



Reredos in Chapel
at La Forêt

MRS. F. M. P. TAYLOR
COLORADO SPRINGS

FIGURES IN THE REREDOS

Top—Our Lady of Guadalupe

Center Panel—St. Clare of Assisi

St. Michael

St. Francis of Assisi

Lower Panel—St. Teresa

St. Joseph

St. Dominic

The Legend

of

Our Lady of Guadalupe



"A pious Indian, Juan Diego, lived in the village of Tolpetlac, and as he went to Mass in the church Santiago Tlaltecoco, he passed around the hillside of Tepoyocac on Saturday morning, December 9th, 1531. He heard the sweet music of singing voices. He was afraid and looking up, behold, a lady appeared to him and bade him hear what she might say. He should go to the bishop and tell him that it was her will that a temple in her honor should be built on that hill. He listened tremblingly, on his knees, and when the lady had vanished, went his way and told the bishop what he had seen and heard.

"The bishop was Don Juan Zumarraga. He listened incredulously to the Indian's story and sent him away. Sorrowfully he returned to where the lady appeared to him, found her waiting and told her the bishop's answer. She bade him come to her again. On the following Sunday, Juan Diego came again to the hillside. The lady appeared for the third time and sent him to the bishop with her message that a temple should be built for her. The bishop, still unbelieving and distrusting the improbable means Our Lady has chosen to convey her message thought it strange she should send such a command through this poor Indian, and told him he must bring some unmistakable token that

what he said was true. The Bishop sent Juan away again, and unknown to him, sent two servants to watch him. As the Indian approached the hill he became invisible in some mysterious way, passed around the hill and alone saw the lady and told her the bishop required a token of the truth of her commands. She told him to come to her again the next day.

"Then Juan Diego returned to his house and found that his Uncle, Juan Bernardino, was ill with the fever, *cocolixtli*, so that he must wait at home and attend him. Early on the morning of December 12th, the sick man being at the point of death, Juan Diego started to Tlalco to call a minister. Fearing that he might be delayed if he met the lady, and that his uncle might die unattended, he went another way, around the other side of the hill. But, behold, she was there, coming down the hill and calling to him. He told her of his uncle's illness. But she assured him that his uncle was already well. Then the lady told him to gather flowers from the barren rocks on top of the hill. Immediately flowers grew where none had been before. She commanded him to take these flowers to the bishop as the token he had desired and to show them to no other until the bishop had looked upon them.

"Joyfully he folded the flowers in his tilma, and departed for the bishop's house. The tilma was a sort of blanket, such as is still worn in Mexico as a cloak. This particular tilma which is 70 inches long and 36 inches wide is made of the fiber of the magney (a large cactus). The material is very coarse and thin and much resembles that which we use for making gunny-sacks. From the place where the Virgin stood, a spring of clear water gushed forth that is there to this day.

"When he came to the bishop's house, the Indian dropped the flowers at his feet and behold, delicately painted upon the tilma appeared the image of the Virgin, in the most beautiful of colors. The bishop placed the wonderful tilma with the miraculous picture in the oratory of his house, holding it as a priceless treasure.

"Juan Diego, escorted by the bishop's servants, returned to his own home and found that his uncle was well.

"A chapel was built where the roses had so miraculously grown from the rocks and on the 7th of February, 1532, the tilma of the holy image was placed over its altar within the shrine.

THE BASILICA

The hill, Tepeyocac, became known as Guadalupe. On it was erected the church of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe) and now a group of churches has grown about the original, which was built by Bishop Zumarraga, afterward Archbishop of Mexico.

The first church was simple. In November, 1622, a hundred years later, a larger, finer building was erected and the sacred image moved to it. It remained there for three centuries, except for the four years, when it was taken to the Cathedral of the City of Mexico to save the City from the dangers of a flood.

The existing parish church was built in 1695, and used as a temporary shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe while a larger and greater temple was being erected. The Basilica which now guards the miraculous picture was dedicated in May, 1709, but it was not completed, due to wars, until 1836. The cost at that time was two million dollars. The

Viceroy Bucareli, who is buried under the pavement of the west aisle, donated a massive silver railing on a base of white marble. The choir is built of carved mahogany and ebony. In the sacristy there are many unusual and extremely precious tables of onyx.

THE ALTAR

The altar containing the sacred tilma is of Carrara marble, "white as the snows of Popocatepetl," exquisitely carved and wrought with bronze from designs by Mexican artists. On the Gospel side of the altar is the figure of Juan Zumarraga; on the Epistle side, Juan Diego; in front is the kneeling figure of Mgr. Labastida y Davalos, the Archbishop of Mexico who completed the work. His ashes as well as the remains of his father and mother rest under the statue.

Three marble angels in relief hold the image of the tilma. These represent the archdioceses of Mexico,—Mexico City, Michoacan, and Guadalajara,—which were instrumental in securing the Papal authority for the coronation. Above the high altar is a Byzantine baldachin supported by pillars of Scotch granite, surmounted by a gilded cross of roses, in memory of the flowers of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The front arch of the baldachin bears the arms of Pope Leo XIII.

There is a crypt underneath the High Altar with a vaulted iron roof that will bear a weight of 300,000 pounds. It contains four altars.

THE TILMA AND ITS SETTING

Many artists and chemists have at different times examined the sacred tilma most carefully. They removed the

plate glass and examined the picture. They marvelled at the apparent oil, water, distemper, etc., coloring in the same picture and unanimously decided that it could not have been painted by an artist's brush. Other pictures fade with the years, but the colors of the tilma after four centuries are still as bright as those of a picture fresh from the artist's brush.

In 1895, a crown of gold and jewels, diamonds, rubies and sapphires, which cost \$30,000 for the manufacturing alone, was placed over the tilma. The jewels and gold were contributed by the women of Mexico from their own jewel boxes. The crown is an imperial diadem, about two feet high and almost three feet in circumference. The twenty bishoprics of Mexico are represented by twenty-two shields. Over these are angels circling the crown and holding six other shields which contain the coat of arms of the six archbishoprics of Mexico. From the wings of the angels are festoons of roses and diamonds, gathered at the top under a globe which pictures Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico. Over all this is the eagle of Mexico, bearing in its talons a diamond cross.

ST. CLARE OF ASSISI

Cofoundress of the Order of the Poor Clares. She was the eldest daughter of Farovino Scif, Count of Sasso-Rossi. From her earliest years, Clare seemed to have been endowed with the rarest virtues.

She was eighteen years of age, when the words of St. Francis kindled a flame in the heart of Clare for the monastic life and she begged him to help her to live after the manner of the holy gospel.

Her father was greatly incensed at Clare's determination to enter the religious life and even tried to drag her from the Benedictine Convent where she had taken refuge, but Clare held her own, with a firmness above her years and the Count was obliged to leave her in peace. Much against her will Clare was made Superior at San Damiano. Continued to rule there until her death in 1203. In reference to the following incident, she is represented in art holding a ciborium.

One night when the Army of Frederick II was devastating the valley of Spoleto, the soldiers, preparing an assault upon Assisi scaled the walls of San Damiano, spreading terror among the community. Clare rising from her sick bed, and taking the ciborium from the chapel proceeded to face the invaders at an open window. It is related that as she raised the Blessed Sacrament on high the soldiers fell backward as if dazed and the others who were ready to follow them took flight. Her feast is celebrated August 12th.

ST. MICHAEL

St. Michael Archangel is called the Captain of the Armies of God. Churches were erected in the East from the time when Christian worship was publicly established by the conversion of Constantine. We are called upon in a particular manner to give thanks to God for the glory which the Angels enjoy and to rejoice in their happiness, Secondly to thank Him for His mercy to us in constituting such glorious beings to minister to our protection, by guarding us at all times. We should join them then in adoring and praising God.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

St. Francis, the son of a merchant of Assisi, was born in that City in 1182. He was early inspired with a high esteem and love for the poor. The thought of the Man of Sorrows, who had not where to lay his head, filled him with a strong desire to renounce his wealth and worldly station. His Christ-like spirit of meekness, patience and love kindled like desires in other hearts. Many joined themselves to him and were constituted by Pope Innocent III into a Religious Order, which spread rapidly throughout the world. St. Francis spent his life like the Divine Master preaching to the multitude, and serving the poor.

ST. TERESA

St. Teresa was born in Avila in Old Castle on the 28th of March, 1515. God inclined the tender heart of Teresa from her infancy to His service. Her Charity and Compassion for the poor and sick never faltered. At an early age she wished to become a nun, but her father would by no means give his consent but she went secretly to the Carmelite Convent without the walls of Avila and from the first days of her entrance there she advanced in fervent love of God in the contemplative life. She died October 4th, 1582.

ST. JOSEPH

St. Joseph was by birth of the royal family of David, but was living in humble security as a carpenter, when God raised him to the highest sanctity and fitted him to be the spouse of His Virgin Mother and foster-father and guardian of Jesus.

ST. DOMINIC

St. Dominic was born at Calaroga in Old Castle Spain in 1170. He was the founder of the Order of Preachers, commonly known as the Dominicans. In 1184 Dominic entered the University of Palencia. Here he remained for ten years. Amid the frivolities and dissipation of a University City, the life of the future Saint was characterized by a seriousness of purpose which singled him out as one from whom great things might be expected. It was in 1208 while St. Dominic knelt in the little chapel of Notre Dame de la Provilla, and implored the Mother of God to save the church which was being persecuted at that time by the heretics that Our Lady appeared to him, gave him the Rosary and bade him go forth and preach. He revived the courage of the Catholic troops, led them to victory against overwhelming numbers and finally crushed the heresy.