Mary in America

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Tonight I get the privilege to talk about two things that I love: *Our Lady of Guadalupe* and our Country! While I would like to talk about many details regarding *Our Lady of Guadalupe* and all of my favorite titles for her such as *Protectress of the Unborn*, this is only around a twenty minute talk, so I will have to wait until another time, perhaps the 500th anniversary of her appearances to Juan Diego in 2031!

Tonight I will focus on the fact that Mary is the Mother of God, that she is also our Mother, the situation surrounding Mary's coming in 1531, Mary's coming, why she has the title, *Patroness of the Americas*, and some lessons we can take from her in light of our Country's 250th anniversary.

From Scripture we can establish that Mary is the Mother of God. In the account of the Annunciation, we hear that Mary "will conceive in [her] womb and bear a son…, [and that this Son] will be called the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:31-32)." In the account of the Visitation, we hear that Elizabeth, "filled with the Holy Spirit…exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me' (Luke 1:41-43)." Other texts that show that Mary is the Mother of God include Galatians 4:4-7, and Isaiah 7:14 that is fulfilled in Matthew 1:22-23. In addition, at the council of Ephesus in 431 AD, this was defined theologically, because Mary is the Mother of a Divine Person, not just the Mother of a nature.

But Mary is not just the Mother of God, she is the Mother of all of us. At the foot of the Cross, on Calvary, as Jesus was dying, He gave John, who represents all of humanity, to Mary as her child when he said, "'Woman, behold, your son!' Then He said to [John], 'Behold, your Mother!' (John 19:26-27)." Mary takes her role as our Mother very seriously, and America was in dire need of her assistance at the time of her appearances in 1531.

The native Mesoamerican cultures practiced human sacrifice and cannibalism. In "the years immediately preceding the arrival of Hernan Cortes, about 250,000 persons…were sacrificed every year."[1] A side note—the population of Wichita is

[1] Anson, Francis, *Guadalupe What Her Eyes Say* (Manila: Sinag-tala Publishers, 1994), 13.

estimated to be 401,409,[2] so if the "source" for human sacrifices was the city of Wichita, KS, in less than two years the whole population of Wichita would be wiped out. You may be wondering why they sacrificed so many people, and the simple answer is that the Aztecs believed their gods needed blood in order for the sun to shine and world not to end.

In February 1519, Cortes landed in Mexico. By August 13, 1521, the Aztecs were conquered, and Cortes renamed the city Mexico City and claimed it for the Spanish Crown.[3] The Spanish conquistadors did not always treat the native population in accord with the laws established for the proper treatment of conquered people.[4]

Things turned from bad to worse for the native population in 1528 when five ruthless conquistadors, who thought they were untouchable came to power. They were known as the First Roal Audience.[5] Thankfully, at Cortes' suggestion and under Emperor Charles V's influence, the Church appointed a bishop who had both civil and ecclesiastical power. "In December 1528 Prior Juan Zumarraga was appointed the first Bishop of the New World"[6] and "Protector of the Indians."[7] While the missionaries in the New World were "instructing the Indians about the love of God and neighbor, teaching them to observe the Ten Commandments and to live in peace and harmony" other Spaniards lived their lives doing the opposite, choosing to kill, enslave, steal, etc.[8] Despite Zumarraga's attempts to change the First Royal Audience's behavior through public condemnations of their actions, writing letters to the Emperor (which were intercepted and destroyed by members of the Royal Audience because of their strict censorship), things were so bad that in 1530 bishop-elect Zumarraga excommunicated the five members of the Royal Audience, moved out of Mexico City, and wrote in a letter to Emperor Charles V (which finally got through "hidden in 'a roll of bacon in a keg of oil'").[9] In this letter Zumarraga stated, "If God does not provide the remedy from His Hand, the land is about to be completely lost."[10] In other words, Zumarraga believed few people would become

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[2] World Population Review, "Wichita, Kansas Population 2026," accessed June 8, 2026, https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/kansas/wichita.

[3] Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, *A Handbook on Guadalupe* (Waite Park, MN: Park Press, 1997), 35.

[4] Gorny, Gazegorz; Rosikon, Janusz; Murphy, Mary, *Guadalupe Mysteries: Deciphering the Code* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2016), 139. *The Laws of Burgos 1512 and the Laws of Valladolid 1513 were established to safeguard conquered peoples. Because human dignity was not being upheld, Pope Paul III wrote "Sublimis Deus" in 1537 which meant that if Catholics enslaved the people or denied them of other God-given rights, they would no longer be Catholic.*

[5] Johnston, Francis, *The Wonder of Guadalupe* (Rockford: Tan Books, 1981), 20.

[6] Johnston, Francis, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*, 21.

[7] Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, *A Handbook on Guadalupe*, 49.

[8] Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, *A Handbook on Guadalupe*, 49.

[9] Hansen, Mary, "Protector of the Indians," accessed June 9, 2026, https://onepeterfive.com/protector-indians/.

[10] Hansen, Mary, "Protector of the Indians," accessed June 9, 2026, https://onepeterfive.com/protector-indians/.

Christian, and the Spanish might become massacred because of the cruel treatment of the Indians by the conquistadors.

Thankfully, God did provide a remedy: His own dear Mother. On Saturday, December 9, 1531, Mary appeared to Juan Diego who was on his way to church for the "Feast of the Immaculate Conception which was celebrated… throughout the Spanish Empire on December 9."[11] She appeared to him on Tepeyac hill, which in pre-Cortes times had a temple dedicated to the "snake-mother goddess, devourer of children."[12] When Mary appeared to Juan Diego, she did it in a way Juan Diego would have understood both as a native but also as a Christian.

As a native, Juan Diego recognized precious birds singing on a hill, which made him feel "extremely happy and contented,"[13] so he went up the hill and saw Mary whose presence made the ordinary rocks and plants colorful, beautiful, and radiant. All of these things made him wonder if he was in the Flower World Paradise (what we would call heaven) that his ancestors had talked about.[14]

As a Christian, Juan Diego could have seen the similarities between what happened to him on Tepeyac hill with the Mother of God and what happened to a different John, on a hill named Calvary, at the foot of the Cross, when Mary was given to all of us as our Mother.

At the first apparition, Mary told Juan Diego in his native language, Nahuatl,

> Know for sure, my dearest and youngest son, that I am the perfect ever virgin holy Mary, Mother of the One Great God *…* I want very much that they build my sacred little house here, in which I will show Him, I will exalt Him and make Him manifest: I will give Him to the people in all my personal love, in my compassionate gaze, in my help, in my salvation. Because I am truly your compassionate mother, yours and of all the people who live together in this land, and of all the other people of different ancestries, my lovers, those who cry to me, those who seek me, those who trust in me, because there I will listen to their weeping, their sadness, to remedy, to cleanse and nurse all their different troubles, their miseries, their suffering…go to the residence of the Bishop of Mexico, and you will tell him how I am sending you, so that you may reveal to him that I very much want him to build me a house here.[15]

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[11] Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, *A Handbook on Guadalupe*, 3.

[12] Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, *A Handbook on Guadalupe*, 4.

[13] *Nican Mopohua*, 13, https://springfieldop.org/wp-content/uploads/nican_mopohua_english.pdf

[14] Gonzalez, Joseph, Gonzalez, Monique, *Guadalupe and the Flower World Prophecy: How God prepared the Americas for Conversion Before the Lady Appeared* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 2023).

[15] Nican Mopohua, 26-33, https://springfieldop.org/wp-content/uploads/nican_mopohua_english.pdf

We can see clearly here that Mary is the Mother of God who wants a shrine built so that the people can come closer to Jesus. But this shrine is to be so much more: a place where Mary, our compassionate Mother, will intercede for her children. Additionally, we see that Mary says she is the Mother "of all the people who live together in this land."[16] This is very important, because the pilgrims will not land at Plymouth Rock until 1620—almost 100 years after this—so at this time there were no national boundaries. This land was all just part of "America," which is why she is the *Patroness of the Americas*.

For time's sake, let us fast forward past a couple apparitions and couple encounters between bishop-elect Zumarraga and Juan Diego. When Juan Diego had returned home on December 10, he found his uncle, Juan Bernardino, very sick. Because he was caring for his uncle, he missed his appointment with Mary on December 11. Then, on December 12, he left to get a priest so that his uncle could be prepared for death. On his way to find a priest, Mary appeared to him. Mary told Juan Diego—again in his native language,

> Listen. Put it into your heart, my youngest and dearest son, that the thing that frightened you, the thing that afflicted you is nothing. Do not let it disturb you: do not fear this sickness nor any other sickness, nor any sharp and hurtful thing. Am I not here, 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 hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need something more? Let nothing else worry you, [or] disturb you…You may be certain that he [your uncle] is already well.[17]

In this apparition, Mary again tells us that she is our Mother. She also tells us not to be anxious and fearful. Instead, we are to trust. Then she ends this encounter with a powerful image: we are "in the hollow of [her] mantle, in the crossing of [her] arms,"[18] the place where mothers would carry and hold their children, and the place where Mary held and carried our Lord.

Also in this apparition, Mary told Juan Diego that his uncle, Juan Bernardino was well, so there was no longer a need for him to go and get a priest to prepare his uncle for death. Additionally, Mary told Juan Diego to climb up Tepeyac hill and cut the flowers—which were Castilian Roses—flowers that had not yet been introduced to Mexico and which were not in season—to be the "sign" for the bishop that Mary had indeed appeared and wanted a church built.[19]

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[16] Nican Mopohua, 30, https://springfieldop.org/wp-content/uploads/nican_mopohua_english.pdf

[17] Nican Mopohua, 118-120, https://springfieldop.org/wp-content/uploads/nican_mopohua_english.pdf

[18] Nican Mopohua, 119, https://springfieldop.org/wp-content/uploads/nican_mopohua_english.pdf

[19] Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, *A Handbook on Guadalupe*, 6.

So, Juan Diego brought the flowers in his tilma to bishop-elect Zumarraga, and as Juan Diego opened his tilma, Our Lady's image was imprinted on his tilma! The tilma "was like a coded message. One part was clear to the Spanish, the other to the Indians."[20] This image united both the Spanish and the Indians, using symbolism to show them that she is the Mother of God and the Mother of all people, thus uniting them into one people.

Prior to this event, the missionaries had few converts. After her image was imprinted on the tilma, people came from all over—places that the missionaries had never been—seeking baptism and admittance to the faith because of ordinary people telling others the message of Guadalupe. Most sources estimate between eight and ten million people were converted to the faith in around ten years because of this image.

The tilma itself is also miraculous—it has lasted almost 500 years when it should have deteriorated after less than twenty. The imperfections of the cloth create different features of the image such as the lips. The eyes act like living human eyes and thirteen people can be seen in them. There is so much more, but that is beyond the scope of this talk.

After the miraculous imprinting of Our Lady's image on the tilma, Juan Diego, Bishop-elect Zumarraga and others went to the home of Juan Diego's uncle, Juan Bernardino. Juan Bernardino was cured, and he told them that the Lady had appeared to him and told him her name. Mary had spoken to both Juan Diego and Juan Bernardino in their native language, Nahuatl. In Nahuatl, there are no g /g/ and d /d/ sounds. Hence, scholars believe that she actually said her name was *Coatlaxopeuh,*[21] which sounds similar to *Guadalupe*, a famous Marian shrine in Extremadura**,** Spain. Interestingly, *Coatlaxopeuh* means "'she who breaks, stamps or crushes the serpent.'"[22]

This has many implications for us, but here are just a few. First, the serpent and the woman make us think of two main texts in the Bible: Genesis 3 and Revelation 12. In Genesis, the serpent tricked the woman into eating the forbidden fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden and then was cursed by God. "I will put enmity [which means absolute, perfect hatred, in other words, they never were in league together for anything such as sin] between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel (Gen 3:15)." This calls to mind the Immaculate Conception, which the people had just celebrated on December 9. The Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of the Immaculate Conception is the patroness of the United States, so we can see again how fitting the 1531 apparitions are for us as Americans. It also calls to mind Revelation 12:1-3, "A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun,

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[20] Gorny, Gazegorz; Rosikon, Janusz; Murphy, Mary, *Guadalupe Mysteries: Deciphering the Code,* 40.

[21] Johnston, Francis, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*, 47.

[22] Johnston, Francis, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*, 47.

with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon…" which makes us think of the image on the tilma. Both picture Mary standing on the moon, pregnant, and clothed with stars. Secondly, one of the main gods of the Aztecs was the serpent god Quetzalcoatl, so we see that Mary and her offspring will "crush all the Aztec gods, behind whom, of course, was Satan."[23]

To pull a couple things together: *Our Lady of Guadalupe* is the *Patroness of the Americas* because no national borders existed in 1531. This title coincides nicely with our Country's official patroness, *Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception*, since that is essentially the name she told Juan Bernardino in 1531, *Coatlaxopeuh,* "'she who breaks, stamps or crushes the serpent.'"[24] Either way, our patroness is none other than the Mother of God.

When Mary came in 1531, she united two cultures, European and indigenous, and formed them into one nation. The United States of America was founded as "One nation under God."[25] The United States is considered a melting pot of cultures and peoples. While we may have different traditions that go back to one's culture of origin, part of being an American means that we also adopt the traditions of this great Country.

Our Country was founded on religious freedom, and it was so important to the founding Fathers that the 1st Amendment to the Constitution (part of the Bill of Rights) protects the freedom of religion.[26] Unfortunately, we are currently "facing an aggressive, organized agenda by elite groups who want to eliminate the influence of Christianity from our society,"[27] rewriting our history and changing our freedom to practice our religion to a freedom to worship behind closed doors. This is something that we cannot tolerate, for the good of our Country, because we would like our Country to be around for another 250 years.

This means that we must stand up when our rights are attacked, but more than that we must witness with our lives, to be the "salt of the earth (Matt 5:13)," showing what it means to be a Catholic Christian in our Country. A part of being a Catholic Christian is having Mary as our Mother, and that means having a real relationship with her and seeking her help in times of need, just as a little child would do. Mary has shown great favor to all of her children, but especially all of us in the Americas because of what she did and said at Tepeyac. Msgr. Eduardo Chavez, an expert on

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[23] Johnston, Francis, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*, 48.

[24] Johnston, Francis, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*, 47.

[25] "Pledge of Allegiance," in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2026), accessed June 8, 2026, https://www.britannica.com/event/Pledge-of-Allegiance-to-the-Flag-of-the-United-States-of-America.

[26] U.S. Constitution, amend. I

[27] Gomez, Jose, "Mary, Foundress of America," accessed June 9, 2026, https://firstthings.com/mary-foundress-of-america/.

the Guadalupe event of 1531 who has studied in depth the original Nahuatl accounts of the apparitions said that Mary's words "would be more accurately translated as 'Do not be afraid. *I have the honor and joy* to be your Mother.' This … revelation [is] a very humbling one—that the Holy Mother of God finds joy in having children such as ourselves."[28] Furthermore, Elizabeth's words at the Visitation can be applied to us: "Why is this granted to [us] that the Mother of my Lord should come to [us] (Luke 1:41-43)." What confidence we should have in such a wonderful Mother!

Additionally, Tepeyac teaches us that we must value every human life—from conception to natural death, and value all people as our "brothers and sisters, children of one Father [with] the Mother of God [as] our Mother."[29] As Pope Pius XII said, "'For we are certain that as long as [Mary is] recognized as Queen and Mother, Mexico and America will be safe'"[30] So, in all our difficulties, fears, and anxieties, we must remember Mary's words at Tepeyac:

Am I not here, 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 hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need something more? Let nothing else worry you [or] disturb you.[31]

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[28] Poor Clare Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe, August 2017, accessed June 10, 2026, https://www.poorclares-roswell.org/2017-newsletter

[29] Gomez, Jose, "Mary, Foundress of America," accessed June 9, 2026, https://firstthings.com/mary-foundress-of-america/.

[30] Johnston, Francis, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*, 95.

[31] Nican Mopohua, 118-120, https://springfieldop.org/wp-content/uploads/nican_mopohua_english.pdf