

him. She inquired about his travels. Prostrating himself, he explained the situation and promised to return afterwards to fulfill her wishes.

“Listen, put it into your heart, my youngest-and-dearest son, that the thing that frightened you, the thing that afflicted you is nothing,” she replied. “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, disturb you. Do not let your uncle’s illness pressure you with grief, because he will not die of it now. You may be certain that he is already well.”

Feeling at peace, Juan Diego asked her for instructions. She then sent him to go to the top of the hill to gather flowers, and bring them to her. He was amazed to find many flowers not in season, and placed them in his tilma. Mary arranged them and sent him to Zumarraga, telling Juan Diego, “And you, you who are my messenger, in you I place my absolute trust.”

The bishop’s servants refused to announce Juan Diego’s arrival, but Juan Diego sat and waited. Finally, after their poking and questions, he allowed them to peek at the flowers in his tilma. Astonished, they tried to grab them but after three times there seemed to be no more flowers. Immediately, they sent word to the bishop. Prostrating himself before Zumarraga, Juan Diego told the story of what had happened, unfurled his tilma, and Castilian roses fell to the floor, revealing a miraculous image of Mary on the tilma. All present wept. This occurred December 12, 1531. The tilma still exists and is kept on the site of the apparitions in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

When Juan Diego came home, he found his uncle was not only healthy but that he, too, had seen the Virgin just as she had appeared to Juan Diego.

Bishop Zumarraga granted Juan Diego his request to become a hermit for the last 17 years of his life. Known as ‘The Pilgrim,’ he evangelized and led a holy life, frequenting the sacraments. Locals would tell young men, “May God make you like Juan Diego and his uncle.” Pope John Paul II beatified him on May 6, 1990, without requiring any miracle attributed to his intercession—other than his tilma and the millions of conversions it inspired.

Socials with the Saints

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Sources incl.: *Guadalupe and the Flower World Prophecy* (González) and the *Nican Mopohua*

St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin

Born: 1474 about 15 miles north of modern-day Mexico City

Died: 30 May 1548

Feast Day: December 9

Canonized: 31 July 2002 by John Paul II

The word “Aztec” has no precise meaning; it is an umbrella term used to describe diverse Mesoamerican peoples, many of whom speak the Náhuatl language. By 1474 when Cuauhtlatoatzin was born (his name meaning “one who speaks like the eagle”) north of Lake Texcoco in modern-day Mexico, the Nahua peoples had developed sophisticated civilizations. Their military and economic power extended from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf Coast, and from the Basin of Mexico to coastal Guatemala.

As a boy, Cuauhtlatoatzin would have been required to attend disciplined schooling, where he received training in his people’s economic, social, and cultural ways including the poetic oral traditions passed on through song and dance called flower songs. During his teen years, a temple to the god of the sun and of war was inaugurated, and as many as eighty thousand people were sacrificed there. Simultaneously, the Nahua Poets Conference convened in 1490, sparking a renewed devotion to their ancient flower songs meditating on the meaning of flowers, beauty, life, and the afterlife. It is very likely that Cuauhtlatoatzin was exposed to an understanding of One Supreme God.

He married a young woman. Sources differ regarding whether the couple had children, but they had land and a house where they raised crops. After the local provincial was baptized in 1524, he invited the Franciscans to preach widely to the people. Cuauhtlatoatzin’s wife was baptized Maria Lucia, and at age 50 he was baptized by an early Franciscan missionary, Brother Pedro Da Gand, and took the name Juan Diego after the two brothers John and James who were closest to Jesus Christ. At some point within the next two years, upon hearing a sermon by Friar Motolinía, Juan Diego and Maria Lucia felt called to live celibately as an expression of their faith.

She died in 1529, and Juan Diego moved to live near his uncle Juan Bernadino. Juan Diego is described as “humble but respected” and “a poor man of the people”. He frequently attended daily Mass, walking about 30



miles round-trip on uneven terrain. On the early morning hours of December 9, 1531 as he walked near the hill called Tepeyac, he heard unbelievably beautiful birdsongs which reminded him of his people's flower songs about Paradise. He wondered whether he was worthy of hearing the music of the Flower World Paradise spoken of by his ancestors for ages.

As he looked east, he heard someone call his name, and followed it. A lady appeared to him, her clothing shining like the sun and everything surrounding her was like beautiful, precious stones. She asked him where he was going. He responded, "My Lady, my Queen, my Beloved Maiden! I am going as far as your little house in Mexico-Tlatilolco, to follow the things of God (everything that makes God be God) that are given to us, that are taught to us by the ones who are the images of Our Lord: our priests." The lady then identified herself as the Virgin Mother of God, using language familiar to him and his people.

She wanted Juan Diego to go to the bishop (Juan de Zumarraga, the first bishop of Mexico) to request a shrine in her honor, saying there she would show God and "exalt Him on making 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, those who love me, 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. And to bring about what my compassionate and merciful gaze is trying to do, go to the residence of the bishop of Mexico, and you will tell him how I am sending you... And know for sure that I will appreciate it very much and reward it, that because of it I will enrich you, I will glorify you; and because of it you will deserve very much the way that I reward your fatigue, your service in going to request the matter that I am sending you for. Now, my dearest son, you have heard my breath, my word: go, do what you are responsible for [in this effort]."

Immediately, he prostrated himself and replied, "My Lady, my Beloved Maiden, now I am going to make your venerable breath, your venerable word, a reality. I, your poor Indian, am leaving you for a while."

Juan Diego, after waiting a while to see the bishop, prostrated himself before him and told him what had happened. Zumarraga responded, "My son, you will come again. I will still hear you calmly, I will look at it carefully from the very beginning, I will consider the reason why you have come, your will, your desire." Juan Diego went away sad, and the next day on his walk he

again met the Virgin Mary. He prostrated himself before her and said, "My dear Mistress, Lady Queen, my Youngest Child, my dear Beloved Maiden! I did go to where you sent me to carry your dear breath, your dear word; although I entered with difficulty to where the place is of the Governing Priest, I saw him, I put your breath, your word, before him, as you ordered me to. He received me kindly and he listened to it perfectly, but from the way he answered me, it's as if he didn't understand it, he doesn't think it's true. [...] The way he answered me, I could clearly see that he thinks your house that you want them to build for you here, maybe I'm only making it up or that maybe it is not from your lips."

"I beg you, my Lady, Queen, my Beloved Maiden, to have one of the nobles who are held in esteem, one who is known, respected, honored, carry, take your dear breath, your dear word, so that he will be believed. Because I am just a man from the country, I am a (porter's) rope, I am a back-frame, a tail, a wing, a man of no importance: I myself needed to be led, carried on someone's back, that place you are sending me to is a place where I'm not used to going to or spending any time in, my little Virgin, my Youngest Daughter, my Lady, Beloved Maiden. Please excuse me; I will grieve to your face, your heart; I will go into, fall into, your anger, into your displeasure, my Lady, my Mistress."

Mary responded, "Listen, my youngest-and-dearest son, know for sure that I have no lack of servants, of messengers, to whom I can give the task of carrying my breath, my word, so that they carry out my will. But it is very necessary that you personally go and plead, that my wish, my will, become a reality; be carried out through your intercession..." He humbly agreed to return, and he did the following day, Sunday. The bishop, after questioning him much, asked that a sign be brought. Juan Diego responded: "Señor Governor, think about what the sign you ask for will be, because then I will go to ask for it of the Queen of Heaven who sent me."

The bishop dismissed him, and had some of his household staff follow Juan Diego to see whom he was meeting. However, they lost him on a bridge where a brook flowed near Tepeyac hill. Embarrassed, they turned back and told the bishop not to listen to Juan Diego and his 'lies.' Meanwhile, Juan Diego reported back to Mary, who instructed him to return the following day.

However, when he arrived home, he found Juan Bernadino very sick. All day he tended to him, calling on the help of the native healer, but his uncle seemed beyond help. As night came, his uncle begged him to call for a priest because he was sure that he would die. While it was still dark on Tuesday, Juan Diego left the house. To avoid being detained by Our Lady, he went a different route than usual, but he saw her coming down from Tepeyac hill to