

Mother of Life



When an insignificant, barren hill in Mexico becomes the destination for 13 million pilgrims a year, something's going on...



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This Month...

- Su 2 **Advent 1**
Be Alert
- Mo 3 St Francis Xavier
- Th 6 St Nicholas
- Su 8 **Advent 2**
Prepare for Lord
- We 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe
- Su 16 **Advent 3**
Awaiting the Saviour?
- Fr 21 St Peter Canisus
- Su 23 **Advent 4**
Blessed are you
- Mo 24 **Christmas Eve**
- Tu 25 **Christmas Day**
- Su 26 **Boxing Day**
St Stephen



December 12 is the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This is one of the most significant Marian apparitions in the Church's history and some 13 million people make a pilgrimage to the Basilica in Mexico City every year.

Just what is so special about Guadalupe?

The Story...

When Our Lady appeared in 1531 to Mexican peasant, Juan Diego, the Bishop was sceptical and requested a sign. He returned a few days later with rare Spanish roses that he collected from the site of the apparition, a barren hill. As Juan Diego opened his tilma (a simple cloak made of agave fibre), the roses tumbled out leaving an image of Our Lady. Falling to their knees, the Bishop and his aids immediately commenced plans for a shrine to be built at the site of the apparition on Tepeyac Hill. The tilma with the miraculous image was housed in the shrine.

Over the next decade, almost the entire Mexican nation, some 8 million people, were baptised into the Catholic faith, drawn by the compassionate heart of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

To read more about Juan Diego and his amazing encounters with Our Lady of Guadalupe, [click here](#).



The Image

Far from a simple 'painting', the image of Our Lady on Juan Diego's tilma has some noteworthy features that were immediately recognised by the native Mexicans and their Spanish conquerors.

- The **colour of her skin** identifies her as a mestiza, a mixed-blood of white Spanish and dark native, presenting herself as the link between the two races as their mother.
- With the **sun at her back and the moon at her feet**, the Spaniards recognised her as the Woman of the Apocalypse (Rev 12:1), while the native peoples saw it as her having power over the blood-thirsty Aztec sun and moon god.
- She is **pregnant**: the black sash normally worn at the waist by Aztec women is worn higher up during pregnancy.



- Her tunic is covered with symbolic gold flowers. The **Jasmine flower** that is positioned over her womb identifies her child as divine and that this omnipotent being is reachable by any human being through his mother.
- Her **posture** indicates a profound humility. Significantly, her entire body is in motion with one knee bent in a dance-step position which was the highest form of prayer for the Aztecs.

Read more about the symbolism of the image [here](#).



Beyond Science

While the symbolism of the image demonstrates a remarkable sensitivity to both the Aztec and Spanish cultures, it is the miraculous qualities of the image that have emerged over time and with scientific study that truly astound.

- The tilma, made of fibre from the agave cactus, would normally decay within 40 years, yet the Guadalupe Tilma has survived almost 500 years.
- Unlike a painting or dyed cloth, the image appears to hover less than 1mm above the surface of the tilma, earning it the description of 'permanent apparition'. No paint, pigment or dye has been detected.
- The stars on her veil perfectly map the positions of the constellations in the sky at the time of the apparition.

- Under magnification, the pupils of Our Lady's eyes reflect the image of the Bishop and his aids kneeling before her.
- A foetal heartbeat has been detected when a stethoscope is held over Our Lady's womb.
- The image has survived several disasters including an accidental acid spill and a bombing which disfigured a crucifix, destroyed the altar and blew out the windows but failed to harm the image. Although the bomb exploded in the middle of Mass, not a single person was harmed.



'Our Lady of Guadalupe', maryourmother.net

Movimento D'Amore San Juan Diego, 'New and Astonishing Scientific Discoveries done by NASA on the Mantle of Holy Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe Revealing other Surprising Secrets', www.conchiglia.net

'Our Lady of Guadalupe', Sancta.org



Embracing Life

The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is one of the rare images representing a pregnant Mary. For this reason, Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patron of the unborn child and is a core spiritual devotion in the prolife movement all over the world.

When we hear the word 'prolife' the immediate association is with 'abortion'. However, being prolife is not an issue-based political position. It is a foundational worldview upon which Christian morality stands.

“Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God.” (CCC #2139)

As Catholics, we are especially called to be prolife which, in essence, is to uphold the dignity of human life in every aspect of our life. We live in a culture that is very clever and logical about denying the fundamental Truth about the dignity of life. This is a fight that is not limited to politics, but it is one that begins and ends in the hearts of every human being.

The most dramatic impact of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe is its



unique revelation of the dignity of the human person.

The pregnant Mary shows us Christ at his most vulnerable and dependant, revealing the profound humanity of both Mary and Christ and how as human beings, we find meaning and truth in our lives through other people.

Embracing Life...



"For me, being pro-life is much more than picketing abortion clinics. It is choosing to be patient when young children kick up a fuss in public (including in church), it is checking in on an elderly neighbour, it is acknowledging the loss in a miscarriage, still-birth or abortion, it is cooking a meal for a family in mourning, it is organising a dance in the parish hall for couples, it is providing for women in crisis pregnancies, it is smiling at a young mother or father, it is fundraising for development projects locally and internationally.... Being pro-life is living a community life in love and in service to all members of it, born and unborn, young and old, big and small..." - Kiara

A Civilisation of Love



Our Lady of Guadalupe also gives us the prime example of how we are to act as prolife Catholics. When Juan Diego disregarded her wishes, rather than expressing anger or frustration or condemning, scolding or admonishing him, the Virgin met him on the road and asked him “What’s going on? Where are you going?” She then proceeded to pour out her love and take care of his concerns.

Similarly, our job is not to condemn, but to meet people where they are and be the gentle, but firm voice and helping hand of truth and love.

“Financially, love costs us nothing, but gives a part of ourselves. If we recognise the face of Christ in the poor and disadvantaged, in the unborn, in the worried faces of mothers and fathers who... feel abandoned and betrayed, we realise that we have more to offer than advice.”- Carl Anderson

Our Lady of Guadalupe calls us to a deeper love for her Son and for each other. This is the essence of what it means to be pro-life beyond the politicking and picketing. In the season of Advent, as we joyfully anticipate the birth of Jesus, why not walk the journey with Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Marian apparition of unity, hope and life.

Authors: Kiara Pirola & Francine Pirola

Further Reading: Carl Anderson, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mother of the Civilisation of Love*, Double Day, New York, 2009.



Stories of Life

“Four weeks into marriage we found out Liesel was pregnant with our first child. I can still remember having that “Oh Crap” feeling & sitting down at the table in our little house thinking “I’m not sure if I am ready for this”, even though I was 30, I still wanted to play for a while yet. Typical boy, a bit slow to grow up, avoid commitment, all that sort of thing. We had no money, I owned a pretty rough little cottage, I had a trade but no real full time work, I was mucking around working for myself a bit. Life as I knew it was about to change for EVER... how was I going to cope with that, “I’m not ready for this”, kept going through my head.

Well, today we have just had our seventh child & I reckon I have coped just fine...”

For more stories, visit www.notbornyet.com

notbornyet
MY VOICE

Notbornyet. Helping Australia fall in love with the **unborn**.

FEATURED VIDEO

ALREADY BEGUN
"True", released October, 2011

Long before our first steps, first haircut and first heartache, The Journey's Already Begun in the womb.

[View Campaign](#)

GET INFORMED

Three Australians are unaware there are at least 80,000 surgical abortions each year in Australia, directly affecting a third of Australian women of child-bearing age. Many are unaware that in 2011, there were less than 50 local abortions, yet many Australians still need not seeking help to conceive. Learn more about the issues that have significant and long term effects, including certain procedures and risks, and answers to the most common reasons given for abortion, as well as helpful resources. [More...](#)

PREGNANT?

"You're pregnant! Congratulations!" You are going to a unique and wonderful aspect and precious child, regardless of gender, race, disability or the circumstances of conception. Pregnancy can be a shock, even when the baby is expected. You have plenty of time to get used to being a mum or dad, so take a deep breath and consider carefully what's at stake. Find out more about what to expect when you're expecting, what's happening to the child within you, and where you can get help. [More...](#)

HURT BY ABORTION? **Print version** YOUR STORIES

A ProLife Parish

Some simple suggestions for building a prolife mentality in your life and in your local parish:

- **Pray:** being prolife is making a total gift of ourselves in love. Sounds superhuman? That's where prayer comes in. Regular prayer is the fuel for our spiritual giving. Check out CathFamily's Novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe.
- **Welcome:** The Mass and sacraments are our strength to be prolife. However, many families with young children can feel unwelcome at Mass. Similarly, the elderly and disabled can feel excluded. Talk to your Parish Priest about dedicating one of the weekend Masses for families with children with a prayerful, but relaxed atmosphere.
- **Mourn:** Many women and men struggle with grief after miscarriages, still-births and abortions. Make sure your parish is equipped with the right information. Consider holding a memorial Mass for all the lost unborn children, or include them in the prayers of the faithful on weekend Masses.

Prolife in the Community

If you feel especially called to get more active on prolife issues in the community, consider the following proposals:

- **40 Days for Life:** Organised during Lent, this is a peaceful 24-hour prayer vigil for the duration of Lent outside a local abortion clinic. The movement has seen some staggering spiritual fruits. [Click here](#) for more info.
- **Practical Assistance:** Crisis pregnancy support centres are desperately in need of practical assistance for vulnerable pregnant women. If you have a spare room or some spare time, do an internet search for your local pregnancy support centre and get involved.
- **Homilies:** If you are a Parish Priest, consider using a homily to speak about prolife issues, emphasising the hope and healing offered for those who have fallen. If done with sensitivity and prayerfulness, it can have a dramatic impact on your parishioners and be a step to healing and awareness in the wider community. [Click here](#) for some homily ideas.



Lovers of Life

Francine & Byron Pirola


Deep within the essence of the marital relationship is a parental capacity; the potential for husband and wife to gift each other with the new identity of 'mother' or 'father'. This potential rests in a profound human desire to give life; to expend and extend our own existence beyond ourselves to the next generation. This parental capacity is a vigorous life force that restlessly seeks to find its target, a recipient of our urgent longings to give ourselves to our offspring.

For couples who are unable conceive, the heartache can be immense. The frustrated helplessness, the sense of being 'punished' for past mistakes, the gruelling process of endless tests and the roller-coaster of hope and disappointment that accompanies each menstrual cycle; all these can take a toll on the marriage relationship. Cherished dreams of growing their own family fade and it can be especially painful to see other couples pregnant or with new babies.

For some the desire to have a child or another child may not be shared by their spouse. Some spouses unilaterally make the decision to get sterilised or terminate an unplanned pregnancy leaving the other spouse with a crushing helplessness. This can give rise to deep pain and resentment that poisons the relationship for years or even decades. Often decisions are made in haste and out of fear without fully considering the consequences leading to later regret.


Questions for Reflection and Sharing

- 1. For couples without children:** what qualities do you see in your spouse that would make him a great father or her a wonderful mother?
- 2. For couples unable to have children:** what qualities have you seen your spouse develop through the difficulties you have faced together?
- 3. For couples who have children:** what qualities do you most appreciate in your spouse in relation to the family?
- 4. For any couple:** what heartache or regret do you have about your fertility decisions?



SMARTLoving

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Find out more about Catholic marriage and how you can enjoy deeper intimacy and spiritual connection.

Guadalupe Novena

Pope John Paul II had is papacy consecrated to Our Lady of Guadalupe. He wrote this beautiful prayer in his Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*. Celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe with a novena based on this prayer. You can begin it on the feast (12-20 Dec) or finish it on the feast (4-12 Dec)

Guadalupe Colour-in

A simple activity to do with your kids to engage them in the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

