

Our Lady of Guadalupe's *Tilma*

Background

The *tilma* of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a cloak of rough-woven cactus fiber that was worn by laborers in Mexico at the time of the Spanish conquest (1521 AD). This most famous of *tilmas* belonged to an Aztec Indian named Juan Diego to whom the Virgin Mary appeared in December of 1531. She sent him to ask the local bishop to build a church on the hill where she appeared. As a result, nine million Indians received baptism within a decade of the apparitions.

“Not painted by human hands” describes the image imprinted on the *tilma* as a sign for the bishop. Mary's self-portrait exhibits no human preparation, brush marks, pigment, or coloring. Science cannot determine how the image adheres to the cloth, which should have disintegrated within twenty years. Yet, it has survived rough handling, floods, candle smoke, acid spilled on it, and even a terrorist's bomb, remaining as colorful today as in 1531. It stays at a constant 98.6-degrees whatever the surrounding temperature.

What to Look For

Appearance: The lady on the *tilma* is a petite 4 ft. 8 in.. Her appearance (head inclined, hands folded, eyes looking down) is one of gentleness, distinct from the fierce-looking idols of the Aztecs. Her hair, skin tone, and stature give her the appearance of...an Indian!

Clothing: Her pink tunic and blue mantle identified her as royalty to the people of that day.

Seam: A seam runs down the center of the *tilma* yet, amazingly, avoids marring the face or hands.

Angel and Moon: Mary stands on a crescent moon with a tiny angel reverently raising the hem of her garments. Her left knee is bent as if stepping on something (the principle Aztec deity was a serpent).

Sun and Stars: Like the woman in Revelation 12, Mary is clothed with sun and stars. The 46 stars uncannily conform to the constellations in the night sky of December 1531. She brings the One True God to them, thus eclipsing the Aztecs' false worship of natural elements.

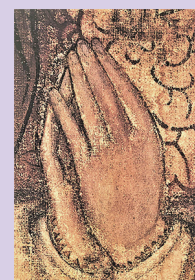
Hands: The pinky finger is separated from the other three fingers, symbolizing the Holy Trinity.

Eyes: Microscopic analysis reveals at least five figures “reflected” in the eyes of the image, giving her eyes a three-dimensional quality.

Cincture: The black bow hanging from an unseen cincture around her waist was a sign of pregnancy in Aztec culture. A single four-petaled flower directly over her womb was called the “flower of life” by the Indians and indicates the presence of the divine Child within.



The Flower of Life



The Trinity Symbol

Arti-Facts

- Date: December 12th, 1531
- Dimensions: 3 ft. 4 in. x 5 ft. 5½ in.
- Medium: supernatural imprint on cloth
- Location: Basilica of Guadalupe, Mexico.