



DECEMBER HOLY HERO

ST. JUAN DIEGO (1474-1548)- Feast Day Dec 9

And OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE- Feast Day Dec 12

I rose before dawn on December 9, 1531 to begin my fifteen mile walk to daily Mass. My name is Juan Diego, and as an Aztec Indian, I once knew only the false, pagan gods that were worshiped in my country of Mexico until I was taught the true, Christian religion from Spanish, Franciscan missionaries. As I passed Tepeyac Hill, I heard a woman's voice calling my name. I quickly climbed the rocky slope and could not believe my eyes! Even though the sun had not yet risen, beams of golden light shone upon a beautiful lady dressed as an Aztec princess. She told me she was the Virgin Mary, the Mother of the one, true God. She said, "Tell the bishop I desire a church to be built in this place so that I may be present to help and defend your people and those who are suffering and in pain."

I did as she said, and although the bishop was kind and patient with this humble farmer, he was doubtful, and asked me to bring proof of the Lady's identity. Before I could return to the Lady, I found out my sick uncle was near death. As I hurried to get a priest, the Lady met me on my way and told me my uncle had been cured. She asked me to climb the hill where we first met. I was shocked to find beautiful roses growing through the rocky, frozen soil. I gathered the miraculous flowers in my *tilma*, or cloak, and took them at once to the bishop. In the bishop's house I let down my tilma and the roses fell to the floor. But an even *MORE* wonderful sign appeared! The bishop fell to his knees as he saw the image of Our Lady imprinted on my tilma, exactly as she appeared to me on Tepeyac Hill.

Soon after, a church was built on the site. News of the miraculous picture spread and thousands converted to Christianity. I spent the rest of my life in prayer and penance in a small hut next to the church. There, I told my story to the many who came to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Juan Diego was canonized on July 31, 2002, by Pope John Paul II. He praised St. Juan for his simple faith and pictured him as a model of humility for all of us. Today, in Mexico City, a large, new Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe stands to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary. Millions of pilgrims come each year from all over the world to look in awe at the miraculous image on the tilma of Juan Diego.