

SACRED WINDOWS



An invitation to gaze into heaven's stained
glass windows
Beauty, Truth, and Goodness

Gaudete Sunday (Advent), December 12, 2021

Why the Stars on Guadalupe's Mantle Are Miraculous

Greetings!

It is common today to say that we should take the 30,000-foot view of something (as if looking down from an airplane) in order to get an overall perspective on it. That's a good thing to do from time to time. It lets us **"see the forest for the trees."**

So, let's take a 30,000-foot view of **the delightful story of the Virgin Mary** who appeared on a hilltop in Mexico City exactly 490 years ago today. It's the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

In keeping with our theme, we're going to look at the overall marvel of the Guadalupe Event, not all the details of the apparitions.

Cascading Miracles



Something miraculous happened on that hill on December 12th of 1531. It wasn't just the miracle that imprinted her image on a piece of rough cloth (called a *tilma*, which you can still see today in the basilica built on the same hill) nor the miraculous healings and wonders that accompanied the public showing of the image.

It was rather something like **a new Pentecost** that blasted open a whole new hemisphere of the globe that had never heard of Christ before.

It was that the Virgin Mary came – personally – to evangelize the entire New World. She came to the Americas. ***She came to us.***

Her choice to appear at that specific place and time set off a series of **cascading miracles** that can best be seen from the wider angle, particularly from the perspective of Church history.

History Viewed from Above

In the first few decades of the 1500s the Catholic Church in Europe **quite literally blew apart**.

- **Martin Luther** openly declared his rebellion against the Catholic Church in 1519 and set in motion certain political processes which would shatter Christian unity in the West.
- Only a few years later in 1531, **King Henry VIII** declared himself head of the Church in England and then proceeded to steal every piece of church property that had been built in England for more than a thousand years. His daughter **Queen Elizabeth** and her cronies went further and put every Catholic priest they could get their hands on to a violent death. (We think we have it bad today....)
- The whole sad tale involves the division of Europe into **Catholic/Protestant spheres** and more than a century of violence that killed hundreds of thousands – Christians against Christians.

But here's the 30,000-foot view of salvation history.

At the very moment the Protestant rebellion was shattering the Church and taking five million Catholics away from their natural home, **Our Lady appeared in another part of the world** and added nine million new souls to the ranks of Christ's Church.

The **Native American populations** of the time received her miraculous appearance as if God Himself had come to them, which in fact He had...that is, carried by His mother. She was His heavenly missionary, and the natives converted to the Church in the millions.

They say God doesn't close a door but He opens a window.

Geography Viewed from Above



The 30,000-foot **perspective on the geography** of the Guadalupe Event is just as interesting. Our Lady appeared on a low-lying hill on the outskirts of what we call Mexico City today.

Even though Mexico City is not the middle-point of the *country* of Mexico, it is in fact the **geographical center of the entire hemisphere** of North, Central, and South America, or "the Americas."

The **red star** on this map indicates the place of Our Lady's appearance.

It's not that everyone in the Americas got word of the apparitions (the US and Canada *didn't even exist* at that time). It's rather that **Our Lady placed her banner over the whole hemisphere** as the patroness of all Christian missionaries who would later come to America's shores bringing the message of the True God to people who walked in the darkness of their pagan beliefs.

As I said, it's hard to imagine a **more successful missionary effort** apart from the Day of Pentecost itself.

The Woman of Revelation

Perhaps the powerful draw of the *tilma* of Our Lady of Guadalupe has to do with the way she resembles **the biblical image** of the heavenly Woman in the book of Revelation:

A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars (Rev 12:1)

The *tilma* of Guadalupe **contains all of this imagery**: she is surrounded by the rays of the sun and stands on a crescent moon.

But the image of the stars is what I'd like to focus on. The biblical image describes her as "crowned with stars", which as we shall see is literally true of Guadalupe, but it is much more.

She actually **wears the stars as her cloak!**

An Astronomical Phenomenon

In the 1990s a **Mexican astronomer** named Juan Hernandez Illescas conducted a **series of studies** on the configuration of the stars on the turquoise-blue mantle of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

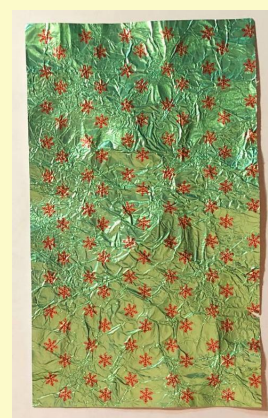
Through computer technology, he was able to regress the map of constellations to the very night of Our Lady's appearance almost five centuries ago. What he found was a **convergence of astronomical marvels that defies belief**. For example:

- The forty-six stars visible on Guadalupe's mantle are the *exact representation* of the **constellations in the night sky** over Mexico on 12/12/1531. (See the chart and images below.)
- In 1531, Mexico was still using the old Julian calendar, which was ten days off from the modern calendar. That places her appearance on the morning of the 22nd of December – the winter solstice – which is **the longest night of the year**. After the solstice, the daylight grows longer. Our Lady appeared at dawn that day, bringing "the dawn from on high," Christ Himself and signaling an end to the darkness of paganism.
- The **precise apex of the solstice** was at 10:40 am, likely the precise moment when the visionary, Juan Diego, was unfolding the *tilma* and showing it to the bishop of Mexico.
- As we view the *tilma*, the constellations of the **Northern sky** appear on the right side of her mantle, while the **Southern constellations** appear on the left side.

A Celestial Map

The **configuration of the various constellations** in the night sky tells another story.

1. **Wrapped:** The blue mantle represents the heavenly panorama, as if Our Lady were “wrapped” in a panoply of stars. If the *tilma* were to be opened out to its fullness (like this unfolded foil wrapper at right) we would see all the constellations at once. Some of the folds of her garment obscure the full view of a few and others wrap around the back.
2. **Visible Constellations:** Only fifteen of the known eighty-nine constellations appear on her mantle because those fifteen were the ones visible in the night sky over Mexico that night.
3. **Invisible Constellations:** Five other constellations are not visible but would have been displayed on her head, tunic, and feet because of their relative positions in the firmament; and their invisible placement contains some astounding theological messaging:



Invisible constellations underlined in **yellow** below:

- **Leo** (the Lion, over her womb, see [Rev 5:5](#); Leo's main star is called “Regulus” which means “little king”, the Christ Child)
- **Corona Borealis** (the Northern Crown, over her temple/forehead; she does indeed wear a crown of stars, [Rev 12:1](#))
- **Virgo** (the Virgin, over her pure heart)
- **Gemini** (the Twins, over her knees or lap, often called the Seat of Wisdom), and
- **Orion** (the Warrior/Hunter, over the angel below; some say the angel represents the great warrior Prince of the Heavenly Host, St. Michael).

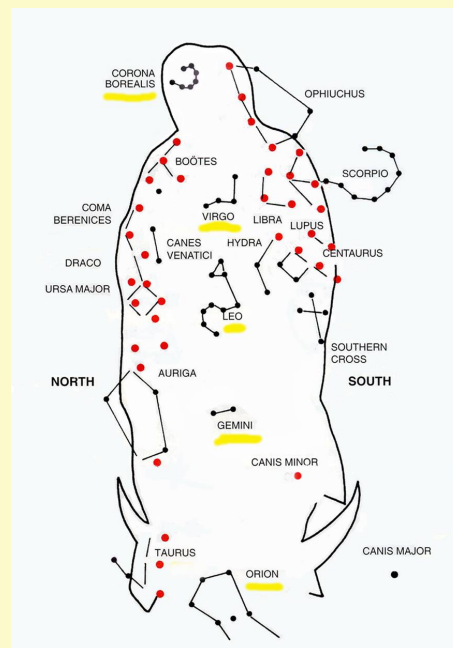
Visible Constellations

Southern Hemisphere (Left side)

Boötes (The Hunter)
Coma Berenices (The Diadem)
Canes Venatici (Boötes' Hunting Dogs)
Ursa Major (The Bear)
Draco (The Dragon)
Auriga (The Charioteer)
Taurus (The Bull)

Northern Hemisphere (Right side)

Ophiucus (The Serpent Holder)
Scorpio (The Scorpion)
Libra (The Balance Scales)
Hydra (The Water Serpent)
Lupus (The Wolf)
Sagittarius (Centaur with Bow)
Southern Cross
Canis Minor (Orion's Hunting Dog)



Two Final Celestial Phenomena

The Guadalupe Event occurred **on the very same day that *Haley's Comet* was visible** on the horizon over Mexico. Why should we be surprised that a shooting star would announce the birth of a new civilization? The birth of Mary's Child was also heralded by a miraculous star in the night sky. (See our [1/10/21 Newsletter](#).)

Perhaps the most astonishing revelation of Dr. Hernandez's study was that the constellations that appear on Our Lady of Guadalupe's mantle **are actually inverted** (North should be South and vice versa). That means that when we see them, we are not viewing them from the vantage point of standing on earth looking upward.

We are viewing them from above: as if God Himself were hovering over His blessed creation and looking down on us through the eyes of His mother.

You know, the 30,000-foot view.

It just so happens that one of our new Mini-Windows explains the larger story of Our Lady of Guadalupe's *tilma*. It is **a mystical gift to humanity** that keeps on giving. Her image is as fresh and delightful today as on the morning she appeared to Juan Diego. Take a moment to look more closely at the details of the *tilma* on our "**Mysticism**" Mini-Window page. It's a good way to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.



Sacred Windows sometimes features episodes of **intelligent and innocent humor**.

Everyone can use more of that these days. The article "**Hilarious Happy Birthday and a Laughing Dolphin**" highlights two short videos that will probably make your day as much as they made mine.

The **Third Sunday of Advent** is called *Gaudete* ("Rejoice!") Sunday, and I thought it might be a good day to feature some pure joy.



[Visit the Newsletter Archives](#)

Thank you and God bless you always!

Peter Darcy

PS – After Christmas I will include a **Reader Survey** at the end of the Newsletter to get some valuable feedback from you about what has worked in 2021 and what you'd like to see more of in 2022.



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