



Our Lady of Guadalupe

The feast in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe goes back to the 16th century. History of that period illustrates and tells the story.

A poor Indian was baptized and given the name of Juan Diego. He was a 57-year old widower and lived in a small village near Mexico City. On the morning of December 9, 1532, he was on his way to attend Mass in honor of Our Lady.

Juan was walking by a hill called Tepeyac when a cloud appeared, and within it was an Indian maiden dressed as an Aztec princess. The lady spoke to him in his own language and sent him to the Bishop of Mexico with a message. The bishop was to build a chapel in her honor where she appeared, which formerly was the site of a pagan temple.

The bishop told Juan he had doubts and would have to think about it. Later that same day, Juan encountered Mary a second time and told her he had failed in granting her request and felt he was not the person to convince the bishop of her wish. Mary told Juan he **was** the person she wanted for the task.

Juan Diego returned to the bishop the next day and repeated his request, but now the bishop asked for a sign that the apparition was real and truly from heaven. About this same time, Juan's uncle became seriously ill and Juan had to care for him and was not able to meet Our Lady. But Mary found Juan and told him his uncle would be cured and asked him to climb the hill and collect the flowers blooming there. He obeyed and found many flowers blooming in December. He filled his cloak with flowers and returned to Mary.

Mary arranged the flowers within his cloak and told him this would be the sign to present to the bishop. Once he found the bishop he opened his cloak and the bishop was presented with the miraculous imprinted image of the Virgin Mary on the flower-filled cloak.

The next day, Juan Diego's uncle was completely healed from his illness. Mary also told Juan she wanted a church built on Tepeyac Hill, and she also wanted it to be named Guadalupe.

Juan Diego lived in a hut on Tepeyac Hill next to the church and lived a solidarity life of prayer and work. He remained there until his death on December 9, 1548, 17 years **to the day** after the first apparition. He was buried in what has become the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. His cloak, with the imprint of Our Lady, has been preserved and is on display in the basilica.

Numerous miracles have been attributed to him. Juan Diego was beatified on May 6, 1990 and canonized on July 31, 2002.

News of Our Lady's apparitions caused nearly 3,000 Indians **a day** to convert to the Catholic faith.