



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Feast day December 12 (The day the image was first seen)
The Story of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Amazing Picture on the Cloak.

Juan Diego lived in a small village in Mexico near the big town called 'Mexico City'. He was a native Mexican and baptized as a Christian when he was 57 years old. He was very poor and was a widower. On Saturday morning December 9, 1531, he started out to walk to Church to go to Mass on a feast of Our Lady.

Juan Diego was walking by a hill when he heard a sound like the singing and warbling of birds. To his great surprise a beautiful cloud appeared and within this cloud there stood an extraordinarily beautiful young woman, dressed like an Aztec princess. He was even more surprised when the lady spoke to him in his own local language. She had a message for Juan; She needed him to go and see the bishop of Mexico and to tell the bishop to build a chapel in the place where she had appeared.

Juan, very surprised, obediently went to find the bishop. But things were not too easy as the bishop was also most surprised by the message.... and wasn't sure whether to believe Juan, or what had happened to him!

Now there were bad things happening in Mexico at that time, and the Spanish who had invaded the land were not behaving at all well either. For a long time the bishop had been praying to Our Lady to bring peace and understanding between the original people of Mexico and their Spanish invaders. He had asked Our Lady to send him a sign that She had heard his prayers and would bring peace and understanding between the peoples. He told Her, in his prayers, that he would like to receive roses that grew in his home town a very long way away in Spain. He knew that only a miracle could provide these, but it would be the sign that Our Lady had heard his prayers and would bring peace to Mexico.

The bishop told Juan to ask the lady to give him a sign to prove who she was and that building a church on the hill, where a pagan temple had once stood, was what she really wanted.

About this same time Juan's uncle became seriously ill. This led him to try to avoid the lady and her message, as he was trying to care for his uncle the best he could, and was very poor. But the lady needed her message to be heard, and even though Juan didn't immediately take the bishop's message straight back to her, she found him, nevertheless.





The lady assured Juan that he must not worry, as his uncle would recover. She earnestly needed Juan to carry her own message back to the bishop. To prove this, in the frost of the middle of winter, she provided roses on a bush for Juan to pick and to carry to the bishop in his cape. (A cape is like a coat but without arms. It can also be used as a blanket and is locally known as a 'tilma'.)

Juan was very surprised to see roses blooming in the frost in the middle of winter! He picked them as the lady asked, and went back to the bishop. Juan was now determined to see the bishop even if he was busy! When he managed to get close to him he opened his cloak and the roses fell to the ground. The bishop sank to his knees in great surprise... Not only was it not normal for the roses to bloom in the middle of winter, but these were not just any rose, but roses from Spain! These roses were a sign of answer to his prayers! The bishop then gasped again as he saw that on Juan's now empty cloak, there had appeared a most beautiful image of the Virgin Mary. This image was exactly as she had appeared to Juan. It was December 12, 1531. The bishop was astonished. He built the church. The news of the appearance of Our Lady and of the beautiful picture She had left, spread.

The persecution of the native people by the Spanish invaders stopped. As a result of the bishop's prayers to Our Lady for peace, the obedience of Juan Diego, the roses and the image of Our Lady on the cloak, millions of native people came to know Our Lady and became Christian.

Juan Diego's cloak is made of cactus plant fibre that should have rotted away within 25 years. But it has not decayed at all even nearly five hundred years later! It can still be seen on display in the church in Mexico today! It is believed impossible to paint such a fine image on this coarse material... but Our Lady found a way! The surrounding light beams are in brilliant colour whilst Our Lady herself is delicate and beautiful. A photographer enlarged a photograph of the eyes Our Lady and found within the picture that the images of Juan Diego and the bishop are still reflected in the eyes of Our Lady, just as she had seen them!

If you ever go to Mexico, see if you can visit it!

This is what Our Lady was telling Juan;

'I know you feel very small and unworthy, but listen to me. This must not frighten you, don't be worried or distressed. Stop worrying about everything and how you will manage. I am with you as your mother. I will protect you. I will be what keeps you going, I hear you praying to me! Stop worrying about everything, be happy and trust me!'

