



*Our Lady of
Guadalupe*



FEAST DAY
TOOLKIT
2018



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¡Ay, Virgencita Morena! Guadalupe, mi esperanza, del Cielo tu amor alcanza para aliviar toda pena; cuídame con tu alma Buena y dame en esta ocasión tu sagrada bendición pues con cariño constante, para venir de migrante, te traje mi corazón.

Oh, young, dark-skinned virgin! Guadalupe, my hope, your love reaches down from the heavens and alleviates my worries; take care of me with your good soul and give me your sacred blessing, your constant affection, I came as an immigrant, I brought you my heart.

- "Virgen de los Migrantes," prayer recited at the [Second Tepeyac of North America](#)

The Story of Our Lady of Guadalupe

December 12 is the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. She is Mexico's patron saint, Patron of the Americas, and a symbol of love and strength for Latin Americans and believers across the world.

In 1531, on the hill of Tepeyac in Tenochtitlán (now Mexico City), the Virgin Mary appeared as an indigenous woman to Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin. Juan Diego was an indigenous farmer, and Our Lady of Guadalupe visited him four times between December 9 and December 12. In his native language, she told him, "Let your face and heart not be troubled, don't be afraid ... Am I not here who am your mother? Are you not under my shadow and bosom?"

Our Lady of Guadalupe asked for a church to be constructed in her honor in that very place. There, she would be a mother to the people, console them in their troubles, hear their struggles and prayers, and give them her compassion and her peace.

Juan Diego went to the archbishop of Mexico City, Juan de Zumárraga, and told him what had happened. At first, the archbishop did not believe. With the encouragement of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Juan Diego revisited him to ask a second time. The archbishop told Juan Diego to ask the Virgin for a sign to prove that she was the Mother of God.

Our Lady of Guadalupe instructed Juan Diego to go to the hill of Tepeyac to collect roses, even though it was December, when roses did not grow. He collected the roses in his tilma (cloak) and went to the archbishop. When he opened his tilma the flowers fell to the floor, revealing on the tilma a miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe exactly as she had appeared. The archbishop immediately believed, and construction of Our Lady's church commenced.



The Tilma

The image of the Virgin on Juan Diego's tilma is preserved today at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. It is the most visited Catholic pilgrimage site in the world, with up to twenty million believers visiting per year.



The image is rich with symbolism. It draws not only upon the Bible but upon the culture and symbols of indigenous people like Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin, speaking directly to them. For example, in Tenochtitlán, the color of the Virgin's mantle was reserved for royalty, so the miraculous image shows that the Virgin is royal. The flowers on her dress are glyphs, carrying messages about truth, civilization, and life which indigenous people would have immediately understood.

In addition, it is incredibly significant that Our Lady of Guadalupe is mestiza, with both European and indigenous features. She speaks to and represents those who are not from the dominant culture, making her truly the mother of all people.



CNS/Billy Hardiman/The Catholic Sun

This image has miraculous properties. The tilma, made of cactus fiber that should have only lasted a few decades, remains in excellent condition today. Furthermore, tests have shown that the image does not have any brush strokes, nor are there any traces of natural or mineral coloring.

Even further, scientists have found that Our Lady's eyes contain a microscopic image of thirteen figures, believed to be the scene of Juan Diego opening his tilma in front of the archbishop and the others in the room.

A bomb exploded near the tilma in 1921, and although its surroundings were destroyed, the tilma itself remained entirely intact.

Our Lady of Guadalupe and Migration



CNS/Carlos Jasso/Reuters

Our Lady of Guadalupe is a reminder that God accepts all peoples and extends His love to those who face poverty and hardship. Just as Jesus was born in a stable, Our Lady chose to reveal her portrait on a humble cactus fiber tilma. She appeared to an indigenous man as indigenous herself, making her a mother and protector for all, especially those who are marginalized, rejected, and ignored.

Although Our Lady is deeply important to Mexicans, her influence extends far beyond Mexico. There are shrines to her all over the world, including the Philippines, Kenya, and South Korea. Our Lady of Guadalupe has given strength to generations of people; her image has been invoked as a symbol of strength in struggles such as the Mexican War of Independence and the United Farm Workers movement.

Today, the Virgin holds special meaning for many migrants: she is present in homes, churches, shrines, and murals across the United States. As they face xenophobia, discrimination, and threats of detention and deportation, Our Lady is a source of strength for migrants and a confirmation of their human dignity. Just as she promised to Juan Diego, Our Lady of Guadalupe witnesses and eases the suffering of her children. Anthropologist [Alyshia Gálvez](#) explains that Guadalupan devotion inspires and guides undocumented immigrants in the United States to advocate for their rights. Our Lady is also an important symbol of cultural and religious identity, solidarity, and pride.

In the words of theologian [Jeanette Rodriguez](#), “Like flowers bursting through the earth seeking sunlight, people turn to Guadalupe for nourishment, acceptance, and direction in a world that ignores them.

Migration Facts

The current administration has made sweeping changes to American immigration policy, which has impacted many migrants and their families.

- An estimated **11.3 million undocumented immigrants** were living in the United States as of 2016. They pay around 11.64 billion dollars in taxes each year.
- During the last decade, more than 7.4 million immigrants have been welcomed into the United States as **naturalized citizens**.
- Children are being increasingly separated from their parents, causing them severe trauma and distress. In 2017, more than **5 million children** in the U.S. were at risk of separation.
- Efforts have been made to end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), leaving the futures of **700,000 young people** who came to this country as children uncertain.
- There were **323,591 people** in immigration detention in 2017, and new ICE policy will cause more pregnant women to be detained in dangerous conditions.
- The administration has revoked the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) of **over 400,000 migrants** from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, Sudan, and Honduras, forcing them to move to countries that lack the resources to adequately handle their return.
- Common misconceptions hold that people migrate to the United States to get rich or take advantage of the country. In truth, they are escaping from poverty, violence, and persecution. Unaccompanied children, many from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, arrive in the U.S. fleeing gang recruitment and often hoping to reunite with family here.
- Undocumented immigrants also pay a wide range of taxes, including sales taxes where applicable and property taxes – directly if they own and indirectly if they rent. **Estimates** are that undocumented migrants pay \$11.74 billion every year in state and local taxes, and the 1.3 million young undocumented immigrants eligible for DACA alone contribute an estimated \$1.7 billion per year

No matter what their situation, migrants are human beings who deserve protection and compassion.

Celebrating Her Feast Day

How is it traditionally celebrated?

Novena : Many believers prepare for the Virgin's feast day with a novena, or a special prayer devotion each evening for the nine days leading up to December 12.



CNS/David Maung

Pilgrimage: Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims come to the Basilica of Guadalupe from near and far to worship, pray, and celebrate Our Lady's feast day. Many ride bikes, walk, or run relays.



CNS/David Maung

Re-enactment: Many communities re-enact Our Lady of Guadalupe's apparition to Saint Juan Diego as part of their feast day celebrations.



CNS/Anthony Alonso Northwest Indiana Catholic

Celebration: An Aztec style of dance is often performed by Conchero dancers, and believers sing [Las Mañanitas](#), a Mexican birthday song. In addition to Mass, many parishes hold colorful parties and serve traditional foods.



CNS/David Maung

Celebrating Her Feast Day

How can I support migrants on this day?

God calls us to welcome the stranger, and Our Lady of Guadalupe reminds us that God's unfailing love encompasses all of us, regardless of immigration status, race, nationality, and all other differences. As we celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we honor the millions of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in the United States and across the world who live in fear because of their immigration statuses and the current political climate around migration. **On this day, you can...**

Listen

- Join a feast day celebration hosted by Latin American community members.
- Hold an event of your own (ex. a panel or a reception) that uplifts the voices and stories of Latin American or migrant parishioners.
- Be sure that your feast day Mass highlights the importance of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Latin Americans and migrants and involves parishioners from those communities.
- Incorporate some traditional elements above into your celebration.

Educate

- Talk to parishioners and friends about Catholic Social Teaching around migration and Our Lady of Guadalupe's message.
- Share information about the current issues around migration in the United States and discuss ways to help.

Give

- Donate money or requested items to help immigrants and refugees through your local [Catholic Charities](#).
- Reach out to your local Catholic Charities about ways to volunteer your time to help migrants in your community.

Advocate

- Tell your elected leaders that you support immigrants and the programs that help them, including DACA and TPS. Mail letters, make phone calls, or meet with their staff. You could even invite them to your celebration.
- Use social media or write a Letter to the Editor to voice your support for migrants. Explain why Our Lady of Guadalupe's feast day is an important reminder to love and advocate for immigrants and refugees.



Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe

Our Lady of Guadalupe,
Hear the prayers of your children
As you promised to San Juan Diego.
Ease their suffering and fill them with your unfailing love.

Blessed Mother,
Bring solace to those across the world forced from their homes
Fleeing poverty, violence, and strife.
Protect them in their tribulations,
Strengthen them as they build new lives,
Fill our aching world with your grace and compassion.

Mother of All,
You see beauty and holiness in each of us:
Open the hearts of those who cannot yet see
The dignity of your children seeking refuge.
Unite us to welcome the stranger in your name,
Grant us the courage to break down walls that divide us,
And guide us as we advocate for justice and peace. AMEN.

"Que las bendiciones de Dios desciendan sobre ustedes y los conserven siempre; la bendición de Dios Padre que les ama con eterno amor, la bendición de Dios Hijo que fue llamado del exilio en Egipto para ser nuestro Salvador, y la bendición de Dios Espíritu Santo que les guía para extender el Reinado de Jesucristo dondequiera que estén. Que María de Guadalupe, nuestra Madre, los lleve seguros a su hogar."

- Ya No Somos Extranjeros: Juntos en el Camino de la Esperanza, Carta Pastoral de los Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos y México sobre la migración

"And may the blessing of the Almighty God come down on you and be with you forever: the blessing of God the Father, who loves you with an everlasting love, the blessing of God the Son, who was called out of exile in Egypt to be our Savior, and the blessing of God the Holy Spirit, who guides you to extend Christ's reign wherever you go. And may Mary of Guadalupe, our mother, bring you safely home."

- Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope, A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Washington, D.C.