

Day five: 12.10.08

The 10th of December. We start the day by stopping at the Plaza of the Three Cultures, the Church of Santiago in Tlaleloico (where Juan Diego was baptized and which was also the residence of Bishop Zumarraga at the time of the apparitions) and to the small village of Tlupetiaco, the site of the 4th apparition. And then we were at the huge plaza and shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The cloak on which her image was transposed is now almost 477 years old and hangs in splendor above the main altar of the relatively new Cathedral. (The original basilica shares the same massive square and is now under serious renovation and preservation.) People are already pouring into the site by the thousands in anticipation of the feast, now two days away.

In the afternoon we leave the city and head for the 13 mile square archeological site: the "Place where GODS are made" according to the ancient Aztecs. These massive monuments rival the pyramids of Egypt and have probably given up fewer of their secrets than those found on the plateau of Giza. Who were these people? Why did they build all of this at great expense and labor? What happened to them, when and why? These sites predated the buildings and Empire found by Cortez when he arrived to confront Montezuma. Is there a connection? Who knows.

En route to the site from Mexico city we witnessed hundreds of joggers running alongside the highway heading for their home villages. These runners bore torches as are normally seen by olympic runners. But their flames were ones of faith. The young people had gone to the Shrine of our Lady, lit their torches at the site and were now running the marathon home to light candles in their village in preparation of the feast of the apparition. On the way back in to the city we were surrounded by thousands of people on bicycles heading to the Plaza to camp out and await the dawn of the 12th of December. These manifestations of devotion are humbling to those of us watching from the comfort of our coach. "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" Once back at our Hotel, some retire to their rooms while some intrepid others mount still another bus, and head out in to traffic to attend a performance at the city's cultural center. One way or the other, it was a long but interesting day.