



This story is taken from [Lifestyle](#) at sacbee.com.

Visions of Mary evoke belief -- and skepticism

By Jennifer Garza -- Bee Staff Writer - (Published June 28, 2003)

She has been seen on tree stumps, on tabletops and, for the past two weeks, on the window of a medical office building in Milton, Mass.

On June 10, on the third floor of nondescript building next to a hospital, an employee spotted what he believed to be the image of the Virgin Mary holding a child.

Since then, more than 40,000 people have flocked to the small community health-care facility about 10 miles south of Boston, overwhelming staff and patients.

"The response has really been something," said Susan Schepici, spokeswoman for Milton Hospital. It has cost the hospital \$10,000 for added security and police patrols, she said.

So many people have come to see the apparition that hospital administrators recently established viewing hours in the evening.

That still didn't keep the crowds away, so hospital officials now have covered the image with a tarp-like material during the day.

"That seems to be working very well," said Schepici.

Skeptics say there is a scientific explanation for the sighting -- a seal broke in the window, causing a drying agent to discolor it -- but the faithful believe otherwise and keep coming.

They always have.

Sightings of the Virgin Mary -- or her likeness -- have drawn the faithful for hundreds of years. Her image has reportedly been seen all over the world, from Lourdes to Fatima to a small town outside Mexico City.

Next week, many believers are expected to visit two Sacramento churches for a chance to see a piece of the cloak that they believe bears the image of the Madonna.

Nearly 500 years ago, Juan Diego saw the Virgin Mary on Tepeyac Hill near Mexico City. At first, church officials didn't believe the poor Indian. Then an image of Our Lady appeared on Diego's cloak, convincing church leaders to build a church on that site.

A small, rectangular piece of the cloak, called The Tilma of Tepeyac, will be on display next Saturday at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and on July 6 at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. The relic is on a 20-city tour to foster understanding and appreciation of ancient relics.

The cloak has passed scientific tests, say church officials and is considered a holy relic. But the church remains skeptical of images such as the one in the window in Milton.

"Sometimes people can be misguided," said the Rev. James Murphy, spokesperson for the Catholic diocese of Sacramento. "That's why the church is skeptical, because often there is a scientific explanation."

What really matters, says Murphy, is why so many people go to see these images. "Clearly there is a hunger that

goes beyond the material," he said.

Milton Hospital administrators called the Boston Archdiocese for guidance but so far have not received a response, said Schepici.

The Milton window is in the back of an eye doctor's office. A few years ago, the doctor had a wall built to block light from the window into an examination room. As a result, there is no way to get to the window from the inside.

Many attribute the apparition to a cracked seal in the window which in turn, resulted in a chemical deposit on the pane. But the scientific explanation doesn't seem to matter to the thousands of people who have descended on this small 127-bed hospital.

Many come and pray. Some spend hours staring at the window saying the rosary. Others just want to see it for themselves.

Hospital officials say they want to respect the wishes of believers and have no plans to do anything with the window.

"We've had a lot of internal discussion on what we should do, but at this point we are going to leave the window alone," said Schepici. "It obviously means a lot to people."

About the Writer

The Bee's Jennifer Garza can be reached at (916) 321-1133 or jgarza@sacbee.com.

At a glance

The Tilma of Tepeyac

Will be on display beginning at 7:30 p.m. July 5 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, 711 T St., and at 1:30 p.m. July 6 at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, 1017 11th St. For more information: (916) 444-3071.

Go to : [Sacbee](#) / [Back to story](#)

[Contact Us/Feedback](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

[News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Business](#) | [Politics](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Lifestyle](#) | [Travel](#) | [Women](#)

[Cars](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Homes](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Yellow Pages](#)

[Help](#) | [Newsletters](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Subscribe to the Print Edition](#) | [Traffic](#) | [Weather](#) | [Wireless Delivery](#)

[About Us](#) | [Advertise in The Bee](#) | [Advertise Online](#) | [Contact Circulation Customer Service](#) | [Events](#)

[Sacramento Bee Web sites]

[Sacbee.com](#) | [SacTicket.com](#) | [Sacramento.com](#)

This article is protected by copyright and should not be printed or distributed for anything except personal use.
The Sacramento Bee, 2100 Q St., P.O. Box 15779, Sacramento, CA 95852
Phone: (916) 321-1000

Copyright © The Sacramento Bee / ver. 4