



Exploring  
**Saints and Feast Days**  
with Young Adolescents

Jenni Vankat

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# Introduction

## Exploring Saints and Feast Days: An Overview

Everyone loves to hear a story. The Catholic Church is rich with stories of people whose deep faith in Jesus moved them to live a life unlike others'. The saints put God and God's ways above the ways of the world. They witness the discipleship to which each Christian is called. The celebrations of saints and feast days tell the stories of our faith history and help shape who we are as a Catholic people. The sessions in this manual explore saints and feast days throughout the liturgical year and challenge young adolescents to discover their own call to discipleship.

## Session Components

Each of the ten chapters explores a saint or feast day using the Pray It! Study It! Live It!® format. The chapters contain core sessions ranging from 45 to 60 minutes in length and optional activities that allow you to extend the gathering to 75 to 90 minutes.

Young adolescents need movement, structure, and opportunities for interaction. The activities in this manual are designed with this in mind. Each session opens with an ice-breaker that helps the participants get to know one another in an active way and leads into the focus of the session—the saint or feast.

The **STUDY IT!** component tells the story of the saint or explains the meaning of the feast day. The stories engage the participants through drama, symbols, storytelling, and other techniques that foster active participation.

The **LIVE IT!** sections prompt the participants to make connections between their lives and aspects of the saint's life story or the feast day. Through discussions, artwork, writing, simulation exercises, and other means, the participants work to assimilate the lessons learned and apply them to their lives.

The **PRAY IT!** segments in each chapter are designed to bring the sessions to conclusion by enabling prayerful reflection on the challenge of living as a disciple of Jesus. The prayers invite communication with God and ask for guidance and strength on the journey of faith, using imaginative prayer, Scripture reflection, Eucharistic adoration, creative expression, ritual action, and other forms of prayer.

The optional activities included in each chapter are designated by the term *Longer*. Each chapter has at least one, and it may be a **STUDY IT! Longer**, a **LIVE IT! Longer**, or a **PRAY IT! Longer**. These extensions are designed to complement the core session.

Each chapter also includes a section entitled "Community Connections," which offers suggestions for activities intended to occur outside the gathered sessions. The ideas are categorized under three headings: "Parish," "Family," and "Other Generations." The parish ideas work to draw the young people into responsible participation in the Church and to celebrate the richness of our faith traditions. The participants identify how the parish community lives the Catholic faith and passes it on. The family ideas promote faith development in the domestic church through discussions, creative activities, and affirmations. The ideas can be shared with families through handouts, newsletters, e-mails, Web pages,

and parish bulletins. Finally, the ideas in the other generations category are intended to strengthen the young adolescents' connections with people of other generations and to empower the young people to become bearers of the faith.

## Background on Saints and Feasts

In presenting the information in this manual and fielding potential questions from the participants, it may be helpful to understand how the Church establishes saints and to be familiar with the terminology used to differentiate the liturgical ranking of the saints and feasts.

### Becoming a Saint

*Canonization*, a term derived from the Greek word for *list*, refers to the process the Church uses to designate people as saints. In most cases, saints are canonized after a lengthy four-step process during which their lives are fully investigated. The first step toward canonization begins on the local level. Petitions proposing a candidate for sainthood are brought to the local bishop, usually at least five years after the person's death. The bishop grants permission for the person to be given the status Servant of God and calls for a review of the person's faith life. When the local inquiry is complete, the individual's cause is reviewed by the Congregation for Cause of Saints. If the person is deemed worthy of having lived a life of profound virtue, the next level of honor is granted and the candidate is raised to Venerable status. The next step is Beatification. This requires verification of one miracle credited to the person postmortem, or verification that he or she is a martyr. The candidate is given the title Blessed at this point. The final step is canonization, which requires a second postmortem miracle. The Pope declares the person a saint, and his or her name is added to the canon, or list, of saints.

### Liturgical Ranking of Feasts

Feasts are special days that commemorate the Paschal mystery of Christ; his life, death, and Resurrection; the mysteries of the Church; the Blessed Mother; and the saints. There are three categories of feasts celebrated within the liturgical year: solemnities, feasts, and memorials. Note that *feast* is used in both a general way to refer to all three ranks and a narrower way to refer to the second of the three ranks. The ranking establishes a priority to the feasts so those of highest import are celebrated throughout the universal Church. The ranking also determines the number of readings as well as the prayers included in the feast's liturgical celebration. Solemnities are the highest level of feast and designate the most important celebrations during the Church year. These celebrations often include a Vigil Mass the evening before the actual day. Easter and Christmas are two primary solemnities. The Assumption and Christ the King are the solemnities explored in this manual. The feast of All Souls is a unique feast because, though not technically a solemnity, it has a level of importance in Church life akin to solemnities. Feasts are ranked below solemnities and are celebrated only on the actual day. They denote primary events in salvation history and saints of special honor. Examples of feasts include the Presentation of the Lord, the Visitation, and the feasts of the archangels and Apostles.

Memorials are the lowest ranking of importance and can be obligatory or optional. Most saints are recognized with memorials.

## **Some Closing Thoughts**

The saints and feast days explored in this resource represent only the tip of the iceberg. The saints and feasts included were chosen to show the diversity of the people of God, to highlight the impact that believers—especially young believers—can make on others, and to flow through the liturgical seasons. The sessions are designed for parish youth ministry settings, but many activities are also suitable for religious formation programs and intergenerational events. Adjust the sessions and elements to meet the needs of the participants in your community. Hopefully the stories, activities, and discussions prompted by this manual inspire you and the young people around you to a deeper commitment to Christ and to living a life of holiness. May we all recognize our place in the communion of saints.

# Chapter 1

## Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12)

### Overview

The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrates Mary's appearance to Juan Diego in 1531 near what is now Mexico City, Mexico. An imprint of Mary was forever forged on Juan's cloak. The image, depicting Mary as a mestiza—a woman with the look of mixed native and European ancestry—inspired a deep devotion to God and to Our Lady throughout Latin America. The feast day for Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12, was established by Pope Benedict XIV in 1754. In 1910 Mary was named the patron saint of Latin America. Pope Pius XII proclaimed Our Lady of Guadalupe the Patroness of the Americas in 1954.

This session recounts the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe through a dramatic presentation. The participants discuss the impact Mary has made on people throughout the Americas. The young people focus on the ordinary elements of the story such as the cloak and roses, which are transformed into extraordinary signs of God's presence through interaction with Mary. The imprint of Mary left on the cloak is the catalyst through which the participants examine who has left an imprint of faith on their own lives. Through a prayer of gratitude, the youth are challenged to inspire faith in others by their words and actions in the spirit of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

### At a Glance

**Icebreaker** Building a Church (15 minutes)

**STUDY IT!** Our Lady of Guadalupe Drama and Discussion (15 minutes)

**LIVE IT!** Leaving Imprints (20 minutes)

**PRAY IT!** Prayer of Thanks and Mission (10 minutes)

**PRAY IT! Longer (Optional)** Our Lady of Guadalupe Novena (15 minutes)

**Community Connections** Parish  
Families  
Other Generations

**Icebreaker****Building a Church (15 minutes)****Materials and Preparation**

- Gather the following items:
    - lunch sacks, one for each small group of four or five
    - craft sticks, ten for each small group of four or five
    - paper clips, five for each small group of four or five
    - toothpicks, ten for each small group of four or five
    - decks of cards, one for each small group of four or five
    - clothespins, three for each small group of four or five
    - rubber bands, four for each small group of four or five
  - Using the lunch sacks, create a bag of supplies for each small group.
    1. Divide the class into small groups of four or five. Give the group members time to introduce themselves if needed. Then distribute a supply bag to each small group.
    2. Give the following directions:
      - Your task is to create a structure of a church using only the supplies provided in your bag. You do not need to use all the supplies, but you cannot add other items. The structure must be identifiable as a church and be sturdy enough to stand on its own without falling. Each member of your group must contribute to the creation. You have six minutes to complete this activity. Begin!
    3. When the time has passed, regain the group's attention. Invite the groups to look at one another's creations. Then lead them in a brief discussion, using these or similar questions:
      - What was difficult about this activity? What was easy?
      - Were there any doubts that your group could complete the activity? Why or why not?
      - What helped you complete the task?
- Help the groups understand that the activity allowed them to listen to the instructions, work together, and complete a task even though they may have experienced difficulties or doubts.

**STUDY IT!****Our Lady of Guadalupe Drama and Discussion (15 minutes)****Materials and Preparation**

- Gather the following items:
  - a bouquet of roses
  - a chair
  - a second chair or a stool
  - a blue blanket or sheet
  - a robe with an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe pinned to the inside (Check your local church supply store for an image of Our Lady.)
  - a chasuble
- Familiarize yourself with the information about the characters, staging, props, costumes, and the script on resource 1–A, “Our Lady of Guadalupe Vignette.”
- Recruit four actors for the roles of the narrator, Juan Diego, Mary, and the bishop. Distribute a copy of resource 1–A to each and give them an opportunity to practice the play before the session begins.



*Note:* For an alternative to the dramatic presentation, consider reading aloud *The Lady of Guadalupe*, by Tomie de Paula (Holiday House, 1980) and then proceed with step 3.

1. Begin by stating that the previous activity relates to the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Ask if anyone knows the story. Draw on the young people's comments, and summarize the story in these or similar words:
  - The church-building activity connects to the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in which Mary appears to Juan Diego and asks him to build a church in her honor. Juan listens to Mary and believes in her request, while others doubt that Mary actually appeared. Through Juan's faith and determination, a church is built. Mary left an imprint on Juan's cloak, and the story has established a devotion to Our Lady throughout the Americas.
2. Announce that four people have prepared a dramatic presentation of the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Introduce the actors and have the narrator begin.
3. Thank the actors for their involvement in the drama. Then engage the large group in a discussion, using these or similar questions:
  - Imagine you are Juan Diego. What thoughts pass through your head upon seeing Mary? What do you feel?
  - How do Mary's appearance and the image on the cloak impact Juan and others?
  - When you picture Mary, how does she look? What has shaped your vision of her?
4. Conclude with the following points:
  - Juan 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.
  - An ordinary man becomes extraordinary by being open to God's working through Mary. The story of his experience helps bring the message of Christ to the people of Latin America.
  - People often view Mary or Jesus as having the same skin tone and physical features as their own. The historical persons of Mary and Jesus possessed the physical characteristics typical of people from their homeland, the Middle East. The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe shows Mary with the features of a Latin American woman. This strengthens the connection between the Latino people and Christianity.
  - Our Lady of Guadalupe was made Patroness of the Americas by Pope Pius XII in 1954. Her feast day is celebrated on December 12.

## **LIVE IT!** Leaving Imprints (20 minutes)

### **Materials and Preparation**

- Gather the following items:
  - foam paper sheets, four sheets for each small group of four or five, found at your local craft store
  - pens or pencils, one for each participant
  - construction paper or cardstock paper, three pieces for each participant
  - ink pads of various colors, four or five for each small group of four or five
  - scissors, two pairs for each small group of four or five
  - markers, one set for each small group of four or five

- baskets or shoe boxes for supplies, one for each small group of four or five
  - a piece of poster board
  - a CD of reflective music (optional)
  - a CD player (optional)
- Make copies of handout 1–A, “Imprints,” one for each participant.
  - Create a supply basket or box for each small group with the first six items listed above.
  - Write the three statements of gratitude listed in step 4 on a piece of poster board and display for all to see.
1. Introduce this activity with these or similar words:
    - 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. Direct the participants to gather in small groups of four or five and distribute the copies of handout 1–A and the supply baskets. Explain that each person should think about people in their lives who have left an imprint by how they have shared their faith life or by how they have helped the youth understand and practice the faith. For example, a grandparent may have passed on the faith tradition of praying the rosary, or another relative may have answered questions of faith for the young person. Allow a few minutes for the participants to complete the handout. Consider playing some reflective music in the background while the young people work. Then invite everyone to name one person about whom they wrote and, if they wish, how that person has shared his or her faith.
  3. Invite the participants to create special Our Lady of Guadalupe feast day notes of gratitude for the people they listed on their handout. Explain that they have the option of enhancing them with “imprints” using foam stampers.
  4. Distribute the construction paper or cardstock paper, and ask the participants to create their cards. Direct them to cut or fold the cards to the desired size and then write personal notes of thanks. Explain that the messages can be original, can be taken from the handout, or can make a specific connection to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Have these or similar lines on display as examples:
    - Our Lady of Guadalupe inspires the faith of many. You have inspired my faith by . . .
    - Our Lady of Guadalupe left an impression of herself on Juan Diego’s cloak and on hearts of the people of the Americas. You have left an impression on my faith life by . . .
    - As we celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, I celebrate the imprint you’ve left on my faith life by . . .
  5. Next, ask the youth to think of a symbol or simple image that reflects the people they wrote about. Share that the symbols should be simple, such as a cross, a heart, a chalice, and so forth, or possibly the first letter in a person’s name. Tell the participants that they will make stampers of their symbols and use them on their gratitude notes.
  6. Direct the participants to create the stampers by drawing the symbols on the foam sheets with a pen and cutting around them. They are then to press the foam symbols onto the ink pads and then push them onto the cards to make the stamps.
  7. Alert the participants when five minutes are left in the activity. Stress the need for them to clean up their area, and ensure they know where to return materials and supplies.

**PRAY IT!****Prayer of Thanks and Mission (10 minutes)****Materials and Preparation**

- Gather the following items:
  - two pieces of poster board
  - a small table
  - a colorful cloth, such as a Mexican serape or blanket
  - a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe
  - a candle and matches
  - a vase with roses (optional)
  - a chime or bell
  - masking tape
  - two ink pads
  - a CD of reflective music
  - a CD player
  - wet wipes, one for each participant (optional)
- Trace an image of a rose onto each piece of poster board. Make the roses as large as possible.
- Create a focal point for the prayer area by covering a small table with the cloth and placing the picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the candle, and the roses on the table. Set the chime or bell on the table also. Display the poster board roses near the prayer area. Make sure the posters are at a location and height that can be reached by all the participants so that everyone will be able to come forward to put a thumbprint on one of the posters.
- Select three participants to lead the “Our Lady of Guadalupe Prayer of Gratitude” and make each a copy of resource 1–B. Give them time to practice before the prayer begins.
- If you decide to use wipes, assign a few participants to distribute them after making their thumbprints.

1. Gather the participants in the prayer area. Share that in the closing prayer, the group will pray in thanksgiving for Mary and for others who inspire our faith. The prayer also calls us to offer ourselves as inspirations for others.

2. Provide an overview of the participants’ involvement in the prayer. Explain that during the prayer, each person will be invited to state aloud the names of three people they identified as making an imprint on them. Simultaneously, each person in the group will say one of his or her names immediately after the chime is sounded. This process happens three times over. Consider practicing this with the participants so they are prepared.

3. Begin the prayer by lighting the candle. Invite the group to join in singing “Deo Gratias” (Peter Rubalcava, *Spirit and Song*, OCP Publications), “Now Thank We All Our God” (Martin Rinkart, *Gather Comprehensive*, GIA Publications), or another familiar song that celebrates faith, gratitude, or Mary.

4. Lead the opening prayer with these or similar words:

- 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.

5. Invite the readers forward to pray the “Our Lady of Guadalupe Prayer of Gratitude.” Make sure the chime or bell is available for the readers.
6. Conclude the prayer of gratitude and transition into the next movement of the prayer with these or similar words:
  - We honor Mary and the saints among us through our words and also through our actions. Just as the modern disciples have made an imprint on our lives, we make an impact on others’ lives. Our loving actions and faith-filled living spread God’s message.
  - Our Lady of Guadalupe used roses to unveil her image on Juan’s cloak. Today I invite you to make your mark on the rose symbol. Take this time to come forward silently and place your thumbprint on the roses as a sign of your desire to spread God’s message through your words and actions.

Have two adult leaders begin the procession to model the thumb printing. Make sure the ink pads are near the posters and accessible to all. Play reflective music during this procession. If you are using wipes, have the volunteer participants distribute them as each participant finishes making his or her imprint.
7. Conclude the service by offering a closing prayer in these or similar words:
  - God our Father, thank you for the gift of Mary, who is a witness of faith for us. When you call to us, may we listen with attentive ears and an open heart as Mary did. 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.
8. Sing a closing song such as “Go Make a Difference” (Steve Angrisano and Tom Tomaszek, *Spirit and Song*, OCP Publications), “Alabaré” (Manuel José Alonso and José Pagán, *Gather Comprehensive*, GIA Publications), or another song of praise and mission.

## **PRAY IT! Longer (optional)**

### **Our Lady of Guadalupe Novena (15 minutes)**

#### **Materials and Preparation**

- Gather the following items:
  - blank sheets of 8½-x-11-inch paper, one piece for each small group of four or five
  - pens or pencils, one for each small group of four or five
- 1. Share that in this activity the participants will write a novena in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Explain the prayer tradition of novenas, using these or similar words:
  - A novena is a devotional prayer prayed on nine consecutive days that uses a set pattern of petitions usually directed toward Mary or other saints for a particular prayer request or intention. On each of the nine days, a petition is prayed and is then followed by the Lord’s Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Glory Be. Novenas have traditionally been prayed during times of difficulty or need.
  - Praying a novena can also help you prepare to celebrate the feast day, or it can be prayed after the feast day to help your continued commitment to discipleship.
- 2. Divide the class into small groups of four or five, distribute a piece of paper and a pen or pencil to each group, and invite each group to write a prayer for one or two of the nine days. (Determine the number based on the number of small groups.) Assign each

group a prayer topic that correlates with the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Use the following topics, or create your own:

- thanksgiving for Mary's witness of faith
- building up the Church
- guidance for Church leaders
- openness to hear God's message
- strength to share God's message
- healing for the ill or peace for those close to death
- strength to believe
- trust in God's will
- desire to do God's will

An example of a prayer is: *Mary, you followed God's will during your lifetime and inspired Juan Diego to continue God's work on earth. With the help of your Son, instill in me the desire to do only what pleases God. Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for me. Amen.*

3. Ask the small groups to share their prayers. Collect them and determine a method to assemble and distribute the novena that suits your circumstances, possibly posting it on the parish Web site. Encourage the young people to pray the novena.

## **Community Connections**

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### **Parish**

Collect various images of Mary and display them in the vestibule of the church. Try to find pictures from different cultures and time periods. Invite parishioners of all ages to create their own pictures of Mary or to create pictures that depict the influence of Mary on their faith life. Exhibit the images together so parishioners can appreciate the view of Mary from the eyes of young children to those of professional artists.

### **Families**

Encourage families to use roses as an affirmation tool to acknowledge Gospel living. Propose that families gather roses (real, hand-drawn, or clip-art versions) and leave them in a common area in their homes with several small pieces of paper. Offer a challenge for family members to take note of instances in which they see other family members living out the Gospel. Suggest that family members leave a rose on the person's pillow with a note of gratitude attached, naming the act of discipleship and how it impacted her or him.

### **Other Generations**

Share the "Our Lady of Guadalupe Vignette" with people of a younger or older generation, or possibly at an intergenerational event. Invite those gathered to think of times when someone has been a messenger of God's love for them like Our Lady of Guadalupe was for Juan Diego. Form small groups or pairs to share the stories.

# OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE VIGNETTE

## Characters

Narrator, Juan Diego, Mary, Bishop

## Staging and Props

Mary stands on a stool or chair on one side of the staging area. The bishop sits in a chair on the opposite side of the stage. Juan sits between the two but closer to the front of the stage. A bouquet of roses sits a few feet away from Mary.

## Costumes

Mary is wrapped in a blue blanket or sheet. Juan wears a robe with an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe pinned to the inside. The bishop wears a chasuble.

## Script

**Narrator:** Juan Diego was a peasant living in what is now Mexico City, Mexico. On December 9, 1531, Juan was on his way to morning Mass. Suddenly, a woman's voice called to him.  
*[Juan walks along slowly.]*

**Mary:** *[standing on a stool or chair, states calmly but loudly]* Juan! Juan Diego!  
*[Juan looks around for the voice.]*

**Mary:** Juan! Juan Diego came over here!  
*[Juan moves closer to Mary.]*

**Mary:** Juan, my son. I am the Virgin Mary. I have chosen you to give a message to the bishop. Go to him and tell him that I desire a church to be built in my honor at the bottom of this hill.

**Juan:** I will do as you wish.

**Narrator:** Juan Diego goes to see the bishop. He is unsure how the bishop will respond to his story.  
*[Juan walks over to the bishop, who is seated in a chair.]*

**Juan:** Sir, my name is Juan Diego. The Virgin Mary has just appeared to me and requested that I give you a message.

**Bishop:** *[surprised]* What is this you say?

**Juan:** As I was walking to Mass this morning, the Blessed Mother came to me and spoke. She said she wants a church built at the bottom of the hill where she appeared to me.

**Bishop:** Juan, I am sure you are a good, holy man, but it is hard to believe that the Mother of Our Lord Jesus appeared to you. Go back to your home and pray for God's blessing.

**Narrator:** Juan returns to tell Mary of his experience with the bishop.  
*[Juan walks away looking discouraged and returns to the spot of the vision.]*

**Juan:** Dearest Mary, I am sorry. The bishop did not believe me.

**Mary:** You are a faithful servant, Juan. Return to the bishop and tell him again.  
*[Juan walks back to the bishop. The two engage in a silent discussion while the narrator reads.]*

**Narrator:** The next day Juan returns to the bishop. Again the bishop is surprised to see him and asks him many questions.

**Bishop:** I have listened to your story, but I still have doubts that this could actually happen. I need some kind of a sign to believe that what you say is true.

**Narrator:** Juan returns to the hill to relate the bishop's need for a sign. Mary promises to meet the bishop's request the next day. However, Juan is not able to return to the hill the next day because his uncle becomes seriously ill. Juan goes out to seek medical help but is unable to find someone to treat his uncle. Instead, Juan tells his dying uncle that tomorrow he will get a priest to hear his confession and anoint him in preparation for his death. The next day Juan starts out for the priest. Mary comes down the hill to meet him as he is hurrying along.  
*[Juan hurries by Mary with his head down. Mary steps down to meet him face-to-face.]*

**Juan:** Dearest Lady, I was not trying to avoid you, but my uncle is sick and needs a priest.

**Mary:** Do not worry about your uncle. I have appeared to him and cured him. He is healthy now. Instead go to the top of the hill and gather the flowers you find there.  
*[Juan goes to the bouquet of roses, picks them up, and takes them to Mary. Juan takes off his robe and Mary places the roses in the robe.]*

**Mary:** Take these to the bishop.  
*[Juan goes to the bishop and opens his robe, letting the flowers fall to the floor. Both Juan and the bishop stare in awe at the image of Mary imprinted on the robe.]*

**Narrator:** The image imprinted on the cloak convinces the bishop that Juan Diego's story is true. The image shows Mary as a dark skinned, native woman. Mary looks the same as the people. This helps the people of Mexico, Central America, and South America realize that Christian belief is open to them as much as it is to Europeans. Mary's appearance to Juan Diego inspires a deeper devotion to God and elevates her to a place of honor among Latin Americans.

# IMPRINTS

Just as Our Lady of Guadalupe left an imprint of herself on Juan Diego's cloak and made a lasting impression on his life, people make imprints on you that help strengthen your faith. Think of three people who have helped you grow in faith or who have been an example to you of faith-filled living. Record your thoughts here.



\_\_\_\_\_ has made an imprint on my faith life by

---

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\_\_\_\_\_ has made an imprint on my faith life by

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\_\_\_\_\_ has made an imprint on my faith life by

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# OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE PRAYER OF GRATITUDE

**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 incorporate new people and cultures. In Bethlehem you gave birth to the Son of God. In what is now Mexico, your words gave birth to a renewed faith in God. For sharing God's message, we give thanks to you.

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. We give thanks to . . . [*sound chime*]

**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 seemed to arise, you kept faith in God and in the people. Through your unwavering belief, lives were changed for good. In Jerusalem you stood by your son Jesus as he awaited death. In 1531 you stood by Juan Diego as he worked to carry out your request. For your trust and belief in God and in the children of 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. We give thanks to . . . [*sound chime*]

**Reader 3:** Mary, Our Lady, you left an imprint of yourself on Juan's cloak. You took on the look of the people, showing your union with them and bearing witness to God's unconditional love. In your native land, you were a model of strength for women. In this foreign land, you were a model of compassion and care. For being a witness of faith in God, we give thanks to you.

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. We give thanks to . . . [*sound chime*]

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