

One

The Story of Our Lady of Guadalupe

I just came back from leading a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. It is the most important world event in the last 1000 years and very few people know the facts.

The Aztec people, the Mexica as they called themselves, believed their god, Huitzilopochtli, also called Mexitli, made them the “chosen people”. He called them across a great desert (Arizona and New Mexico and Northern Mexico) to the “Promised Land”, the valley of Mexico City.

Their god, Mexitli, was known as the Sun God of War and the "serpent god" under the sign of the crescent moon. He threatened not to rise and so the world would perish unless they offered him sacrifice, human sacrifice, every day.

Mexitli was Satan. He enslaved the Mexican people by fear and established a religion to himself. He was to be worshipped by a temple sacrifice not of lambs but of people. You had to eat the sacrifice to take part in it, meaning ritual cannibalism. 50,000 men, women, and children were killed annually. In one four day period in 1487, 80,000 were killed.

In February of 1519, the Spanish explorer Cortes landed on the shore of Mexico. There he found the Aztec people enslaved to a culture of death, literally a cult of human sacrifice. The Spanish witnessed this with their own eyes and wanted to flee. But “thou shalt not stand idly by in the face of grave evil.”

Cortes became convinced he was sent by God to put an end to the human sacrifice. So, he scuttled their ships, leaving his men no option but to fight their way into Mexico City and put an end to this evil occult.

There were an estimated 350,000-500,000 Aztec Warriors in Mexico City. Cortes had 200 soldiers. A few of the tribes who had suffered grievously under the tyranny of the Aztecs joined Cortes but still they were outnumbered 1000-1. Gun-powder ran out quickly and they were forced into hand and to hand combat. It was an impossible task.

In November of 1519 Cortes fought his way into Mexico City and arrested Montezuma. Then, in April of 1520, 1000 Spanish arrived from Cuba to arrest Cortes because they thought he was stealing all the gold. Cortes left Mexico City with 2/3 of his men to confront and defeat the Spanish. By the time he got back to Mexico City Montezuma realized these were just ordinary men – not gods. Then the whole Aztec Empire crashed down on them.

Miraculously – ½ escaped on the Night of Sorrow – June 30, 1520. They gained time and help from surrounding tribes and defeated the Aztec nation in 1521. In 1524, Franciscan missionaries came but had little success with conversions because the King of Spain replaced Cortes with Nuno de Guzman, a wicked tyrant, who enslaved the Aztec people shipping them to the Caribbean colonies. In 1537 he was arrested for treason, abuse of power, and mistreatment of the indigenous inhabitants of his territories and he was sent to Spain in shackles.

In 1530 the Bishop of Mexico City, Bishop Zumarrago had all the Franciscans publicly denounce de Guzman. He had them arrested, tortured and one killed. The Bishop Excommunicated De Guzman for his crimes. De Guzman then tried to assassinate the Bishop. While the

Mexican people lost 1/3 of their population to the small-pox brought by the Spanish. The Aztec Astrologers said it was the end of their world.

This was a situation and a culture impossible to convert to Christ. It looked so hopeless that the Bishop wrote a letter to Emperor Charles V at the end of which he said, "If God does not provide a solution from His own hand, the land is about to be completely lost."

Two

First and Second Apparitions of Guadalupe

On Saturday, December 9th, 1531, one of the few Aztec converts, 57 yr. old Juan Diego was running to Saturday morning Mass and Catechism class 9 miles away! As he came to Tepayac Hill he heard singing, saw a brilliant white cloud and a rainbow, and a beautiful young woman appeared to him.

Juan Diego fell to his knees and the Woman spoke to him, "Know for certain, littlest of my sons, that I am the perfect and perpetual Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God through Whom everything lives. You must go to the house of the bishop of Mexico and tell him that I sent you and that it is my desire to have a Church built here."

Juan went to the Bishop, but the Bishop did not believe him.

As Juan Diego was returning home, Mary was waiting for him again at Tepayak Hill. He explained to her what happened and He begged her to send someone of more importance, "Because I am a nobody, I am a small rope, a tiny ladder, I am just a leaf ,the tail end..."

But Our Lady answered, “I have many servants and messengers whom I could send But I have chosen you...Go and tell the Bishop that I, in person, the ever-virgin Holy Mary, Mother of God, sent you.”

Three

On Sunday December 10th, Juan Diego went back to the Bishop. This time the bishop wanted a sign. On his way home Mary again appeared to Juan. This was the third apparition.

She assured him that she would provide a sign tomorrow. “I will await you here” she said.

However, the next day, Monday December 11th, Juan Diego’s uncle fell gravely ill with smallpox. Juan skipped his appointment with Mary to go and find a doctor who told Juan his Uncle would die.

Juan set off for Mexico City to get a priest for Last Rites. To get there, he had to pass by Tepayac Hill. Afraid he would be delayed by Mary, he ran around the opposite side of the hill, this time to the east. But Mary came down and intercepted him.

He explained about his uncle but she already knew because she was appearing to his uncle at that very moment, healing him.

Mary said, “Listen. Put it in your heart, my dear little son; the thing that frightens you, the thing that afflicts your heart is nothing. Do not let it disturb you; do not fear this sickness nor any other sickness, nor any painful or difficult thing.

“Am I not here, I who have the honor and joy of being your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the folds of my mantle?

I'n the crossing of my arms? Do you need something more?

Let nothing else worry or disturb you. Do not worry about your uncles illness because he will not die. You may be certain that he is already well.”

Four

The Sign

She then told Juan to climb the hill and he would find the sign. There, he found Castillian Roses, a type of rose not yet introduced to Mexico, blooming in winter on a barren hill-side. Juan gathered up the roses. Mary arranged them in his tilma, the bleached white cloak he wore, and she tied it up around his neck. Then Juan went back to the Bishop. When he untied the Tilma and let it fall from around his neck in the presence of the Bishop and the twelve other people in the room, the roses fell out. The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe developed right before their eyes, like a photograph developing. Everyone fell to their knees

The Bishop then placed the Tilma in his private chapel. Two weeks later, on December 26th, 1531, the Bishop brought the Tilma to the main church by procession. At the same time, a funeral procession bearing a young man who died from an arrow wound to the neck was coming into the city. When the two processions met and the Tilma passed by the dead man, he was instantly raised from the dead.

Five

Mary appeared to Juan Diego in 1531

She left a permanent indestructible sign, the Tilma, the cloak bearing her image and 10,000,000 Aztecs converted to Catholicism because they could read the Code, the symbols on the Image.

The woman stands in front of the Sun, covering it, showing that She is greater than their Sun god of war. She stands on the Crescent Moon, the symbol of their Serpent god, appearing to crush it under her feet. She is wearing a bluish-green mantle, the color reserved for royalty. So she is a Queen. She is surrounded by clouds so she came from another world to give her message. She is a virgin, signified by the parted hair that hangs loose. Around her waist is a black sash that signifies a maternity belt, meaning She is pregnant.

This woman was a Queen, who was also a virgin yet she was pregnant – pregnant with whom?

On her garment, over her womb, was the four-petal jasmine flower signifying that she was pregnant with the One True God. The true God, the Lord of the universe was in her womb.

This woman is the Virgin Mother of the One True God. But she herself was not a god because she was praying to the One indicated by the black cross on her brooch, Jesus Christ. He came to offer His life in sacrifice to put an end to all human sacrifice and set us free from slavery to sin, the devil, and death.

They read the message, believed and the whole Aztec Nation converted.

We all face things that make us feel like the Bishop when he wrote, “If God does not provide a solution from His own hand, the land is about to be completely lost.”

But we never have reason to lose hope. Have confidence in Our Lady who is with you and is saying to you,

“Am I not here who, I who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the folds of my mantle? In the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else that you need?”

Ultimate meaning of this Event

The Aztec people couldn't save themselves. Cortes couldn't save them. The Franciscans couldn't do it. The culture of the Aztecs and the Spanish was too far gone. For men it was Impossible. All things are possible for God, through Our Lady.

I think we could say the same for our culture today. On our own, will we wake up and turn back to Christ and His moral teaching? I doubt it.

So Jesus sends Mary. She is the only remedy left. Once again She will crush the head of the Serpent who demands a culture of death. She will lead us to Jesus. This will be the Triumph of Her Immaculate Heart.

Just as She had a mission for Juan Diego, She has a mission for us. Pray the Rosary every day. Invite others to pray the Rosary with you. Take time for invitation, simple hospitality, catching up with people. Print out the transcript or have them pull it up on their phone. Pray the Podcast together or read each point of the transcript and pray the decades together.

Then do what Teresa and I do, turn to someone and ask, “So, what struck you during the meditation?” Then have some good conversation.

Do this once a week on Sundays or once a month. And ask yourself, “What if Juan would have never responded?”