



Seasons of Holiness

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This History behind Our Lady of Guadalupe

December 12th is the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Apparition of Mary of Guadalupe took place in Mexico City in 1531. As history tells us, the arrival of the Spaniards did not only eliminate the Aztec civilization but it also stripped away the dignity and hope of the inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico, the *Mexicas*.

This conquest was extremely brutal and cruel, as they destroyed the deepest roots of Indian existence and the collective soul of the native peoples. Though the Aztecs were conquerors in their own right, they became a great nation because they had the wisdom to integrate other cultures' languages, arts and crafts, technological know-how, and philosophy that would enrich and better their Aztec civilization. As a result, their civilization was sophisticated. They developed a social class system where the aristocracy ruled over the land.

However, because of their own prophecies, the Aztecs were expecting their god Quetzalcoatl to return to them from the east. Unfortunately, Hernan Cortéz not only fit the description of their god, but arrived in the year when he was expected to return. Thus, without much resistance the great Aztec nation surrendered to the Spaniards. Unfortunately, in a short time, they were reduced to something less than human. For the Aztec woman, this conquest was even more damaging. As Aztec women, they had had the opportunity to run their own businesses, receive an education, and even divorce their husbands. They were equally valued with men.



Sadly, as conquered women, they were discriminated against because of their indigenous roots. Their social class was disregarded; and overnight, their status changed. All inhabitants were forced into hard labor. For women, not only were they forced into this type of work, but they were degraded and sexually abused by the Spaniards. Consequently, the conquest would be deeply imprinted in the very soul of the conquered people.

In four short days, Our Lady of Guadalupe not only restored the dignity of the Mexican people, but also she became a symbol of power and maternal love. She restored the people's reason to live and to hope. The apparition was quite symbolic and purposeful, as "it is a major moment in God's saving plan for humanity." Her visit has been marked by leaving behind an imprint of her image on the cloak of a Christianized Indian, named Juan Diego.

In this portrait, Mary appeared to Juan Diego, not as a European Madonna, but as a beautiful Aztec princess speaking to him in his own Aztec language. Thus, through her encounter with Juan Diego, she validated their worth as people and their culture; her facial expression imprinted on Juan Diego's *tilma* (cloak) is filled with kindness, strength and compassion. Certainly, a total different image when compared to the cruel treatment that the Indians received from the conquistadores. Within a short time of her apparition, six million Native Mexicans had themselves baptized as Christians.

1 Virgil Elizondo. *Guadalupe, Mother of the New Creation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), xi



Christmas Around the World

How do you celebrate Christmas? Do you get your presents in a stocking, a shoe, or in a jar? Who delivers your presents? Santa Claus? St. Nick's, Father Christmas, The Three Kings, or a Fairy Queen?

In England on the night before Christmas, Father Christmas sneaks quietly into the house and fills all the children's stocking with gifts. In the United States, Santa Claus makes all the deliveries on Christmas Eve. In France, on Christmas Eve, you put empty shoes on the doorstep or by the fireplace. It is said that the Christ Child will come during the night and put gifts in them.

If you live in the Netherlands, you'll need to put hay and sugar inside a shoe on the night before Saint Nicholas Day. Saint Nicholas' horse will eat the hay and sugar when they stop at your house. After the horse eats, Saint Nicholas will repay you by filling your shoe with candy and tiny gifts. In Spain, you'd put straw inside your shoes on January 6, the day of Epiphany. The camels of The Three Kings will eat the straw. In exchange, the Wise Kings will you leave gifts. In Italy, you get your gifts in a large jar, called the Urn of Fate. It is said that a fairy queen flies down the chimney and fills each jar with gifts and goodies on Epiphany day.

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In some parts of Germany at Christmas you get gifts from a girl called *Christkind*. She wears a crown of candles and carries a basket full of gifts to the children. A dreadful demon called Hans Trapp goes with *Christkind* to deliver the gifts. Before *Christkind* gives any gifts, Hans Trapp waves a stick to threaten the naughty children.

Although each country has different ideas of who brings the gifts at Christmas there is one thing they can all agree on. In America as well as in European nations, Nativity scenes are the core of a traditional Christmas in homes as well as in churches. And by the way, it was in Italy that the nativity scene became popular and spread through the Alps eventually making its way to the United States with the German pioneers.

Source: www.daily-word-of-life.com

The song, 12 days of Christmas, Protected our Faith

The Twelve Days of Christmas are December 26 to Epiphany, January 6. The song, "*The Twelve Days of Christmas*" is an English carol written during the time of persecution in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, against Roman Catholics. "*The Twelve Days of Christmas*" was a coded message that helped young Catholic children learn the tenets of their faith and be able to recite them without fear of going to jail. Each "day" has a hidden meaning concerning teachings of the Catholic faith.

The "true love" refers to God. The "me" who receives the gifts, refers to every baptized person. The Pear Tree is the cross and the Partridge is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Christ is symbolically portrayed as a mother partridge that fakes injury to trick predators from her helpless chicks. It reminds us of Christ's sadness over the fate of Jerusalem: "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Mt. 23:37).

The Partridge in the pear tree refers to Jesus on the cross.

The other symbols in the song are:

- 2 Turtle Doves: The Old and New Testaments
- 3 French Hens: The Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Also the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity
- 4 Calling Birds: The four Gospels and/or the Four Gospel writers — Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
- 5 Golden Rings: The first five Books of the Old Testament, also the five wounds of Jesus Christ
- 6 Geese A-laying: The Six days of Creation
- 7 Swans A-swimming: The Seven Gifts of the Spirit and the seven Sacraments of the Catholic faith
- 8 Maids A-milking: The Eight Beatitudes
- 9 Ladies Dancing: The Nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit
- 10 Lords A-leaping: The Ten Commandments
- 11 Pipers Piping: The Eleven Faithful Apostles after Judas' betrayal
- 12 Drummers Drumming: The Twelve Points of Doctrine in the Apostle's Creed



The Candy Cane

According to legend there was a candy maker who wanted to invent a candy that was a witness to Christ. He began with a hard candy because Christ is the rock of ages.

He shaped it in form of a "J" for Jesus or a shepherd's staff, if you hold it upside down. He made it white to represent the purity of Christ. Finally a red stripe was added to represent the blood Christ shed for the sins of the world and three thinner red stripes for the wounds he received when the Roman soldiers whipped him. He decided to flavor the cane peppermint, because it is hyssop. Hyssop is in the mint family and was used in the Old Testament for purification and sacrifice.

Hence, Jesus is the pure Lamb of God who came to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Source: Unknown

Recommended books—for all ages:

In his introduction to *The Night of Las Posadas*, Tomie dePaola tells us about the beautiful Latin-American custom, depicting Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, also by dePaola, depicts the story of the Aztec peasant Juan Diego, who sees our Lady as a pregnant Mexican woman and hears her tell him to build shrine in her honor. He must convince a skeptical bishop. Mary graciously provides a miraculous sign, captured beautifully in de Paola's pictures.

The Legend of the Poissetia, by dePaola is a story about a little girl who is helping her mother weave a blanket for the Christmas crèche at church. When her mother suddenly falls seriously ill, the child tries to finish the blanket herself, but can't. An old woman mysteriously appears outside the church and suggests she carry a bundle of weeds inside, which turn into glorious poinsettias.

Other fun titles include: *Country Angel Christmas* (celebrating St. Nick), *The Legend of Old Befana and Merry Christmas*, *Strega Nona*.