

Yo Soy un Guadalupano...I am a follower of Our Lady of Guadalupe...

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After many years of prayer, reflection and being with the people of Latin America and Mexico, I have come, in my own humble way to Guadalupe–Tonantzin.

La Morenita, “The little brown Lady”, has found a resting place in my heart. I have been told by a sister friend that I have only to love her and she will be present to me and I believe that to be true.

On December 12, 2007, I was graced to experience the celebration of her feast day - one of several million people from Mexico and other parts of the world who gathered on the hill of Tepayac in Mexico City, to view Juan’s Diego’s *tilma* (cloak) on which Guadalupe’s image first appeared.

To the poor of Mexico, Guadalupe –Tonantzin is their liberator. She brings them the dignity and respect that is their right. She is *Tonatzin*, the earth mother. She gives birth to the sun, the source

of life. She gives birth to Jesus who comes to bring us love and justice. *La Morenita* has told us she is present to all who, each in our own way, work to birth the justice and peace our hearts desire, on this earth where all life forms are meant to flourish.

La Madrecita tells us simply and clearly that we are all one. We share and live with our earth and all that it offers. We are brothers and sisters, not only to each other but to the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, all animal and plant life, the wind, the water.

She is a quiet wake-up call for each of us. Can we rise up to these simple truths and live them out in our short lives? In the words of liberation theologian Jon Sobrino, we are in dramatic need to wake up from our “sleep of inhumanity”.

In Mexico, I saw Canada’s future if we continue in this sleep which allows wealth and power to violate the earth and its peoples.

In 1987 Mexico was forced by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to make “structural adjustments.” This essentially meant privatizing public services including health care and education, and opening the country to foreign investment and exploitation. The 1989 NAFTA treaty and the in-process Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) agreements continue that process of creating a society where less than 30% of the population benefits and the impoverished majority are left to fend for themselves.

Nacho, an indigenous leader of the *Nahathul*, (also Juan Diego’s people) told us that private property is an invention of the oppressor and privatization only benefits a few people. Carmelita, a widow, said “Thank you for buying from my little store. You have helped me pay for costly medicines for my sick mother.” Dominita, a young mother, told us that she can now only feed her children two meals a day, though they used to receive three.

Guadalupe–Tonantzin is a reminder to us of our Visitation Province mission statement “ To follow Jesus in a preferential option for the poor and to live our mission of liberating education in fidelity to the prophetic charism of Marguerite Bourgeois in today’s world, we commit ourselves to live closer to the reality of the impoverished, the excluded and the oppressed. In solidarity with them we commit ourselves to protect our planet and to participate actively in the transformation of church and society for a more just world.”