

The Silver Rose Program

Honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe

On a cold Saturday morning in December 1531, Juan Diego was on his way to assist at Mass at the church at Tlatelolco, Mexico, near Mexico City when he heard beautiful music and a woman's voice calling to him from the top of Tepeyac Hill. At the top he saw a beautiful woman who revealed that she was the Blessed Virgin Mary. She instructed him to visit the bishop to tell him that a temple should be built in her honor at the base of the hill.

Juan Diego immediately went to the Bishop, who received him kindly but was reluctant to believe the story. Juan Diego returned to the hill to report his failure. The Lady told him to return to the bishop repeating the request. The next day Juan Diego returned to the bishop who – after many questions – said he needed a sign before believing that it was really Our Lady who had appeared. Juan Diego relayed this message to the Lady, who told him to come back on the next day, and she would fulfill his request.

However, Juan Diego's uncle became gravely ill, and Juan Diego needed to attend to his uncle, so he was unable to return to Tepeyac Hill the next day. After a day of fruitlessly searching for someone to help his uncle, Juan Diego told him that he would bring a priest the next morning, so his uncle could make his confession and die at peace. On his way to get a priest, he passed Tepeyac Hill. Thinking it better not to let the Lady interrupt his errand of mercy, he decided to go around the other side of the hill. But the Lady came down the hill to meet him.

After listening to his explanation for not keeping the appointment, she told him that his uncle would not die of the sickness and that he was healthy. (That same morning, the Lady appeared to his uncle and cured him.) The Lady told Juan Diego to go to the top of the hill and gather the flowers he would find there. Upon arrival at the top, he found in the frozen earth a miraculous garden of roses not native to the area. He gathered some and then brought them to the Lady, who arranged them in his cloak. She told him to take them to the bishop as the sign he had requested.

When Juan Diego arrived in front of the bishop, he opened his cloak, and the roses fell to the floor. At that moment, they both discovered something even more wondrous: a remarkable portrait of Our Lady of Guadalupe was imprinted on the coarse fabric of the cloak.

In 1946, Pope Pius XII declared Our Lady of Guadalupe Patroness of the Americas. In 1990, Pope John Paul II beatified Juan Diego, and on July 31, 2002, the Holy Father visited Mexico City and declared the sainthood of Blessed Juan Diego.

Our Lady of Guadalupe did so much for her people in Mexico that, in 1960, the Columbian Squires, a youth organization of the Knights of Columbus, wanted to give something back to her. So, that group of young men in Knights of Columbus Council 2312 in Monterrey, Mexico, came up with the idea of running a rose to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Monterrey, Mexico. The rose was chosen to commemorate Juan Diego and the miracle of the roses, an important part of the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The first rose was a natural rose and was delivered by New York Grand Knight Joseph Thomasen to Supreme Knight Luke Hart, who took the rose to Texas State Deputy Jack Collerin. The Rose was then taken to Laredo, Texas, where it was finally given to the Squires from Monterrey, Mexico, at the International Bridge in Laredo. The Squires ran the rose from the International Bridge to the Basilica in Monterrey, Mexico, on December 12, 1960.

The Squires were so enthused by the success of this effort that they wanted to invite other Squires from around the world to participate. They called on Squires from Texas and Ontario, Canada to join them. The Canadian Squires asked that the journey of the rose begin in their home and move from there through the United States, finishing at the Basilica in Mexico.

After a year, the first rose had decomposed, so a group decided to make a rose that would not age. The Squires of Circle 660 in Monterrey decided to make a rose of silver. Silver was chosen for this new rose because it is a precious metal of Mexico.

After 1961, the journey of the rose was repeated annually by the Knights of Texas and Mexico and Our Lady of Guadalupe Province of the Fourth Degree in Canada until the mid-1990s, when it was adopted as a Knights of Columbus Supreme Council Faith in Action program.

Today, eight Silver Roses run along different North American routes that include Canada, every U.S. state, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and Mexico. This tradition spreads devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe and embodies international brotherhood as jointly nurtured across the continent.

As Catholics, we are called to be a people of life and a people for life. The challenge before us is to teach the world that the life of each human being, unique and unrepeatable, begins at the moment of conception and ends by natural death. To accomplish this, we turn to the Blessed Virgin Mary, through whom the Word was made flesh. Through Mary, under her title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas, we seek the grace and strength to bear witness to the reality that every human life is sacred, a gift from God. We take this opportunity to commend ourselves to our Mother, seeking the strength to proclaim the gospel of life, in season and out of season, until respect for the sanctity of human life is restored throughout the world.

Let Us Pray:

We pray that the sanctity of human life, from the moment of conception until natural death, will, once again reign in human hearts and enjoy the full protection of our laws. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, may we be granted the wisdom, strength and grace to persevere in this effort.

Amen!