



When God Has Our Face!

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Every December 12th, Mexico and Latin America celebrate the Virgin of Guadalupe. The brown Madonna is said to have appeared to Juan Diego, an Indigenous man who, like many others, had been forced into Catholicism. The conquest robbed Indigenous people of their spirituality, language, and culture. A new religion was imposed on them by the Spanish colonizers. The Virgin of Guadalupe bears witness to colonialism's assault on the roots of Indigenous people.

The story tells us that la Morenita (the brown one as she is called lovingly by her people) appeared to Juan Diego in the Tepeyac with "Music and Flowers." During this appearance, she asked Juan Diego to deliver a message to the bishop to have a shrine built for her at this site. Juan Diego goes to the religious authorities to deliver the message, but he is dismissed by the priests. His word had no validity to the colonizers. Juan Diego was just a poor, "uncivilized" Indigenous man: Why would God choose him to reveal their divinity? Why would the image of Virgin Mary in the form of Guadalupe use him as messenger? Who was he to have seen God's manifestation?

The first [narrative](#) that we have about the encounter of the Virgin of Guadalupe with Juan Diego is in Nahuatl (Mayan indigenous language). This document says it took a miracle for the religious authorities to believe Juan Diego. The second time the Guadalupe appeared to him, she ordered him to put the roses that were around her on his cloak. The Guadalupe tells him to bring them to the bishop. When Juan Diego arrives to see the bishop and the priests again, he opens his cloak and the splendid image of the Virgin of Guadalupe is painted there. The religious authorities have no other choice but to kneel, adore, and believe Juan Diego. They realized that yes, a humble person can be a vessel of hope. Nowadays, five million people make a pilgrimage to Mexico City every year to visit and pray at the feet of this inexplicable painting on Juan Diego's cloak where the Virgin of Guadalupe is

looking compassionately to the world. Some of the followers make promises and petitions to the image crawling on their knees from outside the Cathedral to reach the front of the altar where the painting hangs. The veneration of millions has not faded after five centuries. The people continue to see themselves in the brown one and continue to believe she will intercede for them with God. On Univision, there is even a TV series titled [La Rosa de Guadalupe](#) (Guadalupe's Rose) where every episode displays a miracle that happens to those who fervently believe in her power. There are over 1,000 episodes, and it is one of the most watched telenovelas in this TV network. I may have watched a few hundreds of these shows because it warms my heart and connects me to my culture.

When I turned forty years old, I visited Mexico City. One of my bucket list items was to visit the Cathedral to see the painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe. I achieved my wish and was able to see her from afar and pray for many of my sick loved ones. I knew in my heart that she was listening as she has listened to millions of others who see her face and see themselves. Maybe the Guadalupe was the Spaniards' strategy to continue converting native Indians to Catholicism. But maybe it was just God reaching out to those in chains to let them know that they had a mother and they hadn't been forgotten. Sometimes we need to see that God also has our face, and that white supremacy hasn't taken all there is.

Dear God, allow us to see our divinity. Allow us to see that you too are on our side. Let those who want to oppress us know you haven't forgotten us and that you will reveal yourself to us because we too are your children.

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