On a Saturday morning in December, 1531, outside Mexico City, the Blessed Virgin appeared to a poor, Mexican Indian -- Juan Diego -- on his way to Mass, and asked him to tell the bishop she desired a church built on Tepeyac hill in her honor.

The bishop called Juan a dreamer, and dismissed him. When the vision was repeated, and the order reiterated, the bishop still incredulous, asked for a sign. Poor Juan returned to the spot of the apparitions, and found roses blooming -- a thing unheard of during December! The Lady told him to pick some and carry them to the bishop. Now the bishop believed him -- more especially when he saw the likeness of the Lady herself imprinted on the cloak (tilma) in which Juan had carried the roses.

After 400 years, this picture of the Mother of God remains with its delicate colors in the church she commanded to be built, and specified that it be called, "Our Lady of Guadalupe." Today miracles continue. Today, she is the Patroness of Mexico. We celebrate her feast tomorrow.

Tonight At The Novena

Remember that you can gain a plenary indulgence during the Marian Year each time you participate in the Novena to the Sorrowful Mother. Tonight makes a good start. A little bank account such as plenary indulgences will come in very handy some day.

A Blessed Experience

Recall the warm feeling that comes over you when someone tells you he appreciates your kindness; or says, "Thanks"; or "God reward you for being so good to me"; or "You'll be in our prayers every day" -- such a warmth is rewarding in itself. And sometimes no words of thanks are needed -- because the expression on the face of the recipient is eloquent testimony of gratitude.

This is the one time of year when the smallness of our selfish natures hides; and our mean, petty jealousies disappear, in an effort to be kind to those about us, especially the less fortunate. Anyway, this Sunday the offering taken up at all the Masses will be turned over to some charities that have appealed to us -- especially those who care for youth, and who depend solely on charity.

Normally, the din of nickels crashing into the basket is terrific. Dimes wouldn't be so disturbing; quarters, even less. A half-dollar has a quiet dignity about it. The silence of a dollar bill is ideal. This Sunday, let's dig deep for a noiseless performance in the pews. In return, some poor nuns who care for orphans will be rattling their beads for you. And Christmas will mean a little more "to you, too.

Gift Suggestions

Shopping these days? The regular St. Andrew's Missal ($4.50); the 4-volume set ($10) are worth considering for a brother or sister in high school. There are rosaries, and statues, spiritual books, and Hummel prints at the bookstore. These are gifts that others may not think of; and they're edifying, too!

PRAYERS -- Deceased: grandfather of Walter Trohan, St. Ed's; uncle of Larry Brohl of Ratlin, and Bill Brohl of Howard; father of Russell Ashbaugh, RH; Sister Mary Jones, RSM. Ill: uncle of Dick Corrigan of Zahm; Sister Christopher, 2 Sp. Intentions.