

Meet Juan Diego! • Saints for kids

LIVED: Juan Diego was an Indian born in Mexico in 1474; his Indian name, Cuauhtlatoatzin, means “the talking eagle.” He and his wife were among the first converts to Christianity. The story of his encounter with the Virgin Mary takes place in December 1521, about ten years after the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire. He died in 1548.

MISSION: Juan received a special mission from the Virgin Mary to tell the bishop that she wanted him to build a chapel in her honor. But his mission was about much more than building a church of bricks or wood. By following the instruction of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Juan Diego helped build a Church where the native people of Mexico would feel welcome.

ADVENTURES: Once upon a time, there was a good and humble Aztec Indian man named Juan Diego who lived in Cuauhtitlan, in what is now Mexico. He had just recently converted to the Catholic faith and every morning, he would wake up at dawn to walk fifteen miles to daily Mass.

One fine morning as Juan passed by a large hill named Tepeyac, he heard some beautiful music that made him stop in his tracks. Then he heard a woman’s voice say clearly, “Juan! Little Juan Diego!” He immediately climbed the hill, at the top of which he found a beautiful lady dressed like an Indian princess. She smiled at him and let him know she was the ever-virgin Mother of God, and that she desired that he go to the Bishop and tell him that a church should be built in the place where she stood.

Juan was unsure whether a big, important man like the bishop would listen to a small and lowly Indian like him, but the beautiful Lady encouraged him. So Juan did as he was told, and

met with the bishop on two separate visits. But as he had feared, the good bishop was cautious about believing him. The bishop asked Juan to ask the Lady for a sign.

Juan relayed this message to Our Lady, and she told him to return the next morning and she would give him a sign for the Bishop. But the next morning, Juan's uncle was very sick. In fact, Juan feared that his uncle was dying. Instead of meeting the Lady as she had requested, Juan hurried to find a priest so his Uncle could receive the sacraments one last time before he died.

But as he passed by the hill at Tepeyac, Juan again saw Our Lady. He apologized for not meeting with her as promised, and told her that his uncle was very sick and he was on his way to get the priest.

Our Lady then said, "My little son, do not be distressed. Am I not here with you who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Your uncle will not die at this time. There is no reason for you to engage a priest, for his health is restored at this moment. He is quite well. Go to the top of the hill and cut the flowers that are growing there. Bring them then to me."

It was winter and too cold for flowers to be growing, but Juan did as he was told. There, at the top of the hill, he found the most beautiful roses he had ever seen!

He quickly cut them and brought them back to Mary, who arranged them with her own hands in his tilma, or mantle. She then sent him to show the bishop the sign he requested and remind him of her desire that a church be built. Juan, eager to show the bishop the beautiful sign, scurried away.

Standing before the bishop and all the important ambassadors, Juan proudly opened his tilma to show them the miraculous flowers. The beautiful flowers fell before the bishop, and the bishop and ambassadors gasped and fell to their knees in

reverent awe.

But it was not the flowers that they were looking at. They were looking at Juan's tilma. Confused, Juan looked down at his tilma as well.

There, printed miraculously, was the image of the beautiful Lady that he had seen on Tepeyak Hill. The bishop had his sign.

Juan later learned from his uncle that while he was gone, a beautiful woman surrounded by a soft glow had cured him of his sickness. She told his uncle, "Call me and call my image Santa Maria de Guadalupe."

The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe remains miraculously preserved on Juan's tilma, which is on display in the cathedral that was built on the site of the apparitions; millions of people visit it every year. It has been studied by many church officials and scientists, who all agree that the image could not have been made by human hands at the time that Juan Diego lived.

Devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe has spread far and wide since she first appeared to Juan Diego nearly five hundred years ago.

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