

WALK WITH MARY

Reflexión del Pueblo

A GUIDE FOR PERSONAL OR SMALL-GROUP REFLECTION

For centuries, Our Lady of Guadalupe has offered a model of evangelization that emphasizes an openness to the “stranger in our midst”. Guadalupe challenges us to remove the blinders and see the other person as a beloved child of God. Her invitation is to encounter and accompany the life of God that is within every person.

She urges us to valiantly tear down any walls or divisions that might exist between us and instead build a temple where love, compassion, help and understanding are the central pillars. To Walk with Mary means that you and I are charged with a mission to be the agents of a new creation.

May this guide help you see that it is of upmost importance that it be through you that her wish is carried out.

GATHERING AND OPENING PRAYER

Begin by setting the tone with an instrumental song or a hymn to Our Blessed Mother/Our Lady of Guadalupe. Ask participants to listen and use this quiet time as an opportunity to express gratitude for the blessings or a special favor they have received through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother.

When the song concludes, invite participants to share what came to mind with the person next to them. You may also ask two or three people to share as part of the larger group.

Conclude the Opening Prayer by inviting participants to recite the Hail Mary.



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Star of the First and New Evangelization

Patroness of the Americas



THE NICAN MOPOHUA

Written almost entirely in Nahuatl, the *Nican Mopohua* is the sacred text that narrates the story of the apparitions of Our Lady in the mount of Tepeyac.

The original author is believed to be Antonio de Valeriano, a 16th century Nahuatl scholar and politician.

In 1649, the vicar of the chapel at Tepeyac, Luis Laso de la Vega, published *The Great Event*—which contains the *Nican Mopohua*. His work is the most widely known version of the story of the apparitions.

The *Nican Mopohua* is imbued with the symbolism and poetry that exemplifies the beauty of classical Nahuatl literature. In the opening lines we are told it was “just before dawn.” Similar to Genesis’ opening phrase “In the beginning,” is used to signify the moment of creation, the *Nican Mopohua* proclaims the beginning of a new creation by placing us at a moment that was only used to refer to the time when the gods gathered to create the world anew.

THE STORY

In the early days of December of 1531, ten years after the conquest of the Aztec empire, the Mother of God appeared to a poor indigenous *campesino*, a convert to Christianity, named Juan Diego (born: Cuauhtlatoatzin—the talking eagle).

In that first encounter, after inquiring his destination, the lady revealed herself to be the “virgin Holy Mary, Mother of the True God for whom we live.” She then asked Juan Diegito “the smallest of my children” to seek out the bishop and ask him to erect a temple on that desolate hill. A temple she said, “so I may therein exhibit and give all my love, compassion, help, and protection, because I am your merciful mother, to you, and to all the inhabitants on this land and all the rest who love me, invoke and confide in me; listen there to their lamentations, and remedy all their miseries, afflictions and sorrows.” Understanding the importance of the task ahead, Juan Diego hurried and presented himself in front of the bishop. Unfortunately, Bishop Zumarraga doubted Juan Diego and asked him to return some other day.

“I am your mother, to you, and to all the inhabitants on this land and all the rest who love me, invoke and confide in me.”

Dejected, Juan Diego returned to the Lady from Heaven and asked her to send “someone of importance, well known, respected, and esteemed, so that they may believe in him.” He begged that she not send him where he does not belong, since he was simply a “nobody”. Unfortunately for Juan Diego, the lady from heaven begged that he try again because it was of utmost importance that it would be through him that her wish would be carried out. Encouraged by her words, Juan Diego returned to see the bishop the following day.

After struggling once again to see the bishop, Juan Diego was able to relate his message. Impressed by his insistence, the bishop asked Juan Diego to ask the lady for a sign so that he might believe. Immediately Juan Diego set out to ask for the sign and the lady from heaven told him to return the next day for she would have the sign requested by the bishop ready for delivery.

The next morning, Juan Diego was unable to deliver the sign because his uncle, Juan Bernardino had fallen ill and was dying. The following day, on December 12, “before dawn” Juan Diego set out to fetch a priest so he could fulfill his uncle’s wish of a last confession. Focused on his mission he decided to go around the hill to Tepeyac so that the Lady from Heaven would not stop him and ask him to deliver the sign to the bishop. However, Our Mother “who sees well everywhere”, came down the hill and asked “the smallest of my children, where are you going?” Embarrassed Juan Diego knelt in front of her and explained the reason for his inability to deliver the message. Our Mother then answered:

“Hear me and understand well, my son the least, that nothing should frighten or grieve you. Let not your heart be disturbed. Do not fear that sickness, nor any other sickness or anguish. Am I not here, who is your Mother? Are you not under my protection? Am I not your health? Are you not happily within my fold? What else

do you wish? Do not grieve nor be disturbed by anything. Do not be afflicted by the illness of your uncle, who will not die now of it. be assured that he is now cured.”

Feeling reassured, Juan Diego agreed to deliver the sign. He was asked to head back to the top of the hill where he had seen Our Lady before and collect the flowers found there. Juan Diego rushed to the top and to his amazement he found roses blooming in a place that “was no place for any kind of flowers to grow, because it had many crags, thistles, thorns, nopales and mezquites”. Immediately he collected the roses, placed them on his *tilma* and took them to Our Mother. She blessed them and instructed Juan Diego not to reveal the contents of his *tilma* in front of anyone but the bishop. She assured him that with this sign, the bishop would heed her request.

Once again, after struggling with the caretakers and other servants, he was able to see the bishop. Again, retelling the story of the apparition, Juan Diego informed the bishop that Our Mother had prepared the sign he had requested. As Juan Diego opened up his *tilma* and “when they scattered on the floor, all the different varieties of roses, suddenly there appeared the drawing of the precious Image of the ever-virgin Holy Mary, Mother of God, in the manner as she is today kept in the temple at Tepeyacac, which is named Guadalupe ”.

Immediately, the bishop and all those around him fell to their knees, “shuddered and, with sorrow, they demonstrated that they contemplated her with their hearts and minds”. That day Juan Diego remained in the bishop’s house at his request. The following day the bishop asked Juan Diego to lead him to the place where the temple would be built.



DIGGING DEEP

The significance of the apparition cannot be understated. In the heels of the Protestant Reformation and the desire for riches, Spanish Catholics has been driven to the “new world” with a double mission: conquest and conversion. In this dual process, the Spaniards practically enslaved the inhabitants of this land and attempted to eradicate their culture, language, and way of life. They were driven by an idea of religious purity that clouded their eyes to encounter the stranger as a kin.

It was in this context that Our Mother appeared to show a different path, a different method of evangelization. Rather than rejecting and doing away with the culture of the indigenous people, Guadalupe embraced their culture, utilized their language and methods of transmitting truth. She also picked someone whose humanity was being debated in elite circles as her messenger. Most importantly, she looked like the indigenous people; she was dark-skinned.

Guadalupe turned the world upside down for both the Spaniards and the natives. She embraced and affirmed both, and called both to conversion. In her, the human kinship that Jesus preached was restored. She became the mother of all inhabitants of this land regardless of race, culture, language, or creed. In her, we see ourselves!

MODERN SIGNIFICANCE

The apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe challenges us to move beyond our comfort zone. She calls us to conversion, so that when we approach the stranger among us we begin that encounter with a “yes”. A “yes” to their humanity, to their identity as children of God. She moves us from a “us vs. them” mentality, because in her our differences are

intertwined and a new creation emerges. In Guadalupe we can find the courage to put aside those things that keep us prisoners of sin: judgment, greed, envy, suspicion, and resentment. Our Mother calls us to belong to each other!

As disciples of Christ, we are called to be the salt and light of

the world. Yet, often times we often seem more comfortable with maintenance rather than courageous witness. Like Guadalupe, we need to take the initiative, we need to walk down the hill—or as Pope Francis says go outside our churches—and give witness. We are to care for the least amongst us, and stand in contrast to

the world that values ideology over life, that prefers institutional stability rather than justice, and cares more about profits than our common home.

We are called to a new creation. One that sees beyond differences, artificial boundaries, and fear of the other. We are called to say “yes” to the Gospel.

“You are my ambassador, most worthy of all confidence.”

REFLECTION

Use the following reflection questions to deepen your understanding of the Guadalupe event:

- In your own words, what is the significance of the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe?
- How does Guadalupe proclaim the Gospel?
- What keeps you from seeing the “stranger” as brother or sister?
- What is Guadalupe’s message for your parish today?
- In what ways does Guadalupe encourage the creativity of your parish community to preach the Gospel?

When Juan Diego felt inadequate to carry out the mission Our Mother entrusted to him, she lovingly reminded him of his worth in the eyes of God. Making that message your own:

- In what ways is Guadalupe asking you to be a modern-day Juan Diego? What is your response?

CLOSING PRAYER

Together, recite the following prayer:

Remember, O most gracious Virgin of Guadalupe, that in your apparitions on Mount Tepeyac you promised to show pity and compassion to all who, loving and trusting you, seek your help and protection.

Accordingly, listen now to our supplications and grant us consolation and relief. We are full of hope that, relying on your help, nothing can trouble or affect us. As you have remained with us through your admirable image, so now obtain for us the graces we need. Amen.

ACTION

Our Lady of Guadalupe gave Juan Diego a mission that had repercussions for an entire continent. Today, Guadalupe sends us as the modern-day Juan Diegos. We are to go out, to encounter and accompany the “stranger in our midst”. The stranger who suffers, who is marginalized, whose humanity is denied! As you complete this meditation—individually or as a group—come up with a concrete action plan you will carry out so as to heed to her calling.

Remember, you are her ambassador and “most worthy of all confidence”. **How will you Walk with Mary today:?**

