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Our Lady of Guadalupe: Patroness of the Unborn and the Americas

Whenever we think of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we tend to think of her as the Patroness of the Americas. But, do we ever invoke her as her Second Name, the Patroness of the Unborn? And why is she the patroness of the Unborn? Whenever we pass by or recognize our Lady of Guadalupe in the grandeur of her images or statues, we become reverent toward her visual presences, and for some, whenever trying to imagine Our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe is the first image depicted in their heads (Meza). But do we ever realize Who else might be in the image, excluding the Cherub at the feet of Our Lady? In many ways, messages of the dignity of life, God has given us in the image and the story that surrounds the image is often overlooked, including the fact that our salvation began with an “unplanned” pregnancy. Although it was planned by God, Mother Mary did not know that she was to bear the Son of God until it was revealed to her during the Annunciation. She was given the choice to say “Yes”, and even the chance to say “No,” but to everyone’s dismay today, she said “Yes.” Because of her answer, many see her as a “strong woman [who] was willing to sacrifice everything for her son and her family” (Dominguez). The reason for her answer can be seen, subtly yet clearly, through not only the story of her apparition at Guadalupe, but in the image of her on San Juan Diego’s tilma.

Firstly, Our Blessed Mother chose to appear to a simple Native man named Juan Diego. Many people “adore her because she chose to show herself to someone who was not a part of the elite group or who was wealthy” (Morales). Likewise, she chose to show herself as a *mezita*, or a woman of mixed races, one being Spanish and the other Aztec. Like her Son Jesus, she chose to be with the oppressed and lowly, yet became the bridge between the two races. Her appearance

in that form represented the dignity of the Aztecs who were being treated poorly by the Spaniards and helped them recognize that they are also Children of God despite their transgressions. During her apparitions to San Juan Diego, he felt guilty that he missed a visit from her as he took care of his sick uncle. To his comfort, La Virgen consoled him and told him that his uncle was healed. Afterward, she asked him to gather flowers from the top of the hill where the church she requested was to be built and show them to the bishop. "Juan Diego trusted Our Lady and found on the top of the frozen and barren hill the most beautiful flowers. He gathered them and Our Blessed Mother arranged them in his cloak or tilma as it was called" (Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe). This represents that even in the darkest of times, our mother will not abandon us and that the possibility of life and thriving despite all circumstances is still there, and that prejudice should not blind potential.

Within the tilma, the symbolism representing the dignity of life becomes rich once looked at in-depth and past its surface level of beauty again forming a sense of unity and community between the Aztecs and the Spaniards. For the Aztecs, her clothing represented her royalty and the black sash she wore is what they wore to signify pregnancy. To the Spaniards, she wore the symbol of the cross which was drawn upon their ships and their buildings, and the blue represented the classical color of blue in which the Blessed Mother had been depicted time and time again. The sun at her back and moon at feet helped the Spaniards classify her as the Woman of the Apocalypse, and to the Aztecs, this exemplified that she was more powerful than the Aztec sun and moon god. As she tramples upon what symbolizes the feathers of their god, Quetzalcoatl, it is like she had removed what was choking them from true life. On her abdomen, where Jesus was growing, there was a small flower that had only four petals. To the Aztecs, it represented the symbol for the true God above all gods. The whole tilma, on which Our Lady of

Guadalupe's miraculous image appeared, survived, and continues to do so for nearly 500 years and counting has only a working life of 15 years. This represents the many generations that were saved due to the conversions of the Aztecs since there was no more child sacrifice. The intact state represents not only the generations that continued to live, but also symbolized the blood that had been shed from the martyrs, and the lives of the babies and children that became the seeds, and hence, roots of the church. Upon seeing all of these revelations the Aztecs, along with the Spaniards, had been affirmed that this was the Mother of the True God (St. Joseph's Rosary Parts). The stars on her tilma told the story of her appearance. The stars were positioned in the exact same constellation they were under on the night of her apparition. Although the Aztecs and Spaniards were under different circumstances, they were bound under the same sky and same God. Even though it could have been seen from a different perspective, they all came to the same understanding of the One True God and His Mother, just on the course of different paths. Like how this occurred during the Protestant reformation, and many people were leaving the Church in Europe, in the Americas, especially in Mexico, there was the conversion of 10 times the people who left the faith. And like how the Spaniards and the Aztecs seemed to be from worlds apart, that night they recognized they were under the same sky. Today, this represents that despite the changing times, and that although we are under different circumstances, we are bound under the same sky, and that we have a Mother who loves and cares deeply for us and a God who is willing to risk it all for us. The whole tilma, on which Our Lady of Guadalupe's miraculous image appeared, survived, and continues to do so for nearly 500 years and counting has only a working life of 15 years (St. Joseph's Rosary Parts). This represents the many generations that were saved due to the conversions of the Aztecs since there was no more child sacrifice. The intact state represents not only the generations that continued to live, but also symbolized the

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Like in the story of Abraham and Issac, during their time, it was common practice to sacrifice their own children since some thought that it was pleasing to their respective gods. God tested Abraham, not to see if he was obedient, but to let Abraham know that the sacrifice of children was not what He wanted when He told Abraham to stop, then provided for him a goat to sacrifice (Kendall). God, again, was the change during the sacrifice of children in Mexico/ the Aztec community. Relating back to today's times, the earthquake that occurred on September 9, 2021, right after Our Lady's birthday, and the moment when abortion became decriminalized in Mexico is what I believe to be the mournful cry of Our Lady who is not only the Patroness of America but of the Unborn. It was her tearful sorrow knowing that the people who were once converted, reverted to their sinful past, but this time not individually but as a conscious choice. We can apply the message, story, and image of Our Lady of Guadalupe today by praying and taking care of the unborn, and their mothers in "action rather than in words that might antagonize" (Sons of Holy Mary Immaculate). Finally, we must give ourselves totally to Mary, as she will polish and refine all our actions, deeds, goodwill, soul, and heart. Like Saint Pope John Paul the II we must say wholeheartedly to her, "Totus tuus", strive to build the Culture of Life, seek to understand as to be understood, and live in simplicity and humility in the Light of God so that others might be brought to the Light as well. What Mary means to many is that she is "the mother who listens to our cries, our laughter, and our silent petitions." Allow her to continue or start being that for you. In our own time, let us remember to respect life from conception to natural death. We are all made in the image of God and our differences make us who we are. Remember that life is sacred and that, to create a just society, we must recognize that. Like St.

Bruno once said, "No act is charitable if it is not just." And if we have made mistakes in the past, whether consciously or unconsciously, and we feel overly immense guilt which makes us feel unredeemable, C.S. Lewis once said in his book *The Great Divorce*, "Don't you remember on earth—there were things too hot to touch with your finger but you could drink them all right? Shame is like that. If you will accept it—if you will drink the cup to the bottom—you will find it very nourishing: but try to do anything else with it and it scalds" and that Oscar Wilde said, as well, "Every Saint has a past, and every sinner has a future."

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