

Chapter 6
The Church Enters the Modern World
[*Our Lady of Guadalupe* by Alejandro Romero]

This assignment engages with the idea of “inculturation,” and teaches how the Church conceives of her mission to the nations of the world. Students will learn about the historical context of the evangelization of Mexico and how the Church has adapted her own symbols and adopted those of a native people in order to preach the Gospel more effectively. Share some brief background on the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe using the following script:

The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared miraculously on the cloak, or *tilma*, of St. Juan Diego when Mary appeared to him in a moment of great need in 1531. Prior to her appearance, the Mexican peoples had continued to follow their indigenous religious practices, despite the presence of Spanish missionaries. Following Mary’s appearances, most of Mexico converted to Christianity within a few decades. Some historians have suggested that this great wave of conversions was due to the fact that Mary appeared dressed in the garments of an Aztec princess. In other words, people could see that Mary, the Mother of the Christian God, was one of them – and so was her Son.

Assign the students to complete the research assignment explained on the worksheet. Allow time in and out of class for the students to work on the assignment.

Research Assignment

1. Research the Aztec religion and provide answers to the following questions:
 - What were their practices?
 - What kind of gods did they worship?
 - How was this religion compatible with Christianity and what were some differences between the two?
2. Look into the symbolisms from Aztec art and culture that appear in the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.
 - What does the black sash on Mary's waist mean?
 - What about the stars on her garment?
3. Look at some of the Christian symbolisms in the image.
 - Why is there a moon under Mary's feet?
 - What does the moon mean in Christian art?
 - What does the symbolism of the moon mean in Aztec culture?
 - What is the significance of the halo around Mary's body (the *mandorla*)?
4. Answer questions about Mary's culture in the image.
 - Why was it important that Mary was depicted as an Aztec?
5. Now that you've researched the symbolism in the image, answer:
 - Why do you think Mexico became Catholic in the wake of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe?