

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12

DO YOU SEE THE ROSES?

Did you notice the roses in the image? Perhaps you find it odd or associate the rose with other holiday seasons. Some might think of Valentine's Day or Mother's Day; others might think of a relative's treasured garden. For the Mexican and Mexican-American community on this day, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, roses carry meaning which runs much deeper than any of these examples.

Indeed, today we commemorate the apparition of Our Lady to Juan Diego, an indigenous man, and her request for him to facilitate through the local bishop the building of a shrine on Tepeyac Hill. Demanding proof, the bishop refuses, and Juan Diego attempts to circumvent her request as a result. However, after a second apparition, Juan Diego is sent again, this time with a cloak full of roses. When Juan Diego unfurls the cloak to offer the winter roses as proof of the Blessed Mother's appearance and request, the miraculous image of Our Lady is found on it. To celebrate and remember this happening and the life of Juan Diego, communities across the continent will rise with the sun at dawn to greet Our Lady with songs, roses and dancing.

Especially when we feel overwhelmed, it is easy to feel as though God is far away. It can feel like God is other than us, as though we are not good enough for God, or as though our problems are not important enough for God to be bothered. The beauty of the story of Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe is in its reminder that, always, God meets



us where we are. When Juan Diego takes a different route to avoid the Blessed Mother, she appears to him anyway.

Not only this, God shows up in the seemingly most unexpected places. The hillside of Tepeyac, where the apparition appeared, was rocky. It is not known to have previously produced vegetation. Thus, imagine Juan Diego's shock upon witnessing so many blooming roses in what was believed to be barren land. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, is the reminder and great Mystery that, in addition to being almighty, God is also one of us. Whether an infant in a stable, or the beautiful indigenous woman — Our Lady of Guadalupe — God looks like us, talks like us, dresses like us.

How is God meeting you where you are in this season? Where have you encountered God in an unexpected place?

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