



MISSIONARIES IN ACTION

DOMINICAN MISSION FOUNDATION

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Blessed Art Thou Among All



Dear Mission Friends:

After 2,018 years, Our Blessed Mother Mary is still venerated the world over, and not only by Christians. Islamists recognize her as the mother of Jesus and a most important and righteous woman—she is in fact mentioned in the Quran more often than in the Bible, and she is the only woman mentioned by name. Until the 18th century, she was the world's most frequently depicted female figure in painting and sculpture, and she is the subject of a myriad of poems, stories, novels, and of course, hymns.

Mary has been accorded over 6,000 titles and epithets, lovely names that demonstrate the breadth of her influence and inspiration. Some of them honor an event from Scripture, such as *Immaculate Conception*; some represent Church dogma, such as the *Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*; some, like *Our Lady of the Rosary*, are based on devotions to her; others, like *Mother of Good Counsel*,

stem from the help she gives with human problems and needs; and many simply acknowledge her virtues, such as *Our Lady of Mercy*.

Mary's apparitions, which have occurred all over the world, are also commemorated in her names, usually by location, such as *Our Lady of Lourdes*. According to the oral descriptions of those to whom she has appeared, she manifested herself differently with each occurrence—the clothing she wore, the language she spoke, the age she appeared to be, the requests she made—are all quite disparate. Yet her world-renowned qualities of faith, love, and gentle strength remain consistent, assuring us that she is one and the same person, Blessed Mother to us all.

One of her earliest apparitions, occurring in 1531 atop a hill near what is now Mexico City, garnered her the epithet of *Our Lady of Guadalupe*. Having a dark complexion, wearing Aztec clothing, and speaking the native tongue, she appeared to Cuauhtlatoatzin, a 57-year-old indigenous man recently converted to Catholicism and baptized Juan Diego. At her first appearance, on December 9th, she told him to have the bishop build a church on that spot, but the bishop dismissed Juan Diego, saying he needed some sort of sign.



When she appeared on the 12th, she had Juan Diego gather some roses growing nearby—roses not native to the area—which she bundled in his cloak and instructed him to take to the bishop. When he entered the bishop's room, he let the roses fall from his cloak, on which there appeared a colorful image of Mary (above, the original, now enclosed in glass), just as he had described her. To be sure, a chapel was soon built on the top of that hill, but the fast-growing devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe necessitated that the chapel be replaced, and in 1709 a basilica that could safely accommodate the cloak and its now 2,000 daily visitors was built at the foot of the hill.





That basilica had to be enlarged two times, until 1976 when yet another basilica was built next to it, a modern stadium-like structure able to hold the now 20,000 daily visitors—millions each year—hoping to catch a glimpse of the original cloak, made of cactus-fiber, still imprinted with Our Lady's image, hanging over the altar.

Our Lady of Guadalupe's popularity can be attributed in large part to the apparition's unique circumstances. Not only is this the only time in which Mary shared an image of herself—an image, moreover, that still exists!—but it is also one of the rare times that she appeared pregnant. (As was tradition at the time, she wore a black sash, which pregnant Aztec women tied higher, above the belly, like Mary's in the image.) With strength and grace, she is carrying Our Lord Jesus Christ, unborn and at his most vulnerable, frail, and dependent. **Many of her devout followers have always been drawn to and felt nurtured by her maternal virtues of comfort and protection, patience, acceptance, and unconditional love.**

In fact she could very well have been addressing all of us when she referred to herself as “mother” to Juan Diego: **“Am I not here, I, who am your mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, the crossing of my arms? Am I not the source of all your joy?”**

Indeed, Our Blessed Mother, like all good mothers, has room to keep all her children close to her heart. And if she is mother to us all, then we are all brothers and sisters. **Thus, the Guadalupe message is both one of the dignity of each human being as well as of our interconnectedness to each other.**

The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is observed on December 12 and pilgrims from all over the country—many traveling for a week on foot or by burro—flock to the basilica outside Mexico City, lining the adjacent streets, waiting their turn to enter the church with their offerings and petitions (*above*). In our parish in Mexicali, Our Lady of Guadalupe is honored each December with a novena

of Masses beginning on the 3rd. For nine consecutive nights, hundreds and hundreds of pilgrims set off from three outlying chapels, on horseback or by foot, to converge upon our church of *Santa Maria de Guadalupe* to honor its patron. The processions are filled with children dressed up in traditional costumes and carrying baskets of roses. The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe abounds—on floats, banners, shirts, wheelchairs...

On the final night, the eve of her actual feast day, many simply spend the night rather than return home yet again, so as to awake to the burst of fireworks that begin even before sunrise, and to join in serenading Our Lady with *Las Mañanitas* (‘Sweet Little Mornings’). Masses are offered all day long and community-made food and drink and traditional songs and dancing continue non-stop throughout the day and evening.

¡Feliz Fiesta a Ud., Nuestra Señora!
¡Y Feliz y Santa Navidad a todos!

Lesley Warnshuis



I caught this picture on a visit to Mexicali, fascinated by Guadalupe's presence even in a junkyard in the poorest of neighborhoods.



Moments from our Mexicali parish's annual novena in celebration of Santa Maria de Guadalupe. It's the children who so eagerly bring it to life year after year.





Antonio de Torres, circa 1720

*God of power and mercy, you blessed the Americas
with the presence of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe.
May her prayers help all men and women
to accept each other as brothers and sisters.
Through your justice present in our hearts,
may your peace reign in the world.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

A POEM FOR THE SEASON

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

~Alfred, Lord Tennyson

YEAR-END GIVING AND TAX BENEFITS

As you do your tax planning, we hope you will consider making good use of the income tax charitable deduction.

Your year-end gift can reduce your income taxes while providing meaningful support to the Dominican Mission Foundation.

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