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## New Haven

### Sacred relic on display at city museum

Brian McCreedy , Register Staff

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**NEW HAVEN — Hundreds of devout Roman Catholics from the region flocked to the Knights of Columbus Museum on Friday to see what they say is a sacred sign of hope for peace during these troubled times.**

The museum is displaying the Tilma of Tepeyac holy relic, which is the only piece ever removed from a cloak that carries the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patron saint of the Americas. It will remain on display until June 15. The actual Tilma remains in Mexico City, where it was believed to be miraculously imprinted with an almost photographic-quality image of the Virgin Mary in 1531. Helen Knapp of Seymour brought her two 4-year-old grandchildren, Colton Rivers and Nicole Hogan, to see the Tilma of Tepeyac, so she could teach them about the miraculous ways of God. "I'm Catholic, and I wanted to feel the holiness. I just want to see the relic and pray for my family and for peace in the world," she said. She said the sacred relic takes on more significance, especially with there being so much unrest in the world. "I feel people should pray more for peace," Knapp said. "I saw it and felt the holiness and peace upon myself." Jess Mallory, a member of the Knights of Columbus and a museum official, said the entire staff was waiting with "high anticipation" for the relic, which is on loan from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. "As an individual person of the faith, it's very deeply touching for me," Mallory said. The relic is a small rectangular piece of cloth, similar to burlap, and is encased in a see-through locket. Aurelio and Grace Cardona of West Haven said the sight of the Tilma touches their hearts. "To me it's a sign of God's love," Grace Cardona said. "It keeps us going during these difficult times." Alex and Gilda Robertson of Branford said they were thrilled that New Haven had been chosen as one of the 18 locations to showcase the Tilma. "I can't describe the feeling I have as it's wonderful to actually see it," Gilda Robertson said. "It's inspiring and makes me feel she's looking after us." The story of Our Lady of Guadalupe dates back to 1531, when Juan Diego was walking to church and passed Tepeyac Hill. There he witnessed a beautiful young woman. The woman, whom he recognized as the Virgin Mary, directed him to go to the bishop and build a church at Tepeyac. The bishop doubted Diego's story, but an image of the Virgin Mary that appeared in the Tilma persuaded him to build the church. Larry Sowinski, museum director, said the museum fielded 300 calls from people Thursday interested in the sacred relic. "People ask if they can touch it and kiss it as they are all excited it's here in New Haven," Sowinski said.

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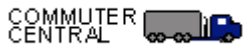
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