

Am I Not Here Who Am Your Mother?



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Part I

You Have a Mother in Heaven

There are few people on earth who do not love their mothers. Even people whose relationships with their mothers are strained recognize that their mothers suffered and sacrificed to bring them into the world. Most people have some fond memories of the unconditional love that they received from their mothers in the first years of their lives. The purpose of this pamphlet is to show you that God, the Creator of the universe, has not only sent His Son Jesus Christ, into the world to be our Savior. Through Jesus Christ, God has also made us members of His divine Family. The Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, has given us His own flesh and blood to eat. He has given us His Holy Spirit. And in the last moments of His life on the Cross at Calvary, He gave us His Mother to be our Mother.

The Blessed Virgin Mary: The New Eve

When God created our first parents, he formed Adam first from the dust of the earth. The Fathers of the Church often described the earth of the first created world as “virgin earth” because as yet no death, deformity or disease had corrupted it. The Fathers saw the “virgin earth” as a type or foreshadowing of the Blessed Virgin Mary from whose immaculate womb the body of Jesus, the “New Adam” would be formed, just as the body of

the first Adam had been formed from the “virgin earth” at the beginning of creation.

After Adam had searched in vain for a companion suitable for him among the animals that God had created, God put Adam into a deep sleep and formed Eve’s body from Adam’s side and placed her soul within it. God gave Eve to Adam to be his companion and helper and to be the mother of his children. God made her immaculate and beautiful in body, mind and spirit. According to the Fathers of the Church, Mary summed up within herself all of the beauty, order, and harmony of the first created world. She was the queen of the entire universe.

God made Adam to be the spiritual head of his wife and children. This is why God did not reveal to Eve the commandment not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden. Instead, Eve had to receive the commandment through her husband, Adam. Lucifer, one of the greatest and most powerful angels in Heaven, exploited this dependence of Eve upon her husband when he tempted her to disobey the commandment not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. According to the Fathers of the Church, God had revealed to Lucifer that he and all of the angels had been created to serve human beings. St. Maximilian Kolbe taught that God had also revealed to Lucifer

that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ, would assume a human nature in the womb of a Woman, and that He and the Woman would become the King and Queen of the Angels. The thought of serving a limited bodily creature was too much for Lucifer, and he refused to obey, taking a large number of other angels with him. From that time forward, Lucifer and his demons dedicated themselves to destroying God's plan for mankind by leading as many human beings as possible to rebel against God.

In His infinite love for mankind, God endowed Adam and Eve with the power to think, to love, and to freely decide what to do, just as God Himself freely loves, thinks, and acts. To give Adam and Eve the opportunity to prove their love for God, it was necessary to give them a test—to allow Satan to tempt them to disobey God's only commandment: not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Since God had given this commandment directly to Adam, Lucifer, now known as Satan, or "the Adversary," refrained from tempting Adam directly, and, instead, used his exalted intellect to tempt him through Eve.

At first, Satan did not tempt Eve directly to disobey God's commandment. Instead, he subtly influenced her to doubt God's Word by slightly twisting what God had revealed to her through Adam. Only once he had gotten Eve to doubt the utter reliability of

God's Word did Satan focus her attention on the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and on the knowledge, power and delight that she could obtain by eating it. When Eve's fascination with the fruit made her forget God and His Word, she became overwhelmed with desire to eat the fruit—and she did eat. But Satan knew well that he could only break the bond between God and man if Adam—the head of the whole human race—disobeyed God. With that in mind, he prompted Eve to offer the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil to Adam, and he prompted Adam to want to please his wife, and in wanting to please her to forget God—and to focus on the delight that eating the fruit would bring him.

God had commanded Adam to guard and protect his wife and lands, and Adam should have rebuked his wife for her disobedience and remained true to God's Word. But his desire to please his wife and to experience the delight of the fruit overwhelmed him and diluted his sense of God's presence. Adam ate, and the heavenly glory that had filled his body (and the body of Eve) immediately disappeared, leaving them naked and ashamed. The wonderful unity with God that they had experienced from the moment of their creation was destroyed, leaving them empty and incapable of recognizing God's presence in other creatures or in each other as they had done effortlessly until that moment.

God gave Adam one last chance to take responsibility for his actions and to restore his relationship with God by admitting his guilt. But, when God spoke to Adam about his newly-exposed nakedness, Adam refused to take responsibility for his sin and instead blamed Eve for tempting him to eat the fruit—and God for creating the woman! Eve also refused to accept responsibility for her actions and tried to blame the devil for leading her into sin. Consequently, out of respect for their free choice, God allowed them to suffer the consequences of their rebellion against Him, and ordered his angels to remove them from the Garden of Eden.

The bodies of our first parents, which had been created in a state of incorruption, now began to experience weakness and decay. And, as Adam and Eve, the king and queen of the first created world, began to experience corruption, and decay, so all of the creatures in the entire universe became subject to what St. Paul would call the “bondage to decay.” Death, disease, and deformity entered the world—along with genetic mutations, those “errors” in copying genetic instructions, which evolutionists hail as the engine that transforms reptiles into birds and land mammals into whales. In reality, these genetic “mistakes,” only degrade the exquisitely organized genetic information that God originally placed in each kind of organism “in the beginning of creation.”

God's Promise of Redemption

According to the Fathers of the Church, the memory of Eden and of their original state of holiness filled Adam and Eve with such sorrow that they wept and grieved continually for the rest of their long lives. Only one thing kept our first parents from absolute despair, and that was the promise that God had made to them before their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Addressing the devil in the presence of Adam and Eve, God had said, "I will put enmity between you and the Woman, and between her seed and your seed. She will crush your head, but you will strike at her heel."

With these words, Adam and Eve understood that God was not going to leave them and their descendants in darkness forever. He was going to restore everything back to the beauty and goodness that it had in the beginning of creation, and to something even greater than that. They understood that God was going to accomplish this through a Woman who would crush the head of Satan, and through her seed: a Child who would be completely opposed to Satan—untouched by him.

For thousands of years this hope was passed down from Adam and Eve to their descendants, from generation to generation. About four thousand years ago, a descendant of Adam and Eve through the line of their son Seth, a man named Abram

(later expanded by God to “Abraham”) was chosen by the Lord to be the father of a great nation, from whom would come the Holy Child who would crush the head of Satan, redeem, or free, souls from their sins, restore the world back to its original holiness and fulfill the purpose that God had intended for it from the beginning of creation.

The Holy Bible records dozens of divinely inspired prophecies about that Child and His Mother. The Patriarch Jacob foretold that the Child would belong to the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve grandsons of Abraham. King David foretold in detail the sufferings that the Child would have to endure to redeem the world. Isaiah predicted that He would be born of a Virgin; that He would be called “mighty God”; would work all kinds of miracles; and would suffer and die to atone for the sins of the world. Micah identified Bethlehem in Judea as the place of his birth. The prophet Daniel predicted the very year of his death, almost 500 years in advance.

No one in history has ever been announced beforehand with so many detailed predictions as the Child Jesus and His Mother Mary. And just as Adam was brought forth from the “virgin earth” by the divine power of God, so Jesus Christ, the New Adam, the Redeemer of the world, was brought forth from the Virgin Mary, the New Eve, by the power of the Holy Spirit, two thousand years ago.

The Fathers of the Church recognized that, in God's Providence, the fall of Adam and Eve had to be undone by the New Adam, Jesus Christ, and the New Eve, Mary, and for this reason their lives unfolded in perfect parallel with the lives of Adam and Eve. The parallels began with the very incarnation of Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Just as the Fall of mankind began with the false message of a fallen angel to the virgin Eve, so the redemption of mankind began with the true message of the holy Archangel Gabriel to Mary, the New Eve. The Archangel Gabriel addressed Mary with a title never given before or after to any other woman: "Hail Mary, you who have been made full of grace" and told her that she had been chosen to become the Mother of the Messiah, the promised Redeemer of the world. And whereas the first Eve doubted the Word of God at the word of an angel, the New Eve held fast to the Word of God and said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to your Word." As the body of the first Adam was made from the "virgin earth," now, as the Holy Spirit "overshadowed" Her, the body of the New Adam was made from the sinless flesh of the Virgin Mary.

Throughout her life, Mary the New Eve, reversed the first Eve's sin of pride and disobedience. In all of her thoughts, words, and deeds, Mary gave her fiat to the Holy Spirit reigning within Her. She obeyed St. Joseph her husband, and, after her

husband died and her Son reached adulthood, She obeyed her Son Jesus in all things. From the beginning to the end of His public life, Jesus highlighted His Mother's maternal role in the family of believers. At the wedding at Cana in Galilee, when Jesus performed His first miracle, it was His Mother who informed Him of the emergency: that the host family had run out of wine for the feast. Thus, when Jesus responded to Mary's concern, and instantly changed six large containers of water into delicious wine, He showed His disciples for all time to come that His Mother is the Queen of the angels and saints, and the most excellent intercessor for sinners in all of our needs.

Jesus confirmed and completed this lesson from the Cross when with His last words to a human being He entrusted His Mother to St. John the Evangelist, giving Her to him to be the Mother of the Church and Mother of all of His disciples until the end of time. That is why, on Pentecost, the birthday of the Church, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, empowering them to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth, Mary stood in their midst as their Holy Mother, asking her Spouse the Holy Spirit to descend upon her children and make them holy. From her place in Heaven, Our Lady continues to watch over us. And to those who freely accept Her as their Mother, She intercedes just as powerfully as She did at Cana for our transformation into the likeness of her Son.

Part II

Modern Science Confirms God's Revelation

Do all of these beautiful thoughts about the Mother of God seem like a fairy tale in this age of skepticism and selfishness? If so, you should know that Almighty God has granted to this skeptical age a miraculous, scientific and technological confirmation of the importance of His Mother to the whole human race and to you in particular. In the next few pages of this pamphlet, we will briefly summarize the facts surrounding this marvel, which began in the mountains near Mexico City, in December, 1531, but which very much concerns you and your loved ones here and now.

Juan Diego Meets the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Christian faith was brought to Central America in 1519 when ships under the command of Hernando Cortes landed on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Cortes unloaded a small army of men, horses, weapons and other supplies, and headed inland. Unbeknownst to Cortes, the area he had begun to explore belonged to the Aztec Empire, a technologically advanced but morally and spiritually corrupt civilization, with its capital in the mountains of present-day Mexico City. The Aztec religion involved the practice of human sacrifice, and it is estimated that 100,000 human beings had their hearts ripped out of their chests and were

offered in sacrifice to the gods atop the pyramids of Mexico City just a few years before the first Catholic missionaries arrived in Central America.

This is not the place to relate how Cortes and his small company of men triumphed over the Aztec forces, abolished human sacrifice, and established a Christian government in Mexico. What is important to emphasize is that most of the Mexican people did not respond favorably to the Christian religion of their conquerors. This natural resistance of a conquered people to the imposition of a foreign religion was compounded by the bad example of many of the Spanish settlers and government officials who scandalized the indigenous people with their immorality, cruelty, and greed.

One of the indigenous people who did embrace the Christian religion from the beginning was a man known to history as Juan Diego. Juan Diego and his wife seem to have received the gift of Faith into well-disposed hearts. As often as he could, Juan walked more than ten miles round trip from the mountains outside of Mexico City to the nearest church to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Early on the morning of December 9, 1531, Juan Diego was on his way to Holy Mass when he heard a lovely voice calling to him. “*Juanito, humblest of my sons, where are you going?*” A beautiful lady appeared to him, dressed in the garments of an Aztec Queen, and he answered her: “My Lady and

Child, I have to reach your church in Mexico, Tlatilolco, to receive holy things, things taught to us by our priests, the representatives of Our Lord.”
Then the Lady replied:

Know and understand well, least of my sons, that I am the ever virgin Holy Mary, Mother of the True God for Whom we live, of the Creator of all things, Lord of heaven and the earth. I wish that a temple be erected here quickly, so that there I may display and give all my love, compassion, help, and protection, as your merciful Mother—to you, and to all who dwell in this land, and to all the rest who love, invoke and confide in me. There I will listen to their woes and heal all their miseries, afflictions and sorrows. To accomplish what my mercy proposes, go to the palace of the bishop of Mexico, and you will say to him that I am making known my great desire, that here on this plain a temple be built to me. You will accurately relate all that you have seen and admired, and all that you have heard. Be assured that I will be most grateful and will reward you, because I will make you happy and worthy of reward for the effort and fatigue it will cost you to fulfill the task that I have entrusted to you. Behold, you have heard my request, my humble son; now go and put forth all your effort.

Reluctantly, Juan obeyed the Lady's request and made her request known to the Bishop. Bishop Zumarraga listened politely to Juan's story, but did not believe him. Juan Diego returned to the Lady and urged her to find someone else to carry out her mission, but she insisted that he was the one she had chosen and that he must go back to the Bishop the next day and try again.

The next day Juan Diego went to the Bishop's palace a second time and after a long wait was granted an audience. This time, the bishop questioned him thoroughly about the Lady, but privately resolved to suspend judgment until God should provide a sign to confirm the truth of his story—Castilian Roses, native to Spain, but unknown to the vicinity of Mexico City.

On December 12, 1531, Juan Diego went to look for a priest to anoint his uncle Juan Bernardino who was dying. To his astonishment, the Lady appeared to him once again and spoke to him tenderly:

Hear me and understand well, least of my sons. Let nothing frighten you or grieve you. Let not your heart be troubled. Do not fear that sickness, nor any other sickness or anguish. Am I not here, who am your Mother? Are you not under my protection? Am I not your health? Are you not within the crossing of my arms? What else do you desire? Do not grieve or be disturbed by

anything. Do not be troubled by your uncle's illness. He will not die of it now. Be assured—he is now cured!

Then She told Juan to climb to the top of the hillside where he found beautiful Castilian roses in full bloom just ten days before the first day of winter. The Lady arranged the roses in Juan Diego's tilma, or cloak, and told him to take them to the Bishop. With great difficulty Juan Diego hurried to the bishop's palace, holding the miraculous flowers, and managing to keep them wrapped in his cloak until he was finally ushered into the Bishop's presence.

As soon as Juan appeared before the Bishop he unfurled his cloak and let fall the Castilian Roses—the sign for which the bishop had prayed! At that very moment, before the entire assembly, a perfect image of the Lady as she had looked to Juan appeared on his cloak, like the photographic image on the film from an instamatic camera. At the sight of the beautiful image of the Queen of Heaven, the Bishop and all the on-lookers knelt down in veneration.

The Woman in the image was dressed as an Aztec queen. Like the woman described by St. John in chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation, the Lady was “clothed with the sun” and had “the moon under her feet” (Revelation 12:1). Around her waist She

wore the kind of belt worn by pregnant women in Aztec society; and around her neck a black cross, like the black crosses painted on the sails of the Spanish ships.

The next day, the Bishop asked Juan to lead a procession to the place where Our Lady had asked for a shrine. From there, the Bishop and his aides accompanied Juan to his uncle's home where they learned that the Lady had appeared to Juan on his deathbed, identifying herself as Our Lady of Coatloxopeuh in the native Nahuatl language, which sounded like "Our Lady of Guadalupe" in Spanish, which was the name of a famous Marian shrine in Estremadura, in Spain. With its strong associations in both Spanish and the local Nahuatl language, the title "Guadalupe" beautifully blended meanings of great importance to both cultures. In Nahuatl, the name meant "She who crushes the serpent." This was at once a reference to the serpent god Quetzacoatl, whose cult occupied a central place in the ritual of human sacrifice (long associated with the mountain of Tepeyac where Our Lady had asked for a shrine), and at the same time a direct reference to God's promise in Genesis 3:15 to put enmity between Satan and a "Woman" who would one day "crush" his head.

From the moment it was installed in a chapel on Tepeyac, the miraculous image and the testimony of Juan Diego drew the indigenous peoples in constant

streams to receive Baptism at the hands of the missionaries. During the next ten years, nine million Indians renounced Satan, embraced the Catholic Faith, and consecrated themselves to Jesus at the invitation of His Mother—who had also become their Mother.

The wonders performed through the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe continued and continue to this day. Over the centuries, millions of people have received graces of physical and spiritual healing from the Lord Jesus Christ, through the prayers of his Mother, and countless testimonials from grateful pilgrims have been preserved at her Shrine. Even the efforts of anti-Christian groups to destroy her image have been turned into testimonies of God's favor. In 1921, when an intensely anti-Catholic Masonic regime held power in Mexico, a powerful bomb was placed under the altar in front of the Image. The explosion blew out the windows in the basilica and twisted the wrought-iron candle holders on the altar. But the miraculous image survived unscathed.

During the past 480 years, many scholars and scientists have studied the image, only to admit their inability to explain its origin. Richard Kuhn, a 1938 Nobel laureate in chemistry, concluded that the image was not painted by a human hand and that the coloring of the image cannot be attributed to any known substance. The material of Juan Diego's

cloak, upon which the image appeared, ought to have disintegrated hundreds of years ago—yet it shows no signs of decay after almost 500 years!

The physical preservation of the image has a profound spiritual significance. We have recalled that the first Adam and Eve were created in a state of incorruption and that the whole earth participated in that state of incorruption until sin entered the world. Like the first Eve, Mary, the second Eve, was conceived without sin, and thus in a state of incorruption. Only in this way could She provide pure flesh for the Body of the Son of God in her womb. And that is also why—according to the constant tradition of the Church—Mary’s body did not decay when she “fell asleep” at the end of her life but was assumed into Heaven by God in a glorified state, an event commemorated throughout the Christian world as the Feast of the Holy Dormition or the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. (This also explains why the most famous woman in history has no tomb!) The miraculous physical preservation of Our Lady’s image testifies to the truth of her incorruptibility and to God’s power to bring all of His faithful children to that same state of incorruptibility by the resurrection of the dead at the end of the world.

The Eyes of the Virgin of Guadalupe

During the past several decades, much of the scientific study of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe has focused on her eyes. In 1929, a photographer named Alfonso Gonzales studied a negative of the image and found the reflection of a bearded man in Our Lady's right eye. Subsequent investigations resulted in the discovery of other reflections of other human images in the Virgin's eyes—a discovery quite unforeseen and impossible without modern photographic knowledge and technology. For more than 20 years, beginning in the 1970's, a civil and environmental engineer named Dr. Jose Aste Tousman, used state-of-the-art equipment to study the eyes of the Virgin, magnifying them up to 2500 times. Tousman eventually identified more than ten individuals in each of the Virgin's eyes, including figures reliably identified as Juan Diego and Bishop Zumarraga. The relative positions of these figures in the two eyes of the image perfectly correspond to the difference in perspective between the two eyes of a living human being. No other non-photographic image known to man has ever displayed this characteristic.

On the one hand, the existence of the images in Our Lady's eyes confirms the miraculous character of this divine portrait of the Blessed Mother. But there is deeper meaning to the discovery. The eyes that

lovingly followed the Lord Jesus Christ from the moment of His birth to the moment of His death on the Cross—those same eyes are fixed on you. And to those who, like St. Juan Diego, entrust themselves to the prayers of the Mother of God and become true followers of her Son Jesus Christ in His Church, the words of the Queen of Heaven will always be true:

Hear me and understand well, least of my children. Let nothing frighten you or grieve you . . . Am I not here, who am your Mother? Are you not under my protection? Am I not your health? Are you not within the crossing of my arms?

Through the prayers of the Holy Mother of Jesus, may God grant you the gifts of faith and repentance and transform you into the perfect likeness of her Son by the power of the Holy Spirit!

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If you would like to contact a member of the Church that Jesus Christ founded two thousand years ago, please contact us at the Melkite Greek Catholic Chapel of the Holy Innocents and the Holy Family in Exile, 1516 Northside Professional Building, Front Royal, VA 22630 or email us at howen@shentel.net and we will help you to find a church community in your area.