December GIFT

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Call of Juan Diego

**Hospitality**

Instructions on power point to get food, pray the table prayer together, and do the table discussion. (Table prayer will be on plastic table stands.

Table Discussion during the meal:

Do you have any special prayers to Mary? What prayers do you know about Mary?

**Welcome**

Welcome to December GIFT!

How is everyone’s Advent going? Who can tell me what this season is about?

Advent is a time of waiting. During Advent we are waiting for the light of Christ, not only 2000 years ago, but today in our lives. Some of you may have many wonderful Advent traditions such as an Advent wreath, Advent calendar or a Jesse tree. These are all great ways to reflect on this important time of the Church year. But today, we are going to think about a couple of feast days that fall during the season of Advent. In particular, we are going to learn about the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe which falls on December 12 and the call of Juan Diego whose feast we celebrate on December 9. Juan Diego was called to do something very special and he answered that call. Today, we will think about Juan and about how we are called, especially during the season of Advent.

Let’s start with our opening prayer which starts with song. Please stand and then remain standing for the prayer.

**Opening Prayer**

**Prayer Leader:**

Let us begin our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son , and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us pray. O God, you chose Mary to be the Mother of your own Son. You sent her to Juan Diego to let him know that Mary is the mother of all your people. She is our mother, too. She wants all peoples, but especially those who are oppressed, to experience God’s love. We pray for Mary’s intercession on behalf of those most in need in our world. Amen.

Let us listen to Mary’s prayer for those in need.

**Reader:** A reading from the Gospel of Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has been mindful  of the humble state of his servant.  
From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—   holy is his name.  
His mercy extends to those who fear him,   from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;   he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.  
He has brought down rulers from their thrones,  but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty.  
He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever,   just as he promised our ancestors.”

The Word of the Lord.

**Respond**

**Leader:** Mary is the patron saint of the Americas. Our response will be: Mary, our Mother, pray for us.

First Petitioner: For our Canadian brothers and sisters, that they may feel Mary’s loving care as they strive for peace in the world, we pray.

All: Mary, our Mother, pray for us.

Second Petitioner: For those who live in the United States, that they may feel Mary’s loving care as they advocate for the human rights of all God’s people, we pray.

All: Mary, our Mother, pray for us.

Third Petitioner: For the people of the Central and South American countries, that they may feel Mary’s loving care as they strive to provide a life of dignity and hope for their children, we pray.

All: Mary, our Mother, pray for us.

Leader: Let us pray. Our Lady of Guadalupe, you told Juan Diego that he mattered. You told him not to be afraid, that you were his mother and would protect him. Today (Tonight) we ask your blessing on all of the people of America who are under your patronage. We ask this in the name of the Son, your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Please be seated.

**Opening Activity**

**Facilitator:**

On December 12 (Wednesday) Catholic communities in Mexico and in the United States celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This is a very important feast day, especially for people in Mexico. Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego, and had an important message for the world.

This is the story. Hundreds of years ago, the conquistadores had convinced every one that the Native Americans in the Americas were less than human or despised people. But Mary, the mother of Jesus, surprised everyone. She chose a poor Native American person of great  
faith to evangelize the Native Americans and the Spaniards, the Bishop and the Church, even though this great-faith person did not speak Spanish.

The person chosen was Juan Diego. Mother Mary, the mother of Jesus, now known in Mexico and throughout the world as Our Lady of Guadalupe, appeared to Juan Diego as an Aztec princess and spoke to him in his native tongue, the forbidden language, Nahuatl. She had a mission for Juan Diego.

Let’s watch a short video to remind us about the Feast. Afterwards, please do the discussion questions on the screen with your family.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htBHTkpDxC8>

**(STOP VIDEO WHEN ADVERTISEMENT BEGINS!)**

Discussion Question:

1. Saint Juan Diego was a humble man. Why is it not surprising that Mary appeared to someone so “lowly”?
2. Juan didn’t give up when the Bishop did not believe him and asked for a sign that he had truly seen Mary. How does it feel to be questioned when you know you are right or telling the truth?
3. Juan tried to hide from the Blessed Mother and visit his sick uncle. Discuss how often we think we may “be hiding” from God.
4. How did Mary’s message spread throughout Mexico?

**Facilitator:**

The choice of a Native American as God’s messenger meant that all Native Americans are important. It meant that the poor had dignity – they were worthy.

Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to build up the Kingdom by reminding poor people that they are worthy. She is the patroness of the Americas.

Now, let’s do our first table activity:

**Activity 1**

**Our Lady of Guadalupe Game**

How much do you know about the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe?

Play our game to find out!

First, choose a leader who will hold the answer sheet.

The rest of the table will play the game.

The first player rolls the dice and picks up one card. If you correctly answer the question on the card, you can move the number of spaces on the dice.

Two or more players can be on the same space.

The first one to reach the end is the winner.

Have fun!

**Facilitator Points:**

Juan Diego was an ordinary man who became extraordinary by being open to God’s work through Mary. Both he and the bishop may have been apprehensive about Mary’s becoming visible and speaking to a man, but through faith and trust in God, the message becomes clear to both. The story of his experience helps bring the message of Christ to the people of Latin America.Because of this amazing appearance, the connection between Latin Americans and Christianity strengthened. In fact, a “Church” was built – many, many people were influenced by this experience.**.** Juan Diego had a call from God. He heard his call, even though he was not sure.Question to think about: What or who strengthens your bond to Jesus?

Now, let’s do our next activity.

**Table Activity 2**

**Imprints on our Faith**

1. Our Lady of Guadalupe has inspired people’s faith throughout several centuries. Now we are going to focus on some of the other people who encourage us in our faith.

2. Each person should think about people in your lives who have left an imprint on you by how they have shared their faith life or by how they have helped you to understand and practice your faith.

3. Make an Our Lady of Guadalupe feast day thank you card to the people who have helped you understand your faith.

* Fold the cards and then write a note of thanks inside the card. You can use your own words or you may want to use one of these:

1. **Our Lady of Guadalupe inspires the faith of many. You have inspired my faith by…**
2. **Our Lady of Guadalupe left an impression of herself on Juan Diego’s cloak and on the hearts of the people of the Americas. You have left an impression on my faith by…**
3. **As we celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, I celebrate the imprint you’ve left on my faith life by…**
   * Next, think of a symbol or simple image that reflects the people you wrote about. The symbol may be a cross or a heart, a chalice, or some other simple image. Draw the image on your card.

Be sure to give the card(s) to the people you made them for!

**Facilitator:**

Be sure to take your cards home and give them to the people you make them for!

It is important to remember that every one of us is also called each and every day to share our faith through the ways we act toward each other, through prayer and through serving others, especially those in need. Juan Diego was listening for his call and even though he may have not been sure, he still listened to Mary. Sometimes we are called to help someone, or to be kind to someone, or to be helpful in our families or at school or work. These are all ways that we show that we are listening to God’s call in our lives.

**Announcements**

**Closing Prayer**

**Please stand.**

*(tell everyone to think about their person of faith. If they would like, they can say the first person’s name after the first reading when you hear “we give thanks to…”)*

**Prayer Leader:** Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, your appearance to the humble peasant Juan Diego inspired a deep devotion to God among the people of the Americas and beyond. Today we give thanks for your faithfulness to God and God’s people. We look to you as a model disciple. May we learn from your example and from the example of the modern-day disciples in our lives. We offer this prayer to God with your help. Amen.

**Reader 1:** Mary, Our Lady, you called upon the faithful to build a church. You used your voice to express God’s love and care for the people of the Americas. Through your message, God’s Reign expanded to new people and cultures. In Bethlehem you gave birth to the Son of God. In Mexico, your words gave birth to a renewed faith in God. For sharing God’s message, we give you thanks. We also give thanks to those in our lives who share the message of the Gospel with us. These people call us to be faithful to God in our everyday living. I invite you to name people that we give thanks to…

**Reader 2:** Mary, Our Lady, you put your trust in Juan Diego and in the people of his community to follow God’s will. Even when obstacles arose, you kept faith in God and in the people. Through your belief, lives were changed. In Jerusalem, you stood by your son Jesus as he awaited death. For your trust and belief in God, we give thanks to you. We also give thanks to those in our lives who trust and believe in us. These people challenge us to live in God’s truth and love. I invite you to name people we give thanks to…

**Reader 3**: Mary, Our Lady, you left an imprint of yourself on Juan’s cloak. You are a model of strength and compassion. For being a witness of faith in God, we give you thanks. We also give thanks to those in our lives who witness Gospel living. These people show us how to live as healthy and holy followers of Christ. I inivte you to name people we give thanks to….

**Leader:** God our Father, thank you for the gift of Mary, who is a witness of faith for us. Thank you for the gift of Juan Diego who heard his call and answered. When you call to us, may we listen with attentive ears and an open heart. Give us the strength to trust in you above all else. May we honor you by our faith-filled living, and may our lives inspire faith in others. We ask this with the help of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Amen.

We pray as Jesus taught us. Our Father….

We ask God to bless us in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Please join in singing our closing song which is our closing prayer.