

Festive celebrations

Feast Day of Our Lady Guadalupe

Every year on the 12th December, millions of people across Mexico and around the world celebrate *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe*, or the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It's one of Mexico's most important religious and cultural celebrations, honouring Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Did you know?

- Each year, around 20 million people visit Mexico City's *Insigne y Nacional Basílica de Santa María de Guadalupe* - the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe - making it the most visited Catholic pilgrimage site in the world.
- Churches around the globe - from St Peter's Basilica in Rome to St Patrick's Cathedral in New York - have altars dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe. She is known as the Patron Saint of Mexico and the Patroness of the Americas, representing belonging and compassion.

What's the story behind this day

According to religious beliefs, in December 1531, a man called Juan Diego - an Indigenous Mexican who had recently become a Christian, saw a vision of Mary on a hill near Mexico City, accompanied by beautiful music and a glowing light.

She spoke gently to him in Nahuatl, his native language, and asked him to tell the local bishop to build a church on that very spot. But the bishop didn't believe him, and so Mary reappeared asking him to go back to the hilltop. There he saw roses growing: a miracle for Mexican winters.

Diego collected the roses in his *tilma*, a cloak, and presented them to the bishop. As he did, Mary's image appeared on the cloak. The church was built, and the place became the sacred hill of Tepeyac.

Cultures and customs

- Although the biggest celebrations take place in Mexico – with huge public processions, firework displays and celebrations, or *fiestas* – devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe is found all over the world. On 12 December, churches and communities come together with music, prayer and dancing, blending faith, culture and joy.
- In Rome, the Pope leads a special Mass at St. Peter's Basilica. In the Philippines, Catholic communities mark the day with colourful processions, dancing and prayer.
- Across Europe – including France, Italy and Spain – churches with altars dedicated to her are filled with people lighting candles and singing songs of celebration.

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