Prayer

“I am a small rope, a tiny ladder, the tail end, a leaf.” ~ Saint Juan Diego

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
you chose to reveal yourself to the humble Juan Diego,
to offer him a message that we should not be troubled or fearful.
Help me to be like Juan Diego in these days of Advent,
remembering that even in my youth I’m called to carry the
Good News of the hope, love and peace of your Son. Amen.

Missionary Witness:
Saint Juan Diego and
Our Lady of Guadalupe

Juan Diego was born in 1474 in an area of Mexico that is just
north of modern-day Mexico City. Described as a poor man,
he was known to be a hard worker. He owned a small piece of
land on which he built a house and farmed. He also made
mats out of local cactus fibers to support himself and his wife.

When he was about 50 years old, he was baptized into the
Catholic faith by one of the first Franciscan missionaries to
reach Mexico. He was given the Christian name Juan, Spanish
for John. Juan was very devoted to his faith, and walked 14
miles several times a week to attend Mass.

Being a poor man, Juan walked barefoot, clothed in a cape, or
tilma, made of fibers from the maguey cactus. This material is similar to rope and somewhat
uncomfortable to wear; only the wealthy had access to cotton. It was during one of these walks
that Juan first encountered a beautiful young woman dressed like an Aztec princess. She told
Juan that she was the Virgin Mary and that she wanted a church to be built on the spot where
they stood. She asked Juan to bring that message to his local Bishop [also named Juan], Bishop
Juan de Zumárraga. Juan delivered the message, but the Bishop was skeptical, and asked for
proof that it was truly Mary. Just as Juan was preparing to meet again with Mary, he received
word that his uncle was ill, and hurried off to see him.

Though he went on a different route than where he had met Mary, our Blessed Mother found
Juan as he traveled, assured him that his uncle was cured and told him to go to the hillside to
gather flowers in his tilma as proof of her true identity.
Juan gathered roses – flowers that never grew in that area – and presented them to the Bishop as a gift from Mary. As he opened his tilma and the flowers spilled out, everyone was amazed that the image of Mary herself was imprinted on his cloak. Juan’s tilma hangs to this day in the Basilica that was built as Mary had asked.

Juan lived out his life in a hut built next to the church. He died at age 74 and was canonized in 2002. He is Mexico’s first indigenous saint; his Feast Day is December 9. The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is December 12.

Meet the Missionaries…
Superhero. In the Missions, that’s just another word for religious Sisters! Meet Sister Jane of Kenya. She just helped to build an intensive care unit for Trinity Mission Hospital in Kenya. Right now she’s working on a new project at the hospital, a feeding program. “After admitting one girl who came to the hospital ill, she told us she hadn’t eaten in three days,” Sister Jane explained. Sister Jane visited the girl’s school with staff from the hospital, and found 100 children also malnourished and underweight. Today, the hospital’s feeding program offers nutrition to such children daily.

Missionary Help: Roses in winter…
This Advent, make roses bloom during the winter, like the roses that filled Juan Diego’s cloak – and raise support for Missionary Childhood Association projects for children, just in time for Christmas. It’s as easy as 1-2-3. First, think of fun ways to raise money for the Missions. Perhaps Mission Monday, where you give up the cost of the day’s snack for MCA. Or Wacky Wednesday, where you make an offering to the Missions to wear a silly hat, or mismatched socks. Let your imagination go on this one! Make copies of the rose drawing to the left, and for every dollar raised by your group, color in the rose – someone different can pick the color each time – and then place them on your classroom’s / meeting room’s bulletin board. By the end of Advent, may the roses be blooming abundantly – and MCA kids smiling!