

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

December 12, 1952

Miracle in Tepeyac

Today, December 12, is the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This feast day was probably first observed in California in 1769 when Portola and the Fathers Serra and Crespi left their camp at Carmelo Bay, crossed our pine covered peninsula, forded the Salinas and camped for the night near the spot they had occupied earlier. Here the reverend fathers celebrated Mass in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The beautiful legend of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe, as told by Emily Lindsay Squier in her book "Gringa", bears repeating in this diary today, although we used it last year on the same date. We hope our followers will forgive us for the repetition.

On the morning of Dec. 9, 1531, a very poor and lonely Indian named Juan Diego was crossing the hills of Tepeyac, which before the Spanish Conquest was sacred to the Aztec goddess Tonantzin, protectress of corn.

Suddenly he heard the strains of sweet music. Then in an arc of blinding gold light, he saw a beautiful, dark-haired woman, who might have been a princess of her own race. But she called him "Hijo mio", as no Aztec princess would have done, and she announced herself to be the Virgin Mary.

She told him in a sweet and gentle voice that she wished to have a church built for her upon the summit of the hill, and that he was to go to the Bishop Juan de Zamarraga and give him her commands.

One can imagine the fear and doubt and hesitation with which the humble Indian went to do her bidding. Would the lordly prelate give credence to the story of the divine vision? Would he not be flogged for boasting that the Lady of Heaven had actually appeared to him, the lowliest of the lowly!

He was not flogged – but neither was he believed. The Bishop was a stern man, a religious fanatic, but he was also a skeptic. He sent the trembling native away, warning him that people were burned at the stake in those enlightened days for just such thoughts.

Sadly, Juan Diego approached the hill of Tepeyac again – and was confronted by the same dazzling, radiating

light, in the heart of which stood the beautiful, gentle-faced Virgin.

She commanded him to go to the bishop again. This time, as a sign of her divinity, she instantaneously cured his uncle, who had been dying. But still the churchly dignitary acted the doubting Thomas and sent the Indian away with scornful, impatient words. And upon the third day, the Lady of Heaven appeared to the peon again.

"Go to the summit of the hill of Tepeyac and pluck the roses that are growing there," she said in her sweet, soft voice. "Take them in thy mantle to the bishop. This time he will believe"

Juan Diego believed and obeyed, although he knew full well that roses did not grow in that bleak place; only cactus and thorny mesquite. But when he had toiled to the brow of the hill, he was almost overcome by the bewildering fragrance of roses. They were blooming in crimson profusion, their petals wet with heavenly dew.

(Continued on Monday)