

# CLIFF NOTES

*by Fr. Clifford Smith*

## **December 12<sup>th</sup> Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe ... Patroness of the Americas**

In 1531 a "Lady from Heaven" appeared to a humble Native American at Tepeyac, a hill northwest of what is now Mexico City, to Blessed Juan Diego, a native Indian. She identified herself as the ever-virgin Holy Mary, Mother of the True God for whom we live, of the Creator of all things, Lord of heaven and the earth.

She asked that Juan Diego tell the local Bishop her wish that a church to be built on the site. When the Bishop hesitated, and requested her for a sign, Our Lady of Guadalupe sent Her native messenger to the top of the hill in mid-December to gather roses for the Bishop.

After complying to the Bishop's request for a sign, She also left for us an image of herself imprinted miraculously on the native's tilma, a poor quality cactus-fiber cloak, which should have deteriorated in 20 years but shows no sign of decay 475 years later and still defies all scientific explanations of its origin.

Her message of love and compassion, and her universal promise of help and protection to all humankind, as well as the story of the apparitions, are described in the "Nican Mopohua", a 16th century document written in the native Nahuatl language of Mexico.

There is reason to believe that at Tepeyac Mary came in her glorified body, and her actual physical hands rearranged the roses in Juan Diego's tilma, which makes this apparition very special.

An incredible list of miracles, cures and interventions are attributed to Her intercession. Yearly, an estimated 14 million visit her Basilica, in Mexico City, making it the most popular Marian shrine and the most visited Catholic sanctuary in the whole world.

Altogether 25 popes have officially honored Our Lady of Guadalupe. His Holiness John Paul II visited her Sanctuary four times: on his first apostolic trip outside Rome as Pope in 1979, and again in 1990, 1999 and 2002.

The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is celebrated on December 12th. In 1999, Pope John Paul II, in his homily from the Solemn Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, during his third visit to the sanctuary, declared the date of December the 12th as a Liturgical Holy Day, officially naming Our Lady of Guadalupe the Patroness of the Americas ... the whole Western Hemisphere.

During the same visit Pope John Paul II entrusted the cause of life to her loving protection, and placed under her motherly care the innocent lives of children, especially those who are in danger of not being born.

Although the Virgin of Guadalupe is a cultural symbol of significant importance to the Mexican identity, she is meant to be honored by the whole of North, Central and South American as the only Marian Apparition in this hemisphere, and Patroness and Intercessor of all people of the Americas regardless of culture or country of origin.

**She is also the patroness of the Diocese of Dallas,  
and our Cathedral is named in her honor.**