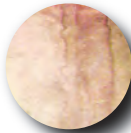


Unveiling the image's hidden meaning

Clouds — In the image, the Virgin is surrounded by clouds, showing that she is from heaven. The indigenous greeted people they believed came from God with the expression: "Among fog and among clouds."



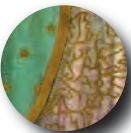
Sun — There are three suns represented in the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The first sun, not visible in the image, is cosmic, casting light on the Virgin's left side and creating a shadow. Golden rays from the second sun, behind her, signify that she is the "Mother of Light" and greater than the Aztec sun god, whom she eclipses. The third sun is represented by the four-petaled flower on her tunic, indicating that she is about to give birth to the "Almighty Sun."

Cross medallion — Around her neck, Mary wears a gold medallion engraved with a cross. For indigenous people, the medallion symbolized consecration, so the medallion around Mary's neck meant that she was consecrated to Jesus.



Hands — The indigenous people expressed prayer not only by the hands, but by the whole body. In the image on the tilma, Our Lady of Guadalupe is shown in a position of dancing prayer, with her knee bent in movement.

Mantle and tunic — Mary's rose-tinted, flowery tunic symbolizes the earth, while her turquoise, starry mantle represents the heavens. The mantle also indicates that she is royalty since only the native emperors wore cloaks of that color.



"A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child . . ."

— Revelation 12:1-2

The four-and-a-half-foot-tall image of Our Lady of Guadalupe imprinted on Juan Diego's cloak in 1531 depicts a young pregnant woman encircled by rays of sunlight.

With her dark complexion and mixture of indigenous and Spanish features, Our Lady of Guadalupe represents the unity of all people. She gazes downward with the tender, loving expression of a mother gazing at her child.

For Mexico's indigenous people, the image contained rich symbolism.

Sources: *Official website of the Basílica de Santa María de Guadalupe in Mexico City, Mexico* (www.virgendeguaalupe.org.mx); *Secrets of the Image website, Knights of Columbus* (www.secretsoftheimage.org/en/index.html).

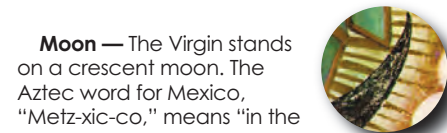


Black ribbon — The black ribbon around Mary's waist shows that she is expecting a child. For the Aztecs, the trapezoid-shaped ends of the ribbon also represented the end of one cycle and the birth of a new era.

Flowers — Nine golden flowers, symbolizing life and truth, adorn Mary's dress. The flowers are made up of glyphs representing a hill and a river. The indigenous people considered hills the highest points of encounter between God and people. Viewed upside down, the flowers take the shape of hearts with arteries coming out, representing life, which originates from God.



Four-petaled jasmine — The only four-petaled flower on Mary's tunic appears over her womb. The four-petaled jasmine represents the Aztecs' highest deity, Ometéotl. While Ometéotl remained distant, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe shows that the one true God chose to be born of a woman, making himself accessible to all.



Moon — The Virgin stands on a crescent moon. The Aztec word for Mexico, "Metz-xic-co," means "in the center of the moon." The moon also symbolizes the Aztec moon god, fertility, birth and life.



Angel — An angel with eagle's wings appears below Mary's feet. According to Aztec belief, an eagle delivered the hearts and the blood of sacrificial victims to the gods. The angel holds up the pregnant Virgin, signifying that the child in her womb is the offering that pleases God.