

SAINTS ALIVE! DECEMBER 12: OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE, SYMBOL OF CATHOLIC MEXICANS



Juan Diego was a peasant from Mexico who had a vision of the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe. The story goes that Juan Diego heard a voice calling him. He saw a young Indian maiden who instructed him to tell the bishop to construct a church on that site. Juan Diego was unsuccessful in persuading the bishop until Mary told Juan to gather roses that grew, unseasonably, at her feet. When he returned to the bishop and opened his cape, Juan revealed a full-color image of the Lady mysteriously imprinted on the rough fabric.

The apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe marked the birth of the Mexican people. With her dark skin and Indian features, Our Lady of Guadalupe offers an image of divine compassion for a demoralized people. Mexicans were demoralized because their country had been conquered by Spain and had lost its independence.

Where do the dispirited denizens of today's world find hope? Here are two answers.

A nation has a duty to immigrants and refugees to provide hope and welcome the foreigner out of charity and respect for the human person. People have the right to immigrate and thus governments are asked to accommodate this right to the greatest extent possible, especially a financially-blessed government such as America. While it would be colonially egotistical to argue that a developed country could be the savior for another country's refugees and economically poor, a country that is financially blessed is called to provide whatever mercy it can to the disadvantaged of the world.

A second source of hope is through prayer. Prayer is the most powerful weapon a person has. A community's collective prayer contains the sacred power to overcome the secular instruments of violence. This is not to suggest that that prayer by itself is the answer. Rather, prayer accompanied by a commensurate, peaceful action, e.g., peace vigils and community organizing, brings change. Made wiser through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and guided by the light of our faith (made clear through prayer), we now stride forward on the path of justice, confident in our direction.

We can find great comfort in praying to the saints to intercede with God for our petitions. Mexicans find hope through the greatest saint of all, Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us and for hope for a world where justice prevails and peace reigns down upon us.



ARCHDIOCESE
OF PORTLAND
IN OREGON

Office of Life, Justice, and Peace