

The Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Because of Blessed Kateri's extraordinary devotion to Our Lady, I think it appropriate to highlight Our Lady of Guadalupe. This tableau which dates back 454 years, is more than a simple picture.

It contains symbols—in a sense, hieroglyphics, or a story in pictures—that reveal part of the message the Blessed Mother brought through Juan Diego to the Indians of Mexico and to all people of the Americas.

But the symbols had a special meaning to the Indians, who, because of their culture, could decipher the code in the Image.



1 EYES

The eyes of the Image are looking down, a position of humility, revealing that, as great as she is, she is not a god. Indian gods never looked down; they looked straight ahead.

2 FACE

The woman's face shows great compassion. The Indians felt that the face was the window of the inner person, a means by which one could read who a person was—the way a person would act. A good woman to the Indians was one whose femininity showed in her face. The head of the woman in the Image shows her with dark skin and dark hair like that of the Indians.

The Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe has great significance for those who can decipher the symbols.

3 HANDS

Her hands are not poised in the traditional Western style of prayer, but in an Indian manner of offering, indicating that something is being offered, that something is to come from her.

4 MATERNITY BAND

The maternity band around the woman's waist was the sign of a pregnant woman, a mother who is about to give birth, it was a sign to the Indians that someone is yet to come.

5 STARS

The stars on the mantle are a sign that a new civilization, or era, is beginning. The Indian tradition recognized the end and the beginning of different eras throughout the ages, and the destruction of a particular civilization or era was always accompanied by a comet, or a body of stars. Indian prophets even before the arrival and conquest by the Spaniard Hernan Cortes had been predicting the end of their civilization at that time.

6 SUN RAYS

The rays of sun in the Image recalled for the Indians that the sun played a key role in their civili-

zation. But the woman in the Image is greater than even the sun. She hides the sun, and only the rays come forth. She hides the sun but does not extinguish it.

7 MANTLE

The predominant color in the Image's mantle is turquoise, the blue-green color reserved for the Great god Omecihuatl. Although the Indians had many "intermediary gods," Omecihuatl was considered the supreme god. It was a mother-father god who sometimes was represented as a man and sometimes as a woman. It was a source of unity for everything that exists.

8 MOON

The woman is standing on the moon, indicating that she is greater than the god of night, the moon god.

9 "ANGEL"

The "angel" at the bottom of the Image was seen by the Indians as an "intermediary god" carrying in a new era, the beginning of a new civilization. One era was at an end—had died—and a new one was beginning was being born.

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