



Feast Day—December 12

Our Lady of Guadalupe

A Beautiful Lady



Juan Diego

Juan Diego was an Aztec in Mexico and a convert to the Catholic faith. On Saturday, December 9, 1531, he was walking to church for Mass when a beautiful lady appeared to him, surrounded by light. She told him she was the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mother of the true God. She wanted to have a shrine built at Tepeyac Hill so that she could show her love for the people. She said,

“Ask for my help. Here I will listen to people’s prayers, and I will help them.”

Mary then asked Juan to tell the bishop her wishes. Juan did so, but the bishop didn’t believe him. Juan returned to the lady and suggested she send to the bishop someone who spoke better. But Mary told Juan she had chosen him for this work, and she would bless him for helping her.

The second time Juan visited the bishop, the bishop told him to ask “his Lady” for a sign that proved she was the Mother of God. When Juan did so, Mary told him to return on Monday for the sign.

Her Miraculous Image

In the meantime, Juan’s uncle became very ill, and Juan had to stay home to care for him. He was unable to return on Monday for Mary’s sign. By Tuesday, his uncle was dying, so Juan set off to get a priest. On the way, he met the Holy Virgin. Embarrassed, he apologized for not meeting her. Mary replied,

“Do not let anything bother you, and do not be afraid of any illness, pain, or accident. Am I, your mother, not here? Are you not under my shadow and protection? What more could you want? Don’t worry about your uncle. He is well already.”

Mary told Juan to go to the top of a hill and gather the flowers he would find growing there. Juan knew that nothing ever grew on that rock hill, let alone in the middle of winter. However, he did as the Virgin told him and climbed the hill. At the top, he found gorgeous roses. He picked them and brought them to Mary, who arranged the roses in his tilma. She told Juan to take them to the bishop.

When the bishop saw Juan, he wanted to know what he had in his tilma. Juan opened it, letting the fragrant roses fall in a shower to the floor. You can imagine the bishop’s surprise at





◀ Jose Guadalupe Posada, *Saint Juan Diego and the Virgin image*.

seeing roses in winter. As he looked, however, the bishop saw an even greater miracle. There on Juan's tilma, a beautifully painted image began to appear. It was the Lady who had appeared to Juan!

The bishop cried out, "The Immaculate!" and knelt and with tears, asking the Blessed Mother's pardon for not believing Juan.

On that same day, Mary appeared to Juan's uncle and cured him. Uncle Bernadino went to the bishop and told how he had been cured. He also gave the bishop a message from the Virgin, saying that she would "crush

the serpent's head." The bishop did not understand the Aztec language. He heard the Aztec words for "crush the serpent" which sounded like "Guadalupe," the name of Mary's shrine in Spain. Thinking that the Virgin wanted the new shrine to have the same name, the bishop called her Our Lady of Guadalupe.



Our Lady Today

The picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe has meaningful symbols. Its main message is that Mary loves us and wants to help us. The cloak itself is made from the rough fibers of a cactus plant. If this type of material is painted on, it will not last more than 20 years. Yet the picture remains fresh and beautiful on the cloak after almost 500 years! It can be seen above the main altar in the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico.



^ *Our Lady of Guadalupe*

The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is celebrated by the Church on December 12. Do you know why that date was chosen?

1. *How can we dedicate—give ourselves wholeheartedly—to Mary?*
2. *What hidden and silent sacrifice can we perform?*
3. *How can we walk the way of complete faithfulness to Jesus and the Church?*