

Juan Diego (1474 - 1548)/ La Virgen de Guadalupe

- 1474 – 1548 This Aztec man's birth name was Quauhtla Tóhuac. His name means "he who speaks like an eagle" or "talking eagle".
He was born in Cuautitlán north of Tenochtitlán in the Aztec Empire. He was a native Náhuatl-speaking Mexica who lived in a village near a hill not far from Tenochtitlán (currently, part of Mexico City). Before the arrival of the Spaniards in 1519, he was a farmer and vendor of sleeping mats. His village was called Tolpetlac (or Tlayacac), near the current Villa de Guadalupe. Alternatively, he was known as Juan Diegotzil. He was beatified by the Roman Catholic Church in 1990, and he was canonized in 2002 as San Juan Diego Quauhtlatoatzin.
- 1519 – 1521 The Spaniards under the command of Hernán Cortés conquer Tenochtitlán, thereby destroying the Aztec empire and replacing the Aztecs as the new rulers of Mesoamerica.
- 1521 – 1531 At some unknown date (possibly 1524 or 1525) after the Spanish conquest of his town and the entire region, Quauhtla Tóhuac and his wife was converted to the Roman Catholic religion. In addition to converting to Christianity, he was taught Spanish. When he was baptized his name was changed to Juan Diego.
- 1529 Juan Diego's wife, baptized as María Lucía, died. The couple had lived in chastity for a couple of years before she died.
- 1531 Between December 9, 1531 and December 12, 1531, according to Juan Diego and Catholic tradition, Santa María (Virgin Mary) appeared to Quauhtla Tóhuac / Juan Diego three times. For an image of the original canvas depicting Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe), click on the following photo fragment:



The miraculous appearances took place on the Cerro de Tepeyac (Tepeyac Hill). Tepeyac had been the place where the Aztecs had erected a shrine to the goddess Tonantzin. This goddess was

considered the mother of the gods; she was depicted as a young woman in a white tunic; Tonantzin is understood to have been a pre-Aztec lunar goddess.

The lady spoke to him in Náhuatl and called him "Xocoyte" (little son). He answered in Náhuatl.

After each miraculous visitation, Juan Diego made a visit (3 visits in all) to the Bishop of México, Juan de Zumárraga. At each visit, Juan Diego gave a message to the bishop, which was that the bishop should build a church on Tepeyac Hill.

First visit: it ended in failure. Juan Diego had begged the Virgin to send a messenger who was more important than he. The strange lady asked him to tell the bishop to build a small house or chapel (*teocalli*) on the hill. The bishop wanted proof in the form of a sign that Juan Diego really had spoken to the Virgin Mary. So he even tried to avoid the Virgin. Meantime he went searching for a priest to attend to his dying uncle. According to pious tradition, the Virgin cured Juan Diego's uncle thereby removing his excuse for not going back to see the bishop.

Second visit: likewise a failure. Later that day the lady told him she would give him a sign.

Third visit: on Tepeyac Hill Juan Diego picked fresh roses, which in December were out of season. He filled his *tilma* with roses, but the Virgin (known in Mexican tradition as *La Morenita*—the little brown lady) arranged the roses in a bouquet and tied the *tilma* around Juan Diego's neck. A *tilma* (> Náhuatl, *timatli*) is a man's outer garment. The roses were none other than Spanish roses, *rosas de Castilla*, which is where Bishop Zumárraga was from. When Juan Diego appeared before the bishop the third time, Juan Diego untied the *tilma*, and the roses fell to the bishop's feet. (Red roses are a symbol of the Virgin Mary.) Juan Diego, the bishop, and others in attendance during the visit saw the image of the Virgen de Guadalupe "painted" on his *ayate* (cloth from maguey fiber). The event was interpreted as a Marianic miracle. The bishop gave the miraculous cloth image to Juan Diego.



(For the modern bronze statue display commemorating this event, see the photo of it taken on the grounds of the Basílica de Guadalupe in Mexico City: => [Guadalupe #11.](#))

- 1531 – 1539 Due to this miracle, 8,000,000 Mexicans converted to Christianity with a special devotion to the Virgen de Guadalupe. This Virgin is the most prominent Virgin of the conquistadors in Spain. Columbus and other conquistadors made special pilgrimages to pay homage to and pray to the Virgen de Guadalupe in her monastery in Extremadura in central Spain. The notion here is that the Spanish Virgen de Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego at Tepeyac, and that she thereby became recognized as being present on American soil.
- 1536 – 1556 A shrine was built for the Virgen de Guadalupe at Tepeyac. Juan Diego lived in this shrine, where he kept the painting, until his death.
- 1548 Juan Diego died in at Tepeyac a suburb of modern Mexico City.
- 1666 Juan Diego was declared a "holy man".
- 1754 December 12th was designated as the feast day of the Virgen de Guadalupe by the Roman Catholic Church.
- 1910 She was declared the Patron Saint of all Latin America.
- 1987 The Catholic Church declared Juan Diego venerable.
- 1990 Juan Diego was beatified (first step toward sainthood) by Pope John Paul II.
- 2002 Juan Diego was canonized as San (Saint) Juan Diego Quauhtlatotzin by Pope John Paul II. In this manner, Juan Diego represents the earliest indigenous Catholic saint in the Americas. (Other holy Latin American Catholics were canonized before Juan Diego was.)

