

# EXPLOSION IN MEXICO

by John M. Haffert

Crowd outside Basilica on December 12th, 1961.

**A** supernatural explosion took place on the American continent which is unequalled, except for the coming of Our Lord, in the history of man.

When one travels in the old Christian countries of Europe, one sees evidence of great faith. The Basilicas of Rome and the Cathedrals of Cologne, Paris, Chartres, Rheims, Canterbury, Milan, Toledo . . . all speak of the great faith, especially of the Thirteenth Century.

But when we speak of "explosion" we do not mean a gradual expression of faith, but just what the word implies: *An explosion.*

You see the proof of this explosion in a great circle around the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. Hundreds upon hundreds of churches, rivaling in richness and beauty the most celebrated churches of the Old World, are splashed within a fifty mile radius like boulders tossed out by the eruption of a giant vol-

cano. In Cholula alone, a very small town barely in sight of Mexico City from an airplane, three hundred and sixty-five churches were built . . . exceeding half the number in all of Rome!

Those 365 Churches in Cholula, for example, were almost all built within fifty years. The *conversions* which *immediately* resulted from the supernatural explosion which we call the "Miracle of Guadalupe" were counted *in millions.*

Perhaps there is nothing more impressive on the face of the world today than to journey in this area and see with one's own eyes the stupendous effect of this miracle.

If you stand in front of the Church of Our Lady of Good Remedy in Cholula, you are on top of a pyramid greater than the famous Giza pyramid in Egypt, and across the valley you see the city of Puebla. There, one little church alone

is so rich (the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary) that it beggars description. The present writer has visited the major Basilicas of Rome many times, has seen the fabled temples of Siam, the lacy stonework of Portugal's Jeronimos, the magic light of Paris' Sainte Chapelle, and in richness of detail this Rosary Chapel in Puebla is unsurpassed by any. Yet travel across the mountains, the same distance to the other side of Mexico City, and in the town of Morelia, you will find (in addition to the great Cathedral and the usual number of churches) a Chapel in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe almost as rich as the Rosary Chapel in Puebla.

Go to the tops of the highest mountains (on Cubilete, in this same circle, is the highest religious monument in North America) and to the bottom of the sea (in the harbor of Acapulco a giant statue of Our Lady stands in the sanctuary of the crystal waters), and everywhere

you see the proof of the explosion . . . unequalled, as we said in the beginning, in the history of man, with the exception of the coming of Our Lord.

### The Miracle

It was the early part of the 16th century . . . less than forty years after Columbus announced to the Old World that he had found a new one.

Three kinds of men dared to risk the dangers of the sea which Columbus said was not flat, to go . . . as some in our own generation may go to new planets . . . to the new world. There were selfish men, in search of wealth; there were ex-prisoners and restless men, in search of change; and there were a few missionaries fired with the words of Christ: "Go, preach the gospel to all nations."

In those short forty years after Columbus' discovery, one of these mixed groups led by Cortez had acquired the ancient and richest center in America: The land of the Aztecs.

Historians usually call it the "Conquest" of Mexico, but it was rather a capitulation. The Aztecs first took that land because their "holy men" had prophesied that their land would be found where an eagle, on a cactus, was clutching a serpent. This came true. The "holy men" also predicted that one day another sign would appear . . . a cross . . . and that those who bore this cross would conquer the Aztecs.

The Aztec ruler of this time refused to fight when he saw the cross on the banners of the Spaniards. But outrages of some of the "conquerors" led to war. The Aztec ruler (Montezuma) was killed by his own people. Cortez reigned by might, and the vast Indian population was organizing to exterminate the Cross-bearers. Then the miracle happened.

An Indian who had been converted by the Cross-bearers was on his way to Church (a six mile walk). On a hill about half way between his mud hut and the church a Lady in Light appeared to him. She said: "I am the ever Virgin, Holy Mary, Mother of the true God Who is the Author of life, Creator of all Things, Lord of Heaven and earth, Present everywhere."

She then asked that a Church be built here, saying:

"Here I will show myself as a loving Mother to you and to all those born in these lands, and to all those who love me and trust in me, for I am your loving Mother."

### Bishop Didn't Believe

The vision asked the Indian to go to the Bishop and present her request for a church. The bishop did not believe. So the Indian went back to the hill and asked that She send someone more credible than an ignorant Indian who was nothing more than "The little end of a rope." Our Lady said She could have someone else, but she wanted this Indian to be her messenger.

This time, on the Indian's insistence that he had seen Our

Lady, the Bishop asked her for a sign. And the result was what we have called the greatest explosion of the supernatural in the history of man (with one, obvious, great exception).

It was a threefold miracle:

1) Our Lady told the Indian to gather roses in a place where only cactus grew; there he found and gathered a profusion of Castilian roses;

2) The Indian's uncle was dying, and from that moment . . . as Our Lady announced . . . the uncle was instantaneously cured and testified not only to his cure, but also corroborated the exact description of the Indian's vision;

3) When the Indian took the roses to the Bishop in his *tilma* (a sort of long, narrow blanket), *a picture of the vision was found on the tilma. It is there now.*

### Miracle's Continuation

The present writer has produced six books and must have written hundreds of thousands of words on many subjects in the past twenty years but (and this is said in nothing but simple honesty) he finds no

American Tour getting organized to enter the Basilica to attend Pontifical Mass, December 12th.



words to describe the ever-continuing miracle of Guadalupe: the miraculous picture.

The *nature* of the miracle is no problem to describe. But it is the actual miracle . . . the picture itself . . . which defies description. It even defies photographic reproduction. And no artist has ever been able . . . to this day . . . to duplicate it exactly.

### Indescribable

So we won't try to describe it. We will only say that if the reader has seen a copy of the picture . . . he has seen only a shadow of the reality. On the night of December 12th, 1961, the present writer began to kneel in front of the picture at 4:00 A.M., and was there with only one slight interruption until 1:30 P.M. a total of over nine hours, and those hours were like minutes. In the sanctuary at the same time was Bishop Mathias Buchholz, who had been before the picture from the previous day . . . and who, even after 1:30 when he left only for lunch . . . went back, saying that as long as he was in Mexico City he could not tear himself away from that "presence."

If these were isolated examples they would have little value. But they are not.

### "- your loving Mother"

Certainly many curious persons can pass in front of the picture and see only a picture. But the person who kneels here in faith begins to see the miracle . . . begins to experience the wonder of those words: "Here I will show myself as a loving Mother to you and to all those born in these lands, and to all those who love me and trust in me, for I am your loving Mother."

Since the picture is indescribable, as we have said, we will not try to describe it. The only

reason we use a copy of it is not because the copy is beautiful like the original, but only because it *reminds* us of the original. Here are some amazing bits of testimony:

ON FRONT COVER OF THIS ISSUE OF SOUL IS AN UNRETOUCHED REPRINT OF THE ACTUAL MIRACULOUS PICTURE

Five ophthalmologists examined the eyes of the miraculous picture and declared it "dimensional;" giving them the impression as they looked through their instruments that they were looking into real eyes rather than into an image.

### Four Hundred Years!

The picture is over four centuries old, and yet the material on which it is "painted" is of vegetable fibre which would normally endure only a few years. It is made from a cactus plant, woven so coarsely that if you are close to the picture you can see through it. For one hundred years it hung in a damp, stone chapel, right on the wall, uncovered, and was touched by millions of hands. Yet it seems as perfect today, after more than four centuries, as it must have been on the day it "happened."

There are no brush marks. It was not actually painted. It "happened."

Today, by X-ray photography, paintings can be studied to reveal the exact brush strokes of an artist, and even any painting-over, or corrections which an artist made as his painting progressed, shows in the X-ray picture. Such scientific analysis of the miraculous picture reveals not only that it was not painted, but that the materials used are not known and appear to be an impossible combination (in different areas) of water color, oil paint, and fresco!

Finally there is the fact we have already mentioned; That the picture has never been exactly reproduced, by any method.

Photographic copies *look like* the original picture, but they *do not look the same*. Perhaps many who have not understood the miracle of Guadalupe and who have seen copies of the picture have not been interested because the copies are not very often inspiring. They are dark. They often give the impression that Our Lady is pouting. The eyes look closed. There is no "presence."

The only way to see this miracle of Guadalupe is to go there.

The present writer first went to Guadalupe in 1946. He was impressed by the faith of the Indians, but not so much by the picture. He knew next to nothing about its history, and focused his attention . . . perhaps out of a Marian-Shrine-force-of-habit . . . on the words Our Lady had spoken there, on the fact that She had appeared there. After all, this is what one does (and with effect) in Lourdes, Rue du Bac, La Salette, Fatima. But to come to Guadalupe merely to pay honor to Our Lady in a place where She appeared was analagous to going to Mass without receiving Communion.

### Guadalupe and America

In 1961 Ave Maria Tours held its first pilgrimage to Guadalupe as a result of a chance meeting, in El Paso, Texas, between the Ave Maria Tour Director and Father Harold Rahm, S.J., official promoter of the Apostolate of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the United States. Father Rahm himself accompanied this first tour, and while it kept "touching down" almost every day before the miraculous picture, it made a thousand mile circuit

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where the impact of that "explosion of the supernatural" is written in the stone of hundreds of churches, in the marvels of Veracruz and in the omnipresent Indian devotion to Our Lady after four hundred years and despite a religious persecution during the past century perhaps as intense as that in atheist Russia.

The reason most Americans have not been touched by that explosion is that they have not SEEN the picture, the actual miracle. They have only heard about it and they have seen disappointing copies.

Contributing reasons are that those who have seen it have not realized what it was (like the present writer, in 1946) and have not really looked at it closely and prayerfully . . . but only with the same casualness with which they have looked at copies. And many of us in North America are deterred because of religious and racial prejudice . . . somehow settled by experience into the subconscious of most adults.

### Long Before Pilgrims

The miracle happened when there were no United States. It happened when Mexico City was the most vital spot in all the Americas. It WAS America. Here the Indians had achieved their highest culture . . . rivaling that of ancient Egypt, one of the greatest of pre-Christian civilizations.

The miracle took place over a hundred years before the Pilgrims landed.

Books were being printed in Mexico City before Benjamin Franklin was born, and not one but several Universities in that area of the "explosion of the supernatural" antecedes Harvard and Yale.

The tendency of Historians

in the United States is to forget that anything happened on this continent before the Mayflower. Recently a small fortune was spent imitating the sailing of that Pilgrim ship . . . even though the original sailing is comparatively "modern" when compared to the voyages of those first forty years after 1492 . . . the forty years which were climaxed by the Guadalupe explosion. Two and a half million dollars have been spent reconstructing Williamsburg, center of a tobacco area which only began to flourish when the 365 Churches of Cholula had already been sounding their Sunday bells for a hundred years.

We forget that at the time of the Guadalupe Miracle, there were no *nations* in America as we know them today. There were only Indian tribes and Indian nations, and the center of it all was in the center of the continent, on a 7,000 foot high plateau which is now the capital of Mexico. *Then* it was America. And the miracle which took place is the American miracle. The explosion which took place should have been our explosion, too . . . but we came too late, and we fought an ignominious war to plunder land from Mexico (one of the few blights on our otherwise tolerant and charitable history) . . . because most of our people thought it heretical to believe in the "Ever virgin, Mother of the True God."

Now things are changing. One has the feeling that the explosion is soon to be felt to the north and to the south of center-America.

Coley Taylor was for many years the editor, consecutively, of two of America's largest book publishers. Several years ago he was sent on an assignment to Mexico City. While there he saw a pamphlet on the Miracle of Guadalupe, which pointed out that Pope Pius

XIII had recently declared Our Lady of Guadalupe to be "Patroness of All America."

"This would make a good subject for our religious book department," Mr. Taylor thought, and he sent his suggestion on to New York. A reply came back that the publishers would like to do the book if Mr. Taylor would handle it. So Taylor found a Mexican writer and ordered the manuscript.

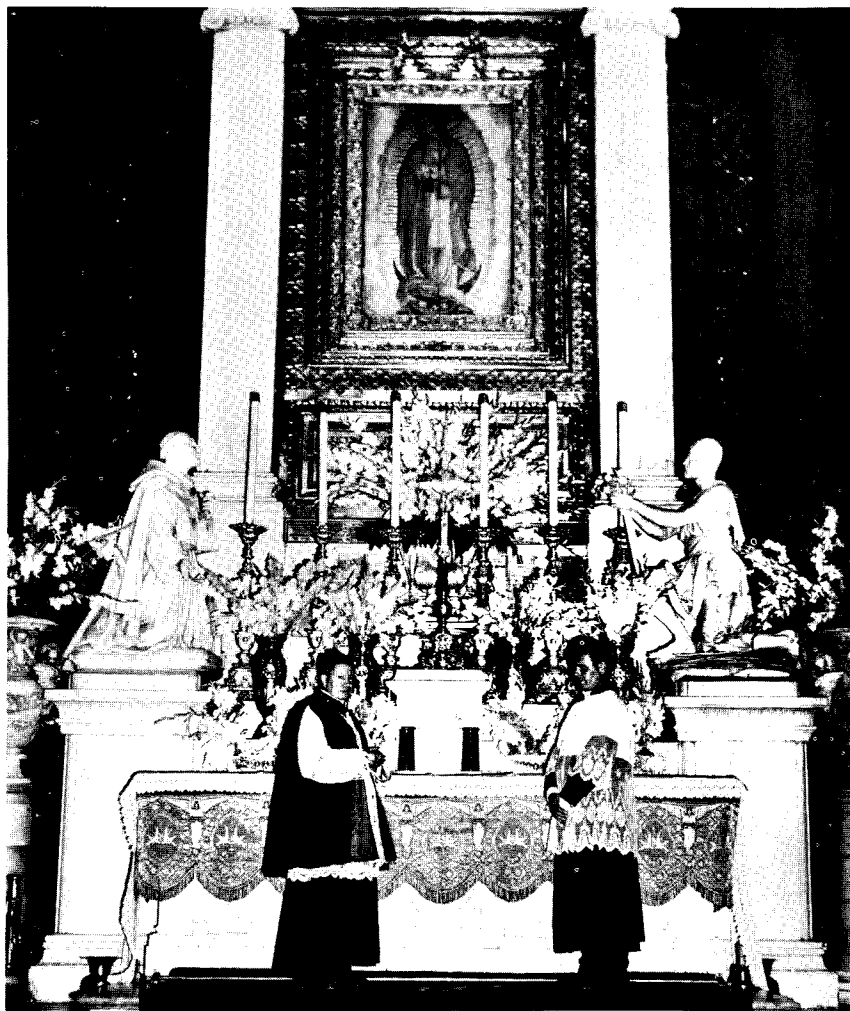
The quiet editor had waded through hundreds of manuscripts of every possible description during his many years in the service of publishing houses. "Some of it had been religious," he says, "but none of it rubbed off on me." Now he held in his hands a story which, from experience, he knew "Could not have been contrived."

### Taylor's Conversion

When our Ave Maria Guadalupe Pilgrimage had its farewell banquet in Mexico City, on Dec. 12, 1961, Mr. Taylor was the principal speaker. With quiet sincerity he told of his reaction to the Guadalupe story . . . "One which no writer would have imagined because there are so many incongruous and unlikely developments." He mentioned the poverty and ignorance of the Indian, the repeated visitations to the Bishop, the very fact of a picture which Ecclesiastical authorities were willing to proclaim as of Divine origin and above all, he said that he was impressed by the "improbable" words the Indian used in talking to Our Lady.

*On this basis alone Coley Taylor believed.*

Then, when he actually *saw* the picture (which he had not yet even taken the trouble to visit!), not only did he take instructions and become a Catholic, but he entered a Trappist Monastery. There his excitement about the miracle of Guad-



The Rt. Rev. D. Gregorio Aquilar, Abbot, Basilica de Guadalupe, and Fr. Harold Rahm on steps of main altar at Shrine in Mexico City.

alupe was so great that the Abbot decided that Brother Taylor should take leave from the monastery and go to Guadalupe, study it further and see if he did not perhaps have a special vocation to make the miracle better known. As a result Coley Taylor wrote his great book, "The Dark Virgin," which . . . as a Book Club Selection . . . has started to extend the explosion into North America.

### Father Rahm

Paralleling the work of Coley Taylor is the entrance to the current scene of Father Harold Rahm, a social-minded Jesuit who had been working on the Mexican border and who often made journeys into Mexico, incognito, to help the persecuted Mexican clergy.

Father Rahm fell so in love with the Patroness of the Americas that he cannot talk to anyone without communicating that love . . . which he does on two Sunday television programs, and which he did to the present writer and all the other pilgrims on that first Ave Maria Tour to Guadalupe, on which he was the official chaplain.

Lamenting the lack of devotion to the Patroness of America in the United States, the Archbishop of Mexico asked Bishop Metzger, of El Paso, to undertake an apostolate for the promotion of this devotion. The Bishop agreed, and Father Rahm was appointed head of the apostolate. An office was established at the Basilica in Guadalupe, head of which (under Father Rahm) is Mrs. Helen Behrens, who wrote perhaps the

first book in the English language on Guadalupe, and Coley Taylor. They produced a color motion picture on the miracle, made pictures available with description and prayers in English, and a set of 35mm color slides with script for easy promotion of the devotion in schools and parishes.

### New Book

Father Rahm recently completed a totally new book titled *MOTHER OF THE AMERICAS*, which is afire with his own devotion and founded not only on all the work that has gone before, but has gone back even to the Aztec dialect for direct translation into English. It is being published this year by AMI International Press, Washington, New Jersey.

### Conclusion

When Coley Taylor finished his address to the Ave Maria Pilgrims at the Guadalupe Hotel, December 12, 1961, he did so not only because he had come to the end of his lecture, but because he was so deeply moved that he could not go on.

"Our Lady had played a little trick on me," he said, referring to his editorial background making it impossible for him to doubt the authenticity of the Guadalupe story, and his voice began to break. "And she continues . . ." he added, obviously intending to say something more. But the wonder of it all welled up inside him, tears filled his eyes and his voice broke. He had nothing more he could say. "*She continues . . .*"

Tears may be in our eyes as we recall those hours before Our Lady's self-portrait . . . those hours in Her "presence." But a typewriter doesn't break under emotion, so we can continue to say what should be said in conclusion:

America is blessed. Were YOU born in this land? Then this is YOUR miracle.