

The significance of la virgen de guadalupe research papers examples

[Religion](#), [God](#)



Religion is the most common universal belief in which its importance lies on the moral values that guide people in life in following the path to righteousness. For some, it provides answers in their quest for meaning and purpose in life while others view it as a way to achieve their hopes and aspirations. In some cultures, religion arises out of a major phenomenon that symbolizes their history of political and social struggles which contributes a huge part of their culture and way of life. One example is the phenomenon of La Virgen de Guadalupe in Mexico which influenced cultural, social and political changes in their entire society. The phenomenon was the beginning of Christianity and the symbol of Catholicism in Mexico in which the Virgin of Guadalupe became a major part of their lives and a national figure in their history.

Social, Cultural and Political Background of La Virgen de Guadalupe

Long before Catholicism was established in Mexico, the Aztecs ruled Central America where indigenous tribes worshipped pagan gods and were engaged in demonic rituals such as human sacrifice. In 1521, the Spanish Conquistadors led by Hernando Cortez conquered Mexico, waged wars against the Aztecs and destroyed their temple that brought an end to the demonic rituals and practices of the indigenous tribes. The Spaniards governed Mexico but were cruel and ruthless to the indigenous people, forcing them to leave their villages or sell them to slavery. Franciscan missionaries introduced their true god, built Catholic churches and converted the people to Christianity by educating them through images, music, poetry and catechetical methods. Some of the indigenous people accepted the new

religion but most of them refused. “ But they found the natives highly resistant to Christianity, the religion of the Conquistadors who had killed thousands of Indians, raped their women and destroyed Tenochtitlan” (Our Lady of Guadalupe). The use of military force, torture, imprisonment and imposing of heavy taxes led to the resentment of most Indian tribes against the Spaniards and their teachings of Christianity. This resentment resulted to outbreaks of fights and struggles that put Mexico on the edge of rebellion.

The Apparition

Juan Diego, a widower was one of the indigenous people converted to Christianity who devoted his life to God. On December 9, 1531, while on his way to church to attend mass and catechism, a beautiful tan complexioned woman appeared to him along the hills of Tepeyac where the Aztec temple of Tonantzin, mother of God used to stand. She introduced herself as the Virgin Mary, Mother of one true God. She told Juan Diego that she desired to have a temple built on the exact spot where she was standing so she could show and deliver the true God to the people through her love, compassion, help and protection. “Here I shall listen to their weeping and their sorrows. I shall take them all to my heart, and I shall cure their many sufferings, afflictions and sorrows” (Our Lady of Guadalupe). She then summoned Juan Diego to go to Tenochtitlan and tell the Bishop about it. However, when he went to the palace of Franciscan Bishop Juan de Zumarraga, the bishop did not believe him. On his next visit, the bishop requested to ask for a sign or proof of the Virgin Mary. On her next apparition, the Virgin Mary summoned Juan Diego to cut Castilian roses on the hilltop as a sign or proof in which

Juan Diego obediently put them on his tilma and brought them to the bishop. There, he unfolded the tilma to show his proof to the bishop while the flowers fell to the floor. The bishop and everyone around fell to their knees for the image of the Virgin Mary was on the tilma. The Bishop then ordered that a church be built at Tepeyac in honor of La Virgen de Guadalupe.

The Meaning of La Virgen de Guadalupe

The apparition of the Virgin Mary was embraced by the indigenous people of Mexico because she was an image of an Indian mother who speaks of a native Aztec language . Having appeared in the hills of Tepeyac, the dwelling place of the mother of god, Tonantzin is an indication that the Virgin Mary was indeed the mother of true God. Her image is of Aztec nature which was easily interpreted by the Aztec Indians. The image is so peculiar that after many centuries, it showed no signs of deterioration. “ All who have scientifically examined the image of our lady over the centuries confess that its properties are absolutely unique and so inexplicable in human terms that the image can only be supernatural” (Cavaliere, 2007).

Her image stood in front of the sun and stars strewn on the mantle which means she is the queen of heavens for she is higher than their sun-god and the stars that they worshipped. Her foot rested on the crescent moon indicated she is the crusher of the serpent’s head, their false god. The blue-green color of her mantle means royalty and the black belt stands for Aztec maternity belt which suggests that she was with child. The four-petal flower on her womb indicates a symbol of life, movement and deity and that she was the mother of god. Her hands are folded in prayer suggests that she is

not god while the black cross at her neck means that her god was her son Jesus Christ. The design of her rose-colored garment indicates the map of Mexico where the apparition took place. For them, the image of the tilma reflects the message of Christianity in which the true God sacrificed himself for the people rather than sacrificing human lives to please pagan gods. The Virgin of Guadalupe brought light to the true faith and destroyed the false gods which brought peace to the land. " She put an end to the bloody human sacrifice of the Aztecs and converted ten million natives in the next 10 years" (Lynch, 2002) Significance of Guadalupe

The events that happened to Juan Diego were a process of religious transition from Aztec Tonantzin practices to Christianity. Despite Juan Diego's conversion to Christianity, he remains devoted to Tonantzin but their indigenous practices were restricted in a Catholic dominant society. For them, the Virgin of Guadalupe was their way of consolidating their own female god, Coatlicue. She was a reflection of both Aztec and Catholic practices because she holds significant symbols and representations to the Aztec female gods. " La Virgen de Guadalupe is a reinvention of the Virgin Mary that through its connection to the Mesoamerican people has escaped the patriarchy of Christianity to become a goddess of the Mexican people" (Surage, 2011). Her apparition to an Indian, Juan Diego, connects her to the poor and oppressed indigenous people of Mexico thus declaring her as their mother and protector and served as a symbol of hope and spiritual nourishment from the forces of colonialism. She is associated with the Mexican peoples' fight for oppression and racial discrimination and the dedication to achieve social, cultural and political progress. The Virgin of

Guadalupe brings cultural perseverance that led to the unity of the people of Mexico from different borders and languages under one mother and which forms a national and cultural identity that depicts the culture of Mexico. In modern times, Mexican women are viewing the Virgin Mary in a new direction by being successful in their jobs, their homes and their communities. “ Today, Guadalupe has been reinterpreted as the empowering symbol of liberation and action rather than as female passivity” (Mueller, 2013).

Analysis

The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe hangs in the Basilica in Mexico City and is the object of devotion and pilgrimage. She is celebrated every 12th day of December which is a national holiday in Mexico. People travel for days to attend special masses, fiesta and processions where she is honored with sacred and popular songs and poetry and Indian dances. Her shrine at Tepeyac hill is visited by millions of pilgrims every year where people walk in their knees and with tears in their eyes. Their devotion in Guadalupanismo is remarkably strong in which their level of vitality and spirit of religious faith is unquestionably beyond compare. Her image is visible in churches, altars, homes, schools, restaurants, buses, taxis, bull rings and even gambling dens.

Festivities and merry making are essential parts of the celebration, however, some practices associated with the faith are not agreeable and do not conform to the religious ethics of the Catholic Church. As one strolls through street markets and see the colorful image of the Virgin Mary on caps, T-

shirts, key chains, mugs, candles, religious arts, mirrors, tattoos and all sorts of products, one couldn't help but think that people are taking advantage of the icon for commercial benefits. In Southern California, Catholics celebrated her feast day while engaging in lucrative business. " Her image adorns in blankets made in China that sell for \$30 in Sta. Ana markets. Guadalupe belt buckles go for \$250 in Sherman Oaks' Belle Gray Boutique" (Mena, 2004).

Considering that the icon is a religious entity, associating Her in business can lose the sacredness, message and true meaning of the Virgin Mary. The same goes with politics where politicians utilized the Virgin Mary in their election campaigns. One example is the idea of former Congressman Robert Dornan during the 1998 election in Orange County. " Dornan's strategy included the image of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe on a campaign mailer, which included graphics of abortion procedures in a effort to woo the Latino Catholic vote" (Vida en el Valle, 2013). It is sad to know that some people are using the image of the Virgin Mary for their own selfish intentions.

Devotion should not come through marketing or political trends but should be in accordance with Catholic doctrines and values.

Devotion to the Catholic religion not only requires a strong and unquestionable faith but one needs to reflect on his/her own consciousness to become a good follower of the church. As Christians, we have the responsibility to help those who are in dire need. By promoting love and compassion to others, we can become worthy of God's love or the Virgin Mary's love, just like her obedient son, Juan Diego.

Works Cited:

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