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Guadalupe Relic to Visit National Shrine


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June 19, 2003

Portion of St. Juan Diego's Tilma on nationwide tour



Thousands of the faithful are expected to turn out in cities around the United States as the Tilma of Tepeyac Tour brings a piece of St. Juan Diego's tilma – the cloth that holds the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe – to more than a dozen dioceses around the country. The May to December 2003 tour was organized by the [Apostolate for Holy Relics \(AHR\)](#) and is cosponsored by the [Knights of Columbus](#). The [Family Rosary](#) apostolate is providing Rosaries for those who venerate the image during the tour.

The relic will be at the National Shrine Aug. 7-8 for the Knights of Columbus Eucharistic Congress. The Archdiocese of Washington will also sponsor a Mass with the relic Aug. 9 at 2

p.m. ([see schedule](#)).

The faithful believe that the image on the tilma, or cloak, of a poor Indian named Juan Diego was miraculously created by the Virgin Mary in 1531. The image, which continues to baffle scientists, is among the most recognizable religious symbols in Latin America, and devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe is a favorite of Catholics throughout the Western Hemisphere.

The relic, presumed to be the only one in the United States, is a small portion of Juan Diego's tilma that was given to Archbishop John Cantwell of Los Angeles by the Archbishop Luis Maria Martinez of Mexico City in 1941. It has been in the archive of the Los Angeles archdiocese since 1981. Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles, authorized the loan of the relic to the AHR. The tour opened in Denver's Immaculate Conception Cathedral May 30, and will end at New York City's Cathedral of St. Patrick Dec. 7. Other stops will include the Basilica of the National Shrine of Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C.

(see [schedule](#)), and the Cathedrals in Palm Beach, Dallas, and Detroit. A complete itinerary is available on the [AHR website](#).

St. Juan Diego was canonized July 31, 2002 by Pope John Paul II before more than 5 million people. Some 20 million people visit the shrine in Mexico City annually, making it the most popular Marian pilgrimage site in the world.

"The tour will promote devotion to the Mother of God, especially through devotion to the Rosary in this year proclaimed by the Pope to be the Year of the Rosary," said AHR Vice President Andrew Walther. "We hope that this pilgrimage will give those people who cannot go on pilgrimage to Mexico City an opportunity to share in the graces and blessings bestowed by the Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Mother of God and the Empress of the Americas."

"We also hope that people will take the faith and devotion of St. Juan Diego as a model for their own lives," he said.

The Reliquary



The reliquary or locket that is suspended on the chain on the statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe contains five relics. The Archbishop of Mexico City gave them to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in 1941 in appreciation of the important official visit of Los Angeles Archbishop Cantwell to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. His pilgrimage helped to reopen doors between the two countries that had been closed by the repressive Mexican Socialist government that had brutalized the Catholic faithful, including the murder of priests.

CENTER: Relic of Juan Diego's tilma, which contains the miraculous imprint of Our Lady of Guadalupe of Mexico. Displayed in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, the tilma is the most recognized Christian symbols in the

Western Hemisphere.

UPPER RIGHT: Relic of St. Francis Borgia. Duke Francis of Gandia was a young Christian nobleman of the famous Borgia family, cousin to Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. He was also a true man of God. When the duke's wife died, he gave his office to his eldest son and became a Jesuit priest in 1550. He practiced great humility and accomplished great works for God, including spreading the Society of Jesus across Spain and Portugal. He was known as "the duke turned Jesuit" and was called upon to speak, leaving strong impressions on many highborn youth who followed him into the Order. In 1566, St. Francis was made the Superior General of the Jesuits and sent missionaries all over the world, spreading the faith to many lands.

LOWER RIGHT: Relic of St. Teresa of Avila. Born of noble parents in Spain, Teresa joined the Carmelite Order and reformed it, and built many convents. She lived a life of constant prayer and brought many souls to Jesus. After an apparition of Jesus and many saints, her soul was taken to heaven in 1582. St. Teresa, renowned for her writings on mystical theology, is one of three women who are doctors of the Church.

LOWER LEFT: Relic of St. Francis Xavier. Born of noble parents in 1506, Francis became a teacher. He joined St. Ignatius Loyola and four other young men and formed the Society of Jesus to work for the conversion of souls. Francis went to India and Japan where he converted thousands of pagans until his death in 1552. He is the Patron of Foreign Missions.

UPPER LEFT: Relic of St. Ignatius Loyola. Ignatius was a soldier who undertook a long recovery from a badly broken leg. At that time he read a book about the lives of the saints and decided to change his life to one of service in the name of Jesus. In Paris, he founded the Jesuit Order to teach, educate, and evangelize during the Protestant Reformation when many were falling away from the Church. He even sent Jesuits to bring the faith to the Indians of the New World. Ignatius was almost totally blind when he died at the age of 65 in 1556.

The Story of Our Lady of Guadalupe



On Saturday morning, Dec. 9, 1531, Juan Diego was walking to Mass at a church several miles from his home, near modern day Mexico City. As he passed Tepeyac Hill, along his journey, he heard the sounds of birds singing and, at the top of the hill, saw a beautiful, young woman. As Juan approached, the woman called his name and he recognized her as the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God.

She asked him to go to the local bishop, Juan Zumarraga, and tell him that she desired a church to be built at the base of Tepeyac Hill in her honor. Juan did as he was told, but Bishop Zumarraga was understandably skeptical. He politely asked Juan to return to discuss the issue further at a later time.

Disappointed, Juan returned to Tepeyac Hill and told the Virgin what happened. She told him to return to the bishop again the next day, December 10, and repeat her plea. Juan did as instructed, but Bishop Zumarraga remained doubtful and asked Juan to bring him a sign to prove that the Blessed Mother had made this request of him.

Juan went back to Tepeyac Hill with the bishop's message and Mary pledged that she would provide him the requested sign the following morning. However, Juan's uncle fell seriously ill and he devoted all the next day, December 11, to his care. On the morning of December 12, as his uncle's condition worsened, Juan took leave to ask a priest to give his uncle a sacramental anointing.

Deliberately taking a route around Tepeyac Hill, the Blessed Virgin appeared and told him not to worry about his uncle's health. Mary directed him to gather roses atop the hill, which were blooming despite the fact that it was winter. Juan obeyed and the Virgin delicately arranged the flowers in his tilma, as a proof of her request, for the bishop.

When he was permitted to see Bishop Zumarraga, Juan opened his garment and declared that Mary had sent the requested sign.

The bishop and those in his company immediately dropped to their knees: a colorful image of the Virgin was revealed on the tilma as the roses tumbled to the floor.

A chapel was built at Tepeyac Hill, and two basilicas have successively been erected. The tilma has been venerated there for more than 470 years since. The cactus fiber cloth of the tilma should have naturally disintegrated within a few years. It remains intact however, and has survived a nitric acid spill in the 1790s and a bomb blast in the 1920s.

Science has confirmed what the faithful have always known: the origin of the image cannot be explained in natural terms. The image was created without paint or dyes. The lack of brushstrokes or tracing makes its origin inexplicable.

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