

San Juan Diego

Feast Day: December 9

All Grades



A beautiful picture of Mary can be seen on a cloak above the main altar in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. The Cloak belonged to Juan Diego an Aztec who lived more than 450 years ago.

Juan Diego and his wife, Maria Lucia, converts, walked 14 miles to religious instructions and Mass every Saturday and Sunday. On December 9, 1531, when Juan was a 57-year-old widower, as he walked to Mass, a beautiful lady dressed as an Aztec appeared. She told him she was the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mother of the true God. She desired to have a shrine there at Tepeyac Hill so that she could show love for her people. She said, "Ask for my help. Here I will listen to people's prayers and I will help them." Mary asked Juan to tell the bishop of her desire.

The bishop didn't believe him, so Juan returned to the lady and suggested she send a better speaker. Mary told Juan that she chose him for this work and that she would bless him for helping her. Juan revisited the bishop. This time the bishop told him to ask his lady for a sign that she was the Mother of God. When Juan did, Mary told him to return the next day for a sign.

The same day Juan's Uncle Bernardino became ill, and Juan stayed home to care for him. When his uncle was dying. Juan

went for a priest. On the way he met the Holy Virgin. He apologized for not meeting her the day before. Mary replied, "Now listen to me. Do not let anything bother you, and do not be afraid of any illness, pain, or accident. Am I not here, your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? What more could you want? Don't worry about your uncle. He is well already."

Mary then sent Juan to the top of the hill to gather the flowers growing there. Juan knew that nothing grew on that rocky hill, let alone in winter. However, he did as the lady said. Juan found gorgeous roses! He picked them and brought them to Mary, who arranged them in his cloak that Maria Lucia had made from cactus fibers. Mary told Juan to take them to the bishop.

When the bishop saw Juan, he asked what he had in his tilma. Juan opened it, letting the roses fall. Imagine the bishop's surprise at seeing roses in winter! Yet he saw an even greater miracle: on Juan's cloak a beautiful, life-size image began to appear. Juan gasped. It was his Lady! The bishop called out "The Immaculate!" Then he knelt and with tears asked the Blessed Mother's pardon for not believing Juan.

On that same day, Mary appeared to Juan's uncle and cured him. Uncle Bernardino went to the bishop and told how he had been cured.

Juan Diego remained poor, simple, humble and devoted to the Eucharist. He spent the next 17 years traveling throughout central Mexico, bringing others to the faith and delivering Guadalupe's message that Mary loves us and wants to help us. He answered his call to mission with humility and love dedicating his life to letting others know about the love of God's mother for us and of Jesus Christ compassion for all. Juan Diego was beatified in 1990 and canonized in 2002 by Pope John Paul II.