



Soy tu madre I am your mother

CLARISSA PINKOLA-ESTÉS

Our Lady of Guadalupe—far from being a simple, compliant girl—infuses courage and tenaciousness into those who need it most.

The mother I know is not clean and not demure. She is called La Conquista, meaning the One Who Conquers All, and also, Mother of the Conquered. She is a high-spirited Jewess and a *force majeure* Azteca. She is an unwed mother, betrothed to a reluctant groom, turned away from door after door while pregnant, and even more pathetically, spurned while in the final wall-clutching stages of labor.

In the corner of some stinking mucked-out stall, she gave birth alone, a *prima gravida*, first-time mother, without midwife or sister or mother to soothe her back or to comfort her cries. She stayed awake and stayed awake to feed her child, and when her child's life was threatened by the ruling military junta of her time, she fled across the desert while still bleeding from childbirth.

Across the cold, cold desert, poised on a spine-jolting wooden saddle tied to the back of a little donkey, *mi madre*, my mother and yours, bound the little child of light tightly to the only place on her body that kept its warmth—to her naked breasts. Those beautiful breasts, leaking like the stars of the Milky Way, nourished the precious baby. Our Lady thought of only one thing; that she, the mother upon whom this child's very life depended, and that he, this tiny child of perpetual light, should live.

La Nuestra Señora, this Mir-yam, Maria, Mary, Madre Guadalupe, is no *la niña pura*, no nice, pure, obedient girl—she is instead, *pure woman*, obedient only to the wildest Force imaginable; that Source without source, *la Voz*, the Voice so much larger than her own voice, the One who asked that she lend her blood, her bones, and her spirit to create a life that would forever after be named *Eternal Love*.

There have been thousands of sightings and experiences of

Blessed Mother this very day as we speak. They are not rare as some suggest. Millions have been visited by Our Lady of Guadalupe since the beginning, and not just in Mexico or Spain, but worldwide. Some in the church want to verify or disprove appearances, advisories, and miracles of Mary in all her many manifestations. Speculation continues about whether Don Diego existed. But meanwhile, Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom, pays no attention. She keeps appearing to those in need without anyone's permission, without any institution's sanction. She bypasses all gatekeepers—appointed or self-appointed—to intervene, lift spirits, direct, to liberate souls throughout the world.

What did Our Lady of Guadalupe say to Don Diego, that smooth-faced, beautiful, dark-skinned man? Did she say, "I am purity personified, and you must behave yourself for God is watching?" No. She infused courage, tenaciousness—her very own attributes. In essence she said:

Have you forgotten, my dear child?

I am your Mother.

Do not be afraid.

Do not be concerned about anything.

Am I not here with you?

You are under my protection . . .

The meaning in these words cannot be interpreted by the cosseted or by those who are secure. They must be interpreted by one who has been conquered. To such they command: "Get up off your knees; you are not meant to be a subjugated people in subservience to a ruling power; you were not born to beg for your life, to be happy with crumbs." Guadalupe reminds them, "Proclaim that I am with you; that you move under my aegis; that you are mine and I am yours." She makes clear, "You belong to no ruler other than the greatest Source imaginable. You are not abandoned, for I am here; and I leave no one stranded."

Undoubtedly the "investigating and deposing" of ordinary

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people's experiences with Our Lady were begun by persons in love with the endless beauty of God. They wanted no chicanery with regard to the sacred, nor exploiting of naive persons. But these valid concerns gradually turned to politicized pronouncements, becoming more strident over time.

Thus the church has built up a language of legalisms that attempts to "verify" such "alleged" visitations in order to "deliver a verdict"—even though visitations cry out to be described in the language of the soul who embraces the mystical nature of all. Even though numinous experience, by definition, is non-quantifiable by outside sources. What was meant to protect from harm seems to have too often become intrusive effect poised to negate revelation.

When I was at university years ago, my grandmothers and aunts were amongst my *conciliares*. Even though "uneducated," they were old believers and smart. When I learned something that might interest them, I would sit in the kitchen and tell all about it—and they would thoughtfully and thoroughly "correct it" for me, and tell me how it all *really* went together.

When I told them about diocesan commissions that voted on the authenticity of private visitations and revelations by Blessed Mother, they listened carefully. Such commissions are capable of making one of three "rulings."

The first is *constat de supernaturalitate*—an apparition, visitation, revelation, or miracle displays "all evidences" and therefore *is* judged to be an authentic intervention from heaven. (Some required "evidences" are that the person receiving the visitation/revelation be "mentally sound, . . . of upright conduct, obedient to ecclesiastical authorities, able to return to normal practices of the faith," meaning communal worship,

receiving sacraments, and so on.)

"Ruling" number two: *constat de non supernaturalitate*—the "alleged" experience is clearly *not* miraculous, found to have no supernatural basis. (Such a ruling may be based on the commission's opinion that the person "claiming" visitation is either "mentally ill" or else possessed "by Satan.")

The third "ruling" is *non constat de supernaturalitate*—meaning, it is not evident whether or not the alleged apparition is authentic. In other words, to use trial lawyers' jargon, "win, lose, or hung jury."

After listening quietly to this précis and consulting amongst themselves, my grandmother Caterin spoke for all. She averred that new visionaries and prophets were needed in each generation. She said they all agreed that visionaries and prophets were like geraniums. (You have to remember, my elders were from the old country.) As the plant grew sturdy new branches, the mother plant needed to be transferred into larger and larger containers so her roots could continue to grow deep and well. By limiting who is and who is not sanctioned or sanctified enough to have experiences with Our Lady, the elders thought the

church had instead willfully transplanted her into increasingly smaller pots.

One of the "smallest containers" I can think of is the idea that the Holy Mother appears only to persons of "upright conduct" and so forth. One would have to infer

that Our Lady would never think to appear to a person who is disturbed in any way.

I must say that *mi madre*, the mother I know, is no such relative idea, but rather *our* relative, our blood clan, and she is in no way elitist. I know this from talking to thousands worldwide who have face-to-face relationships with her. She does not qualify or screen those she visits. She appears to every heart regardless of its

owner's status, authority, dishevelment, or saint potential. In fact, Our Mother appears in striking ways and far more often to people who will never be saints but who are Blessed Mother's dearest daughters and dearest sons, beloved in her giant flower-perfumed heart forever.

It is clear that the souls she appears to most are the ones who need her most. I have met her many grateful witnesses: the lonely, all who have been abandoned; the despairing, she reminds them that God and despair cannot exist in the same place at the same time. She has reunited people and creatures who have lost each other. She visits those imprisoned, whether in a rhetoric, or whether in paper, golden, or iron cages.

She carries souls across the cold deserts of cultural pollutions and harming constraints; she infuses strength into the many who are threatened with physical and spiritual deaths; she is intercessor in their hardships—the privations as a result of deceptions, thefts, the death cults of our times.

She is drawn to those who have experienced any travail, any challenge that she herself faced—to be believed, to be accepted, to be found worthy, to shelter the truth and the light. This is why she is called La Nuestra Señora, because she is mother of *all*. No qualifiers, no proofs required.

She has been called advisor, helper, intervener, mediatrix. Yet, to reduce Our Lady to a mere coping mechanism, saying she has no rational function, grit, or imagination, as some have ventured, is to say that Yahweh must have been a weekend hobbyist who took seven days off to make some "stuff." La Madre, La Nuestra Señora, Our Mother continues regardless of those who say she did or did not appear; did or did not enter a house; did or did not lay hands on; did or did not heal; did or did not speak love to everything and everyone.

As vast intercessor, she is essential to *tikkun olam*, the Hebrew words meaning "repair of the soul of the world"; she is essential to the concept of *ometeotl*, the Aztec word that means "the one who enters the world from highest heaven to sweep clear

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‘the two-way path’ between the great earthly and heavenly hearts once again.”

She has granted me liaison so many times. I fully admit: Her fingerprints are all over me. Perhaps they are all over you, too. I hope so. Her palm prints are on my shoulders from trying to steer me in various proper and difficult directions—such as the path of a long and hard-won education for which I, as a welfare mother, had little means. Mi Guadalupe was there always during those “decades of nights” it took to earn degrees.

She whispered, “I crossed a long desert with little means, so can you.”

I have the literal experience of the strength of her great arms holding me up when I thought I would die; her arms held me tight as I struggled to hold my fainting daughter up as she miscarried her beloved child. I have lain against *mi madre’s* breasts sucking for strength to go on. During a recent struggle with a misdiagnosis of terminal illness for which I was given but four months left to live, she took off her piscus of *rayos* and bid me to pass through her fiery corona, burning away my terror and grief time and again.

She has warmed me, and warned me in prescient ways, allowed me to put my hands inside her hands, responded forcefully to healing petitions for family members, friends, and strangers. She has answered petitions for recovery and abatement of threats, harms, wounds, *las luchas*, struggles of many kinds.

And even so, I am still terribly deficient in many ways, and even so, I still struggle to learn to love more every day. But, as my drollest grandmother used to say, “Just think of how much worse we would have turned out without her.”

Perhaps most powerful of all, I pray to Our Lady daily along with thousands of other old women throughout the world. I do not have all the answers about how Our Lady goes, but I carry the essential conviction that Our Lady cannot resist listening to a gaggle of such comic, imperfect, devout, and lively souls.

La Conquista, who raised up Don Diego in more ways than one, is no simple, compliant girl, no matter who tries to make her so. She is on the side of life and she is *for* the world—all of it. So, come all those who feel or fear they have been conquered in any way. Rise up, come forward, for there is a Lady waiting, a Lady who knows you by name, and by heart:

Have you forgotten, my dear child?

I am your Mother.

Do not be afraid.

Do not be concerned about anything.

Am I not here with you?

I am your mother, and

You are under my protection ... USC

Dr. Estés is compiling a book on everyday people’s personal experiences of revelation, visitation, and miracles by Blessed Mother. Send one-page account with self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Project Screener, BVM, 8601 West Cross Drive, # F5, PMB 127, Littleton, Colorado 80123. Or e-mail to: Projectscreener@aol.com. Materials cannot be returned, so please no originals.

