

ANTORCHA GUADALUPANA (TORCH OF GUADALUPE)

The Traveling Guadalupe Torches

On December 12 of each year, the Catholic church celebrates the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, marking the day when, in 1531, the Blessed Mother appeared in Mexico to a 57-year old peasant named Juan Diego. On that day and in that moment, the hills of Tepeyac are overcome by a silence, when our Lady tell him:

“Listen and let it penetrate your heart ... do not be troubled or weighed down with grief. Do not fear any illness or displeasure, anxiety or pain. Am I not here ... who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not your fountain of life? Are you not in the folds of my mantle? ... In the crossing of my arm? Is there anything else you need?”

These are the words from our Lady of Guadalupe to Juan Diego and these are the words that should resound from the walls of every church and every home all over the world. This message and the miracle of the image that followed has entranced and encouraged Catholics for several centuries. Believers and even nonbelievers the world over are inspired and intrigued by this apparition of Mary.

The Traveling Guadalupe Torches in the Diocese of Trenton

Our Lady of Guadalupe is a story that invites us to know intimately the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of God whose only desire is to bring us to her Son That we may have life and have it abundantly.

In the Diocese of Trenton, we celebrate our Lady of Guadalupe with the Traveling Guadalupe Torches. The Traveling Guadalupe Torches are a symbol commemorating the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe and her message. This has been a tradition for centuries.

That tradition is to have the torchlight process with the Our Lady of Guadalupe image, since she was the original Light carrier. Just as in biblical times there were processions with the Ark of the Covenant, the faithful today can also process with the new Ark of the New Covenant, our Mother Mary. The torch flame carries a message of peace and hope on its journey and brings that peace and hope into the parishes it visits.

What Happens When a Parish Receives the Torch?

The torches are blessed at a special mass by the bishop as he sends them forth. The Torches then travel throughout the parishes of the Diocese of Trenton for the month of November.

The parishes devote this time to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe and she takes them into her mantle just as she did with Juan Diego. Blessings rain upon the parishes that receive our Lady's torch light as, more than anything, our Lady wants us all to follow the light into the parishes where we can be illuminated by her Son.

Then, on the first Saturday of December, the torches will pilgrimage home to St. Mary's Cathedral in a procession through the streets of Trenton. There will be shuttle buses and a police escort throughout the day.

Receiving and Delivering Torches at the Parishes

A few minutes before mass, the delivering parish will come to the receiving parish with the torch. The receiving parish will be waiting for the torch on the steps of their church, with their parishioners there to see the exchange.

The delivering parish hands the torch and the parish ribbon to the pastor of the receiving parish and the new parish ribbon will be placed on the torch. A family can be chosen to put the parish ribbon on the Torch.

The diocese will bring dancers to perform as part of the transfer of the torch to each new parish. The entire ceremony, including the dancers, takes approximately seven (7) minutes so be sure to get to mass early.

Participating Parishes

There will be a sendoff mass celebrated by Bishop O'Connell at the Co-Cathedral of St. Robert Bellarmine in Freehold on Saturday, October 27, 2018. Bishop O'Connell will light and bless the Traveling Guadalupe Torches. The torches will then tour the four counties of the Diocese joining our diocesan family in various ceremonies, special Masses and much fellowship.

St. Anthony Padua Church in Red Bank will be the first church to receive the torch. It will be received on Sunday, October 28, 2018 at 1:30 pm. Precious Blood in Monmouth Beach will receive the torch the following Sunday, November 4, 2018 at 12:00 pm. On Sunday, November 11 at 12:00 pm, the torch will go to Christ the King Church in Long Branch. Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Maple Shade will receive the torch on Sunday, November 18, 2018 at 10:30 am.

On Sunday, November 25, 2018, the torch will come to St. Catherine of Siena Church in conjunction with our 11:30 am mass. We will celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe with various activities throughout the week until it is time to return the torch and banners to St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral in Trenton. St. Catherine's banner will be blue with white lettering.

Since one banner is added at each church, by the time St. Catherine's has the torch, the banners of all of the participating churches will have been added and we will have a very colorful Tepeyac Torch that final week.

On December 1, 2018, when the torch and banners are returned to the cathedral, there will be a procession through the streets of Trenton culminating with a special mass with Bishop David O'Connell at 12:00 noon. Everyone is invited.

The Tradition Expands

The first year the diocese held the Torches Guadalupana celebration, there were four (4) torches, one for each of the counties in the diocese. In the following years, the number of torches increased to seven (7) and this year, there will be a total of fourteen (14) torches.