

Significance of Our Lady of Guadalupe to the Indigenous People

When Our Lady of Guadalupe first encountered Saint Juan Diego on the morning of December 9, 1531, she appeared as a mestizo and spoke his indigenous language. This was referred to by Saint John Paul II at the canonization of Saint Juan Diego as:

[3]..."The Guadalupe Event", as the Mexican Episcopate has pointed out, "meant the beginning of evangelization with a vitality that surpassed all expectations. Christ's message, through his Mother, took up the central elements of the indigenous culture, purified them and gave them the definitive sense of salvation" (14 May 2002, No. 8). Consequently Guadalupe and Juan Diego have a deep ecclesial and missionary meaning and are a model of perfectly inculturated evangelization.

I personally began to know this spiritual and historic encounter in March 2005 when I was asked by the Aboriginal Council of the Canadian Conference of the Catholic Bishops [CCCCB] to write a short article for the celebration of the first official Day of Prayer for Aboriginal People [changed to National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples] in Canada for December 12, 2005.

I was overwhelmed with emotion and gratitude that Our Lord, Jesus, sent His Mother to begin healing, reconciliation and respect for the Indigenous people within the Catholic Church in 1531. I first saw the Missionary Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe for Canada in January 2006. I became an instant follower of Our Lady of Guadalupe and had the opportunity to take Her to four First Nation communities that month. The people were deeply and profoundly touched by Her apparitions and especially Her indigenous appearance and language. This was never told to my people by the missionaries and priests about the love of Jesus and His Mother for our people. I committed to bring Her to New Brunswick on an annual basis. I took the Missionary Image in the summer of 2006 to as many First Nation communities in New Brunswick and non-native communities to celebrate Eucharist with them. The priests were very supportive and encouraged by the faith of our people.

Since 2006, I have been the chauffeur of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Ontario where my wife and I have shared the Nican Mopohua and our love of Her. We witnessed many miracles of family healing, devotion to prayer, return to the church and medical healing through Her intercessions [my wife received a healing in August 2006]. I firmly believe that it was the intercessions of Our Lady of Guadalupe that made it possible for me to join the Knights of Columbus in June 24, 2009 and to serve as Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick from 2009-14. She is a beautiful advocate in our lives.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the person who can lead all people of all faiths to reconciliation and conversion to follow Her Son, Jesus. I would estimate that over 10,000 people have seen the Missionary Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe since 2006. I hope to continue this spiritual journey in the future.

-Graydon Nicholas