

THE RICH MARIOLOGICAL DOCTRINE OF THE NICAN MOPOHUA

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INTRODUCTION

What a grace it is to be able to stand at the foot of Our Lady of Guadalupe in her National Basilica in Mexico, contemplate her most precious Image, and see so many of her children pass by her, with faces often full of tears, of sadness, directing to her anguished looks and ardent prayers that come from the bottom of their hearts ... Prayers that never go unheard!

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Mr. Carl A. Anderson, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, and to Msgr. Eduardo Chávez Sánchez, Postulator of the Cause of St. Juan Diego and Canon of the Basilica of Guadalupe, for having granted me the honor and the joy to participate in this I International Marian Congress on Holy Mary of Guadalupe, to whom I owe so many blessings!

The Guadalupean Event is unique for several reasons:

Since her visit to her kinswoman Elizabeth, the Blessed Virgin continues "to visit" her children and bring them Jesus, but to none of them has She left behind the ineffable gift of *her own Image*, miraculously "imprinted" in a simple ayate for all to see for centuries to come! An Image of deep symbolic meaning for her Mexican children, and of most tender and sublime beauty for all who behold her!

On Tepeyac Hill, in the person of St. Juan Diego, Our Lady comes to the aid of an entire people at the most painful and tragic moment of their history, to bring them consolation and hope in a way She alone could do it.

"Mary can be rightly called an Apostle", said Severus of Antioch (+ 538) in the VI century, because "which is the nation that the Virgin has not taught and led to the knowledge of God?" (1). And he is right: Wherever the Gospel has been preached in the world, Mary's presence and assistance has been felt in manifold ways. But nowhere is this seen so clearly as in the American Continent: Just a few years after the Europeans had discovered the existence of this great land, when no national boundaries existed yet, Our Lady appeared to one of its children, Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin (1474-1548), with two purposes: Bring peace and reconciliation between the two peoples that had met for the first time in such violent and unfortunate circumstances, and give them the greatest possible gift: her Divine Son, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (Jn.14, 6).

Unlike other apparitions, where Mary is trying to revive Christian life, in this one She is starting it. At a moment when the evangelization of the New World was not going at all well, She brings the Gospel in a perfectly inculturated way to millions of people who had never heard about Christ before, and her success is unparalleled! (2).

From Tepeyac Hill She embraced with maternal love the entire American Continent, and indeed the entire world, because her message is as universal as her maternity of all those redeemed by her Son. And yet, a special place must be recognized to Mexico, the land She chose to grace with the gift of her Image,

a land of great martyrs and saints, Mary's land in a special way, as Pope John Paul II experienced.

Another reason why the Guadalupean Event is unique is its doctrinal richness. In the Nican Mopohua, the account of the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe written by Antonio Valeriano (1520-1605) in 1556, we find interesting references to Mary's Divine Maternity, Virginité, Holiness, Queenship, Spiritual Maternity, Mediation, Marian Spirituality, her relation with the Church, and the Cult she is entitled to. We shall examine them in this paper.

I. THE DIVINE MATERNITY

The Divine Maternity is the first Marian Dogma; it was proclaimed by the Church at the Council of Ephesus (431) (3). This Dogma teaches that Mary of Nazareth is in all truth the "Mother of God" ("Theotokos": literally, "the one who conceives, carries in her womb, and gives birth to God"), because her Son, Jesus Christ, is God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Out of His infinite love for humankind, in order to save us, He came down from heaven to the virginal womb of the Blessed Mary and by the power of the Holy Spirit became incarnated. In Mary's womb and from her immaculate flesh, the eternal Word assumed our human nature and united it hypostatically to His Divine Person.

From the Christological point of view, this Dogma is fundamental, because it expresses one of the most important truths of our Christian faith: That Christ is true God and true man. That He is a Divine Person with two natures, the Divine Nature that He received eternally from God the Father, and the Human Nature that He received in time from the Virgin Mary and united hypostatically to His Divine Person. It is also fundamental from the Soteriological point of view, because if Christ is not both true God and true man, there is no salvation. St. John Damascene (+ 749) teaches that the title "Theotokos" synthesizes the entire Economy of Salvation (D.), because it conveys perfectly these two truths about Christ.

From the Mariological point of view, the Divine Maternity is likewise the most important of all the four Marian Dogmas, because it is the foundation of all the others: Her Immaculate Conception, her perpetual Virginité, and her glorious Assumption. It also explains her universal Mediation and Cooperation in the Work of Redemption, her unique personal holiness, her Spiritual Maternity, her indissoluble union with the Church, and the special cult she is entitled to receive.

In the Nican Mopohua, Mary's Divine Maternity is explicitly affirmed six times (Intro.; nn.26, 62, 75, 165, 183), and it is also implicitly conveyed by Mary's appearance (n.16-19) and general demeanor, as well as by St. Juan Diego's behavior towards her.

A. EXPLICIT TEXTS

1. *A Wonderful Synthesis* (Intro.)

The Nican Mopohua starts with a brief Introduction which is a wonderful

synthesis of all that it is going to narrate later, and which contains the first reference to Mary's Divine Maternity: In fact, in it is "narrated" a wonderful twofold event: The apparition of Mary to an Indian called Juan Diego, and the "imprinting" of her Image in his tilma before the Bishop Fray Juan de Zumárraga. Mary is presented as the "Perfect Virgin, Holy Mary, *venerable Mother of God*, our venerable Lady and Queen" ("in cenquizca ichpochtli Sancta Maria Dios Inantzin, tocihualpillatocatzin"), with words similar to those She would use to introduce herself. The "wonderful" apparition took place at a Hill called Tepeyac. By the time the Nican Mopohua was being written, it was already known as "Guadalupe".

The fact that Mary "appears" is affirmed three times in this text: twice with the verb "nezi" ("monexiti") and once with the verb "itta" ("quimottititzino"). With the verb "nezi", the original Nahuatl underlines not simply that Mary "appeared", but that she "deigned to appear" ("monexiti"), or even better, that "she loved us so much as to make herself visible to us" (p.90-91). It is used both for Mary ("*monexiti* in cenquizca Ichpochtli Sancta Maria Dios Inantzin") and for her "precious and beloved Image" ("monexiti in Itlazoixiptlalzin") (Exp.). In fact, it is *out of love* for us that She appears, and remains "imprinted" in St. Juan Diego's tilma. This idea is reinforced in the following sentence, where it is specified that St. Juan Diego is the first person to whom Mary "condescended in making herself visible" (p.93).

In this text, Mary is called "Mother of God" for the first time. This title appears together with other three: "Perfect Virgin" ("in cenquizca Ichpochtli"), "Holy Mary" ("Sancta Maria"), "Our Venerable Lady and Queen" ("tocihualpillatocatzin"). The original Nahuatl says: "Dios Inantzin", with the word "God" in Spanish, and the noun "Inantzin" in the possessive and reverential form: "God's Venerable Mother". From the beginning it is made clear that it deals with a supernatural event that has the Mother of God as its protagonist.

2. *Mary's Solemn Introduction of Herself* (n.26)

After calling him by his name ("Juantzin, Juan Diegotzin"), and asking him where he is going (n.23), Mary's first words are a solemn introduction of herself to St. Juan Diego. It is interesting to note that he had already recognized her. In fact, he does not only call her "my Lady" and "Queen", but also "my little Virgin" ("Nochpochtziné"), a typically Christian title, and he tells her that he is going "to *her little house* in Mexico Tlatilolco", thereby identifying the Church with "*Mary's house*" ("mochantzinco") (n.24), a title given to it in the V century by Cromatius of Aquileia. Mary introduces herself with these words:

"Please know, please fix it in your heart, my youngest son, that I am the perfect ("nicenquizca") ever ("cemicac") Virgin ("Ichpochtli") Holy Mary ("Sancta Maria"), the venerable Mother of the most true God God ("in Inantzin in huel nelli Teotl Dios), of Him through whom we all live ("Ipalnemohuani"), of the Creator of people ("Teyocoyani"), of the Lord of all around us and of what is close to us ("Tloque Nahuaque"), of the Lord of Heaven and earth ("Ilhuicahua Tlaltipaque") ..." (n.26).

In this text, the title "Mother of God" comes again with two others (as it is often the case in Conciliar definitions): "Perfect ever Virgin" and "Holy Mary". In the Nican Mopohua, "Holy Mary" is always rendered in Latin, and the other two in Nahuatl. It expresses very clearly Mary's Divine Maternity taking into consideration both cultures by the use of the word "God" twice: in Nahuatl ("Teotl") and in Spanish ("Dios"): "in Inantzin in huel nelli Teotl Dios".

Moreover, the word God is followed by four titles given by the Aztecs to the only God (Ometéotl). These titles were chosen by Our Lady among other possible ones as those that could be understood and accepted by both cultures: the Aztec and the Spanish. In fact, both believed that God is the Living One, the Cause of all life or He through whom all live, the Creator of people, the Lord who is by everything and contains everything, the Lord of heaven and earth (cf. p.169-176, 37-40).

This extraordinary affirmation of Mary's Divine Maternity, which presents her in Aztec terms as the Mother of the one true God by whom we all live, the Creator, the Omnipresent, the Lord of heaven and earth, rivals with the affirmations of Mary's Divine Maternity found in the Greek Fathers. But the fact that a real woman could be the Mother of God was totally foreign to the Aztec mind, and the Incarnation of God was for them a wholly unexpected, and seemingly unthinkable and impossible event (p.175-176). Our Lady is going to reveal to them that such is precisely the case. God has become man born of her, a real woman, and she wants them to build a temple where she can give Him to all.

Asking for a temple is a common element in Marian apparitions, of which Lourdes is a very good example. It shows Our Lady's respect for the Church, the Sacraments, the Hierarchy, and the Christian community as a whole. She does not come for the sake of a single individual, but of all who would be willing to gather together in her temple, where they will always receive Jesus in Word and Sacrament. Although Mary calls it "her temple" ("noteocal"), it is not for her, but for her Son (p.174-175).

3. *The Mother of God Herself Sends St. Juan Diego to the Bishop* (n.62)

When St. Juan Diego returns from his first interview with the Bishop, and begs Our Lady to send someone else in his stead, Mary insists that *he* is the person chosen for this mission, and strongly orders him to return again to Zumárraga (n.61). He must "carefully tell him" who is sending him:

"I, personally, the ever-Virgin Holy Mary, *I who am the Mother of God*" ("quenin huel nehuatl nicemicac (yo totalmente) Ichpochtli Sancta Maria Niinantzin Teotl Dios") (n.62).

Once more, the title "Mother of God" comes with other two: "I the totally Virgin" ("huel nehuatl niceimcac Ichpochtli"), and "Holy Mary". The term used to express "Mother of God" is almost the same as in the two preceding occasions: "Niinantzin", but with the addition of the Personal Pronoun "I": "I His venerable Mother" (Intro.: "Dios Inantzin", "(of) God His venerable Mother"); (n.26): "in inantzin in huel nelli Teotl Dios", "the venerable Mother (of) the true God God").

Again, Mary uses twice the word God: first in Nahuatl ("Teotl") and then in Spanish ("Dios").

These texts have in common that Mary is always called "His venerable Mother" ("i-nantli-tzintli"). In the Introduction (written by the narrator), she is the Mother "of God" ("Dios"); in the second and third cases, "of God God" ("Teotl Dios"). In the second the emphasis is on Him: "(of) the very true God God", followed by four Aztec titles given to Him. In the third case, the emphasis is on Mary: "I in person" ("huel nehuatl") ("Niinantzin"), "I-His-Venerable-Mother".

4. *The Mother of Our Savior, Our Lord Jesus Christ* (n.75)

In his second interview with the Bishop, St. Juan Diego (nn.68-71), on bended knee, "revealed to him the word of the Queen of Heaven" (n.72). His sole wish was that "the message" ("inetitlaniz"), the "precious will" ("itlanequilitzin") of the wholly Virgin ("cenquizca Ichpochtli") might be believed, and that they might have the honor of building her temple. Fray Juan de Zumárraga, a very strict and punctillious Inquisitor, thoroughly investigated him, and Juan Diego informed him accurately of everything (n.74). However, although "he saw and marveled that it appeared with absolute clarity that she was the Perfect Virgin, *the kind and wondrous Mother of Our Savior, Our Lord Jesus Christ*" (n.75), in the end (n.76), his message was not believed.

The expression used this time is "Inantzin" but in a long, compound word ("Itlazomahuiznantzin") to which two new adjectives have been added: "glorious" and "precious". It is accompanied by the title: "perfect little Virgin" ("cenquizca Ichipotzintli") and, instead of saying "Mother of God", as was the case in the previous three instances, She is called the "Venerable, glorious, and precious Mother" of "our venerable Savior of persons" ("Totemaquixricatzin"), our Lord Jesus Christ ("Totecuiyo Jesucristo"). In other words, two alternative titles to "Mother of God": "Mother of the Savior" and "Mother of Jesus Christ". By calling her thus, St. Juan Diego demonstrates that he had understood the Mystery of the Incarnation: Mary is the Mother of the One true God, Who became incarnate in order to save humankind.

5. *The Beloved Mother of God Sends the Proof to the Bishop* (n.165)

When St. Juan Diego is received by the Bishop for the last time, he explains to him how he has carried out his orders, and asked "*the beloved Mother of God*" for the sign (n.165). It is the same word we have had in the other instances, but forming a different compound: "the venerable precious Mother of God" ("itlazonatzin"). "Of God" is expressed here only in Nahuatl: "Teotl", which makes sense because it is St. Juan Diego who is speaking, and explaining things in his own words.

He goes on to narrate to the Bishop all that has taken place. With particular emotion, he describes how Mary sent him to the top of the hill to cut and bring down the diverse flowers he found there, and how She rearranged them in his tilma, and asked him to bring them to the Bishop as the sign he had asked for (n.170-174). St. Juan Diego also informs Zumárraga that he did not for a moment doubt when Our Lady asked him to go up the hill to cut the flowers, "although he knew very well that the top of the hill wasn't a place where

flowers grow (n.175). His faith was amply rewarded: "When I reached the top of the hill I saw that it was now paradise" ("xochitlalpan", "the land of the flowers")! (n.176).

6. *The Mother of God Herself Becomes the Sign* (n.183)

After explaining everything, St. Juan Diego solemnly asks the Bishop to receive the flowers (178-181). He thinks that he has fulfilled his mission: he has brought the flowers at Our Lady's request. For him, nothing greater can take place than what he has already experienced, from the dialogues with the Mother of God, to his climbing the hill and "seeing that it was now paradise" ("xochitlalpan"). All his greatest expectations as an Aztec have been perfectly fulfilled, and in a way beyond all expectation! What else could he wish for? But the greatest thing was yet to come. Precisely when he opens his tilma and all the different precious flowers fall to the ground, the unthinkable happens:

"then and there the beloved Image of the Perfect Virgin Holy Mary, *Mother of God*, became the sign ("momachioti"), suddenly appeared ("nezrtiquiz") in the form and figure in which it is now" (n.183).

At the culminating point of the story, Mary's Divine Maternity is affirmed again. She, who suddenly appears on the tilma, she, who herself becomes the sign, and for centuries to come, *is the Mother of God!* The flowers were already a great sign for the Indians. Mary crowns her apparition with a sublime sign for them and for the Spanish, the greatest she could give: her very own image!

The title "Mother of God" comes with other two: "here perfect Virgin" ("iz cenquizca Ichpochtli"), and Holy Mary. The word used is the same one as in the Introduction: "Inatzin", "His venerable Mother", but here modified by "Teotl" in Nahuatl, and not by "Dios" in Spanish: "Teotl Inatzin".

Intro. n.26 n.62	Dios huel nehuatl ...	Inantzin in Inantzin Niinantzin	in huel nelli Teotl Dios ... Teotl Dios
n.75		in Iltlazomahuiznantzin	in Totemaquixricatzin, Totecuiyo Jesucristo
n.165 n.183	in Teotl Teotl	Iltlazonatzin Inatzin	

The Mother of God herself has become a permanent, visible sign for the two peoples she wants to reconcile and unite in one, and for all who will come to her "her little temple" in Tepeyac Hill, "known as Guadalupe" (n.184).

B. IMPLICIT TEXTS

1. *Mary "Deigns" to Call St. Juan Diego "Very Near Her"* (n.15)

The Nican Mopohua also shows Mary as Mother of God in indirect ways. For example, by presenting her as the absolute protagonist of the story, as one with uncontended authority and right to do what she is doing.

It is Mary who speaks first and calls Juan Diego from the top of the hill (n.12). The original Nahuatl underlines that she "*has the joy*" of seeing him, that "out of love for him she was standing there" (p.140-141), and that She "had the deference of inviting him to come very close to her". Thus it conveys the idea that Mary, in spite of being the Mother of God, deigns to ask Juan Diego to come very near her, and shows the great love she bears him by making herself present and treating him most lovingly, respectfully and tenderly.

This idea is expressed again further on when Mary's words are described as being "extremely affable ("tehuellamachti", "suavisima a las personas"), noble, as if from someone who was drawing him toward her ("quimococonahuilia") and loved him very much ("quimotlatlazotilia)" (n.22).

2. *Mary's Greatness* (nn.16-19)

Many Saints who have had visions of Mary, like St. Teresa of Avila (+ 1582), St. Anthony M. Claret (+ 1870), or St. Faustina Kowalska (+ 1938), describe her as majestic and clad in shining robes. This is another way of alluding to her Divine Maternity and the glorious state She now enjoys in heaven (nn.16-21). The same is true of St. Juan Diego, who

"was filled with admiration for the way *her perfect grandeur* exceeded all imagination: her clothing was shining like the sun, as if it were sending out waves of light ... Her radiance was like precious stones ..." (nn.16-17; 19).

The way in which Mary appears reflects the culture and personality of the visionary, to which Mary, as the best of mothers, adapts herself. That is why, to St. Juan Diego, she appears with Aztec symbols of particular meaning for him and his people.

Everything around Mary also shines with supernatural beauty:

"And the stones, the crag on which she stood, seemed to be giving out rays, like precious jades, like jewels they gleamed. The earth seemed to shine with the brilliance of a rainbow in the mist ..." (nn.18-21).

What to foreign ears might sound just like a fantastic description in order to enhance the supernatural aspect of the event, to St. Juan Diego every detail: the mountain, birds, songs, sun, jade, feathers, rainbow, clouds emeralds, turquoises meant something very special for him (p.152-158). For example, the fact that Mary is surrounded by a dense mist (n.20) meant that she had come from heaven.

3. *Mary Commands with Authority and St. Juan Diego Obeys Her*

4. *Mary's Providential Gaze* (n.104)

When St. Juan Diego is on his way to find a priest for his sick uncle, he takes a roundabout way, thinking that "*where he made the turn, the one who is looking everywhere perfectly won't be able to see him*" (n.104). But, when he "emerged on the Easter side" (n.102-104),

"He saw how she was coming down from up the hill, and that from there she had been looking at him ..." (n.105).

The Nican Mopohua is affirming here not only that Mary was at the top of the hill, and that from there She was able to see St. Juan Diego, *but that she is the Mother of God*, the one who is in heaven and has the power to exercise the function of universal Mediatrix on our behalf. She is always looking at all of us and taking care of us. This fact will be confirmed by her own words to St. Juan Diego (n.119), and by the miraculous cure of Juan Bernardino.

The idea that Mary can actually see us, and envelops us with her love, is found in the Fathers of the Church. St. Germanus of Constantinople (+ 733), for example, says that Mary "can see us" and "hear us", and that "her constant care and protection" is a proof that she is alive and cares for us (Asunc.).

II. THE VIRGINITY

The Dogma of Mary's Virginity: at Conception, at Childbirth, and ever-after, was defined by the Lateran Council (649). It teaches that Mary conceived Christ virginally, i.e., by the power of the Holy Spirit, without the concourse of a human father; that she gave birth to Christ virginally, i.e., without losing her physical virginity and without pain; and that she remained a virgin for the rest of her life, never bearing other children. Starting with St. Gregory of Nyssa (+ 392) and St. Augustine (+ 431), Tradition also affirms that Mary made a vow of virginity before she knew that she was going to become the Mother of God.

Like the Divine Maternity, the Virginity is a Dogma clearly and explicitly founded in Sacred Scripture (Mt., Lk.), firmly professed by the entire Tradition of the Church, starting with the first Father who spoke about Mary: St. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 110), and repeatedly affirmed by the Magisterium of the Church from the I Council of Constantinople (381) to the present day.

It is extremely important for several reasons, which can be synthesized in three: It shows us the intimate nature of Christ, Mary, and the Church.

The very core of the Mystery of Jesus Christ is the fact that He is *the Son*, the *Son of God* Who deigned to become also the *Son of Mary*. He is conceived and born of a *Virgin* precisely because He already has a father, *God the Father*. As Tradition untiringly repeats, "Christ was eternally generated of the Father without a mother, and in time He was generated of the Mother without a father".

Mary is *the Virgin* par excellence, the creature who, from her Immaculate Conception, belonged entirely to God, body and soul; the creature who has most perfectly loved God, with a most pure and ardent love; the creature who

surrendered her whole self to Jesus and to His Work of Salvation. Perfect virginity was the only worthy preparation to become the Mother of God, and the obvious personal response from the woman who was raised by God to this most sublime vocation.

It is part of the intimate nature of the Church to be a virgin: "a virgin who keeps in its entirety and purity the faith she pledged to her spouse", who, "imitating the mother of her Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, keeps intact faith, firm hope and sincere charity" (Cf. LG 64).

In the Nican Mopohua, Mary is called a Virgin nineteen times. The word used is "ichpochtli", which means "virgin". Of those nineteen times, five times (thrice "Ichpochtli", twice "Ichpochtziniltli", in the reverential form) it appears together with the adverb "cenquizca", "perfectly", from the adjective "cenquizqui", which means "entire, whole, pure", thus underlining her perfect, intact Virginity. It appears twice with the adverb "cemicac", "forever", and once with a combination of the two: "in nicensquizca cemicac", "I the perfect ever-Virgin". Nine times St. Juan Diego calls her "Nochpochtziné" ("my little Virgin"). And twice, the word "ichpochtli" appears in compound form: "the totally venerable and glorious Virgin" ("mahuizichpochtintli"), and "the pious perfect venerable Virgin" ("icnohuacacencquizcaichpochtintli").

A. THE PERFECT, EVER-VIRGIN

The reference to Mary's Virginity appears in three forms: it is included in all the most important affirmations concerning Mary; it is a title given to her in the course of the narration of the events, and St. Juan Diego calls her thus several times.

1. The first reference to Mary's Virginity is found in the Introduction to the Nican Mopohua, where it is the first of a series of three fundamental Marian titles: "*the Perfect Virgin*" ("in cenquizca ichpochtli"), Holy Mary, venerable Mother of God" (Intro).

2. The second one comes in Mary's solemn presentation of herself, where she underlines that she is the "*perfect*" ("in nicensquizca), "*ever*" ("cemicac") *Virgin* ("Ichpochtli") (n.26).

3. The third is as solemn as the second: Mary asks St. Juan Diego to tell the Bishop that it is She in person, "*I the ever Virgin*" ("nicensmigas Ichpochtli"), who is sending him (n.62).

4. Before the Bishop, St. Juan Diego expresses his ardent wish that "the precious will" "*of the perfect Virgin Mary*" ("cenquizca Ichpochtli") may be believed and heeded (n.73). But although in everything the Bishop could see that "she was "*the perfect Virgin*" ("in cenquizca Ichpochtintli") (n.75), nevertheless he did not believe, and asked for a sign (cf. nn.76-78).

5. At the culminating moment when our Lady's figure is "imprinted" in St. Juan Diego's tilma, Mary is again called by her three main titles: "*perfect Virgin*" ("iz cenquizca Ichpochtli"), Holy Mary, venerable Mother of God", who "then and there ... became the sign, suddenly appeared in the form and figure in which it is now" (n.183).

6. Finally, in the name chosen by Mary herself for her precious Image, She puts in the first place that of "*perfect Virgin*", thereby underlining the

importance she gives to this title: "*the perfect Virgin*" ("iz cenquizca Ichpochtintli") Holy Mary of Guadalupe" (n.208) (Narration: n.57; n.88, Rojas; n.117)

B. "MY LITTLE VIRGIN" ("NOCHPOCHTZINÉ")

St. Juan Diego calls Our Lady nine times "my little Virgin" ("Nochpochtziné"), an original title which will become the inheritance of the Mexicans and of other Latin American peoples who would continue to call her lovingly by that name.

The first time this title appears coincides with the first time St. Juan Diego addresses Our Lady, and it is the third of three titles he gives her: "My Lady" ("Notecuiyoé"), Queen ("Cihuapillé"), *my Little Virgin* ("Nochpochtziné") (n.24).

It is interesting to note that St. Juan Diego should give her such a title from the very beginning. It means that he had Mary's Virginity extremely clear in his mind, and that he recognized it is as a name that belongs to her par excellence. In this way he puts himself in line with a practice common in Tradition from the time of St. Justin Martyr (+ 165).

"My little Virgin" is actually the title St. Juan Diego gives Mary more often after that of "Queen" ("Cihuapilli"). Except for one instance, it always comes together with other titles, but he does not follow a particular order.

III. HOLINESS

The Nican Mopohua does not refer itself to the Immaculate Conception, a Dogma that had not yet been defined by the Church at the time. What it does affirm is Mary's holiness, calling her six times in Latin "*Holy Mary*". It always appears together with other Marian titles, and in very important texts. The title "Sancta Maria" was extremely familiar to the Spanish. Its use made it clear to them that St. Juan Diego was speaking about Mary, the Mother of God.

IV. QUEENSHIP

From Patristic times, Mary has often received the title of "Queen". It is rightly given Her because She is the Mother of the King of the Universe, Jesus Christ, and because She is His most perfect collaborator and disciple, so that St. Paul's words are perfectly fulfilled in Her: "If we endure with Him, *we shall also reign with Him ...*" (2Tim.2, 11-12). Mary was "exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, *that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son ...*" (LG 59).

In the Nican Mopohua, Mary is constantly presented as a heavenly Queen, and St. Juan Diego honors her as such. It is actually the title most often given her: it appears forty-three times, using three different words: "Cihuapilli" (29 times), "Notecuiyo" (8 times), and "Tlacatl" (6 times), either as titles addressed to her by St. Juan Diego or in the course of the narration. With them,

the Nican Mopohua is also referring itself indirectly to her glorious Assumption, the reason behind the fact that She know reigns from heaven.

A. THE TITLES USED

Whenever St. Juan Diego addresses Mary, he almost always includes one of the following titles related to her Queenship:

1. *"Queen" ("Cihuapilli")*

The word "Cihuapilli" appears 29 times in the Nican Mopohua: 16 times together with the adjective "heavenly" ("Ilhuicac Cihuapilli", "Heavenly Queen") (cf. nn. 43, 48, 72, 78, 80, 103, 122, 124, 134, 143, 165, 189, 192, 194, 198, 200). Ten times in single form (eight of them in the Vocative case ("Cihuapillé") (cf. nn. 24, 38, 50, 54, 55, 63, 66, 110), twice alone ("Cihuapilli") (cf. nn. 89, 211), and four times in compound form: twice "Tlatocacihuapilli", "Lady and Queen" (cf. nn.89, 211), and once each "Tocihualpillatocatzin" ("Our Venerable Lady and Queen") (Intro.), and "Ilhuicac Tlazocihuapilli" ("the heavenly beloved Queen) (cf. n. 212).

The word "cihuapilli" comes from "cíhuatl", a noun which means "woman", "female"; and "pilli", a term which is only used in compound form, and has many meanings: "son, daughter", also in the Spanish sense of "nobleman" ("infante"). Thus "cihuapilli" can mean a range of things: "daughter, young girl (muchachita), queen, noble lady".

In the Nahuatl, the form that expresses reverence and veneration is the same as the one that expresses affection and love. That is why the same word can be translated with such different meanings as "girl and queen". Out of affection, daughters and girls to this day are called "queens"; and out of respect, mistresses are called "daughters and girls" ... In order to understand this, it is indispensable to be aware of the cultural background, and know that in the Mexican culture, authority and love were bound together. In fact, the Tlatoani or Lord was supposed to exercise both the roles of ruler and father-mother of his people.

Thus, in the Nican Mopohua, when St. Juan Diego calls Mary "Cihuapilli", he is calling her both "daughter" and "Queen". He never uses it in the possessive form, "*my* Queen".

2. *"My Lady" ("Notecuiyo")*

Another word which expresses the idea of queenship or authority is "Notecuiyo", which St. Juan Diego uses eight times in reference to Mary (seven of them in the vocative case, "Notecuiyoé"), and always in the possessive form: "*my* Lady". This same word is also used for Jesus: *Our Lord* Jesus Christ" ("Totecuiyo Jesucristo") (n.75), and the Bishop (n.164). It is variously translated as "my Lady" ("mi Ama or mi Señora"), "my Mistress", or "little Mistress" ("Patroncita").

3. "Lady" ("Tlacatl")

A word also used for the Bishop (cf. n.80), it is translated as "Lady" ("Señora"). By the word "Tlácatl" was meant a noble person of high lineage, which was supposed to be generous, magnanimous, worthy to be honored, feared, and obeyed, loving, pious, compassionate, liberal, inspiring reverence in those who saw her (p.221). All these characteristics are perfectly fulfilled in Mary.

4. Other Titles ("Noxocoyouh"; "Nopiltzintziné")

St. Juan Diego gives Mary two other titles: Five times he calls her "Noxocoyohué" (cf. nn. 50, 55, 66, 110, 116), the word used to address the youngest son or daughter in the family, considered for this very reason the most beloved; it is rendered "my littlest daughter", or "my most beloved daughter". It is exactly the same word that Mary uses eleven times to address him.

Twice he uses "nopiltzintziné", "my beloved little daughter" (nn.110; 116) (This same word is used by the Bishop to address him in their first interview: cf. n.45: "Nopilzé"). The use of these words must be understood within the Mexican context of respect and affection, love and authority. One cannot but imagine the joy with which Our Lady certainly received these titles from her Mexican son, titles which her European children would never have dreamt of giving her.

B. ST. JUAN DIEGO AND HIS "QUEEN"

The first reference to Mary's Queenship is found in the Introduction, where She is called "Tocihuapillatocatzin", "Our venerable Lady and Queen (Intro.).

At the top of the Tepeyac Hill is waiting for St. Juan Diego a "Cihuapilli" (n.14) of impressing greatness (cf. nn.16-21), and great tenderness (cf. n.15). The first title that St. Juan Diego gives her at that moment is that of "Notecuiyoé", followed by "Cihuapillé": "My Lady, Queen" (cf. n.24). Thus, his first impression of Mary is that of a Queen, followed by "little Virgin". He expresses his respect and his desire to serve her by often calling her "Notecuiyoé", "Cihuapillé", Tlacatlé (cf. n.38; 50; 54-55; 63; 66; 89; 90-93; 211), often together with "my little Virgin" ("Nochpochtziné") and "my littlest Daughter" ("Noxocoyohué"). When he is trying to convince her to send someone else, or to allow him to go for a priest first, he multiplies the titles even more (cf. n.55; 110; 115-116). Another such litany is found when he narrates to the Bishop how he asked Mary for the sign:

The title "Heavenly Queen" ("Ilhuicac Cihuapilli", literally: "in heaven Queen"), often repeated, usually comes in the narrative, and is not directly addressed to Mary. It is common to find it in the dialogues between St. Juan Diego and the Bishop (cf. 43; 72; 78; 80; 192; 194; 195). In fact, the first time it is used is when St. Juan Diego comes into his presence and reveals to him "the precious breath, the precious word of the Queen of Heaven" ("Ilhuicac

Cihuapilli") (n.43; 48; 103; 200). Such a title was perfectly intelligible for the Spanish Bishop. It is often used in the last Apparition (n.122; 124-126; 134; 143; 189; .212).

V. SPIRITUAL MATERNITY

Mary is our Mother. This is an incontestable truth, deeply engraved in our hearts and vividly experienced in our daily lives. Throughout history, Christians have expressed it using different titles: Mother of Mercy, Mother of the Elect, Mother of the Faithful ...

The oldest known reference to Mary's Spiritual Maternity is found in the apocryphal work *Transitus Mariae* of the II century, where she is called "Mother of the twelve branches" (n.16), "my Mother and sister" (n.21), "our Mother Mary" (three times) (n.26; 31 twice), "Mother of all the saved" (n.28), and fecund vine around which we are gathered (n.29). St. Ireneus (+ 202) calls Mary's womb: "that pure womb" where men are generated in the life of God". Origen (+ 253) teaches that every perfect disciple who no longer lives, but is Christ who lives in him, becomes Mary's son. St. Epiphanius (+ 403) says that Mary, and not Eve, is the "true mother of the living" (Gen.3, 20). St. Augustine (+430), in a famous passage quoted by Vatican II (Cf. LG 53), says that she is "truly the mother of the members of Christ, because she has cooperated with her charity to the birth of the faithful in the Church".

The Fathers of the Church firmly established the main foundation upon which Mary's Spiritual Maternity is based: her Divine Maternity. Since Mary is the Mother of the Head, and Head and members form One Body, One Christ, then she must necessarily be the mother of the members as well, to whose salvation She has cooperated in a unique way. They often spoke of her "maternal" duties: giving us our Life, protecting, guiding, interceding, taking care of us.

In the Middle Ages, the mystery of Mary's spiritual motherhood is deepened even more. Keeping the Divine Maternity as the main argument, Christ's Testament from the Cross (Jn.19, 25-27) also becomes important, and from that period onwards, calling Mary "our Mother" became very common.

Mary's Spiritual Maternity is another fundamental doctrine which is very clear in the Nican Mopohua. It is expressed in three ways: 1. Mary calls herself St. Juan Diego's Mother, Mother of all the inhabitants of that land, and mother of all men in general; 2. Mary calls St. Juan Diego several times "her son"; 3. Mary behaves like a mother with her tender, maternal care, her loving concern, her nearness, her providential solicitude, her readiness to help, console, purify, etc., and above all her ardent desire to give us the one important thing: her Son Jesus Christ.

A. "MY DEAREST AND YOUNGEST SON" ("NOXOCOYOUH")

Mary calls St. Juan Diego eleven times "Noxocoyouh", "my fructification" ("Xocóyotl"), a word which in itself does not mean "son", but it was the title given to the youngest child in the family, who was considered the dearest, most

precious one. In other words, it is a term that shows great tenderness and esteem, and is still used in Mexico today ("mi xocoyote", "mi xocoyotito"). Mary starts every dialogue with St. Juan Diego with this word (Cf. nn.23; 58; 90; 107; 137), and repeats it when she is going to reveal something very important (Cf. nn. 26; 60; 92; 118; 125) (end: n.37). St. Juan Diego himself addresses Mary several times with this same word (cf. n.50;).

Mary also gives him two other titles: "Notelpotzin", "my young boy", when she is encouraging him to return to the Bishop (n. 93), and "tinotitlan", "ambassador", given at the solemn moment when she is sending him to the Bishop with her flowers. The word used shows that he is not simply an "errand boy" ("tititlantli"), but a most trusted messenger. This is reinforced by Mary's own words: "*in you I place my absolute trust*" (n.139).

It is interesting to note that the Bishop calls St. Juan Diego "Nopiltzé", "my little son" (n.45), which actually does mean "son", but in his case it is probably a mere formality, if not paternalism, whereas Mary's words do reflect a true fact: that she is truly his mother and truly considers him her dear son.

B. COMPASSIONATE MOTHER OF THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE

On Tepeyac Hill, Mary makes two solemn proclamations:

"I am ... the Mother of the one true God in whom we all live" (n.26).

"I am your compassionate Mother" (n.29).

"The Mother of God is also our Mother!", exclaimed St. Anselm of Canterbury (+ 1009) centuries before. Here it is Mary herself who affirms that *"she has the honor of being the Mother of the most true God, the Living One, the Giver of Life"* (n.26: "in Inantzin in huel nelli Teotl Dios in Ipalnemohuani"), and that *likewise "she has the honor of being truly our compassionate mother"* (n.29: "Ca nel nehuatl in namoicnohuacanantzín"). That Mary should feel honored to be the Mother of God is obvious; but that She should feel honored to be *their Mother* was something that truly touched the Mexicans, and elicited from them a wonderful response that showed itself in their desire to embrace the new religion that Mary was explaining to them in terms they could understand.

The Blessed Virgin had asked for a temple where She would give her Son ("nictemacaz") (n.28). Now She explains why: "because She is truly their compassionate Mother" ("namoicnohuacanantzín") (n.29). The Nican Mopohua could not express Mary's Spiritual Maternity better, in full agreement with the Patristic Tradition: Mary is our Mother *because She gives us Christ*.

Of whom is Mary the Mother? The Nican Mopohua gives a multiple answer: "yours" (of the native Mexicans, second person plural) (n.29), "yours" (of St. Juan Diego) (n.29), "of the people who live together in this land" ("in ixquichtin in ic nican tlalpan ancepantlaca") (n.30), "and of all the other people of different ancestries ..." ("in occequin napapantlaca") (n.31):

We have here one of the most impressive declarations on Mary's Spiritual Maternity, and one that comes *from her own lips*: After declaring herself *"your compassionate Mother"* in a plural, general sense (understood, of the Mexicans, whom she is addressing in the person of Juan Diego), now She

affirms that She is *St. Juan Diego's mother* ("*yours*", "tehuatl", second person singular). In fact, there are two indissoluble aspects in Mary's Spiritual Maternity: the social and the individual one. Mary is the Mother of the whole ensemble of human beings, and at the same time She is the Mother of each single person, with which she has a unique, intimate relationship. She is both "our Mother" and "my mother".

These two aspects are very clear in the Nican Mopohua. Mary calls herself *St. Juan Diego's own mother*, with all that this implies, in particular in the Aztec culture, where the father was nearly always absent fighting wars, and the central figure of the family was the mother (Cf. p.185). On the other hand, Mary also affirms something that at that moment was particularly hard to accept, but that was precisely the purpose of her apparition: She is also the mother of *all* the inhabitants of this land, of the New Spain, at that moment not yet divided into different countries. They are all her children, equally loved by her.

But Mary is not content with this: her maternal love embraces the entire globe. That is why She goes on to say:

"and of all the other people of different ancestries my lovers, those who cry to me, those who seek me, those who trust me" (n.31).

Mary considers herself the mother of whoever "loves her" ("*nepapantlaca notetlazotlacahuan*"). However, "loving her" is not a condition in the sense that She loves only those who love her, but in the sense that the more we open ourselves to her love and her action in our life, the more efficacious that action will be, because Mary wants to help us all, but she respects our freedom.

Mary goes on to explain what she will do for all her children in this temple: She will listen to "their weeping and sadness" with the concrete purpose of "purifying and remedying all their different miseries, troubles and sufferings". Exactly what She did at Cana: She pays attention to our needs and acts to remedy them. She does not promise a life without sufferings; Christ didn't either: He exhorted us "to take up our cross daily and follow him". But She does promise to help us. That she has certainly done is easy to verify just by standing a few minutes in her Basilica and watching the people go by her Image ...

C. "AM I NOT HERE, I WHO HAVE THE HONOR OF BEING YOUR MOTHER?"

"*Am I not here, I who have the privilege of being your Mother?*" Who is it that is not moved by these words? And yet how often we fail to live by them! When *St. Juan Diego* is trying to avoid meeting the Blessed Virgin, because he does not want to say "no" to her, and thinks that for the time being he has to solve his problem on his own, Our Lady comes out to meet him and teaches him two things: That she is aware of his deep concern for his uncle and has amply provided for his need by healing him, and that her command must be heeded. *St. Juan Diego* must go about what She asked him to do, and She will take care of the rest.

Mary affirms again her Spiritual Maternity in extremely strong and tender terms, very personal, but applicable to all her children wherever they may be.

1. *The Privilege and Joy of Being Our Mother*

The first thing she says is:

"Am I not here, I who have the privilege of being your mother?" ("Cuix amo nican nica Nimonatzin?").

It is equivalent to say: "I have the joy to be your Mother"! (p.321). This affirmation meant a lot to St. Juan Diego and his people, because for all of them the mother was the most caring and loving person, one who is ready to sacrifice anything for her children (p.321).

2. *Under Her Protection*

Mary goes on to say:

"Are you not under my shadow and protection?" (n.119) ("Cuiz amo nocehualltotitlan, necauhyotitlan in tica?").

The OT speaks about seeking refuge "Under the shadow of the Most High"), and Jesus compared Himself with the chicken that protects her brood under her wings (cf. Mt.23, 37). Mary's words here also agree in a wonderful way with the first-known and widely used Marian Prayer: "Under your protection" (Sub tuum praesidium), which in the original Greek is even closer to the Nican Mopohua: "under your entrails of mercy we seek refuge ...". It is a concept very well explained by St. John of the Cross (+ 1591) ("casting shadows").

3. *Source of Our Health, Well-Being and Joy*

The following affirmation likewise has strong echoes in Tradition:

"Am I not the source of your joy?" (n.119) ("¿Cuix amo nehuatl in nimopaccayeliz?").

The word Mary uses ("nimopaccayeliz") can be translated as: "I your health", "your well-being", "your joy", very similar terms to the well-known litanies: "Salus infirmorum", "Consolatrix afflictorum", "causa nostrae laetitia" (p.322-323), all things which, on the one hand, were very familiar to the Spanish, and on the other, had great meaning for the Aztecs.

Christ is the Fountain of Life, Salvation, Holiness and Joy in the absolute sense. As His Mother and ours, Mary can also be said to be all this, for She constantly gives us blessedness, happiness and plenitude in the Person of her own Son.

4. *In Mary's Maternal Arms*

"Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need something more?" (n.119) ("¿Cuix amo nocuixanco, nomamalhuazco in tica? ¿Cuix oc itla in motech monequi?").

"Cuixantli" is the concavity formed in a piece of clothing like a shawl in order to carry something; it expresses the idea of a maternal womb, a lap, intimacy, nearness, protection ... (p.323-324), all things that Mary offers to us.

After Our Lady's most consoling words on her maternal function, addressed to St. Juan Diego but open to all humankind, she now turns to Juan Diego himself as a person, and addresses his personal problem of the moment: the illness of his uncle. With the most courteous and tender words, Mary actually almost begs him, as a favor ("ma", repeated thrice) not to worry, be disturbed or in grief because of his uncle's illness: he is not going to die of it. Mary assures him that he has already healed (n.120-121).

At Our Lady's words, St. Juan Diego "was greatly comforted", and "his heart became peaceful" (n. 122). Moreover, his immediate reaction was to put himself at her entire service (n.123).

VI. MEDIATION

St. Louis de Montfort (+ 1716) synthesizes Mary's Mediation in these words: "It was through the blessed Virgin Mary that Jesus Christ came into the world, and it is also through her that He must reign in the world". If Mary was the way chosen by Christ to come down to us, she is also the way we should take to go to Him. It was God Himself Who sovereignly and mercifully willed to have Mary's Mediation in His entire Work of Salvation, from the Incarnation to the Parusia. He called her to be the Mother of the *Total Christ*, Head and members.

At the Incarnation, Mary mediates in a threefold way: 1. Her holiness and ardent prayers asking God to send the promised Messiah "attracted" the Son of God to earth. 2. Her consent at the Annunciation (Lc.1, 38), given "in the name of the entire humankind", as St. Thomas Aquinas (+ 1274) teaches, made it possible. 3. Her Divine Maternity, which is her most important Mediation and the foundation of all her other mediations, gave us Christ made Man. As St. Paul expressed it so well: "God sent His Son *born of a woman*" (Gal.4, 4). It was *through Mary* that the Son of God came into the world, with her consent and active cooperation. It was in her and of her that He became Man. Mary is the "means" chosen by God to send us His Son. She is the "way" the Word chose in other to come to us. Likewise, it is also through Mary that Christ continues coming into our hearts now, and that He will come in glory at the end of times.

Mary is not only the intimate collaborator of Christ in His entire Work of Salvation, but also *the inseparable associate of the Holy Spirit* in all the works of grace", conceiving, nourishing and bringing us forth to eternal life as our mother; "forming us in Jesus and Jesus in us".

A. MARY'S MEDIATION AND THE GUADALUPEAN EVENT

The Nican Mopohua refers itself to these great truths when Mary explains that she is the Mother of God and our Mother, and the Guadalupean Event itself greatly gives witness to them, because the apparitions of Our Lady and the gift of her Image are concrete acts of her maternal mediation. They show her intervention *today* in the life of her children and her maternal power, granted to her by God for our sake.

B. MARY GIVES US CHRIST, WHO IS HER LOVE, HER COMPASSIONATE GAZE, HER HELP AND HER SALVATION

Mary plans to do three wonderful things for us from the temple She is asking for: "*Show Christ*" ("in oncan nicnextiz"); "*magnify or exalt Him*" ("nicpantlazaz"), and "*give Him*" ("nictemacaz"). Then come those wonderful titles: "Love" ("in ixquich Notetlazotlaliz"), "Compassionate Gaze" ("Noteicnoittaliz"), "Help" ("in Notemanahuiiz"), and "Salvation" ("Notepalahuiliz"). How are they to be understood? Unfortunately, the Nahuatl original is not easy to translate, and that is the reason why this text has often been mistranslated, thus missing the very significant point that it makes.

In fact, Mary is not promising to give us *her* love, compassion, help, and salvation (although She will also do that), but to give us *Him* Who is all those things for herself. It is Christ Himself Who is Love, Compassionate Gaze, Help, and Salvation. And this is the Person that Mary wants to give to all of us.

The same idea is repeated in n.33, where the same word is used again: "my-compassionate-gaze-Person" ("noteicnoittaliz"). Mary orders St. Juan Diego to go to the Bishop of Mexico "in order to bring about *what her compassionate and merciful gaze would achieve*". That is, what Christ, Who is "her compassionate Gaze", would achieve (p.183-184). It is Christ Himself Who wishes to accomplish all this, Mary knows it, and that is why She acts in His name and following His Will.

In Mary's words to St. Juan Diego, we can also hear an echo of her Magnificat: In the Magnificat Mary says that "her soul *magnifies* the Lord" (Lk.1, 46), and to St. Juan Diego she says that in the temple She will "*magnify*" Him. In the Magnificat she says that "God has *regarded* the humility of His handmaiden" (Lk.1, 48), and here she says that He is "her compassionate *gaze*" (n.28). In the Magnificat Mary affirms that "God has *helped* his servant Israel" (Lk.1, 54), and here She calls Him "her *Help*". In the Magnificat Mary says that "her spirit has rejoiced in God, *her Savior*" (Lk.1, 47), and the entire Magnificat sings of this salvation; here she calls him "*her Salvation*". In both texts vibrate in a wonderful way the same themes, because both come from the same Immaculate Heart. Both are a song of faith, adoration, love, recognition of God as Savior, ardent desire to give Him to the world, just as She gave Him to Elizabeth and John the Baptist; and just as She is now giving Him to all of us.

VII. MARIAN SPIRITUALITY

"Marian Spirituality is an essential part of Christian Spirituality". As Pope Paul VI expressed it so well, "in order to be Christians, we have to be Marian".

A. THE FOUR ASPECTS OF MARIAN SPIRITUALITY IN THE NICAN MOPOHUA

There are four aspects in Marian Spirituality. 1. First of all, *Marian Spirituality is Mary's Spirituality*, i.e., it is the concrete way in which Mary of Nazareth lived her spiritual life. But Mary lived her spiritual life in such a perfect way, as Christ's first and best disciple, that She became, after her Son, *the model* for every single Christian. Since Patristic times, the Church has always exhorted Christians to imitate Mary. The Nican Mopohua refers indirectly to this by calling Mary several times "holy".

2. The second aspect is the fact that *Mary collaborated in a unique way to make our spiritual life possible* with her consent at the Annunciation, Divine Maternity, Mediation, and Cooperation on Calvary. As we have seen, the Nican Mopohua clearly teaches Mary's Divine Maternity and Mediation.

Mary's solemn introduction of herself to St. Juan Diego is preceded by the following admonition: "Know, know for sure, my dearest and youngest son ..." (n.26). It indicates that what She is going to say is something St. Juan Diego and every Christian should know and keep at heart, i.e. Who Mary is, Who her Divine Son is, what has been her role in the Economy of Salvation. St. Juan Diego believes and understands that Mary is the Mother of the One, True God, and he surrenders himself completely and joyfully to her service, knowing that he is thereby serving both God and neighbor.

3. The third aspect of Marian Spirituality is the fact that *Mary, as our most loving Mother and powerful Mediatrix, continues collaborating now with each one of us in order to help us live our spiritual life unto perfection*. The Nican Mopohua speaks precisely about this: Mary intervenes not only in the personal lives of St. Juan Diego, Juan Bernardino, and Fray Juan de Zumárraga, but also in the lives of two great peoples: the Indians and the Spanish, in a wonderful effort to evangelize them and unite them in a common faith in and a common love of her Divine Son.

The fourth aspect of Marian Spirituality is *our personal response to Mary's presence in our life*. And in this regard, St. Juan Diego will always be an excellent model for all of us to follow, because he responded to Mary as a true son and a faithful servant.

B. THE MOTHER AND MEDIATRIX SEEKS OUR SERVICE

1. *The Mediatrix has her "mediators"*

St. Juan Diego, St. Catherine Labouré (+ 1876), St. Bernardette (+ 1879), the Children of Fatima are among a long list of Saints through the centuries, including St. Germanus of Constantinople (+ 733), St. John Damascene (+ 749), St. Louis De Montfort (+ 1716), St. Anthony M. Claret (+ 1870), Bl. María Romero (+ 1977), Bl. Teresa of Calcuta (+ 1997) ... who give witness to an outstanding truth: the Virgin Mary, chosen and called by God to be the Mother of the Author of Grace and the universal Mediatrix of all graces, on her part, calls us to collaborate with her in her maternal mission. She wants to make use of our "mediation". Christ is Life, Love, Compassion, Help, Salvation (nn.26;

28). Mary "makes Him manifest" and "gives Him" to all of us. She "listens to us, purifies, remedies" (nn.27; 28; 32). But in order to accomplish all this, we also have to do our part.

When St. Juan Diego begs Mary to send someone else in his stead, Mary affirms categorically ("Tlaxiccaqui Noxocoyouh, ma huel yuh ye in moyollo") that She is not lacking ("camo tlazotin") in servants ("in notetlayecolticahuan") and messengers ("in notititlanhuan") at her disposal, "to whom she can give the task of carrying her breath, her word, ("in huel intech niccahuaz in quitquizque in niiyo in notlatol") ("in quineltilizque in notlanequiliz") (n.58). But each of them has a task to fulfill that belongs to that person alone. Concerning the present circumstances, that person is St. Juan Diego. Her will has to be accomplished precisely *through him*:

"but it is necessary that you, personally, go and plead, that my wish ("nocializ") and my will ("notlanequiliz") become a reality, be carried out through your intercession" (n.59).

St. Juan Diego considers himself a poor servant ("nimocnomacehual"), but Mary treats him with confidence and respect. She considers him her own representative, in whom she has placed "*her absolute trust*" ("ca huel motech netlacaneconi") (n.139). She charges him with the important mission of cooperating in a unique way in the evangelization of his people.

2. *Like a True Mother, Mary Commands with Love and Authority*

3. *Mary Rewards Her Servants Most Generously*

Mary characterizes herself for rewarding most generously the littlest service rendered in her honor, and She is never surpassed in generosity. This truth is clearly seen in the Nican Mopohua, where Mary assures St. Juan Diego that she appreciates his service, and promises him twice that she "will *reward*" ("niquixtluhuaz") (n.34), "*enrich*" ("nimitzcuiltonoz"), and "*glorify*" him ("nimitztlamachtiz") (n.35). ("niccucpoyotiz") for the care and fatigue that he has put into her request (n.35-36; 92).

Our Lady fulfilled her promise in a way worthy of herself. She actually fulfilled it in many ways, some known to us through the Nican Mopohua, others known to St. Juan Diego alone: She gave him the joy of seeing and experiencing "paradise" here on earth, even before She had spoken to him, when he first heard the finest birds singing most lovely songs (nn.8-10); he saw the Queen of Heaven in great glory and beauty (nn.16-21; he felt her love (n.22), and was privileged to hear her revelations and be chosen to be her personal messenger (nn.26-33); Our Lady healed his uncle (nn.120-121); he witnessed the miracle of the most precious flowers that bloomed on Tepeyac Hill (nn.125-134); the Mother of God granted him the ineffable gift of arranging the flowers for him in his own tilma (nn.135-136), and asking him to take them to the Bishop in her name (nn.137-140); and, as if all this were not enough, the ineffable took place: Mary herself became the sign, when She appeared

imprinted *in his own tilma* (n.183)! St. Juan Diego had the joy of dedicating the rest of his life to her, and the Blessed Virgin glorified him indeed: he was canonized by Pope John Paul II, Mary's beloved servant, on July 31, 2002!

C. SERVING MARY LIKE ST. JUAN DIEGO

1. *Serving Mary is Serving Christ*

The fourth aspect of Marian Spirituality is our response to Mary, and one of its most important expressions is *serving her*. In fact, what has been called "slavery of love" is one of the oldest and most constant forms of doing it in the history of the Church. St. Ildephonsus of Toledo (+ 687) is one of the first authors who speaks about this, and he explains extremely well how honoring and serving Mary is honoring and serving Jesus Christ.

We are Mary's children and servants at the same time. There is no contradiction in this: Every good son is all too happy to serve his parents.

Serving Mary is a theme that is present throughout the Nican Mopohua. St. Juan Diego is the Blessed Virgin's "servant", specially chosen and called by her to fulfill a very important mission. He feels immensely happy to serve her, and after the apparitions, he will consecrate the rest of his life to serve her in her temple.

The Nican Mopohua shows very well that the service we render to the Blessed Mother has God's glory as its end. The Son wills His Mother's intervention, and Mary acts in full accord with her Son's Will. She refers to Him all the time and takes us to Him.

2. *St. Juan Diego's Faithful Service*

St. Juan Diego's response is a great example for us. It is characterized by great humility, respect, ready and joyous obedience, without counting the cost, with perseverance, patience, strong faith in Mary, full trust in her power, total availability, surrendering himself whole-heartedly and forever to her service.

VIII. MARY AND THE CHURCH

Between Mary and the Church there exists an indissoluble union that was recognized by the Fathers of the Church from the beginning. In fact, Mary is the most important member of the Church after her Head, Jesus Christ, because She is the Mother of the Head and Founder, the Mother and model of all the members, the first member who preceded and represented the Church, the most holy member after Christ, the type, figure and eschatological icon of the Church. Contemplating Mary, "the Church discovers her origins; her intimate nature as virgin, mother, bride, disciple and collaborator of Christ; her road of faith, her mission of grace, and her destiny of glory". There is a perfect union between Mary, the Church, and each faithful soul. Medieval authors

explain it very well saying that, whatever is said about Mary in a perfect, special sense, is said of the Church in a general, universal sense, and is said of each persona in a singular, individual sense.

The Nican Mopohua also mentions the relationship between Mary and the Church.

A. ST. JUAN DIEGO AND THE CHURCH

1. *St. Juan Diego's Previous Preparation*
2. *The Catechesis of the Church and the Sacraments*

When St. Juan Diego meets Our Lady the first time, he was on his way to Mexico Tlatilolco, to attend the catechesis of the Church, imparted by the priests. Some say that he was also going to attend Saturday Mass, a significant detail which sheds light on his personal Marian devotion.

When his uncle is taken ill, St. Juan Diego takes very seriously his petition to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a Sacrament very much appreciated by the Aztecs (cf. p.287-289).

3. *St. Juan Diego's Respect for the Hierarchy*

St. Juan Diego always shows great respect for the Hierarchy of the Church. He calls "our priests" ("in toteopicalhuan") the "representatives" or "image" ("in ixiptlahuan") of the Lord.

B. MARY ASKS FOR A TEMPLE

The Virgin Mary often asks for a temple in her apparitions (n.26). This fact very significantly shows her indissoluble union with the Church: She does not say that She will give us her Son on her own, but always using the mediation of the Church. She always asks the visionary to go to the Bishop or other member of the Hierarchy (confessor, priest) and ask *them* to build it. She seeks and waits for the consent of the Hierarchy. She does not come for one person or a few privileged ones in a secret place, but in a Church, open to all. The main place where She wants her children to come and where She wants to receive them is the Church. That is the main place where Jesus is found and where Mary gives us Jesus. This is very clear in the Nican Mopohua, where Mary expresses in such wonderful terms how she will give us *Christ precisely in the temple she wants to have built* (nn.27-28).

C. MARY'S RESPECT FOR THE HIERARCHY

Mary specifies to St. Juan Diego that in order to bring about her wonderful promise of giving us Christ and helping us in all our needs, it is necessary for him to go to the Bishop of Mexico and tell him how the Mother of

God is sending him, and how very much she wants *him* to build her a temple (n.33).

She always insists, both to St. Juan Diego and to Juan Bernardino, that they must tell the Bishop *everything* that they have seen and heard, without keeping anything from him. She has the authority to ask, but we are free to respond affirmatively or not.

Mary could have asked St. Juan Diego and his compatriots to build her the temple, and they would have been more than happy to oblige her, for they loved to build temples. But no; even though She knows that it will not be easy to get the Bishop's consent, She always takes that road. She never acts outside, behind or against the Church, but always from within, as the Church's beloved Mother. She is the first one in subjecting herself to the Hierarchy established by her Son, even though, as Mother of God, She is above all angels and men. She does not give orders to the Hierarchy, but She asks, so that the decision may be taken by those who hold the power in the name of her Son.

IX. MARIAN CULT

In Mary's wonderful proclamation of her Spiritual Maternity, we find a great synthesis of what Marian cult and devotion is all about, and in terms very similar to those used by LG 65: Mary declares herself the Mother of those who are her lovers ("notetlazotlacahuan"), "those who deign cry to her" ("in notech motzatzilia"), "those who seek her" ("in nechtemoa"), "those who deign trust in her" ("in notech motemachilia"). As her children, we are called to love her, to invoke her, to seek her in all our needs, to trust in her, in her prodigal hand ("in notech motemachilia"), in her intercession (n.31). The terms used are also very similar to those used centuries before by St. Germanus of Constantinople (+ 733), "She is near those who invoke her, She is found by those who seek her ..." (*Assumpt.*).

The precious Image on Juan Diego's tilma itself becomes an object of cult. The first expressions of reverence it receives come from the Bishop himself and those around him, as soon as they see Her:

"And as soon as the Governing Bishop and all those who were there saw it, *they knelt*, they were full of awe and reverence (n.185), they stood up to see it, they became sad, they wept, their hearts and minds were in ecstasy (n.186). And the Governing Bishop with weeping and sadness begged her, asked her to forgive him for not having immediately carried out her will, her holy breath, her holy word (n.187). "And when he got up, he untied Juan Diego's garment, his tilma, from his neck where it was tied (n.188). On which the Heavenly Queen appeared, on which she became the sign (n.189). And then he took it and placed it in his private chapel (n.190).

Later, the Bishop will move the beloved Image from his private chapel in his residence "to the principal Church" (n.212), "so that all could see it and admire it" (n.213). And indeed we have here the first testimonies on cult rendered to the Image of Our Lady in very moving words:

"And absolutely this entire city with no exception, was deeply moved as everyone came to see and admire her precious Image (n.214). They came to acknowledge its divine character (n.215). They came to offer her their prayers (n.216). They marveled at the miraculous way it had appeared (n.217). Since absolutely no one on earth had painted her beloved Image" (n.218).

CONCLUSION

If the Guadalupean Event is unique in many ways, and the experts in different fields keep surprising us with new details that show us its depth, the Mariological doctrine that comes forth from it is no exception.

The Nican Mopohua, written by Antonio Valeriano based on St. Juan Diego's words, is a *narration of the events* that took place. Its primary purpose, therefore, is not that of a doctrinal treatise, nor did Valeriano intend to offer a synthesis of Marian doctrine. All the more admirable, then, that it should contain such a rich Mariological content!

The Divine Maternity is affirmed in clear and accurate theological terms. Mary is "the Mother of the one, true, living God, the God by Whom we all live, the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, the Omnipresent. She is the Mother of Our Savior, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who became incarnate in her virginal womb.

With the entire Tradition of the Church, the Nican Mopohua also proclaims the Virginité of Mary: She is the perfect, intact, ever Virgin. St. Juan Diego adds a delicate touch that is much at heart among the Latin American peoples: "Nochpochtzine": Mary is "my little Virgin", "mi Virgencita adorada".

The Nican Mopohua alludes to Mary's holiness by using the title "Sancta", "Holy". It indirectly refers to her Assumption by its constant affirmation of her Queenship, her greatness, and the heavenly power granted to her by God and exercised on our behalf.

A Marian doctrine wonderfully developed is that of the Spiritual Maternity, which Mary herself proclaims, on whose universality She insists, and which She describes in such forceful and tender terms. The whole Guadalupean event is an extraordinary act of her Spiritual Maternity, full of maternal details. Her main mission is always the same: give birth to Christ, in Bethlehem or in our hearts.

The Guadalupean event is also an outstanding example of what Mary's Mediation is all about: Constantly give to the world and to each one of us Him Who is Love, Compassionate Gaze, Help and Salvation. From Tepeyac Hill, from every single church, wherever we may be.

Marian Spirituality is also very well developed in the Nican Mopohua. Mary's calling is to collaborate with the Holy Spirit in the formation of Christ in us. That is why She comes to the aid of an entire people, and indeed of an entire continent, in order to guide it from the very first stages of the evangelization process to its final consummation, by teaching them Who Christ is, in terms that could be understood and accepted by all her children, and helping them live their Christian vocation.

May St. Juan Diego intercede for us, so that the Nican Mopohua's two great messages may be deeply engraved in our hearts: Mary says to us: "Am I

not here, I who am your Mother?" (n.119). May we answer Mary with St. Juan Diego:

"My Lady, Queen, my little Virgin, my littlest Daughter, I will go, to carry out your breath, your word. I absolutely will not fail to do it, nor does the road trouble me (n.163). Send me immediately with the Sign to the world. Send me to take your flowers, your love, your Jesus!