

Today is the memorial of St. Juan Diego. He was born in 1474, and died in 1548.

On this day in 1531, on his way to morning Mass, the Virgin Mary appeared to him asking for a chapel to be built on the hill where she appeared. He went to the bishop, but was sent away. The next day, Our Lady again appeared to him, sending him to the bishop. This time the bishop was more compliant, but asked for a sign. Later that day, he encountered the Virgin again, who promised a sign the next day. That next day, Juan Diego was obliged to care for his sick uncle, and it wasn't until early in the morning the following day that he set out to get a priest to give last rites to his uncle. En route, he again met the Virgin. She assured him his uncle was now well, and sent him to the bishop with a garment full of roses.

The rest, of course, is history. When he arrived on December 12, and dumped the roses at the feet of the bishop, an image of Our Lady was impressed on the cloth of his garment. And on Friday, we will celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the good shepherd – who goes to extraordinary lengths to find his lost sheep. And in the First Reading from Isaiah, we hear that God desires to give comfort to His people.

Such is the solicitude of God ... His great Love for humanity.

God loves everyone – the sinner no less than the saint. While this doesn't mean that we should abandon our walk with Christ, what it means is that we should seek to emulate God's love in our life. Difficult, or impossible, for mere mortals ... but with the outpouring of supernatural grace, we can become examples of God's love, grace, and mercy in how we live our own lives.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray to be instruments of God's love, mercy, and peace. May His grace transform us in preparation for our celebration of Christmas.