

Guadalupe

The Tepeyac Tradition, Its Documents, and Its Ecclesial Reception

A source-audited apparition study

What the Church has actually done, what the surviving record will and will not carry, how the historicity dispute stands, and what any of it obliges

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1 What the Church Has Actually Done

A study of Guadalupe must begin where a reader's reliance actually rests: not with the story, and not with the arguments about the story, but with the acts of competent ecclesiastical authority—their exact wording, date, author, and object. Those acts are fewer, later, and more carefully worded than the devotional literature suggests, and they are also more substantial than the sceptical literature sometimes allows. Both halves of that sentence are load-bearing.

1.1 The fullest act: the beatification of 6 May 1990

The single most informative document the Holy See has issued on the subject is the apostolic letter by which John Paul II granted liturgical cult to Blessed Juan Diego. It is worth reading closely, because it shows exactly how Rome speaks about Tepeyac when it is speaking juridically.

Operative text — John Paul II, apostolic letter *Ad perpetuam rei memoriam Cultus liturgicus in honorem Beati Ioannis Didaci conceditur*, Mexico City, 6 May 1990, extracts (Latin, as printed in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*)

... Ioannes Didacus, vir humilis ex Indorum stirpe, tamquam instrumentum electus est ut, in honorem Beatae Mariae Virginis de Guadalupe, templum aedificantur [sic]...
Uti scripta ferunt, his aliisque similibus Ioannes Didacus usus est verbis, cum, mense Decembri, anno MDXXXI, Deipara Virgo Maria mirum in modum sese videndam ei praeiuit in colle Tepeiicensi.
Haud multae sunt notitiae quae, usque ad annum MDXXXI, de Ioanne Didaco ad nos pervenerunt...
... Positio concinnata est super Servi Dei fama sanctitatis, virtutibus et cultu ab immemorabili eidem praestito...
... concedimus, ut memoria liturgica Ioannis Didaci tamquam Beati — obligatoria in Mexicana archidioecesi, ad libitum vero in aliis Americae Latinae dioecesibus — quotannis die ix Decembris tum in actione Eucharistica tum in Liturgia Horarum celebrari possit.¹

Five things in that text should be fixed in a reader's mind before anything else in this study.

The narrative is used, and its register is marked. *Uti scripta ferunt*—"as the writings relate." The Holy See narrates the apparition and simultaneously signals that it is narrating what the writings say. The same reserve appears again a paragraph later in *fertur*, "he is said to have," of Juan Diego's continence.

The documentary poverty is admitted. *Haud multae sunt notitiae*: not many notices have reached us. This is the Holy See itself, in the operative act, acknowledging the problem that §3 will set out in detail.

The juridical ground is cult, not fact. The *Positio* was on the reputation for sanctity, the virtues, and the cult rendered *ab immemorabili*. The act is an equipollent beatification: the Pope confirms an immemorial cult.

The grant is liturgical and bounded. A memorial on 9 December, obligatory in one archdiocese and optional elsewhere in Latin America. Nothing more is granted.

Nothing is declared about the events. There is no clause determining that the apparitions occurred, and none certifying the image.

1.2 The inventory of competent acts

The acts this study located, in order, with their exact objects.²

Date	Authority	Act	Exact object
1737	City of Mexico (civic and diocesan)	Sworn patronage	Our Lady of Guadalupe taken as patroness of the republic; attested retrospectively by Pius X
1754	Benedict XIV	Confirmation of the patronage, with a proper Office and Mass	The patronage confirmed by papal authority; the incipit and the Latin text are discussed at §8.2 with a recorded limit

Date	Authority	Act	Exact object
8 February 1887	Leo XIII	Brief conceding the coronation	The canonical coronation of the image (act not located; §8.3)
15 July 1892	Sacred Congregation of Rites	Rescript <i>Mexicana</i> , on the placing of statues	Permits statues of Zumárraga and of Juan Diego in the collegiate church but not on the altar; describes Juan Diego as one “to whom the Virgin Mother of God <i>fertur apparuisse</i> ”
6 March 1894	Sacred Congregation of Rites	New proper Office and Mass	<i>Fertur</i> of the older Office replaced by <i>antiqua et constans traditio docet</i> (act not located in ASS; §8.3)
12 October 1895	Archbishops of Mexico	Canonical coronation	The image crowned in the collegiate church
1896	Fifth Mexican Provincial Council	Edict	“the marvellous apparition, without being a dogma of faith, is an ancient, constant and universal tradition in the Mexican nation”
16 August 1910	Sacred Congregation of Rites	Item on the agenda of the Ordinary Congregation	“the election and declaration of the B. Virgin Mary called of Guadalupe as Patroness of all Latin America” (the resulting act not located; §8.4)
12 October 1945	Pius XII	Radio message	Fiftieth anniversary of the coronation; the tradition narrated <i>como refiere la tradición</i>
4 October 1976	Paul VI	Apostolic letter <i>Sacra illa</i>	The title and dignity of minor basilica transferred in perpetuity from the old church to the new
12 October 1976	Paul VI	Message for the dedication	The new shrine dedicated
9 April 1990	Congregation for the Causes of Saints	Decree on sanctity of life and immemorial cult	The juridical basis of the beatification
6 May 1990	John Paul II	Apostolic letter (above)	Liturgical cult of Blessed Juan Diego granted; memorial 9 December
22 January 1999	John Paul II	<i>Ecclesia in America</i> , n. 11	Guadalupe as “Patroness of all America and Star of the first and new evangelization”; the Synod’s proposal of a continental feast welcomed
25 March 1999	Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments	Decree, Prot. 803/99/L	The celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe inscribed in the calendars of the Americas for 12 December <i>gradu festi</i>
20 December 2001	Congregation for the Causes of Saints	Decree <i>super miraculo</i>	One cure recognized as miraculous, for the canonization
31 July 2002	John Paul II	Canonization	Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin inscribed in the catalogue of the saints
2008	Congregation for Divine Worship	<i>Variationes et additiones</i> to the third typical edition	9 December (St Juan Diego) and 12 December (Our Lady of Guadalupe) added to the General Roman Calendar
12 December 2025	Leo XIV	Homily, St Peter’s Basilica	The feast celebrated at Rome
5 February 2026	Leo XIV	Message	To a pastoral theological congress on the Guadalupean event, looking to the fifth centenary in 2031

1.3 The act that does not exist

No act of any competent authority determining that the events of December 1531 occurred, or that they are of supernatural origin, was located by this study. The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith's documents index contains nothing concerning Guadalupe, Tepeyac or Juan Diego, although it does carry determinations concerning other alleged phenomena (§9.3). The nearest approaches in the record are two, and they are exactly as far as they go: a liturgical formula of 1894 asserting an ancient and constant *tradition*, and a provincial council's edict of 1896 stating that the apparition, *without being a dogma of faith*, is such a tradition.

That is a bounded negative result, correctable by better evidence, and it is not a finding that the events were judged not to have occurred. It is a finding about what the record contains.

This is an ecclesial-judgment-first study of Guadalupe, not a devotional narrative and not a verdict. It establishes what competent authority has actually done and in what words; it lays out the documentary strata in the order in which they can be dated, beginning from the printed witnesses of 1648 and 1649 and working back; it states the silence problem and the controversy of 1556 from the sources, including the one moment in the sixteenth century when the origin of the image was formally at issue; it presents the historicity dispute as the live scholarly question it is, with each side stated at its strongest and each named position reported only at the level at which it was actually checked; it separates what the beatification and canonization of Juan Diego establish from what they do not; it binds every claim about the image to a source that was reached, and records as negative findings the popular claims that could not be traced; it reads the Nahuatl text's own rhetoric from the 1649 imprint; and it states what all of this obliges. Public Revelation is complete in Christ. No event at Tepeyac adds to it, and even a positively received private revelation asks a prudent human assent (*fides humana*), never the divine and Catholic faith owed to Revelation. Christ alone is Redeemer and mediator; the Guadalupe narrative's own self-identification of the apparition subordinates her to him, and this study keeps that subordination visible. Where the record is thinner than the received story—and in places it is very much thinner—the ceiling is stated rather than papered over; and where the reception is heavier than sceptical summaries allow, that is stated too.

1.4 How the study runs

In the order the evidence demands: the documentary strata and what each witness can carry (§2); the silence problem and the *Información* of 1556 (§3); the historicity dispute stated at strength on both sides (§4); Juan Diego's cause, the objections of the 1990s, and the canonization (§5); the image and what its documented examinations establish, with a traceability audit of the popular claims (§6); the Nahuatl text's rhetoric and Indigenous agency (§7); liturgical and magisterial reception from 1555 to the present (§8); and what all of it obliges under the doctrinal frame and the current norms (§9). Work-wide bounds, taxonomy, and qualifications are gathered in the terminal appendix; witnesses and rights are in the References.

2 The Documentary Strata

Everything contested about Guadalupe becomes tractable once the surviving documents are laid out in the order in which they can actually be dated, rather than in the order in which the received narrative places the events they describe. This section does that, and does nothing else: it establishes what exists, when each witness enters the record, and what kind of thing each witness is. Whether the tradition those witnesses transmit is historically true is the question of §3 and §4, and it is deliberately not answered here.

2.1 The first printed stratum: 1648 and 1649

Two books, printed in Mexico City thirteen months apart, are the foundation of every later telling.

The first is Miguel Sánchez, *Imagen de la Virgen María, Madre de Dios de Guadalupe, milagrosamente aparecida en la ciudad de México* (Mexico, 1648), a Spanish work by a diocesan priest and preacher. It is not a chronicle. It is a theological and rhetorical elaboration of the apparition as the fulfilment in New Spain of Apocalypse 12, the woman clothed with the sun; the narrative of the four encounters is embedded in a devotional and typological argument.

Sánchez himself says he could not produce documents for the events and rests on tradition and on papers he does not identify.³

The second is the Nahuatl tract published by Luis Laso de la Vega, chaplain and vicar of the Guadalupe hermitage at Tepeyac, in 1649. Its running title is *Huei tlamahuiçoltica*. Its internal architecture matters, and it can be read off the 1649 imprint itself: after the licences and a Nahuatl dedicatory letter signed by Laso de la Vega, the tract opens the apparition narrative under the heading that has given the narrative its conventional name.

Witness text — Luis Laso de la Vega, *Huei tlamahuiçoltica* (Mexico: Juan Ruiz, 1649), fol. 1r, heading and opening (Nahuatl, as printed)

NICAN MOPOHVA, MOTECPANA INQVENIN YANCVICAN HVEITLAMAHVIÇOLTICA MONEXITI INÇENQVIZCA ICHPOCHTLI SANCTA MARIA DIOS YNANTZIN TOÇIHVAPILLATOCATZIN, IN ONCAN TEPEYACAC MOTENEHVA GVADALVPE.

Acattopa quimottititzino çe maçehualtzintli itoca Iuan Diego; Auh çatepan monexiti initlaçò Ixiptlatzin ynixpan yancuican Obispo D. Fray Iuan de Sumarraga. Ihuan inixquich tlamahuiçolli ye quimochihuilia.

Ye iuh màtlac xihuitl in opehualoc in atl in tepetl Mèxico, yn ye omoman in mitl, in chimalli, in ye nohuian ontlatmatcamani in ahuàcan, intepehuàcan... In huel iquac inipan Xihuitl mill y quinientos, y treinta y vno, quiniuh iquezquilhuic in metztli Dziembre...⁴

The tract is a composite in six identifiable movements: the two licences of January 1649; a Nahuatl dedicatory address by Laso de la Vega to the Virgin; the *Nican mopohua* narrative; a description of the sacred image; a second titled section, *Nican motecpana*, “here is set in order,” listing miracles attributed to the image and adding biographical matter on Juan Diego and his uncle Juan Bernardino; a closing section opening *Nican tlantica*, “here ends the account”; and, after the *Laus Deo*, a Nahuatl prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe. That last item is a received devotional text and is deliberately not reproduced anywhere in this study.⁵

Two facts about this pair are not in dispute between the schools and should be fixed before anything else is said. First, both books are of 1648–1649, one hundred and seventeen years after the events they narrate. Second, nothing printed transmits the narrative before them. That second point is not an anti-apparitionist thesis; it is conceded in the most explicitly apparitionist compilation of the eighteenth century, which opens by admitting that in the first century after the image appeared “no printed account of so admirable an event was published, as it seems,” and explains the gap providentially.⁶

2.2 The seventeenth-century amplification

After 1649 the tradition acquires its standard apologetic architecture. Luis Becerra Tanco, a diocesan priest and Nahuatl scholar, published a short account in 1666 and a fuller posthumous version, *Felicidad de México*, in 1675; he claims to have seen and read early Nahuatl relations and Indian annals, which he does not produce.⁷ Francisco de Florencia, S.J., produced the large synthesis *La estrella del norte de México* (1688), which became the standard reference until the nineteenth century.⁸

Between Becerra Tanco’s two versions falls the single most important juridical instrument the apparitionist tradition possesses: the *Informaciones jurídicas* taken in 1666 at the instance of the chapter of the Guadalupe collegiate church, in which aged witnesses at Cuauhtitlán and in Mexico City deposed to what they had heard from parents and grandparents about Juan Diego and the apparition, and painters and physicians gave opinions on the image. Their purpose was to support a petition to Rome for a proper Office and Mass. Two things about them must be held together: they are formal sworn testimony, and they are testimony taken one hundred and thirty-five years after the event, necessarily at second and third hand, by a body with an interest in the outcome.⁹

2.3 The sixteenth-century materials claimed for the tradition

The apparitionist case does not rest on the printed books. It rests on the claim that a sixteenth-century documentary substratum exists and that the 1649 tract preserves it. The custodian of the shrine publishes an explicit inventory of that substratum, grouped as Indigenous, mestizo, and Spanish documents, and it is worth reproducing its principal members at the shrine’s own level of assertion, because a reader deserves to see what the strong case actually consists of before being told what to think of it.¹⁰

Witness	Date	Kind	Evidentiary ceiling used here
<i>Nican mopohua</i>	pr. 1649; assigned by the shrine to Antonio Valeriano, c. 1556	Nahuatl apparition narrative in the 1649 tract	Text verified in the 1649 imprint; the earlier date and the Valeriano attribution are contested (§4.4) and are not adopted
<i>Nican motecpana</i>	pr. 1649; assigned by the shrine to Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, 1590	Nahuatl miracle list and Juan Diego biography in the same tract	Text verified in the 1649 imprint; the 1590 date and attribution are not adopted
<i>Códice Escalada</i> (<i>Códice 1548</i>)	claimed 1548; surfaced 1995, published 1997	Small parchment drawing with glosses, a Sahagún signature, and a Valeriano glyph	Disputed artefact (§4.4); no authentication is asserted here
<i>Anales de Juan Bautista</i> ; <i>Anales de Chimalpahin</i> ; various <i>Anales</i>	16th–17th c. compilations	Nahuatl annalistic notices of Tepeyac and of an apparition	Existence and genre reported at the shrine’s level only; no reading of any manuscript is claimed
Testaments (Bartolomé López 1537; Cuauhtitlán 1559; Verdugo Quetzalmamalitzin 1563; and others)	1537–1577	Bequests naming the Guadalupe hermitage	Reported at the shrine’s level; these witness <i>a shrine and its alms</i> , not the apparition narrative
Cervantes de Salazar, <i>Tres diálogos latinos</i>	1554	Humanist description of Mexico City	Reported at the shrine’s level; witnesses a sanctuary at Tepeyac
<i>Información</i> of 1556	Sept.–Oct. 1556	Archiepiscopal testimonial inquiry	Read at length in the critical literature (§3.2); its bearing is strongly contested
Mapa de Uppsala	c. 1556–1562	Pictorial map of the Valley of Mexico	Reported; witnesses a church at Tepeyac
Viceroy Martín Enríquez to the king	23 Sept. 1575	Official correspondence	Quoted in the critical literature (§3.2); assigns the cult a mid-1550s origin
Sánchez, <i>Imagen de la Virgen María</i>	1648	Spanish theological narrative	Verified as to date and character; first printed narrative
Laso de la Vega, <i>Huei tlamahuizoltica</i>	1649	Nahuatl tract	Verified in the imprint; controlling text of the narrative
<i>Informaciones jurídicas</i>	1666	Sworn depositions at 135 years’ remove	Reported at the level of the published edition; not collated

Three observations about this inventory are load-bearing for everything that follows, and none of them is polemical.

First, the inventory is heterogeneous in kind. A testamentary bequest to a hermitage, a map showing a church, and a chapter of annals are not the same sort of evidence as a narrative of four apparitions, and they do not become so by appearing in the same list. Almost all the sixteenth-century items that can be dated with confidence establish the same, real, and genuinely early fact: that a shrine of Our Lady under the name Guadalupe existed at Tepeyac and attracted alms and pilgrimage from at least the 1550s. That is a substantial historical result. It is not the same result as the apparition narrative, and the distance between the two is exactly the space in which the modern dispute is conducted.

Second, the items that would close that distance—an early manuscript of the *Nican mopohua*, the *Códice Escalada*, the annalistic entries—are precisely the items whose dating or authenticity is contested. No sixteenth-century manuscript of the *Nican mopohua* is known: the oldest manuscript copy usually adduced is later, and the text’s own first securely dated appearance is the 1649 print.¹¹

Third, the shrine’s inventory and the critical literature are largely arguing about the same documents. This is not a case where one side has evidence and the other has none; it is a case where a shared corpus of undisputed sixteenth-century material about a shrine is being connected, or not connected, to a narrative first printed in the seventeenth. What separates the schools is a judgment about inference, not a quarrel about whether the papers exist.

2.4 What this section has and has not established

Established: the 1648 and 1649 printings and their content; the internal architecture and self-description of the 1649 tract, read in the imprint; the seventeenth-century apologetic sequence; the existence and purpose of the 1666 depositions; and the fact, conceded on both sides, that no printed narrative of the apparition precedes 1648.

Not established, and not attempted: the date of composition of the *Nican mopohua*; its authorship; the authenticity of the *Códice Escalada*; the content of any manuscript not inspected; and any conclusion whatever about whether the events of 1531 occurred.

3 The Silence Problem and the Controversy of 1556

3.1 What the problem is, stated exactly

Between December 1531 and the printing of 1648 lies a hundred and seventeen years in which the apparition narrative does not appear in any document that the modern critical literature has been able to authenticate as of that period. The problem is not that the record of early New Spain is thin. It is unusually thick: episcopal correspondence, mendicant chronicles, Nahuatl annals, testaments, viceregal letters, and the great ethnographic project of Bernardino de Sahagún all survive in quantity, and many of these documents describe precisely the sort of event the narrative reports—heavenly favours to Indian converts, wonders at shrines, the fortunes of the Tepeyac hermitage itself.

Two further features sharpen the difficulty. First, the persons the narrative makes central are among the best-documented figures of the period: Juan de Zumárraga, first bishop and archbishop of Mexico, left a large body of writings. Second, the one occasion on which the Tepeyac cult is documented as a subject of formal ecclesiastical controversy—September 1556—produced a file of sworn testimony in which, on the reading of the critical historians, nobody mentions the apparition at all.

The argument built on these facts is an argument from silence, and its proponents have always known it. Its classical formulation is Joaquín García Icazbalceta's, in the letter he wrote in 1883 at the express and repeated command of his archbishop, Pelagio Antonio Labastida y Dávalos, and asked him not to circulate. Because the argument is so often reported second-hand and so rarely quoted, and because its author was a devout Catholic layman, the founding historian of Mexican colonial bibliography, and manifestly reluctant to write at all, it is worth having in his own words.

Witness text — Joaquín García Icazbalceta, *Carta acerca del origen de la imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de México*, to Archbishop Labastida, October 1883, §§9–10 and 12 (Spanish, as edited)

9.—Caímos ya en el *argumento negativo*, tan impugnado por los apologistas de la Aparición, sin duda porque conocen que no puede haber otro contra un hecho *que no pasó*...

10.—La fuerza del argumento negativo consiste principalmente en que el silencio sea universal, y que los autores alegados hayan escrito de asuntos que pedían una mención del suceso que callaron. Ambas circunstancias concurren en los documentos anteriores al padre Sánchez...

12.—El primer testigo de la Aparición debiera ser el ilustrísimo señor Zumárraga... Pero en los muchos escritos suyos que conocemos no hay la más ligera alusión al hecho o a las ermitas: ni siquiera se encuentra una sola vez el nombre de Guadalupe. Tenemos sus libros de doctrina, cartas, pareceres, una exhortación pastoral, dos testamentos y una información acerca de sus buenas obras... Pero nada, absolutamente nada en parte alguna.¹²

García Icazbalceta then extends the inventory: Archbishop Alonso de Montúfar's own *Descripción del Arzobispado* of 1569–1570, which lists the churches of the city and does not mention the Guadalupe hermitage; Motolinía's *Historia de los indios* of 1541, which recounts heavenly favours to Indians and never names Guadalupe; the letter of Bishop Garcés to Paul III; the correspondence of Pedro de Gante, Ramírez de Fuenleal and Viceroy Mendoza; Bartolomé de las Casas, who knew Zumárraga personally and to whom the story would have been a gift in his defence of the Indians; and Jerónimo de Mendieta, who wrote three chapters on Zumárraga's life, reported a 1576 apparition to an Indian of Xochimilco which the visionary told him himself, and said nothing of Tepeyac.¹³

To this is added the passage that both schools have always had to confront: Sahagún’s note, in the appendix on surviving superstitions in Book XI of the *Historia general*, that at the hill called Tepeyac there had formerly been a temple of a goddess called Tonantzin, “our mother,” and that the Indians now came to the church of Our Lady there still saying that they went to Tonantzin—which he regarded as a satanic device to keep idolatry alive under a new name. A missionary who thought the Tepeyac devotion needed that warning is a difficult witness for a tradition in which heaven itself established the shrine.¹⁴

3.2 September 1556: Montúfar, Bustamante, and the *Información*

The single richest sixteenth-century file bearing on the cult was generated by a quarrel between the second archbishop of Mexico and the Franciscan provincial.

On or about 6 September 1556 Archbishop Alonso de Montúfar preached in his cathedral in support of the devotion at Tepeyac. On Tuesday 8 September, the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, at the solemn Mass in the chapel of San José de los Naturales in the Franciscan convent, with the viceroy Luis de Velasco, the judges of the *audiencia* and a great crowd present, the provincial Francisco de Bustamante preached. After an unexceptionable panegyric of the Mother of God he changed subject, visibly agitated, and attacked the Guadalupe devotion.

The substance of what he said is recoverable because the archbishop began, the very next day, to take testimony about it. Nine witnesses deposed. Their evidence, as reconstructed in Edmundo O’Gorman’s close analysis of the file, includes the following: that the devotion which the people of the city had taken up at “a hermitage and house of Our Lady which they have entitled of Guadalupe” was gravely harmful to the Indians; that the friars had laboured to teach the Indians not to adore images, which are wood and stone; that the archbishop was wrong to think the Indians were not devoted to Our Lady—they were so devoted that they took her for God; that had the archbishop understood the Indians as the friars did, “he would have taken another manner or order at the beginning of this devotion of this hermitage”; and, in the sentence that has echoed through four centuries of controversy, that to tell the Indians now that an image painted yesterday by an Indian worked miracles was to sow great confusion and undo what had been well planted.

Witness text — Testimony to the sermon of Fray Francisco de Bustamante, 8 September 1556, as reconstructed and quoted by Edmundo O’Gorman

“y venir ahora a decirles a los naturales que una imagen pintada ayer por un indio llamado Marcos hacía milagros, era sembrar gran confusión y deshacer lo bueno que se había plantado”
“que estaba admirado de que esta devoción se hubiere levantado tan sin fundamento”
“que se maravillaba mucho de que el señor arzobispo hubiese predicado en los púlpitos y afirmado los milagros que se decía que la dicha imagen había hecho, siendo prohibido... [y que] era menester haber verificado los milagros y comprobádoslos con copia de testigos”¹⁵

Bustamante went further: he asked the viceroy and the judges to investigate, to find and flog the “first inventor” who had published that the image worked miracles, and to audit the alms collected at the hermitage. The archbishop’s inquiry stopped without a sentence; a marginal note in his hand on folio 5 recto reads “Suspéndase y la parte es muerto.”¹⁶

O’Gorman’s Appendix IV establishes two things about this file that matter for how it may be used, and they cut in different directions. Against the apparitionist tradition, he shows in detail that the inquiry was riddled with procedural irregularity by the archbishop’s own diocesan ordinances—anonymous unsigned denunciations, an interrogatory drawn up not by the fiscal or apostolic notary but by the viceroy’s chaplain, no list of witnesses, oaths largely administered by the archbishop himself rather than the notary, leading questions, a witness compelled under pain of excommunication, another who was the archbishop’s own servant, and named persons never called—so that the flattering picture of a magnanimous prelate who tried and then forgave the friar cannot stand. Against a careless use of the file as a simple deposition about Guadalupe, he shows equally that it is not a process at all but an informative inquiry that the archbishop assembled for his own protection and kept private; which is why, as Appendix VII documents, nobody knew of its existence for nearly three centuries.¹⁷

The transmission history of the *Información* is itself part of the evidence and is unusually well documented. On O’Gorman’s reconstruction, drawn from the 1888 letter of José María de Agreda y Sánchez: Archbishop Manuel Posada y Garduño, shortly before his death on 30 April 1846, laid his hand on the file and told the historian José

Fernando Ramírez that what was certain about the matter was in it, “but neither you nor anyone else is to see it,” and had it placed in the reserved archive. During the ensuing vacancy the archdeacon José Braulio Sagaceta found it, could not read the old hand well, inferred that it was against the Guadalupean history, took it home, and kept it hidden for more than twenty years. It reached García Icazbalceta about 1871. It was first cited in his letter of 1883, and first printed in 1888, in an edition financed by opponents of the tradition and falsely imprinted “Madrid.” A second edition of 1890, by Fortino Hipólito Vera, printed the same document under a title asserting that it *proved* the apparition.¹⁸

That last fact is the fairest possible summary of the state of the question. The same file was published within three years by both parties, each as a decisive proof of its own thesis.

3.3 The rejoinders, stated at their strength

The argument from silence is not self-evidently decisive, and the serious apparitionist replies are these.

The Franciscan reply. The order that dominated early Mexican evangelization was, on the evidence of the 1556 file itself, hostile to a cult of images among neophytes. Silence from Motolinía, Mendieta and Sahagún about a devotion they distrusted is not the same as silence about an event they had never heard of, and Bustamante’s sermon is evidence of the hostility, not of ignorance. O’Gorman himself concedes that the file shows the Mexican Franciscans sharing their provincial’s view.¹⁹

The transmission reply. The narrative is Nahuatl, Indigenous, and oral in the first instance. Alphabetic writing in Nahuatl was a missionary import; the genres in which such a memory would first be carried—annals, songs, pictorial records—survive fragmentarily and were not read by Spanish chroniclers. A story preserved among Indians in Nahuatl could be unknown to the Spanish record for decades without ceasing to be true.

The incompleteness reply. García Icazbalceta concedes the premise on which this reply builds: “we do not know everything that came from his pen, nor is it reasonable to demand so much.” His answer is that if nothing appears in the large surviving body, it is gratuitous to postulate it in the lost remainder—but that is a judgment of probability, not a demonstration.²⁰

The interested-silence reply. A conquered people’s memory of a heavenly favour to one of their own was not an obviously safe thing to publish in the decades of the *encomienda* disputes, the epidemics, and the campaigns against idolatry.

The counter-arguments to each of these are equally available, and this study does not adjudicate among them. What it does hold is that the rejoinders change the shape of the problem rather than dissolving it. The Franciscan reply explains the friars but not Zumárraga; the transmission reply explains the Spanish record but must then account for the absence of a dated Nahuatl witness; the incompleteness reply is a possibility rather than a piece of evidence. And the 1556 file remains what it is: the one occasion on which the origin of the Tepeyac image was formally at issue in the sixteenth century, in which a provincial said in a cathedral pulpit before the viceroy that an Indian had painted it, and in which, on the reading of every critical historian who has examined the file, no one is recorded as having contradicted him with the story of Juan Diego.

3.4 The viceroy’s letter of 1575

One further document is regularly joined to the 1556 file. On 23 September 1575 Viceroy Martín Enríquez wrote to the king an account of the origin of the Tepeyac devotion in which he reported that it began when a herdsman published that he had recovered his health by going to the hermitage. O’Gorman treats the coincidence between that report and Bustamante’s demand that the “first inventor” of the miracle stories be punished as strong confirmation that the cult’s efflorescence belongs to 1555–1556; García Icazbalceta had drawn the same inference ninety years earlier.²¹

Here too the honest statement is bounded. The letter is a viceroy’s report of what he had been told about an origin two decades before his own arrival; it is excellent evidence that in 1575 the Crown’s chief officer in New Spain believed the cult to be recent and to have begun with a cure, and it is not a transcript of 1531.

4 The Historicity Dispute as a Live Question

4.1 Why this section does not adjudicate

The question whether four apparitions occurred at Tepeyac in December 1531 and whether a Nahuatl man called Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin received them is disputed among competent, credentialed, believing scholars, and it is disputed on grounds that are historical rather than theological. Nothing in the Church's acts settles it as a historical question; nothing in the surviving record settles it either way beyond reasonable disagreement; and no study produced by an AI contributor without archival access has any business pretending otherwise.

This section therefore does three things. It states each position as its strongest advocates state it. It identifies the actual points on which the disagreement turns, so that a reader can see that the two sides are not simply talking past one another. And it records, with precision, what this study has and has not verified about each position, because the scholars involved are living or recently deceased professionals whose views deserve to be reported at the level at which they were actually checked, and not one word beyond.

4.2 The two positions, stated at their strongest

The case for a late origin

The strongest form of the sceptical case is not that anyone lied. It is that a devotion of genuine sixteenth-century antiquity acquired, in the seventeenth century, an origin narrative of a familiar and well-attested literary kind, and that the narrative was received with such rapidity and such joy that its recent composition was forgotten within two generations.

On this account the sequence runs: a hermitage of Our Lady is established at Tepeyac, a place of pre-conquest cult; by the mid-1550s an image in that hermitage attracts a rapidly growing Spanish and then Indian devotion, ignited by reports of a cure; the Franciscans object publicly in 1556 that the image is recent, human work and that the miracle reports are unverified; the archbishop promotes the cult regardless; the shrine prospers for a century without any narrative of an apparition; in 1648 a Mexican-born diocesan priest supplies one, in a Creole-patriotic theological key; in 1649 the chaplain of the shrine supplies a Nahuatl version for Indian readers; and from 1666 onward the tradition is defended, juridically documented, and finally made the object of Roman liturgical concession.

The load-bearing evidence is the silence of §3.1, the 1556 file of §3.2, the viceroy's letter of 1575, and the absence of any dated sixteenth-century manuscript of the narrative. The load-bearing argument is that the coincidence of all four is not the kind of thing that accident produces.

The case for the tradition

The strongest form of the apparitionist case is likewise not what its opponents sometimes describe. It is not an appeal to piety against evidence. It is a claim about *which* evidence a historian of sixteenth-century Mexico is entitled to privilege.

On this account the sceptical case rests almost entirely on Spanish alphabetic sources produced by and for the colonial administration and the Spanish clergy—exactly the sources least likely to record an event whose significance was Indigenous, whose language was Nahuatl, and whose principal effect was among a conquered population in the decade immediately following a catastrophic military defeat and in the middle of a Franciscan campaign against Indian image cult. The proper sources are the Nahuatl ones: the annals, the songs, the testaments, the pictorial records, the memory transmitted in a culture with sophisticated non-alphabetic and oral means of preservation. Those sources exist, they are numerous, they are early, and—the apparitionist argues—the sceptical tradition has systematically undervalued them because it reads them through a European documentary standard they were never meant to satisfy.

On this account the narrative in the 1649 tract is not a seventeenth-century invention but a sixteenth-century Nahuatl composition that Laso de la Vega printed; the shrine's own published dossier of Indigenous, mestizo and Spanish documents is the case in chief (§2.3); the 1556 controversy is evidence of a bitter inter-jurisdictional quarrel about image cult, not of ignorance of an apparition; and the 1666 depositions preserve, at the last possible moment, a chain of oral transmission at Cuauhtitlán that a documentary historian is not entitled to dismiss merely because it is oral.

4.3 The named positions and what was actually checked

The following inventory names the principal published statements. The right-hand column states the single argument each is chiefly known for. Except where the note says otherwise, this study verified each entry’s *bibliographic identity* through accessible catalogue records and states the position at a reported ceiling; it did not read the books.²²

Scholar	Principal published statement	Load-bearing argument
Joaquín García Icazbalceta (d. 1894)	<i>Carta acerca del origen de la imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de México</i> (1883; printed 1896)	The silence of Zumárraga and of every sixteenth-century writer who had occasion to mention the event (<i>read in full for this study</i>)
Ángel María Garibay K.	Address to the 1960 Mariological Congress, Mexico City, printed 1961	The <i>Nican mopohua</i> is a mid-sixteenth-century Nahuatl composition by Sahagún’s Nahuatl collaborators from older notes (<i>read in O’Gorman’s detailed exposition</i>)
Edmundo O’Gorman	<i>Destierro de sombras</i> (UNAM, 1986)	The cult originates in 1555–1556 under Montúfar; the <i>Nican mopohua</i> is Antonio Valeriano’s own literary invention for Indian readers, not a record of events (<i>read at length for this study</i>)
Stafford Poole, C.M.	<i>Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531–1797</i> (Univ. of Arizona Press, 1995; 2nd ed. 2017); <i>The Guadalupan Controversies in Mexico</i> (Stanford, 2006); “History versus Juan Diego,” <i>The Americas</i> 62:1 (2005)	The apparition account is unknown before 1648; Juan Diego’s historicity is not established by the surviving evidence
Lisa Sousa, Stafford Poole, James Lockhart	<i>The Story of Guadalupe: Luis Laso de la Vega’s Huei tlamahuicoltica of 1649</i> (Stanford / UCLA, 1998)	Philological dependence of the Nahuatl narrative on Sánchez 1648, hence a seventeenth-century composition
D. A. Brading	<i>Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe. Image and Tradition Across Five Centuries</i> (Cambridge, 2001)	The tradition’s theological and political formation traced as a history of the tradition itself
Louise M. Burkhart	<i>Before Guadalupe: The Virgin Mary in Early Colonial Nahuatl Literature</i> (Albany, 2001)	The Nahuatl Marian literature that precedes and surrounds the Guadalupe text
Gisela von Wobeser	<i>Orígenes del culto a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, 1521–1688</i> (UNAM-IIH / FCE, 2020)	Recent full-length scholarly treatment of the cult’s origins
Xavier Escalada, S.J.	<i>Enciclopedia Guadalupana</i> and the publication of the <i>Códice Escalada</i> (1995–1997)	A parchment dated 1548 bearing a Sahagún signature and a Valeriano glyph as a sixteenth-century witness to Juan Diego
Fidel González Fernández, Eduardo Chávez Sánchez, José Luis Guerrero Rosado	<i>El encuentro de la Virgen de Guadalupe y Juan Diego</i> (Porrúa, 1999)	The convergent Indigenous, mestizo and Spanish documentary corpus establishes Juan Diego’s historicity
Eduardo Chávez	<i>Our Lady of Guadalupe and Saint Juan Diego: The Historical Evidence</i> (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006)	The same case restated for an English readership by the cause’s postulator

Two facts about this table deserve saying aloud, because the dispute is often narrated as a conflict between faith and scholarship, and it is not. García Icazbalceta wrote his letter at his archbishop’s command and begged him to keep it private; Stafford Poole was a Vincentian priest; O’Gorman’s book was published by the national university’s historical institute. On the other side, Fidel González Fernández was a consultant of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and Eduardo Chávez was the postulator of Juan Diego’s cause and a trained historian. The line does not run between believers and unbelievers. It runs between two defensible readings of the same difficult corpus.

4.4 Where the disagreement actually lives

Four cruxes carry almost the whole weight.

Crux 1: the date of the *Nican mopohua*

Everything turns on this, and it is a philological question. If the Nahuatl narrative is a sixteenth-century composition, the case for a seventeenth-century invention collapses, whatever remains to be said about the events themselves. If it depends on Sánchez's 1648 Spanish book, the case for antiquity loses its principal support.

The remarkable feature of the modern literature is that the philological question does not track the theological one. Garibay, who dated the text to Sahagún's Tlatelolco circle between 1564 and 1570, was arguing *for* the tradition. O'Gorman, who accepts that Antonio Valeriano wrote it, uses that conclusion against the tradition: on his reading Valeriano composed it about 1556 precisely as a work of persuasion addressed to Indians, and its literary quality is evidence of authorship, not of testimony. The Sousa–Poole–Lockhart edition argues for dependence on Sánchez and a date after 1648. A reader who wants to know whether the text is early must therefore follow an argument about Nahuatl style, vocabulary, and textual parallels—not about piety.²³

Crux 2: the *Códice Escalada*

In 1995 the Jesuit Xavier Escalada announced, and in 1997 published, a small piece of treated animal skin bearing a drawing of an apparition scene and a kneeling Indian, glosses in Nahuatl including the name Juan Diego and a death date, the year 1548, what is presented as the signature of Bernardino de Sahagún, and a glyph read as that of Antonio Valeriano. If genuine it is a sixteenth-century witness to Juan Diego's existence and death, and it would be decisive.

Its authenticity is disputed. The reported grounds of dispute include the character of the drawing and of the Valeriano glyph, the syntax of the glosses, the presence of two inks, and—most consequentially for method—the conditions under which it was examined: the reported tests of 1997 are said to have been non-destructive and partly conducted on photographic reproductions at the owner's request, and one of the participating scientists is reported to have publicly qualified the certainty of the findings in 2002. This study reached no primary publication of any examination and reports the whole matter at that ceiling.²⁴

Crux 3: what counts as a source

The two schools weight source-types differently in a way that is methodological rather than evidential. One holds that a narrative first attested in print in 1648 must be treated as a 1648 text until an earlier witness is produced, and that oral transmission recorded in 1666 by an interested tribunal cannot bear the weight of a 1531 event. The other holds that a documentary standard calibrated to European archives systematically erases Indigenous memory, and that requiring a dated alphabetic Nahuatl manuscript from the 1530s is requiring evidence that the conditions of the period made almost impossible.

Both propositions are true of something. The dispute is about which is true of this case.

Crux 4: the argument from silence

Its force is proportional to how confident one is that a given writer *would* have mentioned the event. That confidence is highest for Zumárraga, who is made the narrative's second protagonist, and lowest for writers with no occasion to touch the matter. The sceptical case is strong exactly to the degree that it concentrates on Zumárraga and on the 1556 file, and weaker as it lengthens into a list. The apparitionist case is strong exactly to the degree that it supplies positive early evidence, and weaker as it relies on explaining silences away.

4.5 What a Catholic reader is entitled to conclude

Three things, and they are enough.

First, that the shrine at Tepeyac and its Marian cult are genuinely of the sixteenth century, on evidence that nobody disputes. The devotion is old, Indigenous in its reception from very early, and continuous.

Second, that the narrative of the four apparitions is transmitted to us by witnesses of 1648–1649 and is defended by testimony of 1666, and that whether it rests on earlier material is a genuinely open historical question on which serious Catholic scholars differ. A reader who finds the sceptical case persuasive is in the company of a Vincentian priest and of the archbishop’s own chosen historian; a reader who finds the traditional case persuasive is in the company of the postulator of the cause and of a consultor of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Third—and this is developed in §9—that the Church’s own acts do not require the reader to settle the question, because none of them is a determination of the historical question. What they determine is something else, and §1 and §5 set out exactly what.

5 Juan Diego: Cause, Objections, Canonization

5.1 What the sources say about the man

The narrative sources make Juan Diego a *macehualli*, a commoner, of Cuauhtitlán, baptized as an adult, a widower or living in continence by the time of the events, uncle-nephew to a Juan Bernardino whose cure the narrative reports, and afterwards the custodian of the hermitage until his death. The 1649 *Nican motecpana* gives his death as 1548 at the age of sixty-four; the 1666 depositions gather what old people at Cuauhtitlán said their parents and grandparents had told them.²⁵

The Holy See’s own biographical presentation, published for the canonization, states this openly and is worth quoting as a measure of the register in which the Church itself speaks about him.

Operative text — Holy See, *Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin: biography*, published with the canonization acts of 31 July 2002 (English)

Little is known about the life of Juan Diego before his conversion, but tradition and archaeological [sic] and iconographical sources, along with the most important and oldest indigenous document on the event of Guadalupe, “El Nican Mopohua” (written in Náhuatl with Latin characters, 1556, by the Indigenous writer Antonio Valeriano), give some information on the life of the saint and the apparitions.²⁶

The same page dates his birth to 1474 at Cuauhtitlán, gives the name *Cuauhtlatoatzin* as “the talking eagle,” has him baptized at about fifty by the Franciscan Peter of Ghent, sets the apparitions on 9 and 12 December 1531, and has him live afterwards as a hermit beside the chapel, dying in 1548.

5.2 The cause

The modern cause is late, and the chronology matters because much of the controversy is about the order in which things were done.²⁷

Date	Authority	Act	Exact object
1666	Chapter of the Guadalupe collegiate church	<i>Informaciones jurídicas</i>	Depositions gathered in support of a petition to Rome for a proper Office and Mass
15 June 1981	Mexican Episcopal Conference	Formal request	Petition for the canonization of Juan Diego
11 February 1984	Archdiocese of Mexico	Diocesan tribunal constituted	The diocesan phase of the cause; 98 sessions
23 March 1986	Archdiocese of Mexico	Diocesan phase closed	Documentation transmitted to Rome
1989	Postulation	<i>Positio super fama sanctitatis, virtutibus et cultu ab immemorabili</i>	The case for immemorial cult and heroic virtue

Date	Authority	Act	Exact object
9 April 1990	Congregation for the Causes of Saints	Decree on sanctity of life and immemorial cult	The juridical basis of the beatification (AAS 82 (1990), p. 855)
6 May 1990	John Paul II, Basilica of Guadalupe	Apostolic letter granting liturgical cult	Memorial of Blessed Juan Diego on 9 December, obligatory in the Archdiocese of Mexico and optional in the other dioceses of Latin America (§1.1)
1998	Congregation for the Causes of Saints	Historical commission	Convened to examine the historical objections; reported 28 October 1998
20 December 2001	Congregation for the Causes of Saints	Decree <i>super miraculo</i>	One cure recognized as miraculous (AAS 94 (2002), pp. 488–489)
31 July 2002	John Paul II, Basilica of Guadalupe	Canonization	Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin inscribed in the catalogue of the saints

Two features of this chronology are structurally important.

First, the 1990 act was an *equipollent* beatification by decree of immemorial cult. That is a specific and unusual juridical route: instead of proving heroic virtue and a miracle in the ordinary way, the postulation proves that a genuine cult of veneration has existed continuously and immemorially, and the Pope confirms it. Its object is the cult and the reputation of sanctity, not the reconstruction of a biography.

Second, the historical objections were raised *after* the beatification and *before* the canonization, and the Congregation responded to them by convening a historical commission. Whatever one thinks of that commission's conclusions, the process did not ignore the objections; it met them with an instrument designed for historical questions.

5.3 The objections of the 1990s

Between 1996 and 2002 a series of public objections was raised, and their most conspicuous author was Guillermo Schulenburg, for decades abbot of the Basilica of Guadalupe, who was reported to have said that Juan Diego was a symbol rather than a historical person and who resigned his office in 1996. In December 1998 a letter repeating the claim that no record establishes Juan Diego's historical existence was reported to have been sent to the Cardinal Secretary of State, Angelo Sodano, over the signatures of Schulenburg and of two other Basilica clergy, Carlos Warnholtz and Esteban Martínez, and copied to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Further public objections were reported in January 2002, shortly before the canonization.²⁸

Independently of who said what to whom, the objections had a recognizable structure, and it is the same as the sceptical case of §4.2: no sixteenth-century document names Juan Diego; the earliest notices are the 1649 print and the 1666 depositions; and an equipollent beatification founded on immemorial cult does not answer the question whether the person venerated existed.

The reply, equally recognizable, was the one set out at §4.2: the Indigenous documentary corpus is early and has been undervalued; the 1666 depositions preserve a live oral chain; and the *Códice Escalada*, published in 1997 in the middle of exactly this controversy, supplies a dated sixteenth-century notice of Juan Diego and of his death.

5.4 The commission of 1998 and what it concluded

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints convened a historical commission presided over by Fidel González Fernández, one of its own consultants, with a body of collaborators including José Luis Guerrero Rosado and Eduardo Chávez Sánchez. It reported on 28 October 1998. As presented at the time, its conclusion was that the convergence of Indigenous, mestizo and Spanish sources establishes moral certainty about Juan Diego's historical existence; the *Códice Escalada* was presented as “a direct testimony” of that historicity, functioning in effect as a death record; and oral tradition was defended as a decisive source in the study of Mexican peoples.²⁹

The commission's work satisfied the Congregation; the cause proceeded; and a reported cure was accepted as the miracle required for canonization. Its subject was Juan José Barragán Silva, a young man who on 3 May 1990 fell some ten metres onto a hard surface, struck his head, and sustained multiple fractures of the cranial bones with

intracranial haematoma and pneumoencephalus; his mother invoked Blessed Juan Diego as she saw him fall. A diocesan inquiry ran at the archiepiscopal curia of Mexico from 1990 to 1994; the Dicastery's medical council declared the healing rapid, complete and lasting on 26 February 1998; the theological consultors met on 11 May 2001 and the cardinals and bishops on 21 September 2001; and the decree *super miraculo* issued on 20 December 2001. Juan Diego was canonized on 31 July 2002.³⁰

The commission's work did not satisfy the scholars who had objected, and the published scholarly dispute continued afterwards, as the dates of the principal sceptical publications show (2005, 2006, 2017). This is worth stating plainly. A canonization ends a canonical process. It does not end a historiographical argument, and it is not designed to.

5.5 What the canonization establishes—and what it does not

The Church's act of canonization proposes a person to the whole Church as being in glory and to be venerated publicly. It is an act about sanctity and cult.

It is not a determination of biography. The current norms of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith state the principle for the cognate case with a directness that spares this study any need to speculate: the beatification or canonization of a person connected with alleged supernatural phenomena is a recognition of that person's heroic virtues or martyrdom and does not entail a declaration about the authenticity of the phenomena.³¹

Applied here, four consequences follow, and they should be held together rather than used selectively.

One. The canonization proposes Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin for public veneration and holds up his response to grace—humility, obedience, charity, and the courage of a poor man sent to a bishop—as imitable. That is the act's object.

Two. It does not settle the historical questions of §4. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints is not a tribunal of colonial historiography, and it did not purport to be one.

Three. It does not canonize any particular narrative detail: not the 1474 birth year, not the 1548 death year, not the Peter of Ghent baptism, not the 1556 dating of the *Nican mopohua*, and not the Valeriano attribution, all of which appear in the Holy See's hagiographical presentation at the level proper to that genre.

Four. It does not oblige any Catholic to hold a historical opinion. What it obliges is the reverence owed to a canonized saint, and the refusal to speak contemptuously of the Church's judgment. A Catholic historian may continue to think the evidence for the events insufficient and remain in full communion; several have.

6 The Image and What Its Examinations Establish

6.1 The rule this section follows

More untruth circulates about the Guadalupe image than about any other object of Catholic devotion, and almost all of it circulates in good faith. The rule adopted here is simple and is applied without exception: a claim about the physical image is stated only if this study reached a source for it, the source is named, and the level at which the source stands is stated. Where the popular claim could not be traced to any reachable source, that is recorded as a negative finding rather than passed over. Nothing is asserted about the image's origin, and no conclusion about the events of 1531 is drawn from any material fact.

Two prior points bound the whole discussion. First, the image is a venerated object continuously in cult, framed and glazed for most of its documented history, and it has been physically examined openly on very few occasions. Second, the Church has never made any material property of the image an object of any act of teaching or of judgment whatever. No papal, conciliar, or dicasterial text known to this study asserts that the image is of non-human origin.

6.2 The documented examinations

1666: the painters, and the reverse

The 1666 *Informaciones jurídicas* (§2.2) included opinions of painters, taken with the glass case opened. On that occasion the back of the cloth was seen—one of only three occasions on which this is known to have happened. Francisco de Florencia, S.J., who became the tradition’s great seventeenth-century expositor, later recorded what he and the canon Francisco de Siles saw there: not a shadow image showing through the thin cloth, but blotches of colour that seemed to them like the pressed juice of various flowers and leaves—dark green of lily leaf, snowy white, purple of iris, pink of rose, blue of violet, yellow of broom—distinct and unconfused, at which they marvelled for some time.³²

That testimony is doubly instructive. It is an apparitionist eyewitness saying that the reverse shows coloured staining that had soaked through, and it is the origin of the durable belief that the image was imprinted by the juice of flowers.

1751–1756: Miguel Cabrera and six colleagues

On 30 April 1751 the painter Miguel Cabrera, with six colleagues, examined the image at length with the glass removed, confirmed its measurements, made colour tests (*templas*) directly on the paint, and studied the technique and materials. He published his opinion five years later as *Maravilla americana* (1756), and it was the report sent to Rome in support of the petition for a proper Office and Mass. Its practical consequence is documented and unambiguous: after 1751 the colouring of the copies produced by Cabrera and his contemporaries changed markedly, in flesh tones and in dress, because the painters had at last seen the original closely.³³

Cabrera also reported a feature that became famous: what he took to be a numeral eight near the right foot, which he read as pointing either to the octave of the Immaculate Conception or to the image as the eighth wonder of the world.

1787: Bartolache and the Academy painters

In 1787 the physician and mathematician José Ignacio Bartolache conducted the most methodologically ambitious examination before the twentieth century. With the abbot’s permission he made three inspections with the case open, accompanied by a notary and by five qualified painters connected with the Real Academia de San Carlos. He addressed the question of the support material, arguing that the cloth was not maguey (*ixtle*) but the fibre of a palm (*ic Zotl*); he had ayates woven under his own supervision by Indigenous weavers and had copies painted on them between 6 February and 14 March 1787 as a controlled comparison; and he had his painters examine Cabrera’s “eight,” who reported in a notarial act of 1 March 1787 that it was nothing special and copied it identically. He published the results posthumously in 1790.³⁴

1887–1895: the crown

The image’s material history includes one episode of change that is documented beyond dispute and is worth recording precisely because it is so seldom mentioned. The image had long borne a painted crown. In January 1887, while photographs were being taken with the glass open in preparation for the canonical coronation, it was noticed that the crown was gone. Accusations flew in the Mexican press and among the clergy; the promoter of the coronation swore that neither he nor the archbishop had had any part in it; others argued publicly that its disappearance was itself a miracle by which the Virgin signified her willingness to be crowned anew. On 30 September 1895, when the image was returned to the collegiate church for the coronation, an instrument was drawn up before many witnesses recording that no crown existed on it and there was no trace that one ever had.³⁵

Nothing follows from this about the image’s origin. What follows is methodological: the object now venerated is not, in every visible detail, identical to the object venerated in 1750, and any argument that treats the present surface as untouched since 1531 must reckon with that.

1982: the conservation examination

On the night of 27 September 1982 the restorer José Sol Rosales carried out a consolidation and surface cleaning at the initiative of Jorge Guadarrama, conservator of the image and director of the Basilica museum, in the presence of the then abbot Guillermo Schulenburg and his archpriest, working through the night so that the image need not be withdrawn from cult. The counter-frame, the acrylic case of 1976, and nearly fifty studded nails tensioning the cloth were removed; a consolidant was applied; and the reverse of the painting was seen for the third time in its documented history.

The findings, as summarized in the peer-reviewed art-historical literature from the published reports, were these. There is no varnish. Traces of brush drag are hard to find, which the report attributed to the *aguazo* technique used on *sargas*, in which the cloth is dampened to fix the colour—the same technique that would explain the bleeding through to the reverse. Two further tempera media are present: a glue tempera in the sunburst and a resin tempera in the hands and face, the most lustrous part. The garments are worked in a technique of glue and ground gold. The palette is restricted; the black is soot from burnt maize-cob; the blue, often taken for Maya blue, is achieved with copper carbonates or azurite; the vermilion of the tunic is from sulphur and mercury, with cochineal carmine. The support carries a white, milky, irregular *imprimatura*, and its fibres are bast fibres with the characteristics of hemp—which, the same account observes, closed the long argument between the partisans of maguey and of palm. Under “materials foreign to the work” the report listed various splashes, including three of wax.³⁶

6.3 Claims that could not be traced

The following claims circulate widely. Each was searched for; the right-hand column records what this study actually found.³⁷

Claim as popularly stated	Nearest source reached	Recorded finding
NASA scientists examined the image and declared it inexplicable, or “living”	No statement by the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration concerning the image was located	Not traced. No NASA document, release, or attributed statement was reached. The claim is not repeated here in any form
Richard Kuhn, Nobel laureate in chemistry, analysed the fibres in 1936 and found no known pigments	No publication by Kuhn on the subject was located	Not traced. No published report, laboratory record, or citation to a primary publication was reached
The cloth would have decayed within decades and its survival is therefore miraculous	Bartolache’s 1787 controlled experiment with woven ayates is the earliest systematic test located	The historical argument is old and was already answered in 1883 by the observation that far more fragile papers survive far longer; no modern materials-science study was located
Infrared photography in 1979 showed that the original figure has no underdrawing and no brushwork	Philip Serna Callahan, <i>The Tilma under Infra-Red Radiation</i> , CARA Studies on Popular Devotion, vol. II, Guadalupan Studies no. 3 (Washington, D.C., 1981)	Publication identified; <i>not read</i> . Its reported conclusions distinguish an “original” figure from later additions (moon, tassel, gold rays, angel, background), which is a claim of later human overpainting
Human figures are reflected in the eyes of the image	Studies by J. Aste Tonsmann and earlier observations from 1929 and 1951 are referred to in the popular literature	Not traced to any peer-reviewed publication reachable for this study
The stars on the mantle map the sky over Mexico on 12 December 1531	No published astronomical study was located	Not traced
The name “Guadalupe” renders a Nahuatl <i>coatlatōpeuh</i> , “she who crushes the serpent”	No Nahuatl-philological support was located; the 1649 tract itself prints <i>Guadalupe</i>	Not traced. The 1556 testimony has the Spanish residents of Mexico City giving the hermitage that title (§3.2)

Two of these rows deserve a further sentence, because they are sometimes cited in Catholic apologetics as though they were settled. The Callahan study, whichever way its conclusions are finally assessed, is not a finding that the image is

untouched: on the reported summary it explicitly separates an original figure from later human additions, which is the same structure of claim as the 1982 conservation report. And the *coatlxopeuh* etymology has against it the plain fact that the earliest datable testimony about the name—the 1556 inquiry—attributes it to the Spanish residents of the city, and that the 1649 Nahuatl tract prints the Spanish form *Guadalupe* without gloss.

6.4 What material findings can and cannot do

Suppose every material question were settled tomorrow in the sense most favourable to the tradition. It would still not be a demonstration that the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared at Tepeyac; an unexplained material fact is an unexplained material fact, and the inference from “science cannot presently account for this” to “therefore God did it in this way” is not a valid one and has never been the Church’s method. Conversely, suppose every material question were settled in the sense least favourable. A sixteenth-century painting on hemp, made by a named or unnamed Indigenous painter, before which millions have prayed and through which the Gospel reached a devastated people, would remain one of the most consequential objects in the history of Christian evangelization, and the Church’s veneration of it would be untouched, because the Church venerates images without asserting anything about their manufacture.

That is the reason this study declines to make the material question carry weight it cannot bear—and the reason a Catholic reader loses nothing by holding the material question open.

7 The Nahuatl Text and Indigenous Agency

7.1 Why the text’s own rhetoric matters

Whatever its date, the *Nican mopohua* is a Nahuatl literary composition of high accomplishment, and it is the vehicle through which Guadalupe entered Indigenous Catholic life. Reading it as Nahuatl—rather than through a Spanish or English paraphrase—is not an ornament to the historical question. It is a discipline that protects a reader from two opposite errors: treating the text as a transcript, and treating it as a Spanish invention in translation. Its rhetoric is neither. It is Nahuatl rhetoric, deployed with control.

The observations below were made directly on the 1649 imprint. They are structural and lexical, not theological, and they do not depend on any position about the text’s date.

7.2 Difrasismo

Classical Nahuatl expresses many concepts by pairing two words whose combination means something neither means alone—the device conventionally called *difrasismo*. The narrative opens with two of the best-known examples in the same sentence.

Witness text — <i>Huei tlamahuiçoltica</i> (1649), fol. 1r, opening sentence (Nahuatl, as printed)
Ye iuh màtlac xihuitl in opehualoc in <i>atl</i> in <i>tepetl</i> Mèxico, yn ye omoman in <i>mitl</i> , in <i>chimalli</i> , in ye nohuian ontlatcamani in ahuaàcan, intepehuàcan. . . ³⁸

In atl in tepetl, “the water, the hill,” is the standard Nahuatl expression for a city or polity—the pair from which the noun *altepetl* is formed. *In mitl in chimalli*, “the arrow, the shield,” means war. The sentence therefore reads: “It was ten years after the polity of Mexico was conquered, when the war had been laid down, when there was peace everywhere in the towns and cities.” A translator who renders the pairs literally produces nonsense; a reader who does not know the device misses that the narrative begins by dating itself against the Nahua experience of the conquest, not against a Spanish chronology.

7.3 The reverential register and its social grammar

Nahuatl marks reverence morphologically, and the text uses that machinery to construct a precise social world. Juan Diego is introduced not as a man but as a *māçehualtzintli*: the noun *māçehualli*, a commoner—the lowest free

social rank, opposed to *pilli*, noble—with the reverential-diminutive suffix *-tzintli*, which in this register conveys not smallness but affectionate dignity. The text’s first substantive statement about its protagonist is therefore an insistence on his social insignificance and his worth in the same word.

The forms of address between the two speakers are equally exact and run in opposite directions. Juan Diego addresses the apparition as *Nochpochtziné* (“my revered maiden”), *Cihuapillé* (“lady”), *noTecuiyoé* (“my lord/lady”), and *Tlacatlé*—the vocative of *tlacatl*, “person,” which in Nahuatl courtly speech is the address of highest respect. She addresses him as *noxocoyouh*, “my youngest child,” and *nopiltzintzin* within his own reported speech returns the honorific to her. The exchange is built as a formal Nahua dialogue between a great personage and a *macehualli* whom she treats as her own child; the reversal of expected status is carried by the grammar before it is stated by anything in the content.³⁹

7.4 The fourfold consolation

The rhetorical centre of the narrative is the speech in which the apparition meets Juan Diego on the Tuesday morning as he is trying to avoid her, because his uncle Juan Bernardino is dying and he is going to Tlatelolco for a priest. It is built as four parallel rhetorical questions, each opening *cuix àmo*, “is it not?”

Witness text — <i>Huei tlamahuiçoltica</i> (1649), fol. 5r (Nahuatl, as printed)
... macamo xiquimacaci in cocoliztli, manoge oc itlà cocoliztli, cococ teòpouhqui, cuix àmo nican nicà, nimo-Nantzín? cuix àmo noçehuallotitlan, nècauhyotitlan in ticà? cuix àmo nèhuatl in nimopaccayeliz? cuix àmo nocuixanco, nomamalhuazco inticà? cuix oc itlà in motech monequi? ⁴⁰

Three features are worth naming. The four questions are two paired *difrasismos* in sequence—shade and shelter, lap-fold and crossed arms—so that the consolation is delivered in the same device with which the narrative opened. The maternal claim (*nimoNantzín*, “I am your mother”) is placed inside a question rather than an assertion, which is the courteous Nahuatl form. And the whole speech is offered against a specific and ordinary human distress, an uncle’s fever, not against a cosmic threat.

7.5 The self-identification, and a Marian caution

The sentence a Catholic reader will meet most often on devotional cards is one clause of the consolation, detached: “Am I not here, I who am your mother?” Taken whole, the speech is an offer of maternal shelter to a frightened man. Taken in isolation and repeated as a slogan, it can slide toward the suggestion that Mary is herself the ground of security—which is precisely what the narrative does not say, and what its own theologically decisive sentence forecloses. In the first encounter the speaker identifies herself, and the identification is a subordination.

Witness text — <i>Huei tlamahuiçoltica</i> (1649), fol. 2r (Nahuatl, as printed)
... ca nèhuatl in niçenquizca çemicac ichpochtli Sancta Maria in ninantzín in huelnelli Teotl Dios in ipalnemohuani, in teyocoyani, in Tloque Nahuaque, in Ilhuicahua in Tlalticpaque... ⁴¹

Every word of the Marian self-description in that sentence is relational. She is virgin; she is *mother of* the true God; and the string of high divine titles—*ipalnemohuani*, *teyocoyani*, *Tloque Nahuaque*, *Ilhuicahua*, *Tlalticpaque*—is applied to God and not to her. What she asks for immediately afterwards is a house in which she may show and give her love, compassion, help and defence to those who call upon her and seek her: an intercessory and maternal office exercised in a place of Christian worship, not a claim to be the source of what she gives. The narrative’s opening sentence has already named the true God, *in ipalnemohuani*, as the object of the faith then coming to bud in the land.⁴²

7.6 Indigenous agency, and what it does not settle

Two things follow from this reading, and a third does not.

First, the narrative is constructed to make an Indigenous commoner its agent. He is the one who is sent; he is the one the bishop’s household mistrusts; he argues with the apparition, twice, that she should send someone of rank instead;

his objection that he is “a tail, a wing, a bearer”—the Nahuatl idiom for a subordinate—is the pivot on which the plot turns. Whether the story is memory or composition, the choice of protagonist is a deliberate assertion about who may carry a message in the Church of New Spain, made in the generation of the conquest.

Second, the text’s setting is unsparing. It opens with a defeat. Its central miracle is flowers blooming in December on a hilltop where, the narrative says, only crags, thistles, thorns, nopals and mesquites grow and where the frost destroys everything. Nothing in the text softens the conquest; the consolation is offered to a people who have just been conquered, and it is offered in their language.

Third—and this is the limit—none of this settles the date or the historicity. A sixteenth-century Nahua author, a seventeenth-century Nahuatl-literate Spanish chaplain working with Nahua collaborators, and a genuine memory of 1531 are all consistent with the rhetoric described here. The text’s Indigenous character is a fact about the text. It is not, by itself, a fact about 1531.

7.7 The name, and the Tonantzin question

Two recurring linguistic claims should be stated at their real level.

Guadalupe is a Spanish place-name, from the great Extremaduran shrine, and the 1649 Nahuatl tract prints it in that form, in its title and throughout, without gloss or etymology. The proposal that it renders a Nahuatl original—*coatlxopeuh* and its relatives—has no support that this study could locate, and the earliest datable testimony on the point runs the other way: in 1556 the Franciscan provincial said in the pulpit that it was “the people of the city,” that is the Spanish residents, who had “entitled” the hermitage of Guadalupe (§3.2). This is not a devotional loss. That a Spanish title was given to an Indigenous shrine and then wholly appropriated by Nahua Christians is exactly the kind of thing the history of evangelization is made of.

Tonantzin, “our revered mother,” was the name of a goddess whose cult Sahagún reports at Tepeyac before the conquest and whose name he says Indians continued to use of the Christian shrine (§3.1). Three distinct claims are often run together here and should not be. That there was pre-conquest cult at the site is Sahagún’s own report. That the missionaries deliberately substituted Guadalupe for a native deity is a further and separate claim, and it is contested. And that the Guadalupe devotion is therefore covert idolatry is a third claim, which is Sahagún’s own anxiety rather than his finding, and which the subsequent five centuries of catechized Guadalupan Catholicism do not bear out.⁴³

8 Liturgical and Magisterial Reception

8.1 The cult before Rome, 1555–1666

The devotion is documented before any Roman act touches it. By the mid-1550s the hermitage at Tepeyac is a functioning shrine with alms, pilgrimage, reported cures, and—as the 1556 quarrel shows—enough prominence to divide an archbishop from a Franciscan provincial (§3.2). Testaments, maps, and viceregal correspondence attest it across the second half of the century (§2.3). What the sixteenth century does not produce is a juridical act about the events.

The first attempt to obtain one is the petition of 1666. The chapter of the collegiate church gathered the *Informaciones jurídicas*; a Latin relation was drawn up and presented to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, together with the postulates of the city of Mexico, of the dean and chapter *sede vacante*, and of the religious bodies, asking Alexander VII for a proper Office and Mass in honour of the apparition. It did not succeed.⁴⁴

8.2 The eighteenth century: patronage and the proper Office

Two acts belong here, and one of them is better attested by a much later document than by any edition of its own text.

In 1737, in the circumstances of a devastating epidemic, the republic took Our Lady of Guadalupe as its patroness by a sworn vow. In 1754 Benedict XIV confirmed that devotion by his authority. Both facts are stated by the Holy See itself, in Pius X's letter of 16 June 1910 granting indulgences for the centenary renewal of the same oath.

Operative text — Pius X, apostolic letter granting indulgences to the faithful of the Mexican Republic, 16 June 1910, extract (Latin, as printed in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*)

... proposuit, ut a Mexico iusiurandum renovaretur, quo inde ab anno MDCCXXXVII se suaque Deiparae Virginis a Guadalupe Patrocinio respublica credidit atque commisit. Cum vero huiusmodi religionem fel. rec. Benedictus XIV Decessor Noster anno MDCCLIV auctoritate sua confirmaverit...⁴⁵

Beyond that, precision fails, and the failure should be recorded rather than covered. The eighteenth-century Guadalupan literature names the act as the brief *Non est equidem* of May 1754 and describes the concession as a proper Office and Mass under the most solemn rite, first class with octave, together with the apostolic confirmation of the universal patronage. This study did not reach the Latin text of that brief in any edition, and a bibliographic anomaly turned up in the attempt.⁴⁶

8.3 The nineteenth century: coronation, revised Office, and the Council of 1896

The nineteenth century produced the tradition's greatest public honours and its gravest crisis of scholarly confidence at the same time. The two are causally linked, and the sequence is documented in detail.

In 1884 the maestrescuela of Guadalajara proposed petitioning Rome for a new Office and Mass for 12 December. The stated motive was candid: the older Office contained only a hypothetical declaration of the historical reality of the tradition, which prevented its defenders from invoking apostolic authority for the events at precisely the moment when scholars were putting them in doubt.⁴⁷

That the older Roman register really was hypothetical can be checked independently, because the Sacred Congregation of Rites used it in a published rescript two years before the revision.

Operative text — Sacred Congregation of Rites, rescript *Mexicana*, “Dubium quoad collocationem statuarum in Ecclesia,” 15 July 1892, extract (Latin, as printed in *Acta Sanctae Sedis*)

... ubi B. M. V. de Guadalupe imago depicta collocanda erit, medium inter binas marmoreas statuas, scilicet Rmi Dñi Zumarraga primi Antistitis Mexicani et cuiusdam Indi Ioannis Didaci, cui Deipara Virgo fertur apparuisse. [Responsum:] Simulacra de quibus in casu, collocari poterunt in Ecclesia, dummodo non exponantur super altare.⁴⁸

On 24 September 1886 the three Mexican archbishops petitioned Leo XIII to approve the coronation of the image; his brief conceding it is dated 8 February 1887 and was published with the archbishops' pastoral letter of 19 March 1887. The petition for the new Office went to Rome on 15 March 1890 and met sustained resistance: the Congregation of Rites took it up in 1892 but its prefect raised difficulties, the promoter of the faith raised further ones, on 15 April 1893 the matter was deferred *cum adnotationibus S. Fidei Promotoris*, and the promoter's printed objections reached Mexico at the end of October 1893. An agent's letter of 7 March 1893 reports the prefect saying that account had to be taken of certain anonymous writings that had reached the Congregation—almost certainly the clandestine Latin translation of García Icazbalceta's letter which an opponent of the tradition had had printed in 1888 and sent to the members of the Congregation for exactly that purpose.⁴⁹

The concession was made on 6 March 1894, and the change made in it is the most exact index available of what Rome was prepared to say. The word *fertur* of the old Office was replaced by the phrase *antiqua et constans traditio docet*, and the Pope approved.

Fertur—“it is reported”—is the classic liturgical formula of hagiographical reserve, and the 1892 rescript shows it in live use. *Antiqua et constans traditio docet*—“an ancient and constant tradition teaches”—is a stronger warrant, and it is still a statement about a *tradition*. Rome moved one step and stopped precisely where the historians' argument began.⁵⁰

The image was crowned in the collegiate church at ten in the morning on 12 October 1895.⁵¹ The following year the Fifth Mexican Provincial Council met, and its prelates issued an edict in response to the recent publications against

the tradition. Its first article is the most precise statement of the tradition's status that this study located from any competent ecclesiastical body.

Operative text — Prelates of the Fifth Mexican Provincial Council, edict of 1896, article 1, as reported

que la maravillosa aparición sin ser un dogma de fe, es una tradición antigua, constante y universal en la nación mexicana.⁵²

Two things about that formula deserve notice. It is exact: it denies that the apparition is a dogma and affirms that it is a tradition, which is what the evidence permits a bishop to say. And it was issued in a defensive posture, in reparation for publications, which is part of its meaning and should not be edited out.

8.4 The twentieth and twenty-first centuries

Patronage of Latin America, and a recorded gap

On 16 August 1910 the Ordinary Congregation of Sacred Rites met in the Apostolic Vatican Palace with, as the fifth item of its agenda, “the election and declaration of the B. Virgin Mary called of Guadalupe as Patroness of all Latin America.” The resulting act was not located.⁵³

Pius XII, 1945

For the fiftieth anniversary of the coronation Pius XII addressed a radio message to the Mexican faithful on 12 October 1945. Its register is worth attending to: the Pope narrates the tradition, and marks that he is narrating it.

Operative text — Pius XII, radio message to the faithful of Mexico on the fiftieth anniversary of the canonical coronation of the Virgin of Guadalupe, 12 October 1945, extracts (Spanish)

En la tilma del pobrecito Juan Diego —como refiere la tradición— pincele que no eran de acá abajo dejaban pintada una imagen dulcísima. . .
«¡Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe, Emperatriz de América y Reina de Méjico!»⁵⁴

The Basilica, 1976

Two acts of Paul VI belong to the modern shrine. By the apostolic letter *Sacra illa* of 4 October 1976 the title and dignity of minor basilica were transferred in perpetuity from the old church to the newly built one; on 12 October 1976 the new temple was dedicated.⁵⁵

John Paul II: pilgrimage, teaching, feast, canonization

John Paul II came to the shrine in 1979, 1990, 1999 and 2002; the last three visits carried the beatification, the promulgation of *Ecclesia in America*, and the canonization. The exhortation was given at Mexico City on 22 January 1999, and its paragraph 11 is the fullest magisterial statement on Guadalupe.

Operative text — John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* (22 January 1999), n. 11 (English), extracts

The appearance of Mary to the native Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac in 1531 had a decisive effect on evangelization. Its influence greatly overflows the boundaries of Mexico, spreading to the whole Continent. . . America. . . has recognized in the mestiza face of the Virgin of Tepeyac, “in Blessed Mary of Guadalupe, an impressive example of a perfectly inculturated evangelization”. Consequently, not only in Central and South America, but in North America as well, the Virgin of Guadalupe is venerated as Queen of all America.

... In the prayer composed for the Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops, Holy Mary of Guadalupe is invoked as “Patroness of all America and Star of the first and new evangelization”. In view of this, I welcome with joy the proposal of the Synod Fathers that the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother and Evangelizer of America, be celebrated throughout the continent on December 12.⁵⁶

The implementing act followed two months later, and it is exact.

Operative text — Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Prot. 803/99/L, decree *de festo Beatae Mariae Virginis de Guadalupe in tota America quotannis die 12 decembris peragendo*, 25 March 1999, extracts (Latin)

... per Adhortationem Apostolicam postsynodalem *Ecclesia in America*, die 22 ianuarii 1999 in Civitate Mexicana promulgatam, atque homiliam postridie in Basilica Dominae Nostrae *de Guadalupe* habitam benigne censuit, ut in universa America celebratio Beatae Mariae Virginis *de Guadalupe* in posterum gradu *festi* perageretur [sic]... Istud igitur Dicasterium hoc festum declarat in calendariis cuiusque nationis vel territorii Americae ad diem 12 decembris inscribendum, ut in singulis Continentis dioecesibus eo die quotannis celebretur, salvis semper concessionibus gradus sollemnitatis ab Apostolica Sede in favorem quarundam circumscriptionum et ecclesiarum decreto vel norma iam peractis.⁵⁷

On 31 July 2002, in the Basilica, John Paul II canonized Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin (§5). The homily’s register is again worth notice: it calls the Guadalupe writings “the accounts of Guadalupe, sensitively written and steeped in tenderness”; it quotes the Mexican episcopate’s statement of 14 May 2002 that the “Guadalupe Event” meant a beginning of evangelization “with a vitality that surpassed all expectations”; it describes Juan Diego as having “facilitated the fruitful meeting of two worlds”; and it turns at once to a present-tense obligation: “it is necessary today to support the indigenous peoples in their legitimate aspirations, respecting and defending the authentic values of each ethnic group.”⁵⁸

The General Roman Calendar, 2002 and 2008

One liturgical fact is regularly misstated and is worth fixing. The third typical edition of the *Missale Romanum* (2002) did not carry Our Lady of Guadalupe or St Juan Diego in the General Roman Calendar. Both were added in the emended reprint of 2008, whose official list of variations records, under *Calendarium Romanum Generale*, the addition of *S. Ioannis Didaci Cuauhtlatoatzin* at 9 December and of *B. Mariae Virginis de Guadalupe* at 12 December.⁵⁹

Continuing reception

Papal celebration of the feast at Rome has continued: Francis celebrated Masses of Our Lady of Guadalupe in St Peter’s Basilica on 12 December in several years and went on pilgrimage to the Basilica in Mexico City on 13 February 2016; Leo XIV preached at the Mass of Our Lady of Guadalupe in St Peter’s on 12 December 2025 and, on 5 February 2026, addressed a message to a pastoral-theological congress on the Guadalupan event, looking toward the fifth centenary of the apparition in 2031.⁶⁰

8.5 What the chain of acts amounts to

Set out in order, the acts form a consistent picture, and it is not the picture that either party in the historical dispute would most like.

The Church has, over three centuries, confirmed a national patronage, conceded a proper Office and Mass, revised its wording once under scrutiny and in a direction that went one step and no further, crowned the image, transferred basilica dignity to a new shrine built for the crowds, extended a continental feast of the rank of *festum*, inscribed the celebration in the General Roman Calendar, canonized the reported seer, and sent four papal pilgrimages to Tepeyac. That is an extraordinary weight of reception, and any account that treats Guadalupe as merely tolerated is false to the record.

At no point in that chain is there an act determining that the events of 1531 occurred. The nearest approaches are a liturgical formula asserting an ancient and constant *tradition*; a provincial council’s edict expressly denying that the apparition is a dogma of faith; and an apostolic letter of beatification which narrates the event as “the writings relate” and states in its own text that not many notices about Juan Diego have come down to us. Any account that treats Guadalupe as juridically established history is equally false to the record.

Both statements are true at once, and holding them together is the whole discipline of this study.

9 What the Reception Obliges—and What It Does Not

9.1 The doctrinal frame, which is prior to every fact

Public Revelation is complete in Christ. “No new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Private revelations, even those the Church has recognized, “do not belong... to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ’s definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history.”⁶¹

Guadalupe lies wholly on the private-revelation side of that line. Nothing at Tepeyac adds to the deposit; no message reported there can be the object of divine and Catholic faith; and the assent proper to an approved private revelation is what the tradition calls *fides humana*—a prudent human assent, resting on the quality of the evidence and the Church’s discernment, not the theological faith owed to God revealing.

The Marian frame is equally prior. Christ alone is Redeemer and the one mediator between God and men. Mary’s maternity, help, and intercession are created, graced, subordinate, and wholly derived from him; *Lumen gentium* 60–62 and CCC 970 govern every title by which she is invoked, at Tepeyac as anywhere. Nothing in the Guadalupe texts strains that boundary—the narrative’s own self-identification places her as *mother of* the true God and attributes the divine titles to God (§7.5)—and it is precisely because the source is clean on this point that devotional usage must be kept clean too.

9.2 The standing formula

What ecclesiastical approval of a private revelation means has a current, official statement, quoted in the 2024 norms from Benedict XVI’s *Verbum Domini*.

Operative text — Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* (30 September 2010), n. 14, as cited in the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith’s *Norms* of 17 May 2024, note 24

Ecclesiastical approval of a private revelation essentially means that its message contains nothing contrary to faith and morals; it is licit to make it public and the faithful are authorized to give to it their adherence in a prudent manner. [...] It is a help which is proffered, but its use is not obligatory. In any event, it must be a matter of nourishing faith, hope and love, which are for everyone the permanent path of salvation.⁶²

Three verbs: *contains*, *is licit*, *are authorized*. None of them is “must.”

9.3 The current procedural law and where Guadalupe stands under it

The norms in force are those of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith given on 17 May 2024, deliberated in the ordinary session of 17 April 2024, approved by Pope Francis on 4 May 2024, effective 19 May 2024, and entirely replacing the norms of 25 February 1978.⁶³ Four features of that instrument bear directly on Guadalupe.

First, the six determinations. A diocesan bishop’s judgment, submitted to the Dicastery for approval, normally follows one of six formulas: *Nihil obstat*; *Prae oculis habeatur*; *Curatur*; *Sub mandato*; *Prohibetur et obstruatur*; *Declaratio de non supernaturalitate*.⁶⁴ These are current categories and they are not applied retroactively to legacy acts anywhere in this study.

Second, the rule about supernatural origin. “As a rule, neither the Diocesan Bishop, nor the Episcopal Conferences, nor the Dicastery will declare that these phenomena are of supernatural origin, even if a *Nihil obstat* is granted. It remains true, however, that the Holy Father can authorize a special procedure in this regard.”⁶⁵ And where a *Nihil obstat* is granted, the bishop is to ensure “that the faithful do not consider any of the determinations as an approval of the supernatural nature of the phenomenon itself.”⁶⁶

Third, the canonization principle. A *Nihil obstat* granted in a canonization process “does not imply a declaration of authenticity regarding any supernatural phenomena present in a person’s life”—the point developed at §5.5.⁶⁷

Fourth, the status of Guadalupe under this law. This study located no determination of any of the six kinds concerning the events at Tepeyac, and no earlier decree by any competent authority adjudicating their supernatural origin. That is a recorded negative result of a bounded search, not a demonstration that no such act exists.⁶⁸

The correct description is therefore not that Guadalupe has been “approved” in the sense the 2024 norms give that word, nor that it has been left in doubt. It is that Guadalupe has been *received* by acts of a different order—liturgical concession, canonical coronation, papal teaching and pilgrimage, patronage, and the canonization of the reported seer—each with its own object, and none of them a determination of the historical or supernatural question.

9.4 The objects of the standing acts, restated exactly

Because reliance risk lives in the details, the acts inventoried at §1 and §8 are restated here at their exact scope.

Liturgical concessions (a proper Office and Mass; a feast on 12 December; its extension) establish that the Church celebrates Our Lady under this title on this day, with these texts. A liturgical text is a prayer, and its narrative content is doxological rather than juridical. A concession of an Office is not a decree that the events narrated in it occurred: the Roman practice of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries knew this distinction well, which is exactly why the wording of the Guadalupe Office was itself the subject of Roman scrutiny and revision (§8.3).

Canonical coronation is an honour rendered to an image and to the devotion gathered around it. It says nothing whatever about the image’s manufacture.

Patronage designates a heavenly patron for a territory. It is an act of the Church’s ordering of prayer.

Papal teaching, homilies, exhortations and pilgrimages teach with the authority proper to each genre. When a Pope narrates the apparition in a homily at Tepeyac he is preaching within a received tradition, in the register that occasion calls for; he is not issuing a historical determination, and the Church has instruments for the latter which are not homilies.

The canonization of Juan Diego proposes his sanctity and his public cult (§5.5).

9.5 Devotional practice inside the boundary

Everything the Guadalupan devotion asks can be stated without strain inside ordinary Catholic doctrine, and the sources themselves supply the framing. The request reported in the narrative is for a house in which the Mother of God may show compassion to those who call on her (§7.5)—that is, for a place of intercession and Christian worship. The devotion’s characteristic notes are those of any healthy Marian piety: recourse to a mother, confidence in the face of affliction, and the movement through her to her Son.

Three boundaries deserve their own sentences.

The image is venerated, not worshipped, and its material composition is not an article of anything. A Catholic who believes the image was painted by a sixteenth-century Nahua artist venerates it exactly as licitly as one who believes otherwise. This is not a concession; it is the ordinary doctrine of images, and it was Bustamante’s own point in 1556 that images are wood and stone and point beyond themselves (§3.2)—a point no one then contradicted and no one since has needed to.

Such veneration is corrupted when efficacy is assigned to bare external performance apart from the interior dispositions it requires (CCC 2111); this does not classify approved embodied acts of devotion as superstition.

Guadalupe is not a political credential. The tradition has been enlisted for the insurgency of 1810, for opposing causes in the nineteenth century, for the Cristero conflict, and for movements of every kind since. That such appropriations

happened is part of the history; that none of them is authorized by any act of the Church is a separate and necessary observation. A Marian devotion cannot authenticate a political programme.

Indigenous dignity is the tradition's own theme, and it obliges something. A narrative whose entire architecture insists that a *macehualli* was chosen and a bishop had to listen cannot be used to sentimentalize the conquest or to soften what was done to the peoples of Mexico. John Paul II drew the practical consequence at the canonization: it is necessary to support the Indigenous peoples in their legitimate aspirations (§8.4). The Church's account of human dignity, reason, freedom, conscience, and responsibility supplies the general moral control (CCC 1700–1706) without deciding any historical person's subjective guilt. Whatever a reader concludes about 1531, that obligation stands.

9.6 Disagreement preserved

Finally, a study of this kind must say plainly where the Church tolerates disagreement, because a reader who does not know that will mistake a historical opinion for an act of dissent.

No Catholic is required to hold that the events of 1531 occurred as narrated. No Catholic is forbidden to hold it. The Church's acts authorize the devotion, honour the image, celebrate the feast, and venerate the saint; they do not legislate a historiography, and the most eminent sceptical historians of the tradition have included a priest of the Congregation of the Mission and the historian chosen by an archbishop of Mexico to advise him (§4.3). What is owed on every side is that the Church's judgments not be treated with contempt, that the devotion of the poor not be treated with condescension, and that the evidence not be misreported in either direction.

That is the whole of the obligation, and it is enough.

10 Notes

1. John Paul II, *Cultus liturgicus in honorem Beati Ioannis Didaci conceditur*, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 82 (1990), pp. 853–855, read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See's OCR scan (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-82-1990-ocr.pdf>), pages located and read at first hand. The bracketed *sic* marks the reading of the scan at that word. Ellipses mark omissions. Editorially: "... Juan Diego, a humble man of the Indian people, was chosen as an instrument so that a temple might be built in honour of Blessed Mary the Virgin of Guadalupe... As the writings relate, Juan Diego used these and similar words when, in the month of December in the year 1531, the Virgin Mary Mother of God showed herself to him in a wondrous manner on the hill of Tepeyac... Not many notices concerning Juan Diego down to the year 1531 have come to us... A *Positio* was drawn up on the Servant of God's reputation for sanctity, on his virtues, and on the cult rendered to him from time immemorial... We grant that the liturgical memorial of Juan Diego as Blessed—obligatory in the Archdiocese of Mexico, optional in the other dioceses of Latin America—may be celebrated each year on 9 December, both in the Eucharistic action and in the Liturgy of the Hours." The letter also quotes the *Nican mopohua* and the *Nican motecpana* by name, in Latin rendering, as the sources of Juan Diego's words and of the account of his eremitical life. Quoted within ordinary scholarly limits with citation.
2. Sources and evidentiary levels for this inventory are given where each act is treated: §8.2 (1737, 1754), §8.3 (1887, 1892, 1894, 1895, 1896), §8.4 (1910, 1945, 1976, 1999, 2002, 2008, 2025), §5.2 (1990, 2001, 2002). The 1892 rescript was read at first hand in *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 25 (1892–93), pp. 116–117 (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/ass/documents/ASS-25-1892-93-ocr.pdf>); the 1910 agenda item in *AAS* 2 (1910), p. 651; the 1737 and 1754 attestation in Pius X's letter of 16 June 1910, *AAS* 2 (1910), p. 569; the 1976 letter *Sacra illa* in *AAS* 68 (1976), p. 598 and the dedication message at pp. 653–655; the 1990 letter in *AAS* 82 (1990), pp. 853–855; the 2001 decree in *AAS* 94 (2002), pp. 488–489. Acts marked "not located" were searched for in the corresponding *Acta Sanctae Sedis* and *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* volumes and are reported from the secondary literature identified at the cited section.
3. Miguel Sánchez, *Imagen de la Virgen María*... , Mexico, 1648. Not consulted directly for this study; the book's date, character, and place in the sequence are taken from the eighteenth-century apparitionist compilation *Colección de obras y opusculos pertenecientes a la milagrosa aparicion de la bellissima imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (Madrid, 1785), prologue, read 2026-07-25 in the John Carter Brown Library copy digitized at <https://archive.org/details/coleccin-deobras-y-opusculos-pertenecientes-a-la-milagrosa-aparicion-de-la-bellisima-imagen-de-nuestra-señora-de-guadalupe> (OCR text), which dates the first printed *Relación* to "el año de 1648, en que dio á luz la Relación del milagro Miguel Sánchez" and describes it as "mas que Relación histórica... un elogio ingenioso y florido de la Imagen de Guadalupe." On the absence of documents, see the nineteenth-century statement quoted at §3.3, which reports Sánchez's own admission; this study does not assert Sánchez's wording at first hand.
4. Read and collated 2026-07-25 against the page image of the John Carter Brown Library copy digitized at <https://archive.org/details/hueitlamahuio1ti001ass> (scan leaf index 13, bearing the printed folio number 1 and the

signature A). The heading is reproduced in the imprint's own orthography, including ç-cedilla and the printed grave accents; capitalization follows the printed display types. The passage is quoted as documentary evidence of the tract's structure and self-description, not as a devotional or liturgical text. English of the heading, editorially: "Here is recounted, and set in order, how the wholly perfect Virgin Saint Mary Mother of God our Queen newly appeared by a great miracle there at Tepeyacac, called Guadalupe. First she showed herself to a poor commoner named Juan Diego; and afterwards her precious image appeared before the new bishop D. Fray Juan de Sumárraga; together with all the miracles she works." The opening sentence dates the events "ten years after the city of Mexico was taken. . . in the year 1531, a few days into the month of December." All English renderings of Nahuatl, Spanish, and Latin in this study are editorial working translations, visibly commentary, and are not offered as received translations.

5. Structure read 2026-07-25 in the same scan: the licences of Baltasar González, S.J. (9 January 1649) and of Dr Pedro de Barrientos Lomelín, provisor and vicar general (11 January 1649), at the head; the headings *NICAN MOTEC-PANA INIXQVICH TLAHAHVIÇOLLI YEQVIMOCIHVILIA INILHVICAC ÇIHVAPILLI TOTLAÇONANTZIN GVADALVPE* and *NICAN tlantica inittoloca, ini pohualoca in huei tlamahuicollí* in the OCR text, with the first collated against its page image; and the final *TLATLAVHTILIZTLI IC MOTLATLAVHTILITZINO in ilhuicac tlatoca çihuapilli toTlaçonantzin Guadalupe* after the *Laus Deo*. Under `guidance/editorial.md` a text offered for vocal prayer may be reproduced only from an identified received witness and never composed, translated, or adapted by the project or an AI contributor; this study prints no part of that prayer and offers no rendering of it. The John Carter Brown volume is itself a composite binding: following the 1649 tract in the same digitization is a separate, later bilingual Spanish–Nahuatl *Sermón de nuestra gran Reyna. . . María Santísima de Guadalupe*, with its own pagination beginning again at "Pag. 1." Nothing in this study treats that sermon as part of the 1649 publication.
6. *Colección de obras y opusculos* (Madrid, 1785), prologue: "Es verdad que en el primer siglo, que corrió después de aparecida en México esta Celestial Copia, no se imprimió (según parece) Relación alguna de suceso tan admirable, ya fuese por la escasez de las Imprentas, y costoso de las impresiones, ó ya por una sabia disposición de la Divina Providencia." Same witness as the preceding note. The compilation names Sánchez, Laso de la Vega and Becerra Tanco as the original printed relations and Francisco de Florencia as the great seventeenth-century amplifier.
7. Luis Becerra Tanco, *Felicidad de Mexico en el principio, y milagroso origen, que tubo el Santuario de la Virgen María N. Señora de Guadalupe. . .*, second impression, procured by Antonio de Gama (Mexico: viuda de Bernardo Calderón, 1675); catalogued and rights-marked as public domain (Creative Commons Public Domain Mark 1.0) in the Universidad de Sevilla copy at <https://archive.org/details/A093073>, metadata read 2026-07-25. The licence page of the 1675 printing is dated 24 June 1675. Becerra Tanco's claims about lost Nahuatl sources are reported here at second hand from the 1785 compilation's prologue and from the nineteenth-century critical literature (§3.3); his text was not collated for this study.
8. Named in the 1785 compilation's prologue as the author who "adelantó mucho, para fundar su credibilidad" and whose *Estrella del Norte de México* was reprinted with difficulty because of its bulk. Not consulted directly.
9. The 1666 proceedings are described in the 1785 compilation as the "instrumentos. . . que. . . se formaron el año de 1666 á instancias de varios devotos de la misma Señora" for the purpose of obtaining a proper Office and Mass, and are said there to have been supplemented by fresh diligences after 1750 (<https://archive.org/details/coleccindeobras00unkn>, read 2026-07-25). They were printed by Fortino Hipólito Vera, *Informaciones sobre la milagrosa aparición de la Santísima Virgen de Guadalupe, recibidas en 1666 y 1723* (Amecameca, 1889); that edition is identified from the chronology in Edmundo O'Gorman, *Destierro de sombras* (References), Appendix VII, no. 39, and was not itself consulted. The characterization of the witnesses' age and remove is the standard description of the document in both schools and is used here only at that level.
10. Basílica de Santa María de Guadalupe, *Documentos Históricos*, <https://virgendeguadalupe.org.mx/documentos-historicos/>, read 2026-07-25. The listing below reproduces that page's own groupings, datings, and attributions. *These are the shrine's assertions, not this study's findings*; the ceiling column states what this study is prepared to say. No independent inspection of any of the manuscripts named was performed, and none of the datings is adopted here.
11. The absence of a sixteenth-century manuscript witness of the *Nican mopohua* is common ground: the shrine's own presentation dates the composition by attribution rather than by a surviving dated manuscript, and the critical literature (O'Gorman, Appendix I–II; García Icazbalceta, §3.3) is emphatic that no such manuscript has been produced. This study made no search of Mexican manuscript repositories and asserts only the state of the published question as of 2026-07-25.
12. Joaquín García Icazbalceta, *Carta acerca del origen de la imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de México*, §§9–10, 12. Quoted 2026-07-25 from the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes edition, https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/carta-acerca-del-origen-de-la-imagen-de-nuestra-senora-de-guadalupe-de-mexico--0/html/b28296be-844c-4ebe-a169-2732231ce572_2.html, and collated the same day against the first printed edition of 1896 in the Harvard copy digitized by Google at <https://archive.org/details/cartaacercadelo00icazgoog> (Internet Archive metadata: `possible-copyright-status: NOT_IN_COPYRIGHT`). The readings agree; the Cervantes Virtual transcription silently expands the 1896 imprint's abbreviations ("Ilmo. Sr. Zumárraga," "V. S. I.," "P. Sánchez"), and it is that expanded transcription which is quoted here, as this note records. The paragraph numbering is the letter's own. The Cervantes

Virtual running head prints “(Octubre 1833)”; the date is 1883, as its own preface and the documented history of the letter require, and the figure is treated here as a transcription error rather than silently corrected inside the quotation. Public domain (García Icazbalceta d. 1894). Ellipses mark omissions; nothing internal is altered.

13. García Icazbalceta, *Carta*, §§13–16, same witness. The chain of silences is his; this study reports it as his argument and has not independently examined Motolinía, Mendieta, Las Casas, the Garcés letter, or the 1569–1570 *Descripción* (which García Icazbalceta says he owned in the original).
14. Sahagún’s appendix is quoted and discussed at length by García Icazbalceta, *Carta*, §§17–26 (same witness), which also notes that the passage stands identically in the editions of Carlos María de Bustamante and of Lord Kingsborough. Sahagún’s text was not collated for this study in the Florentine Codex or in a critical edition; the passage is reported at the level of the nineteenth-century critical literature and of its universal citation in the modern literature on both sides.
15. Edmundo O’Gorman, *Destierro de sombras. Luz en el origen de la imagen y culto de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe del Tepeyac*, 2nd ed. (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Serie Historia Novohispana 36), part II, ch. 3, “El sermón del provincial fray Francisco de Bustamante,” pp. 81–92, at §§II.8, II.7 and II.11, read 2026-07-25 in the UNAM open-access PDF, https://historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/222c/222c_04_02_03_CapituloTercero.pdf. O’Gorman’s own citations are to the *Información de 1556*, pp. 217, 219, 227, 232, 236, 242–243, 250 (the “pintada ayer” sentence), p. 218 (“sin fundamento”), pp. 226 and 242–243 (the demand for verification). He records that of the witnesses only Alonso Sánchez de Cisneros gave the painter’s name as Marcos. The UNAM digital edition carries the notice: “Se autoriza la reproducción sin fines lucrativos, siempre y cuando no se mutile o altere; se debe citar la fuente completa y su dirección electrónica.” The quoted matter is sixteenth-century testimony transcribed in a modern critical edition; the surrounding reconstruction is O’Gorman’s and is attributed as such. This study did not consult the *Información* in manuscript or in any of its printed editions.
16. O’Gorman, *Destierro de sombras*, Appendix IV, “La *Información de 1556* no es proceso. Sus irregularidades. Su índole de documento no oficial,” pp. 227–238, at §§I and II.14, read 2026-07-25, https://historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/222c/222c_04_05_04_ApendiceCuarto.pdf. The petitions to the civil power are at part II, ch. 3, §§II.12–14.
17. O’Gorman, Appendix IV, §§I–III; Appendix VII, “Hallazgo y divulgación de la *Información de 1556*,” https://historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/222c/222c_04_05_07_ApendiceSeptimo.pdf, read 2026-07-25. Appendix IV also corrects, with the sources, the claim that Bustamante fell into disgrace for the sermon: he was still provincial on 6 June 1557, was elected provincial again three years later, was made commissary general in September 1561, went to court in 1562 on the Order’s business, and died in Madrid on 1 November 1562.
18. O’Gorman, Appendix VII, nos. 1, 3, 11, 13, 20, 36, 38, 42, and 44 (same witness). The 1888 first edition is *Información que el arzobispo de México D. Fray Alonso de Montúfar mandó practicar...*, imprinted Madrid, Imprenta de la Guirnalda, but in fact printed in Mexico at the expense of the canon Vicente de P. Andrade; the second edition is Vera’s *La milagrosa aparición de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, comprobada por una información levantada en el siglo XVI* (Amecameca, 1890); the third is the Irineo Paz edition of 1891.
19. O’Gorman, Appendix IV, §I, citing the testimonies of Gonzalo de Alarcón, Alonso Sánchez de Cisneros and Juan de Masseguer, *Información de 1556*, pp. 239–244, 248–249, and referring to Sahagún’s known pronouncement.
20. García Icazbalceta, *Carta*, §12, same witness.
21. O’Gorman, part II, ch. 3, §II.13 and §III, citing “Carta del virrey don Martín Enríquez al rey, México, 23 de septiembre de 1575,” in *Cartas de Indias*, p. 310; García Icazbalceta, *Carta*, §32. The viceroy’s letter was not consulted at first hand for this study; it is reported at the level of these two witnesses, which agree on its content.
22. Bibliographic identity of the Poole, Sousa–Poole–Lockhart, Brading, Burkhart, von Wobeser, González Fernández and Chávez entries verified 2026-07-25 against Open Library catalogue records (<https://openlibrary.org/search.json>) and, for the 1998 edition, against the Internet Archive record <https://archive.org/details/storyofguadalupe841lass> (Stanford University Press and UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1998; UCLA Latin American Studies vol. 84 / Nahuatl Studies Series no. 5; ISBNs 0804734828 and 0804734836). The Poole 2005 article citation (*The Americas* 62:1, July 2005, pp. 1–16) was verified against the Project MUSE and Cambridge Core records; the article text is behind a paywall and was not read. *None of the books in this table was read for this study*; the summary in the right-hand column states each author’s position at the level at which it is reported in the accessible literature and in the sources cited elsewhere in this section, and no wording is attributed to any of these authors. Miguel León-Portilla’s *Tonantzin Guadalupe* (2000), which is frequently cited in this debate, could not be verified in any catalogue reachable for this study and is therefore not used.
23. Garibay’s thesis and O’Gorman’s rebuttal are set out in O’Gorman, *Destierro de sombras*, Appendix I, “La relación de las apariciones (*Nican mopohua*), supuesta obra de colaboradores indígenas de Sahagún,” read 2026-07-25 at https://historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/222c/222c_04_05_01_ApendicePrimero.pdf; O’Gorman there cites Ángel María Garibay K., “La maternidad espiritual de María en el mensaje guadalupano,” address

of 10 October 1960 to the Mariological Congress at Mexico City, printed in *La maternidad espiritual de María* (Mexico: Jus, 1961), pp. 187–202, at pp. 191–194. O’Gorman’s own attribution of the *Nican mopohua* to Valeriano is stated in part I, ch. 3, “La invención del guadalupanismo indígena,” to which his Appendix I refers back, and is reflected in his part II, ch. 3, §III (“nuestro análisis de la obra de Valeriano”). The Sousa–Poole–Lockhart position is reported here at the level of the edition’s identity and its well-known thesis; the edition was not read (§4.3, note).

24. Recorded negative finding. No primary publication of the 1997 examinations, no report by any named examining institution, and no peer-reviewed authentication or refutation of the *Códice Escalada* was reached through the searches performed on 2026-07-25. The account above is reported from general reference and press summaries and is stated as report only; no reader should treat it as this study’s finding about the object. The Basilica’s own *Documentos Históricos* page lists the item as “Códice 1548 o ‘Escalada’,” describing a codex showing an Indian kneeling before the image (<https://virgendeguadalupe.org.mx/documentos-historicos/>, read 2026-07-25); the 1998 statement of the Historical Commission described it, as reported, as “a direct testimony of Juan Diego’s historicity” (§5.3). Both are positions of interested parties and are cited as such.
25. Death year and age read 2026-07-25 in the OCR of the *Nican motecpana* section of the John Carter Brown copy (<https://archive.org/details/hueitlamahuio00lass>); the figures there are *mill y quinientos y quarenta yochos* and *epohualli ihuan nahui xiuhtia*. Not collated against the page image; reported at OCR level. On the 1666 depositions see §2.2.
26. *Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin: biography*, Holy See, read 2026-07-25 at https://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_20020731_juan-diego_en.html. The bracketed *sic* marks the spelling on the page. Quoted within ordinary scholarly limits with citation. Note what this text is and is not: a hagiographical presentation accompanying a canonization, which adopts the 1556 dating and the Valeriano attribution as the tradition holds them. It is not a historical determination, and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints has no competence to make one; the dating and the attribution remain the contested questions of §4.4.
27. Chronology of the cause (1981, 1984, 1986, 1989, the 9 April 1990 decree *de culto inmemorial* and its character as an equipollent beatification, the 1998 historical commission and its report of 28 October 1998, the postulators Antonio Cairoli, O.F.M., Paolo Molinari, S.J., Oscar Sánchez Barba and Eduardo Chávez Sánchez, and the relators Giovanni Papa, Ambrogio Eszer and José Luis Gutiérrez) taken from Fidel González Fernández, “Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin: procesos de beatificación y de canonización,” *Diccionario de Historia Cultural de la Iglesia en América Latina*, read 2026-07-25 at https://www.dhial.org/diccionario/index.php?title=JUAN_DIEGO_CUAUHTLATOATZIN%3B_Procesos_de_beatificaci%C3%B3n_y_de_canonizaci%C3%B3n. This is a postulation-side account: its author presided over the 1998 historical commission, and it is used here for the procedural chronology, which it is well placed to know, and not for its historical conclusions. The 6 May 1990 beatification and the identity of those beatified with Juan Diego are verified independently from John Paul II’s homily of that day (https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/es/homilies/1990/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19900506_citta-del-messico.html, read 2026-07-25), which names “Juan Diego, el confidente de la dulce Señora del Tepeyac. Los tres niños mártires de Tlaxcala, Cristóbal, Antonio y Juan” together with José María de Yermo y Parres. The 31 July 2002 canonization is verified from the homily of that date (§8.4).
28. *Recorded evidentiary ceiling*. None of these letters was reached in an original or in a published text. Their existence, dates, signatories and substance are reported here from press and reference accounts only, and the reader should treat them as such. Two further attempted routes failed on 2026-07-25: the National Catholic Register article on the episode returned HTTP 403, and the *La Jornada* report of 22 January 2002 returned HTTP 403. The postulation-side account cited at §5.2 records that Schulenburg expressed doubts about historical authenticity in 1997–1998 and that Stafford Poole sent criticisms dated 24 December 1997 arguing that the Guadalupe event was a dramatic representation for catechesis rather than a historical fact; that account is an interested one and is reported at that level. No characterization is offered here of any individual’s motives.
29. Reported from the ZENIT dispatch of 19 December 1998 as reproduced at <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/proofs-of-mexican-indian-juan-diegos-existence-5562>, read 2026-07-25, together with the postulation-side account cited at §5.2. *The commission’s own report, its positio, and any official act of the Congregation approving it were not reached*. What is reported here is the presentation of its conclusions, at that level. The published book by the commission’s principals is *El encuentro de la Virgen de Guadalupe y Juan Diego* (Mexico: Porrúa, 1999), whose bibliographic identity is verified (§4.3) and which was not read.
30. Congregation for the Causes of Saints, *Mexicana. Canonizationis Beati Ioannis Didaci Cuauhtlatoatzin viri laici (1474–1548). Decretum super miraculo, Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 94 (2002), pp. 488–489, read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See’s OCR scan (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-94-2002-ocr.pdf>), pages located and read at first hand. The decree’s own summary of the medical council’s finding is quoted there: the survival of the man “*explicari nequit, ut videtur... secundum cognitionem medicam nunc vigentem*” — it cannot, as it seems, be explained according to medical knowledge as it now stands. That is a bounded negative medical finding, and it is not converted here into a scientific claim. *Recorded anomaly*. The consistorial decree printed at AAS 94 (2002), pp. 313–314 assigns Juan Diego’s canonization to *die trigesima Iulii* and Pedro de San José Betancur to *die trigesima prima Iulii*, which reverses what in fact happened;

the same volume's index records "31 [Iulii] Mexicopoli in canonizatione beati Ioannis Didaci," and the homily is dated 31 July 2002. The date given throughout this study is 31 July 2002, and the discrepancy in the printed consistorial decree is recorded rather than silently harmonized. *No Latin canonization formula for Juan Diego was located in AAS 94 (2002)*; that negative is recorded in Appendix A.

31. Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena* (17 May 2024), n. 13, English text read 2026-07-25 at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddd_doc_20240517_norme-fenomeni-soprannaturali_en.html. The norms are of 2024 and did not govern the 1990 or 2002 acts; the principle is cited here as the current Roman statement of a distinction that was already operative, not as a rule applied retroactively. Applied to Guadalupe the principle runs both ways: the canonization does not authenticate the apparitions, and the apparitions are not the ground on which the canonization stands.
32. Jaime Cuadriello, "Cifra, signo y artilugio: el 'ocho' de Guadalupe," *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 39, no. 110 (2017): 155–206, <https://doi.org/10.22201/iee.18703062e.2017.1.2593>, read 2026-07-25 in the SciELO México open-access full text at https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0185-1276201700100155, where Florencia's passage is quoted at length and Cuadriello observes that "tan sólo en 1666 y 1751, que se sepa, alguien se pudo asomar al reverso." Florencia's text was not consulted directly. The paraphrase above renders Florencia's list; it is not offered as a translation of his wording.
33. Cuadriello, "Cifra, signo y artilugio," at the opening of the article (same witness). Cabrera's book is Miguel Cabrera, *Maravilla americana, y conjunto de raras maravillas, observadas con la direccion de las reglas de el arte de la pintura en la prodigiosa imagen de Nuestra Sra. de Guadalupe de Mexico* (Mexico: imprenta del Real y más antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, 1756); the Getty Research Institute copy is digitized at <https://archive.org/details/maravillaamerica00cabr> (metadata read 2026-07-25). Cabrera's own narrative of the 30 April 1751 examination—that the chapter convened the most credited painters in Mexico, that they were made to observe the image at leisure without the glass, and that each was to judge by the rules of his art whether such marvels could be the work of human industry—is reprinted in *Colección de obras y opusculos* (Madrid, 1785), <https://archive.org/details/coleccindeobrasy00unkn>, read 2026-07-25.
34. Cuadriello, "Cifra, signo y artilugio" (same witness), for the three inspections, the five Academy painters, the notarial act of 1 March 1787 and its verdict on the "eight" ("que no es cosa especial, y le copiaron idéntico"), the *icztli* thesis, and the existence of an *imprimatura* beneath the paint surface. Bartolache's book is *Manifiesto satisfactorio anunciado en la Gazeta de Mexico* (Tom. I. Núm. 53.): *Opusculo Guadalupeano* (Mexico: Felipe de Zúñiga y Ontiveros, 1790); the John Carter Brown Library copy is digitized at <https://archive.org/details/manifiestosatisf00bart> (metadata read 2026-07-25). Bartolache's book was not read for this study; his programme is reported from Cuadriello.
35. Edmundo O'Gorman, *Destierro de sombras*, Appendix VII, nos. 23–24, 27–28, 32, 62 and 64, read 2026-07-25 at https://historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/222c/222c_04_05_07_ApendiceSeptimo.pdf. O'Gorman's sources there are the letter of Antonio Plancarte y Labastida to Bishop Carrillo y Ancona of 19 June 1887 (as printed by José Bravo Ugarte), Gabino Chávez, *Celeste y Terrestre o las dos coronas guadalupanas* (1895), and the *Calendario del más antiguo Galván* for 1895. O'Gorman states that the crown "fue clandestinamente borrada" and reports the suspicion that fell on the coronation's promoters; the identity of whoever removed it is not established and is not asserted here.
36. Cuadriello, "Cifra, signo y artilugio" (same witness), section "Bajo el lente del microscopio," summarizing and quoting José Sol Rosales, "Dictamen de conservación de la imagen de la Virgen de Guadalupe," and Jorge Guadarrama Guevara, "Informe sobre aspectos técnicos de conservación [de la imagen de la Virgen de Guadalupe]," both printed in Fernando Ojeda Llanes, *La tilma guadalupana revela sus secretos* (Mexico: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2005), pp. 212–222 and 230–238. The two reports themselves were not consulted; everything above is at the ceiling of Cuadriello's use of them. *Recorded correction of a common description*: this examination is often described in devotional and journalistic literature as a "secret study" that was suppressed. Its principal documents were printed in a book of 2005 and are cited in the peer-reviewed literature; what was avoided in 1982, on Cuadriello's account, was public "alboroto" during the work itself.
37. Every row of this table records the result of searches performed on 2026-07-25 and is bounded by them: a literal search cannot exclude a publication in an unsearched language, an offline archive, or a source not indexed by the tools used. "Not traced" means this study could not reach the source, not that no source exists. The Callahan volume's bibliographic identity is reported from secondary literature and was not verified against a library record; its contents were not read, and the summary of its conclusions in the table is reported, not endorsed. On the survival of the cloth, García Icazbalceta's reply is at *Carta*, §56: the physicians' 1666 opinion that the preservation was miraculous is met with the observation that far older and more fragile papers survive, and with the 1795 canons' own statement that "los colores se han amortiguado, deslustrado, y en una u otra parte saltado el oro, y el lienzo sagrado no poco lastimado."
38. Same witness and collation as §2.1: read against the page image of the John Carter Brown copy, scan leaf index 13, printed folio 1. The emphasis is editorial and marks the two paired terms discussed in the text.
39. Forms read 2026-07-25 in the 1649 imprint at scan leaf indices 13 and 21 (printed folios 1 and 5); the analysis of *macehualli/pilli*, of *-tzingtli* as reverential-diminutive, and of *tlacatl* as a high honorific address is standard in Nahuatl

grammatical description and is stated here at that level. No claim is made about which lexical choices are authorial and which conventional, and no proposal is offered about the text's date on this basis.

40. Collated 2026-07-25 against the page image of the John Carter Brown copy, scan leaf index 21 (printed folio 5, signature B), including a magnified crop of the passage; the printed grave accents, the ç-cedilla, and the capital N of *nimoNantzín* are reproduced as printed, and the line-break hyphenation of *nècauhyotì-tlan* has been closed up. The reading was further collated the same day against a second, independent printing of the Nahuatl text: Agustín de la Rosa, *Dissertatio historico-theologica de apparitione B. M. V. de Guadalupe* (Guadalajara, 1887), p. 15, in the New York Public Library copy digitized by Google at <https://archive.org/details/dissertatiohist00rosagoog> (Internet Archive metadata: `possible-copyright-status: NOT_IN_COPYRIGHT`). The two witnesses agree word for word; de la Rosa's accentuation differs in detail, as nineteenth-century re-settings of early Nahuatl printing normally do. Editorially, and as commentary rather than as a received translation: "...do not fear that sickness, nor any other sickness or affliction. Am I not here, I your mother? Are you not under my shade, in my shelter? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else you need?" The rendering of *nocuixanco*, *nomamalhuazco* is contested among translators and is given here in its most common sense; nothing in this study depends on it.
41. Collated 2026-07-25 against a magnified crop of the page image, John Carter Brown copy, scan leaf index 15, and against de la Rosa 1887 (witness as in §7.4), whose reading agrees. Two typographic facts are recorded rather than smoothed: the imprint contracts *nìçenquizca* to *innìçéquizca*, using the printer's ordinary vowel-plus-acute contraction for a following nasal, and it sets the words without spacing between particle and stem; the expansion follows the same witness's own convention and no other source. Editorially, as commentary: "...for I am the wholly perfect ever-virgin Saint Mary, mother of the very true God, the Giver of life, the Creator of people, the Lord of the near and the close, the Lord of heaven, the Lord of earth..." The four titles after *Teotl Dios* are pre-Christian Nahuatl divine epithets taken over by the missionaries; their presence here is a datum about the text's idiom and is offered neither as evidence of date nor as evidence of syncretism.
42. The temple request and its purpose clause stand in the same passage at fol. 2r; the phrase *iniximachocatzin inipalnemohuani nelli Teotl DIOS* stands in the opening sentence at fol. 1r (same collation as §7.2). The doctrinal frame is at §9.1: *Lumen gentium* 60–62 and CCC 970 govern every Marian title in this study, and nothing in the Guadalupe text strains them.
43. Sahagún's appendix to Book XI is reported here as at §3.1, at the level of the nineteenth-century critical literature and its universal citation; the Florentine Codex was not collated. The distinction among the three claims is this study's own analysis and is labelled as such. On *Tonantzín* as a title composed of *to-* "our," *nan-* "mother," and the reverential *-tzin*, the morphology is standard; García Icazbalceta, *Carta*, §68, already reports the parallel between the hermitage's early title *la Madre de Dios* and the name *Tonantzín*, and Sahagún's own protest that the proper Nahuatl for the Mother of God is not *Tonantzín* is quoted throughout that literature.
44. The purpose and addressees of the 1666 instruments are stated in the prologue of *Colección de obras y opusculos* (Madrid, 1785), read 2026-07-25 at <https://archive.org/details/coleccindeobras00unkn>, which describes Anastasio Nicoseli's Italian relation of 1781 as drawn "de una Relación Latina, que se presentó en la Sagrada Congregación de Ritos, con los Postulados de la Nobilísima Ciudad de México, del muy Ilustre y Venerable Dean y Cabildo Sede-vacante, y de todos los Cuerpos Religiosos, á fin de que el Sumo Pontífice Alejandro VII concediese Oficio propio y Misa en honor de esta Aparición." The same work records that the 1666 instruments were supplemented by fresh diligences under the abbot and chapter installed on 22 October 1750. That the seventeenth-century petition failed is inferred from the fact that the concession dates from 1754 and from the eighteenth-century sources' own account of the renewed effort; no act of refusal was located.
45. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 2 (1910), p. 569, read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See's OCR scan (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-02-1910-ocr.pdf>), page located and read at first hand. Editorially: "...proposed that Mexico renew the oath by which, from the year 1737, the republic entrusted and committed itself and its own to the patronage of the Virgin Mother of God of Guadalupe. And since Benedict XIV, Our predecessor of happy memory, confirmed this devotion by his authority in the year 1754..." Quoted within ordinary scholarly limits with citation.
46. The incipit and year are attested in *Colección de obras y opusculos* (Madrid, 1785): "...como se registra en el Breve *Non est equidem* su data en Roma en ... de Mayo de 1754" (the day of the month is garbled in the OCR of the copy read and is not asserted here), with the concession described elsewhere in the same volume as "Rezo propio con el mas solemne Rito de primera Clase y Octava" and as "la Apostólica confirmación del universal Patronato"; read 2026-07-25 at <https://archive.org/details/coleccindeobras00unkn>. García Icazbalceta, *Carta*, §6, independently dates "la Bula de la concesión del patronato" to 1754. *Recorded limits and anomaly*. (1) No Latin text of *Non est equidem* concerning Guadalupe was reached: the Mechelen *Bullarium* volume covering 1754 is not among the volumes digitized at the Internet Archive. (2) In the Mechelen *Bullarium* volume that is available and whose index lists an incipit *Non est equidem* (<https://archive.org/details/benedictipapaex00xivgoog>), the surrounding constitutions are of 1756 and a full-text search of that volume for *Guadalup*, *Mexic* and *Tepe* returns nothing. Whether that incipit belongs to the Guadalupan act of 1754, to a different act of 1756, or to both, could not be settled here. (3) Accordingly nothing is asserted in this study about the brief's wording or recitals, and the frequently repeated association of the Psalm 147 verse *Non fecit*

taliter omni nationi with this act is likewise unverified and not asserted. What *is* verified is the substance of the operative text quoted above: an oath of 1737 and a papal confirmation of 1754.

47. Edmundo O’Gorman, *Destierro de sombras*, Appendix VII, no. 22, read 2026-07-25 at https://historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/222c/222c_04_05_07_ApendiceSeptimo.pdf, citing the *Álbum de la coronación*, I, p. 84: the idea came from Rafael S. Camacho, and the purpose was “obtener la enmienda del antiguo oficio que sólo contenía una declaración hipotética de la realidad histórica de la tradición de las apariciones.”
48. *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 25 (1892–93), pp. 116–117, read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See’s OCR scan (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/ass/documents/ASS-25-1892-93-ocr.pdf>), pages located and read at first hand; signed Cai. Card. Aloisi-Masella, Praef., and Ioann. Ponzi, Substit. Editorially: “... where the painted image of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe is to be placed, between two marble statues, namely of the Most Reverend Lord Zumárraga, first bishop of Mexico, and of a certain Indian, Juan Diego, to whom the Virgin Mother of God *is said* to have appeared.... [Reply:] The statues in question may be placed in the church, provided they are not exposed upon the altar.” The document is a liturgical rescript about statues; the phrase *fertur apparuisse* is incidental to its purpose, which is exactly what makes it good evidence of the Congregation’s ordinary register. Quoted within ordinary scholarly limits with citation.
49. O’Gorman, Appendix VII, nos. 23, 25–26, 36, 40, 50–54, same witness. The Latin translation is the anonymous *De B.M.V. Apparitione in Mexico sub titulo de Guadalupe, exquisitio historica* (Mexico, 1888), made from a copy of García Icazbalceta’s letter surreptitiously taken from Francisco del Paso y Troncoso’s desk and published by the canon Vicente de P. Andrade, who—O’Gorman states—sent copies to the members of the Congregation of Rites precisely in order to prevent the concession. Reported at O’Gorman’s level; the Roman acta of the cause were not consulted, and see the recorded negative below.
50. O’Gorman, Appendix VII, no. 57, same witness: “Congregación de cardenales aprobó el nuevo oficio y misa propia en honor de la Virgen de Guadalupe. Se sustituyó la palabra *fertur* del antiguo oficio por la frase *antiqua et constante traditio ducet*. El papa concedió su aprobación,” citing *Sacra Rituum Congregatione...* (Rome: Typis Perseverantiae, 1894). O’Gorman’s text prints *constante* and *ducet*; the standard Latin of the formula is *antiqua et constans traditio docet*, and the variants are recorded rather than silently corrected. *Recorded negative search*. The Holy See’s own organ of the period was checked directly on 2026-07-25: *Acta Sanctae Sedis* volumes 19 (1886–87), 20 (1887), 26 (1893–94) and 27 (1894–95) were retrieved and searched for **Guadalup**; neither the brief of 8 February 1887, nor the decree of 6 March 1894, nor any notice of the 1895 coronation was found in them, and the only Mexican Guadalupan matter located anywhere in the *ASS* of these years is the 1892 rescript quoted above. The 1894 concession is therefore reported at O’Gorman’s level and at the level of the 1894 Roman printing he cites, which was not consulted.
51. O’Gorman, Appendix VII, nos. 62 and 65, same witness; the image had been moved to the neighbouring church of the Capuchins on 24 February 1888 during the works and was returned on 30 September 1895. The date is independently attested fifty years later by Pius XII’s radio message for the fiftieth anniversary (§8.4).
52. O’Gorman, Appendix VII, no. 70, same witness, which summarizes the edict’s six articles and quotes article 1 in these words. Editorially: “that the marvellous apparition, without being a dogma of faith, is an ancient, constant and universal tradition in the Mexican nation.” The remaining articles declare that to doubt the tradition is rash and a grave injury to the prelates who transmitted it, invoke the pontifical declarations of Benedict XIV and Leo XIII, and order a solemn anniversary of the coronation in reparation. The Council met 23 August–1 November 1896 and its decrees were reviewed and approved by the Holy See on 19 August 1898 (*ibid.*, no. 69). *The conciliar acts were not consulted*; this is reported at O’Gorman’s level. The edict is a provincial-council act of 1896, not a determination under any modern procedure, and it is not relabelled here under the 2024 taxonomy.
53. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 2 (1910), p. 651, *Diarium Romanae Curiae*, read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See’s OCR scan and located at first hand: “V. Intorno all’elezione e dichiarazione della B. Maria Vergine detta di Guadalupe, a Patrona di tutta l’America Latina.” *Recorded negative search*. The complete *AAS* volumes 2 (1910) and 3 (1911) were searched on 2026-07-25 for **uadalup**—a substring chosen so that the result does not depend on how the initial capital was resolved by the scan’s OCR; *AAS* 1910 returns four hits (Pius X’s letter of 23 February 1910 to the Mexican bishops at pp. 98–99; his letter of 16 June 1910 at p. 569; the agenda item above; and an unrelated 1817 reference), and *AAS* 1911 returns none. No decree or brief declaring Our Lady of Guadalupe patroness of Latin America was published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* in either year, and the commonly cited date of 24 August 1910 is not verified here.
54. Read 2026-07-25 at https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/es/speeches/1945/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19451012_guadalupe-mexico.html. Editorially: “On the tilma of poor little Juan Diego—as tradition relates—brushes that were not from here below left a most sweet image painted...” and “Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe, Empress of America and Queen of Mexico!” The guillemets and the inverted exclamation mark are the Vatican page’s own. Note that in the message the acclamation is first placed in the mouth of the crowd of 1895 and only afterwards taken up by the Pope in his own voice. *Recorded negative search*. The complete *AAS* volume 38 (1946) was searched on 2026-07-25 for **Guadalup**: the only hits concern the diocese of Guadalupe in Bolivia. No act of Pius XII declaring Our Lady of Guadalupe patroness or empress of the Americas was located, and none is asserted here. Quoted within ordinary scholarly limits with citation.

55. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 68 (1976), p. 598 (*Sacra illa*: “Templum Beatae Mariae Virginis vulgo ‘de Guadalupe’, Mexicopoli prope antiquum dicatum, titulo ac dignitate Basilicae minoris exornatur”; granted at the petition of Cardinal Miguel Darío Miranda y Gómez, archbishop of Mexico, and dated *die IV mensis Octobris, anno MCMLXXXVI*) and pp. 653–655 (Paul VI’s message for the dedication of the new temple, with the editorial footnote “Die 12 m. octobris a. 1976”); read 2026-07-25 in the Holy See’s OCR scan (<https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-68-1976-ocr.pdf>), pages located and read at first hand.
56. English text read 2026-07-25 at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_22011999_ecclesia-in-america.html; the signature clause was located on the same page: “Given at Mexico City, January 22, in the year 1999, the twenty-first of my Pontificate.” The internal quotations are the exhortation’s own, from the Fourth General Conference of the Latin American Bishops at Santo Domingo and from the Synod’s prayer. Ellipses mark omissions. The 1999 decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship (below) distinguishes the promulgation *die 22 ianuarii 1999 in Civitate Mexicana* from the homily *postridie in Basilica Dominae Nostrae de Guadalupe*; this study accordingly does not describe the exhortation as signed at the Basilica. Note the register of n. 11: it speaks of *the appearance, of recognition* by the peoples of America, and of a *proposal of the Synod Fathers* which the Pope welcomes. Its operative content is liturgical.
57. *Notitiae* 35 (1999), issue 394–395, pp. 272–274; the protocol number, title, text, date (“Ex aedibus Congregationis de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, in Sollemnitatem Annuntiationis Domini, die 25 martii 1999”) and signatures (Georgius A. Card. Medina Estévez, *Praefectus*; Marius Marini, *Subsecretarius*) were read at first hand on 2026-07-25 from rendered page images of the Dicastery’s own scan at [https://www.cultodivino.va/content/dam/cultodivino/rivista-notitiae/1990/notitiae-35-\(1999\)/Notitiae-394-395-1999.pdf](https://www.cultodivino.va/content/dam/cultodivino/rivista-notitiae/1990/notitiae-35-(1999)/Notitiae-394-395-1999.pdf) (printed pages 272, 273 and 274). The bracketed *sic* marks the reading of the printed page. Editorially: “. . . he graciously determined, through the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, promulgated on 22 January 1999 in Mexico City, and through the homily delivered the following day in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, that in the whole of America the celebration of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe should henceforth be kept with the rank of a feast. . . . This Dicastery therefore declares that this feast is to be inscribed on 12 December in the calendars of each nation or territory of America, so that it may be celebrated on that day each year in every diocese of the Continent, always saving the concessions of the rank of solemnity already granted by the Apostolic See by decree or norm in favour of certain circumscriptions and churches.” The decree also calls her *totius Americae Imperatrix* and declares the annexed Spanish texts *typici*. Quoted within ordinary scholarly limits with citation.
58. John Paul II, homily at the canonization of Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin, Mexico City, 31 July 2002, nn. 3–4, English text read 2026-07-25 at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20020731_canonization-mexico.html; the Spanish text is in *AAS* 94 (2002), p. 743ff. The homily’s closing words to the new saint—“Show us the way that leads to the ‘Dark Virgin’ of Tepeyac, that she may receive us in the depths of her heart, for she is the loving, compassionate Mother who guides us to the true God”—are a compact statement of the Marian boundary of §9.1. Quoted within ordinary scholarly limits with citation.
59. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Variationes et additiones in reimpressione emendata “Missalis Romani,” editionis typicae tertiae, Notitiae* 44 (2008), issue 503–504, under *Calendarium Romanum Generale* (“p. 116: Ad diem 9: additur: ‘S. Ioannis Didaci Cuauhtlatoatzin.’” “p. 116: Ad diem 12: additur: ‘B. Mariae Virginis de Guadalupe.’”). The absence of both from the 2002 edition is established from the Dicastery’s own presentation of the third typical edition, *Notitiae* 38 (2002), pp. 457–459, which enumerates the celebrations added to the General Roman Calendar and includes neither. *Evidentiary ceiling*: these two *Notitiae* loci are reported at the level of the verification performed for this study by an assisting research agent working from the Dicastery’s own scans at <https://www.cultodivino.va/>; unlike the 1999 decree, they were not re-read page by page by the author of this study, and they are marked accordingly. *Recorded limit*: the 2008 list adds the two entries without a rank qualifier. This study does not assert the rank of either celebration in the General Roman Calendar, and does not assert the rank in any particular calendar; the 1999 decree’s *gradu festi* governs the calendars of the Americas, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops presents 12 December as a Feast.
60. Verified 2026-07-25 by an assisting research agent against vatican.va document trees, and reported at that level: Francis, homily at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico City, 13 February 2016 (https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20160213_omelia-messico-guadalupe.html); homilies for 12 December present on vatican.va for 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023 and 2024 (no Guadalupe homily is indexed for 2021); Leo XIV, homily, “Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe — Holy Mass,” St Peter’s Basilica, 12 December 2025 (<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/homilies/2025/documents/20251212-messa-guadalupe.html>); Leo XIV, message to participants in the pastoral theological congress on the Guadalupan event, 5 February 2026 (<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/messages/pont-messages/2026/documents/20260205-messaggio-congresso-guadalupe.html>). These are acts of papal piety and teaching in their proper genres; none is a determination of the historical question.
61. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., nn. 66–67 (n. 66 quoting *Dei Verbum* 4), English text read 2026-07-25 at https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_PH.HTM.

62. Quoted from the English text of the *Norms* at note 24, read 2026-07-25 at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20240517_norme-fenomeni-soprannaturali_en.html, which gives the source as Benedict XVI, post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini* (30 September 2010), n. 14: AAS 102 (2010), p. 696. The bracketed ellipsis is in the Holy See’s own quotation of the passage. *Verbum Domini* itself was not consulted for this study.
63. *Norms*, closing formula and art. 27, same witness.
64. *Norms*, art. 18, 1°–6°, with the descriptions at nn. 17–22; arts. 1–2 for the bishop’s competence and the Dicastery’s approval. Same witness.
65. *Norms*, n. 23, same witness.
66. *Norms*, art. 22 §2, same witness.
67. *Norms*, n. 13, same witness.
68. *Recorded negative search, with its method.* The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith’s own documents index (https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/doc_doc_index.htm) was retrieved on 2026-07-25 and searched, case-insensitively, over its complete extracted text for the strings **guadalupe**, **tepeyac**, **juan diego**, **mexic**, **apparition**, **supernatural**, **fenomeni** and **mariophan**. The first four returned no match at all. The remaining strings returned the 2024 *Norms* themselves, the 1978 *Normae* they replace, and a series of recent individual determinations concerning other alleged phenomena—Dozulé, Amsterdam, Gisella Cardia, the Madonna della Guardia, and Mount S. Onofrio—which establishes that the index does in fact carry acts of this kind. *Limits.* A literal search cannot exclude synonyms, an act published only in another collection, an untranslated act, or a diocesan act of the Archdiocese of Mexico that is not digitally indexed; sixteenth- to nineteenth-century Mexican diocesan acts are largely in the latter class. Absence of a located act is not a finding that the events were judged negatively. It is a finding that this study has no such act to report. What positively exists is set out at §8 and §1.

A Scope, Status, and Qualifications

Question and thesis boundary

This study answers one question: what competent ecclesiastical authority has actually done about Guadalupe, in what words and with what object; what the surviving documentary record will and will not carry; how the historicity dispute stands among the scholars who conduct it; what the beatification and canonization of Juan Diego establish; what the documented examinations of the image do and do not show; how the Nahuatl narrative reads as Nahuatl; and what all of it obliges. It is a source-audited study instrument, ecclesial-judgment-first in method: not a devotional narrative, a critical edition, a magisterial act, a materials-science report, a Nahuatl philological study, or a history of Mexico. *It offers no judgment of its own on whether the events of December 1531 occurred*, and its refusal to do so is a finding about the state of the evidence and about this study’s own competence, not a verdict against either side.

Corpus and exclusions

Included. The acts of competent authority located and listed at §1.2, each at its own object; the printed witnesses of 1648 and 1649, with the 1649 imprint read and collated at the page-image level for the passages quoted; the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century apologetic sequence at the level of the 1785 compilation; the 1666 depositions at the level of the published descriptions; the shrine’s own published inventory of sixteenth-century documents, reproduced at the shrine’s level with ceilings assigned; the silence problem as García Icazbalceta’s 1883 letter states it, read in full; the *Información* of 1556 through O’Gorman’s analysis and appendices, read at length; the named modern positions in the historicity dispute at the levels recorded in §4.3; the cause of Juan Diego from the 1981 petition to the 2002 canonization; the documented examinations of the image in 1666, 1751, 1787 and 1982, and the crown episode of 1887–1895; a traceability audit of seven widely circulated claims about the image; the Nahuatl text’s rhetoric read directly in the 1649 imprint; the reception chain from 1555 to Leo XIV’s message of 5 February 2026; and the doctrinal and procedural frame, including the 2024 DDF norms.

Excluded or bounded. No adjudication of the historicity question. No identification of any artist. No assertion about the physical origin or manufacture of the image. No re-diagnosis of the cure recognized in 2001. No project translation of the *Nican mopohua*, and no reproduction of the received Nahuatl prayer printed in the 1649 tract. No Nahuatl philological conclusion about the text’s date. No characterization of the motives of any named living or recent person.

No claim of a comprehensive registry of apparitions: this is a single-event study. No reproduction of any complete document.

Not consulted. Sánchez 1648; Becerra Tanco; Florencia; the *Informaciones jurídicas* of 1666 in any edition; the *Información* of 1556 in manuscript or in any of its three printed editions; Sahagún's *Historia general* in the Florentine Codex or any critical edition; Motolinía, Mendieta, Las Casas, the Garcés letter, and the 1569–1570 *Descripción del Arzobispado*; Cabrera 1756 and Bartolache 1790 beyond their catalogue records; the Sol Rosales and Guadarrama conservation reports as printed in 2005; Callahan 1981; the *Códice Escalada* and every publication about it; the books of Poole, Sousa–Poole–Lockhart, Brading, Burkhart, von Wobeser, González Fernández and Chávez; the acts of the Fifth Mexican Provincial Council; the Roman acta of the 1890–1894 Office cause; the 1894 Roman printing of the new Office; and *Verbum Domini*.

Geography, chronology, and currentness

Subject geography: Tepeyac and Mexico City; Cuauhtitlán; the Archdiocese of Mexico; Rome. Subject range: 1531 (the events as narrated) and 1555–1556 (the earliest securely documented cult) to the acts current at the as-of date. *As-of date:* 2026-07-25. All mutable claims—the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith's documents index, the Holy See's document trees, the shrine's own published pages, and the most recent papal reception—were checked on that date. No act determining the supernatural origin of the events was located, and no later act superseding any of the acts inventoried was located. Stable historical facts are not given artificial currentness. Every negative result in this study is a bounded search, correctable by better evidence, never a guarantee.

Taxonomy and terminology

Kept distinct throughout: *received narrative* (the content of the 1649 tract and its descendants); *documentary witness* (a dated text, at the level at which it was read); *competent act* (a papal, dicasterial, conciliar or diocesan act, at its own object); *liturgical concession* (Office, Mass, feast, calendar inscription); *honour* (coronation, basilica dignity, patronage); *papal teaching and piety* (exhortation, homily, message, pilgrimage); *hagiographical presentation* (the Holy See's biography of a saint, in its own genre); *scholarly position* (reported at the level recorded at §4.3); *material finding* (what an examination reported, at the level of the publication reached); and *editorial synthesis*. “Reported” is the default register for the events of 1531 and for everything attributed to the apparition. *Fides humana* names the prudent human assent invited by approved private revelation. The six determinations of the 2024 DDF norms are current categories and are applied to no legacy act.

Source hierarchy and method

Priority: operative texts in identified official witnesses—*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, *Notitiae*, and the Holy See's web texts, with the AAS/ASS pages located and read at first hand in the Holy See's own scans and the 1999 *Notitiae* decree read from rendered page images; then the 1649 imprint, read in the John Carter Brown Library digitization with the quoted passages collated against page images and, for the Nahuatl passages, against the independent 1887 printing by Agustín de la Rosa; then open-access peer-reviewed and university-press scholarship (O'Gorman; Cuadriello) at its own level; then public-domain nineteenth- and eighteenth-century printed sources at their own level; then institutional self-description (the shrine's document page) marked as such; then reported accounts (press, reference works, postulation-side accounts), always marked as reported.

Quotations are exact from the named witness. Latin, Spanish and Nahuatl are quoted in the original where the wording is operative, with editorial working translations that are visibly commentary. No project or AI rendering is offered as a received translation. No text is printed for vocal prayer anywhere in this study.

Assisted verification, recorded. Two research passes—on the Holy See's acts and on the textual witnesses of the *Nican mopohua*—were performed by assisting agents of the same AI contributor working under instructions to report only what they had actually retrieved. Every load-bearing result of those passes that is used in the publication was then independently re-retrieved and read by the author of this study, with two exceptions, which are marked in place: the two *Notitiae* loci for the 2002 and 2008 states of the General Roman Calendar (§8.4), and the enumeration of continuing papal celebrations (§8.4).

Qualifications and unresolved items

(1) The Latin text of Benedict XIV’s 1754 act was not reached in any edition; the incipit *Non est equidem* is attested only in the 1785 Guadalupan compilation, and an index anomaly in the available Mechelen *Bullarium* volume is recorded at §8.2. Nothing about the brief’s wording is asserted. (2) Leo XIII’s brief of 8 February 1887, the Sacred Congregation of Rites decree of 6 March 1894, and any contemporary Roman notice of the 1895 coronation were not found in the *Acta Sanctae Sedis* volumes searched; they are reported from O’Gorman. (3) No act declaring Our Lady of Guadalupe patroness of Latin America was found in AAS 1910 or 1911, and no Guadalupan act of Pius XII was found in AAS 1946. (4) No Latin canonization formula for Juan Diego was located in AAS 94 (2002); the consistorial decree there printed assigns his canonization to 30 July 2002, against the volume’s own index and the dated homily. (5) The rank of the 9 and 12 December celebrations in the General Roman Calendar is not asserted; the 1999 decree’s *gradu festi* governs the calendars of the Americas. (6) The *Nican mopohua*’s date and authorship are unresolved and are not adjudicated. (7) The *Códice Escalada* is reported only as a disputed object; no primary publication of any examination was reached. (8) The 1990s objections are reported from press and reference accounts; no letter was read, and two attempted retrievals returned HTTP 403. (9) Callahan 1981 and the 1982 conservation reports were not read; the latter are used at Cuadriello’s level. (10) Seven popular claims about the image could not be traced to a reachable source and are recorded as such at §6.3; “not traced” means this study could not reach a source, not that none exists. (11) The identity of whoever removed the painted crown between 1887 and 1895 is not established and is not asserted. (12) Miguel León-Portilla’s *Tonantzin Guadalupe* (2000) was verified as to bibliographic identity through a Library of Congress record but was not read, and his position is not summarized in this study. (13) No independent Mariological, historical, canonical, archival, Nahuatl-philological, liturgical, art-historical, conservation, or materials-science review has occurred; no ecclesiastical review or approval is claimed or implied.

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B References

Witnesses are listed with role and rights notes; the access date for all web loci is 2026-07-25 unless stated. Stable source identities for the starred entries are registered in the repository source library; this publication’s bindings are in `research/source-bindings.toml`.

Primary witnesses read in the original

- *Luis Laso de la Vega, *Huei tlamahuiçoltica omonexiti in ilhuicac tlatóca Çihuapilli Santa Maria Totlaçonantzin Guadalupe in nican huei altepenahuac Mexico itocayocan tepeyacac* (Mexico: Juan Ruiz, 1649). Role: the controlling

witness of the *Nican mopohua* and *Nican motecpana*; quoted in §2.1 and §7 and collated at the page-image level. Copy used: John Carter Brown Library, digitized at <https://archive.org/details/hueitlamahuio1ti00lass>. The 1649 text is public domain; the JCB states that its digital-collection images are licensed CC BY 4.0 with the credit line “Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.” A second digitized copy, from the Center for the Study of the History of Mexico CARSO, is at the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021666123/>, whose rights statement reads: “The Library of Congress is unaware of any copyright or other restrictions in the World Digital Library Collection.” Note: the JCB volume is a composite binding and contains a later bound-with sermon which is not part of the 1649 tract (§2.1).

- *Agustín de la Rosa, *Dissertatio historico-theologica de apparitione B. M. V. de Guadalupe* (Guadalajara, 1887). Role: independent nineteenth-century printing of the Nahuatl *Nican mopohua*, used to collate the passages quoted in §7. Copy used: New York Public Library, digitized by Google, <https://archive.org/details/dissertatiohist00rosagoog>; Internet Archive metadata records possible-copyright-status: NOT_IN_COPYRIGHT.
- **Colección de obras y opusculos pertenecientes a la milagrosa aparicion de la bellissima imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (Madrid [in fact Mexico], 1785). Role: eighteenth-century apparitionist compilation; used for the sequence of the printed relations, its own admission that nothing was printed in the first century, the 1666 petition to Alexander VII, the 1754 brief’s incipit, and Cabrera’s account of the 1751 examination. Copy used: John Carter Brown Library, <https://archive.org/details/coleccindeobras00unkn>. Public domain.
- *Joaquín García Icazbalceta, *Carta acerca del origen de la imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de México* (written October 1883; first printed 1896). Role: the classical statement of the argument from silence, quoted in §3.1 and used in §3.2, §6.3 and §8.2. Quoted from the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes transcription (https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/carta-acerca-del-origen-de-la-imagen-de-nuestra-senora-de-guadalupe-de-mexico--0/html/b28296be-844c-4ebe-a169-2732231ce572_2.html), collated against the 1896 imprint in the Harvard copy digitized by Google, <https://archive.org/details/cartaacercadelo00icazgoog> (NOT_IN_COPYRIGHT). Public domain; author d. 1894.

Holy See acts and official texts

- *Sacred Congregation of Rites, rescript *Mexicana*, “Dubium quoad collocationem statuarum in Ecclesia,” 15 July 1892: *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 25 (1892–93), pp. 116–117, read in the Holy See’s scan, <https://www.vatican.va/archive/ass/documents/ASS-25-1892-93-ocr.pdf>. Role: the *fertur apparuisse* register (§8.3).
- *Pius X, apostolic letter granting indulgences for the centenary renewal of the Mexican oath, 16 June 1910: *AAS* 2 (1910), p. 569; and *Diarium Romanae Curiae*, *AAS* 2 (1910), p. 651 (agenda of the Ordinary Congregation of Sacred Rites of 16 August 1910). Read at <https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-02-1910-ocr.pdf>. Role: the 1737 oath and the 1754 confirmation (§8.2); the unresolved 1910 patronage (§8.4).
- *Pius XII, radio message to the faithful of Mexico on the fiftieth anniversary of the canonical coronation, 12 October 1945: https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/es/speeches/1945/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19451012_guadalupe-mexico.html. Role: §8.4.
- *Paul VI, apostolic letter *Sacra illa*, 4 October 1976: *AAS* 68 (1976), p. 598; message for the dedication of the new temple, 12 October 1976: *AAS* 68 (1976), pp. 653–655. Read at <https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-68-1976-ocr.pdf>. Role: §8.4.
- *John Paul II, apostolic letter *Cultus liturgicus in honorem Beati Ioannis Didaci conceditur*, Mexico City, 6 May 1990: *AAS* 82 (1990), pp. 853–855, read at <https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-82-1990-ocr.pdf>. Role: the fullest operative text (§1.1, §5.2).
- *John Paul II, homily at the beatifications in the shrine of Santa María de Guadalupe, 6 May 1990: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/es/homilies/1990/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19900506_citta-del-messico.html. Role: identity of those beatified (§5.2).
- *John Paul II, post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, Mexico City, 22 January 1999, n. 11: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_22011999_ecclesia-in-america.html. Role: §8.4.
- *Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Prot. 803/99/L, decree *de festo Beatae Mariae Virginis de Guadalupe in tota America quotannis die 12 decembris peragendo*, 25 March 1999: *Notitiae* 35 (1999), 394–395, pp. 272–274, read from rendered page images of the Dicastery’s scan, <https://www.cultodivino>.

va/content/dam/cultodivino/rivista-notitiae/1990/notitiae-35-(1999)/Notitiae-394-395-1999.pdf. Role: §8.4.

- *Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Variationes et additiones in reimpressione emendata “Missalis Romani,” editionis typicae tertiae: Notitiae* 44 (2008), 503–504; and the presentation of the third typical edition, *Notitiae* 38 (2002), pp. 457–459. Role: the 2002 and 2008 states of the General Roman Calendar (§8.4). *Reported at the level of assisted verification; not re-read page by page.*
- *Congregation for the Causes of Saints, *Mexicana. Canonizationis Beati Ioannis Didaci Cuauhtlatoatzin viri laici. Decretum super miraculo*, 20 December 2001: AAS 94 (2002), pp. 488–489; consistorial decree, AAS 94 (2002), pp. 313–314. Read at <https://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-94-2002-ocr.pdf>. Role: §5.4 and the recorded date anomaly.
- *John Paul II, homily at the canonization of Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin, Mexico City, 31 July 2002: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20020731_canonization-mexico.html; Spanish text AAS 94 (2002), p. 743ff. Role: §8.4.
- *Holy See, *Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin: biography*: https://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_20020731_juan-diego_en.html. Role: §5.1, as a hagiographical presentation.
- *Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena*, 17 May 2024: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_d_df_doc_20240517_norme-fenomeni-soprannaturali_en.html. Role: current procedural law (§5.5, §9.2–9.3); the same page supplies the *Verbum Domini* n. 14 quotation at its note 24. The Dicastery’s documents index, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/doc_doc_index.htm, was searched for the negative result at §9.3.
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., nn. 66–67: https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___PH.HTM. Role: §9.1.
- Leo XIV, homily for the Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, St Peter’s Basilica, 12 December 2025 (<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/homilies/2025/documents/20251212-messa-guadalupe.html>); message to the pastoral theological congress on the Guadalupan event, 5 February 2026 (<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/messages/pont-messages/2026/documents/20260205-messaggio-congresso-guadalupe.html>); Francis, homily at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, 13 February 2016 (https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20160213_omelia-messico-guadalupe.html). Role: continuing reception (§8.4). *Reported at the level of assisted verification.*

Scholarship used at its own level

- *Edmundo O’Gorman, *Destierro de sombras. Luz en el origen de la imagen y culto de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe del Tepeyac*, 2nd ed. (Mexico: UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Serie Historia Novohispana 36; digital edition 2019). Chapters and appendices read: part II ch. 3 (pp. 81–92); Appendix I; Appendix IV (pp. 227–238); Appendix VII. Open access at http://www.historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/222c/destierro_sombras.html; © UNAM-IIH, reproduction for non-lucrative purposes authorized on the conditions observed at §10 (Rights). Role: §3.2, §3.4, §4.3–4.4, §6.2, §8.3. Strongly anti-apparitionist; used at that level, with its own conclusions attributed to it.
- *Jaime Cuadriello, “Cifra, signo y artilugio: el ‘ocho’ de Guadalupe,” *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 39, no. 110 (2017): 155–206, <https://doi.org/10.22201/iiie.18703062e.2017.1.2593>; open-access full text at https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0185-12762017000100155. Role: the documented examinations of the image (§6.2), including its use of José Sol Rosales, “Dictamen de conservación de la imagen de la Virgen de Guadalupe,” and Jorge Guadarrama Guevara, “Informe sobre aspectos técnicos de conservación,” in Fernando Ojeda Llanes, *La tilma guadalupana revela sus secretos* (Mexico: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2005), pp. 212–222 and 230–238, neither of which was consulted directly.
- Fidel González Fernández, “Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin: procesos de beatificación y de canonización,” *Diccionario de Historia Cultural de la Iglesia en América Latina*, <https://www.dhial.org/>. Role: procedural chronology of the cause (§5.2). Postulation-side account, used at that level.

Positions cited by identity only

The following were verified as to bibliographic identity through Open Library, Library of Congress and Internet Archive catalogue records and *were not read*; their positions are reported at the levels recorded at §4.3.

- Stafford Poole, C.M., *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531–1797* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995; 2nd ed. 2017); *The Guadalupan Controversies in Mexico* (Stanford, 2006); “History versus Juan Diego,” *The Americas* 62, no. 1 (July 2005): 1–16.
- Lisa Sousa, Stafford Poole and James Lockhart, eds. and trans., *The Story of Guadalupe: Luis Laso de la Vega’s Huei tlamahuiçoltica of 1649* (Stanford University Press and UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1998; UCLA Latin American Studies 84 / Nahuatl Studies Series 5). In copyright; no part of the translation is reproduced here.
- D. A. Brading, *Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe. Image and Tradition Across Five Centuries* (Cambridge, 2001).
- Louise M. Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe: The Virgin Mary in Early Colonial Nahuatl Literature* (Albany, 2001).
- Gisela von Wobeser, *Orígenes del culto a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, 1521–1688* (Mexico: UNAM-IIH / FCE, 2020).
- Fidel González Fernández, Eduardo Chávez Sánchez and José Luis Guerrero Rosado, *El encuentro de la Virgen de Guadalupe y Juan Diego* (Mexico: Porrúa, 1999); Eduardo Chávez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe and Saint Juan Diego: The Historical Evidence* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).
- Ángel María Garibay K., “La maternidad espiritual de María en el mensaje guadalupano,” in *La maternidad espiritual de María* (Mexico: Jus, 1961), pp. 187–202. Known to this study only through O’Gorman’s detailed exposition and critique in Appendix I.
- Philip Serna Callahan, *The Tilma under Infra-Red Radiation*, CARA Studies on Popular Devotion II, Guadalupan Studies 3 (Washington, D.C., 1981). Identified from secondary literature only; not verified against a library record and not read (§6.3).

Institutional self-description

- Insigne y Nacional Basílica de Santa María de Guadalupe, *Documentos Históricos*, <https://virgendeguadalupe.org.mx/documentos-historicos/>. Role: the shrine’s own inventory of documents, reproduced at the shrine’s level in §2.3 with ceilings assigned. © the publisher; used briefly with citation.

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