

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe – December 12, 2025 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.  
Saint Rose Academy, Birmingham, Alabama – 9:30am School Festive Mass – 770 words

*Mi corazón en amarte eternamente se ocupe – y mi lengua en alabarte, ¡Madre mía de Guadalupe!*

Today, it brings us great joy to join to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe – one of our Blessed Mother’s most beloved titles, especially dear to our brothers and sisters from Mexico, but important for us all, throughout the Americas. The story of Our Lady of Guadalupe teaches us that God sees every person – no matter how small, poor, or ordinary – and that he works through people who trust and obey him.

Almost 500 years ago, a terrible calamity was happening in Europe: a priest named Martin Luther left the Church and began a movement that attracted hundreds of thousands of people; another Catholic man named John Calvin did likewise. The king of England – Henry VIII – split from the Catholic Church and led the majority of the English people to do the same. All in all, millions of people left the Catholic Church.

Meanwhile, Spanish explorers were traveling across the Atlantic to find new lands. They brought Franciscan, Dominican, and Jesuit priests with them to teach the pagan peoples the Catholic faith. When they arrived in Mexico, they found the great Aztec Empire, a fascinating civilization with a powerful ruler named Moctezuma over them. He shed much blood and led his people in a way that was very offensive to God.

The Spaniards conquered the Aztec Empire in the year 1521 and continued to try to convert the Aztec people to Catholicism. But some of the conquerors gave in to greed and other forms of corruption; they gave a bad example; consequently, they were not very successful. Some people did convert, though, and two of them were a humble farmer named Juan Diego and his wife Maria Lucia. They were baptized Catholic in 1525.

Juan Diego and his wife lived near a hill called “Tepeyac”, which today is part of Mexico City. They went to church daily and continued learning the faith; they were excellent Catholics. And then one day – it was December 9, 1531, to be exact – something truly extraordinary happened. The Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to Juan Diego while he was on his way to church. She told him she wanted a church built on the Tepeyac hill!

Now Juan Diego was not a rich or powerful man; again, he was a simple, hard-working, and humble farmer. He could not believe that the Mother of God would appear to him! But she did, and she called him “my little son”! She said that she wanted to show her love to all people in the church that would be built. And she told him to go tell the bishop her wish. Juan Diego doubted if the bishop would even listen to him.

Nevertheless, he trusted and he obeyed. The bishop was named Juan de Zumárraga. Juan Diego approached him nervously and shared what Mary said. The bishop was skeptical, but told him to come back. And Mary did send him back a couple of days later with a special sign: she had him gather beautiful roses from Spain that were miraculously growing on the Tepeyac hill in the middle of winter! Juan Diego carried them in his cloak.

And when he arrived at the bishop’s house and offered him the miraculous fresh roses from the Blessed Mother, something even more amazing happened: on the inside of his cloak, there was a miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin Mary – an image that we still have today. It was as if God himself had painted it there! At that point, the bishop no longer doubted, and soon after, the first church on the hill was built, as Mary requested.

What followed was even more amazing, however. Remember what I said about how millions were leaving the Church back in Europe? And that the Spaniards were having very little success converting people in the New World? But after Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared and

that first little church was built? Within 10 years, nine million people in Mexico were baptized Catholic! And the little church is now a great shrine.

God sees everyone and has compassion on all. Throughout history, he has sent his mother and ours – the Blessed Virgin Mary – on special missions to reveal his love and help people open their hearts to him. That is what Our Lady of Guadalupe did – with the cooperation of the humble, trusting, and obedient man whom we now call *Saint* Juan Diego. We are bound to thank God for sharing his love with us; for giving us his mother to be our mother, too. And we thank him for our Catholic faith, asking him to keep us firm in it always.