilolco to continue the study of the divine mysteries taught us by the images of Our Lord, our priests.” She spoke then, revealing her blessed will, saying: “Know, know for sure, my dearest, littlest, and youngest son, that I am the perfect and ever-Virgin Holy Mary, Mother

of the God of truth through Whom everything lives, the Lord of all things near us, the Lord of Heaven and earth. I want very much to have a little house built here for me, in which I will show Him, exalt Him, and make Him manifest. I will give Him to the people in all my personal love, in my compassion, in my help, in my protection: because I am truly your merciful Mother, yours and all the people who live united in this land and of all the other people of different ancestries, my lovers, who love me, those who seek me, those who trust in me. Here I will hear their weeping, their complaints and heal all their sorrows, hardships, and sufferings. And to bring about what my compassionate and merciful concern is trying to achieve, you must go to the residence of the Bishop of Mexico and tell him that I sent you to show him how strongly I wish him to build me a temple here on the plain; you will report to him exactly all you have seen, admired, and heard. Know for sure, I will appreciate it very much, be grateful, and reward you. And you? You will deserve very much the reward I will give you for your fatigue, the work, and the trouble that my mission will cause you. Now, my dearest son, you have heard my breath, my word; go now and put forth your best effort.”

At this, he bowed low before her and said, “My Lady, I am going now to carry out your charge; for the present, I, your poor servant, take leave of you.” He then descended the hill, intent on fulfilling her command, and continued on along the causeway which goes directly to Mexico City. Once inside the city, he went without delay to the residence of the bishop, a new prelate, who had only recently arrived. His name was Friar Don Juan de Zumarraga, a religious of St. Francis. As soon as he got there, he tried to see him, begging the servants to announce him. After a long while they came to call him, the Bishop having ordered that he should enter.

Upon entering, he bowed and knelt before him and immediately gave him the message of the Lady from Heaven, telling him everything he had admired and had seen and heard. After hearing the story and the message, the bishop didn’t seem to believe him and said, “You will come again, my son, and I will hear what you have to say at greater leisure; I shall look into the matter carefully from the very beginning and give much thought and consideration to the request you have brought me.” He left feeling sad, because the message entrusted to him was not immediately accepted. He returned that same day, heading directly to the crest of the hill and found the Lady from Heaven waiting for him on the very spot where he first saw her. He fell to his knees before her saying,

“My dear little Mistress, Lady, and Queen, my littlest Daughter, my dear little Girl, I went where you sent me to carry out your order. Although it was difficult for me to enter the bishop’s quarters, I saw him and explained your message exactly as instructed. He received me kindly and listened with attention; but as soon as he answered, it was apparent that he did not believe it; he said: ‘You will come back some other time, and I shall listen to what you say at greater leisure; and I shall examine it from the very beginning and think about the request you have delivered.’

“The way he answered me I could clearly see that he thinks I may have made it up, about your wanting a little house built for you here, or that it is not from you. So I beg you, my Lady, Queen, and my little Girl, to send one of the nobles who are held in esteem and respected with the message, so that it will be believed; for I am a man of no importance, a backframe, a follower. You are sending me to a place that I am not used to spending my time, my little Virgin, my youngest Daughter, my Lady. Forgive me if I grieve you and you are angry with me.” The Most Holy Virgin, worthy of all honor and veneration answered:

“Listen to me, my youngest and dearest son, know for sure that I do not lack servants and messengers to whom I can give the task of carrying out my words, who will carry out my will. But it is very necessary that you plead my cause and, with your help and through your mediation, that my will be fulfilled. My youngest and dearest son, I urge and firmly order you to go to the bishop again tomorrow. Tell him in my name and make him fully understand my intention that he start work on the chapel I’m requesting. Tell him again that I am the ever-Virgin, Holy Mary, the Mother of God, who is sending you.”

IF YOU BEGAN READING THIS ARTICLE IN THE LITTLE FLOWER WEEKLY, Page One and all the above paragraphs were included. The next few pages were NOT in the newsletter.





Juan answered, "My Lady, Queen, my little Girl, I do not wish to give you anguish, pain or grieve your heart; I shall go very gladly as you command; I shall by no means give up, nor do I consider it any trouble. I shall go to fulfill your wish; but I may not be heard or, if heard, still not believed. Tomorrow afternoon, when the sun goes down, I shall return to give you an account of the Bishop's answer. I must now take leave of you, my youngest Daughter, little Maid, my little Girl and Lady. Rest well in the meantime." Then he went to his home to rest.

The following day was Sunday and in the very early dawn he left his house going directly to Tlatilolco for religious instruction. He arrived just before ten o'clock and heard Mass, keeping his mission in mind. Once the crowd had dispersed, he set out for the bishop's residence. As soon as he got there, he insisted on seeing the bishop, and after many difficulties was allowed in. Kneeling down before him, he repeated sadly and tearfully the demand he brought from the Lady from Heaven. He was extremely anxious to be believed and that the bishop comply with the wish of the Perfect Virgin that a place of worship be erected on the spot she had clearly indicated.

The bishop, in order to verify the matter, asked many questions. Where had he seen her? What was she like? He gave a full account of everything. But even though he recounted with great exactitude what she was like and all he had seen and marveled at, and the Bishop saw that it was the Perfect Virgin, Mother of the Savior, he was unable to act without further evidence. He said he could not carry out the order only on his word and request, but that it was necessary to give him a sign that the message had come from the Lady from Heaven herself. As soon as he heard that, Juan Diego said, "Lord Bishop, what kind of sign do you require? I shall go and request it of the Lady from Heaven who sent me."

When the bishop saw that he confirmed everything and did not hesitate or doubt in the slightest, he dismissed him. He had him followed by members of the household whom he trusted so that they could watch and see where he went, whom he saw and spoke to. When Juan Diego came directly to the causeway, those who were following him lost sight of him on the wooden bridge where the brook comes out near Tepeyac; and although they looked everywhere, there was no trace of him to be found. So they turned back, annoyed not only because he had slipped out of sight, but also because he had frustrated their attempt in shadowing him. After telling the bishop what had happened, they urged him not to believe his story, that Juan was lying, making up a story, dreaming or imagining the whole thing. They agreed that if he should ever come back, they would grab him and punish him severely so that he would never tell lies nor get the people all excited. In the meantime, Juan Diego was with the Most Holy Virgin giving her the bishop's reply. Upon hearing it, she said: "That is fine, my youngest and dearest son; you will return here tomorrow so that you may take the sign he asked for. Then, he will believe and no longer doubt or be suspicious of you; and know, my dear son, I shall reward your care, work and fatigue in my behalf. Go now; tomorrow I shall be here waiting for you."

Upon arriving home Sunday, he found his uncle, Juan Bernardino, seriously ill and in danger of death. First, he went for the native healer who treated him, but he was too late. The next day, Monday, when Juan Diego was to take the sign to the bishop in order to be believed, he did not return. During the night, the uncle begged him to go to Tlatilolco to bring a priest to hear his confession and prepare him for dying, knowing that his time had arrived, and that he would never get well.

Early in the morning of Tuesday, Juan Diego was already on his way to Tlatilolco for the priest. As he approached the road that passes at the side of the foothill of Tepeyac toward the west, which was his usual route, he thought, "If I take the direct path, the Lady may see me and I would be detained by the sign she wished to give me. I must hurry to get a priest first, since my poor uncle is anxiously waiting for him." So Juan Diego took another path around the hill which crosses toward the east side in order to reach Mexico more quickly, and not be detained by the Queen of Heaven. He thought this would prevent his being seen by her, but she was watching him from where she saw him before.

She came down the hill and blocked his way and said to him: "What is happening, dearest and youngest of my sons? Where are you going? Where are you headed?" And he, regretful, ashamed and fearful, prostrated himself before her and said in greeting: "My little Maiden, my youngest Daughter, my Girl, I hope that you are happy. How are you this morning? Do you feel well? Although it grieves me, and may cause you anguish, I must tell you that one of your servants, my uncle, is very ill. A terrible sickness has struck him down and he will surely die soon. And now I hurry to your little house in Tlatilolco to call on the beloved ones of Our Lord, our prests, to hear his confession and prepare him for death. For we all are born for that and await the difficult day of our own death. Although I go, I shall return right away to take care of your message, my Lady and my little Maiden. I beg you to forgive me, be patient with me a little longer, because I am not deceiving you, my youngest Daughter, my little Girl. Tomorrow without fail, I will return as fast as possible." After hearing Juan Diego's words, the most merciful Virgin spoke:

"Listen, put it into your heart, my youngest and dearest son, that the thing that disturbs you, the thing that afflicts you, is nothing. Do not let your countenance, your heart be disturbed. Do not fear this sickness of your uncle or any other sickness, nor anything that is sharp or hurtful. **Am I not here, I, who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need anything more? Let nothing else worry you, disturb you.** Do not let your uncle's illness worry you, because he will not die now. You may be certain that he is already well." [And at that moment the uncle was restored to health, as they were to learn later.]

When Juan Diego heard this from the Queen of Heaven, he felt better, was comforted and at peace. He begged her to send him to the bishop without delay with some sign that he would believe. The Lady from heaven then told him: "Go up, my dearest son, to the top of the hill, to where you saw me and received my directions and you will find different kinds of flowers. Cut them, gather them, put them all together, then come down here and bring them before me."

Juan Diego went up the hill immediately and, upon reaching the crest, was astonished to find so many beautiful, exotic varieties of fine, full-bloomed flowers since it was out of season, being the time of biting frost. They were very fragrant and covered with night dew which gleamed like precious pearls. He went around cutting and gathering them and placed them inside the fold of his tilma. The top of the hill was no place for flowers to grow; it was stony and full of nothing but thistles, thorns, prickly pears, and mesquites. At times grass grew there, but this was the month of December, when frost kills everything. He hurried down the hill taking the flowers to the heavenly Maiden. She took them into her precious hands and rearranged them in his tilma saying:

"My youngest and dearest son, these different kinds of flowers are the proof, the sign that you will take to the Bishop. You will tell him from me that he is to see in them my desire, and therefore he is to carry out my wish, my will. And you, who are my messenger, in you I place my absolute trust. I strictly order you not to unfold your tilma or reveal its contents until you are in his presence. You will relate to him everything very carefully: how I sent you to the top of the hill to cut and gather flowers, all you saw and marveled at in order to convince the Governing Priest so that he will then do what lies within his responsibility so that my house of God, which I requested, will be made, will be built."

After the Lady from Heaven had finished her instructions, he set out along the causeway leading directly to Mexico City. Happy now, and feeling sure that this time everything would go well, he held his precious burden close to protect it and prevent any of its contents from falling out, while delighting in the fragrance of the various beautiful flowers. When he arrived at the residence of the Bishop, the doorkeeper and the other servants stepped out to meet him. He begged them to inform the Bishop how urgent it was that he see him, but they all refused, pretending they did not hear him, either because it was still dark, or because they knew him from his other visits and felt he was giving them trouble with his repeated visits. Also, they had already been informed by their companions of how he had slipped from their sight the time they had been ordered to follow him. As they saw him standing there a long time, head lowered, doing nothing in case he should be called, they noticed that he seemed to be carrying something. Out of curiosity, they went over to him and tried to see what it was he was carrying.

When Juan Diego saw that he couldn't hide what he carried, and fearing that they would continue to harrass him and possibly damage the flowers, he opened the folds of his tilma a bit to give them a peek. When they saw that it contained exquisite, different, blooming flowers out of season, they were awed. They were impressed how fresh they were, how open their corollas were, how good they smelled, and how beautiful. They dared to snatch some of them away from him three times but they could not succeed. They no longer saw real flowers, but flowers which seemed to be painted, embroidered or sewn on the tilma.

They went right away to tell the Bishop what they had seen and informed him about the humble Indian who had come before and was waiting a long time to see him. Hearing this, the Bishop realized that Juan had the proof he needed to convince him to carry out Our Lady's wish. He immediately ordered them to show him in. Upon entering, Juan Diego prostrated himself before the Bishop as he had done the other times, reporting everything he had seen and marveled at, and repeating her message. He said:

"Your Excellency, I did as you ordered, telling my Mistress, the Heavenly Maiden, Holy Mary, the Beloved Mother of God, that you were asking for proof so that you could believe me, so that you could build her sacred little house that she requested. I told her that I had promised to bring you some sign, so that her beloved will could be carried out. Today, while it was still night, she ordered me to see you again. I asked for the proof, so that I would be believed and she kept her promise immediately, sending me up the hill where I had seen her before, to cut various roses and other flowers.

"Although I knew very well that the top of the hill wasn't the place where flowers grow, because it is full of craggy rocks, thorns, spiny acacias and mesquite bushes, I didn't doubt or hesitate one minute to do her bidding. When I arrived at the crest of the hill, it seemed as if I were in paradise, because there in one place was a great variety of different precious flowers, all exquisite and sparkling with dew, which I set about gathering. After I brought them down to her she took them in her holy hands and rearranged them in the hollow of my ayate for me to bring and present to you in person. She told me to give them to you from her so that you would recognize the sign you requested and comply with her wishes, and also to show you that I was truthful. Here they are, please receive them."

He then opened his white mantle which held the flowers, and as the different precious flowers fell to the floor, then and there the beloved Image of the Perfect Virgin, Holy Mary, Mother of God, suddenly appeared in the form and figure in which it remains to this day and is preserved in her chapel at Tepeyac called Guadalupe.





Upon seeing it, the bishop and all those present fell to their knees full of awe and reverence, greatly affected and moved by what they saw. They then grew sad, they wept, and their hearts and minds were in ecstasy. The Bishop prayed in tears begging forgiveness for not having immediately carried out her will to do what she wanted. He rose to his feet and untied the mantle from around Juan Diego's neck on which the heavenly Queen's Image was imprinted and took it to his private chapel. He detained Juan Diego, who remained another day at the Bishop's house. The following day he said, "Come, let us go to see the place where the Lady from Heaven wants her temple to be built." People were immediately invited to build her "sacred little house." As soon as Juan Diego had pointed out where the Lady from Heaven wanted her chapel to be built, he asked permission to leave. He wanted to see his uncle who had been gravely ill when he left for Tlatilolco to call the priest to confess him and prepare him for dying.

But they wouldn't let Juan Diego go alone; a number of people went with him to his house. Upon arriving, they saw the uncle was well and happy without ache or pain. He was surprised to see his nephew accompanied by so many people and inquired as to the cause for so much honor and attention. The nephew explained that when he had left to bring the priest to hear his confession and prepare him for dying, the Lady from Heaven had appeared to him on Tepeyac, and that she had consoled him greatly by telling him not to worry because his uncle was already restored to health. She then had sent him to Mexico City to ask that a house be erected for her on Tepeyac.

The uncle then revealed that it was indeed at that same moment he was suddenly restored to health, when she appeared in much the same way as she had appeared to his nephew. She related that she had sent Juan to see the bishop in Mexico. At the same time, the Lady told Juan Bernardino that as soon as he saw the bishop he must reveal to him the miraculous manner in which she had effected his cure and that he should convey to him the proper name for her blessed Image, The Perfect Virgin Holy Mary of Guadalupe. [Some Nahuatl scholars think that she spoke to Juan Bernardino in his native tongue, which contains no "g" or "d" sounds. Therefore, working back from the sounds of the word "Guadalupe," these scholars say that the best guess of the Nahuatl word that she used to reveal her name to Juan Bernardino was: "she who comes flying from the region of light and music, and singing a song like the fire eagle" (p. 177, *Handbook On Guadalupe*).

Then they took Juan Bernardino before the bishop so he might speak to him and give his testimony. Both Juan Bernardino and his nephew Juan Diego stayed at the bishop's residence until the chapel of the little Queen of Tepeyac was erected where she revealed herself to Juan Diego. The Bishop had the holy image of the beloved heavenly Maiden transferred from the oratory to the main church, so that all the people could see and admire it. The whole city came to see and admire her precious image and pray before it. They marveled at the miraculous way it had appeared, since absolutely no one on earth could have painted her beloved Image.

You are also encouraged to purchase *The Handbook on Guadalupe* by Franciscan Marytown Press, Ohio. It has over 30 articles by different authors on all aspects of the tilma, the persons involved, the background, the history, etc.

