

St. Juan Diego
December 9



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1474–1548 • Mexico

In Mexico, an Aztec boy was born named Cuauhtlatoatzin, which means “the Eagle-who-Speaks.” Raised by his uncle, he married a young Aztec woman and lived humbly as a farmer. Like all Aztecs, the couple worshiped many gods. But the false Aztec gods were very different from the one, true God. They were violent and demanded human sacrifice.

Then, the Spaniard Hernán Cortés came and, along with him, the Franciscan friars. The friars spoke of Jesus, who loved us so much that He died for us. The love of Jesus spoke to Cuauhtlatoatzin’s heart, and he and his wife were some of the first Aztecs to be baptized. They took the names Juan Diego and Maria Luisa. When Maria Luisa died, Juan Diego returned to live with his uncle. He lived a simple life of prayer, and early every Saturday morning, he made the hour-long walk to the Franciscan church near Mexico City to hear Mass in honor of Our Lady.

One Saturday morning, as he passed by Tepeyac Hill, he heard a gentle voice calling his name. Quickly, he climbed the hill, where he found the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. The woman told him that she was Mary, the Mother of God, and that she wished him to go to the bishop and ask him to build a church in her honor.

Juan Diego did as Our Lady asked. But he was just a humble man, so the bishop did not believe him and asked for a sign. On his return, Our Lady promised Juan Diego she would give him a sign the next day. The next morning, however, Juan Diego’s uncle fell terribly ill, and Juan Diego stayed home. Finally, he went to fetch a priest to give his uncle last rites.

Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego on the road and promised that his uncle would be all right. Then, she pointed to the top of Tepeyac Hill and told him to gather the roses he would find there. These he gathered and showed to the bishop. But when he opened his tilma (a cloak), the roses tumbled to the ground, and imprinted on his tilma was a miraculous image of Our Lady. The bishop fell on his knees and gave thanks to Our Lady for her sign. Juan Diego returned home and found his uncle cured, just as Our Lady had promised.

The bishop built Mary’s church on Tepeyac Hill, which housed Mary’s miraculous image. Beside the church was a little hermitage for Juan Diego, who spent the rest of his life welcoming pilgrims to the church. Many miraculous healings occurred to those who prayed before Mary’s image, and millions of Mexican Indians converted to the Catholic Faith. St. Juan Diego, help me humbly serve Jesus and Mary!