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Religion

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Revered relic to be on display in Detroit

Fabric from Mexico tied to saint's vision

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For two days in mid-August, thousands of pilgrims are likely to visit Detroit's Catholic cathedral to see a tiny piece of fabric that the faithful believe came from the cloak of St. Juan Diego, the 16th-Century peasant who described appearances of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

"Knowing Detroit, we will have thousands for this very important chance to see this relic," the Rev. John West of Holly, a theologian for the Archdiocese of Detroit, said Friday as the church announced the Detroit stop on the relic's national tour.

"Every time I have visited the homes of Mexican families in the archdiocese, I find the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe displayed somewhere," West said. "This is actually a relic from Juan Diego's cloak that is displayed in Mexico City."

In July 2002, Juan Diego was canonized by Pope John Paul II.

According to Catholic tradition, Jesus' mother, Mary, appeared to Juan Diego four times in December 1531 on Tepeyac hill in Mexico City. Her image was imprinted on his cloak, which has been preserved.

The fragment on tour was brought to the United States in 1941 and has been preserved in Los Angeles. The relic is called the Tilma of Tepeyac.

At Blessed Sacrament Cathedral, 9844 Woodward, the relic will be on public display starting at midday Aug. 15; the exact time is not yet known. A procession will follow at 5 p.m. with a mass, celebrated by Detroit Cardinal Adam Maida, at 7 p.m. Then, on Aug. 16, the cathedral will display the relic until a noon mass, followed by a 1:30 p.m. procession.

"For Mexican families, this is going to stir up a lot of devotion," West said. "But Pope John Paul II has said that Our Lady of Guadalupe is for all of the Americas, so we will see many Catholics who aren't Mexican also coming to take part."

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