

THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

December 12, 2031, will mark the 500th anniversary of when Our Lady of Guadalupe first appeared to St. Juan Diego on a Mexican hillside. This important date in Marian and North American history will be the occasion of many local celebrations and pilgrimages throughout the world. Certainly, the most beautiful and memorable moments will be lived at the renowned basilica in Mexico City. While we might logically expect a dramatic papal visit, what would be worth considering and planning for are visits by young and old from throughout the Americas and other countries. Due to very large domestic crowds during December, foreign pilgrims would be well advised to travel in other months of the year.

Similar to the highly successful national Eucharistic Pilgrimages in the United States, Catholic dioceses, organizations, schools, and universities would do well to begin laying the groundwork now for large-scale pilgrimages to Mexico City during that calendar year, especially in the spring and summer months. For the sake of economization and logistics, large scale advance arrangements should be made with airlines, bus companies, dormitories, governmental authorities, hostels, hotels, marketing companies, and tourism agencies so as to best anticipate and receive these visitors.

Given the benefit of long-range planning, trip organizers might undertake fundraising campaigns so as to facilitate the participation of as many young people as possible. Similarly, American ecclesiastical and educational institutions might consider seeking financial support for the Archdiocese of Mexico City and its organizing committees.

For its part, the government of Mexico and its capital city might invest in the relevant personnel and infrastructure so as to insure a safe and successful experience for all visitors. The national and urban tourism departments should brainstorm how to best align all necessary resources as if preparations were being made for the Olympics. They should also organize battalions of uniformed English-speaking “guardian angels” who would be conspicuously available to foreigners at key locations. The local business community would also do well to be ready for this momentous anniversary that will surely bring many millions of dollars of religious and secular tourism revenue.