

This Day in History... December 30, 1696

“The Lady of the Cloud”

On December 30, 1696, it is said a miracle took place in Guápulo, Ecuador. That miracle was performed by the Virgin Mary (called the “Lady of the Cloud” by certain communities in Ecuador and Peru). The event became an important part of Guapulo’s culture.

In 1696, Bishop Sancho de Andrade y Figueroa had fallen ill, and the people of Guápulo traveled to nearby Quito to see him. They brought an image of the Virgin Mary (taken from the church of Guápulo) with them. As they traveled, the people prayed. At 4:45 pm on December 30, 1696, the group arrived at St. Francis’s Church, where bells rang out marking the start of prayers. Just then, Don José de Ulloa y la Cadena, chaplain of the Nuns of the Immaculate Conception, pointed to sky in the east and shouted “The Virgin! The Virgin!”

All 500 people present claimed they saw the Virgin Mary appear within the clouds with a crown on her head, holding a lily and baby Jesus. She remained in the sky as they recited several prayers. The bishop then made a full recovery.



Full painting featured on the stamp above.



Traditional Christmas stamp featuring a portion of a painting on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Franciscan friars later founded a sanctuary near the site in Azogues. Each year, they celebrate “Fiesta de la Virgen de la Nube” or “Feast of the Virgin of the Cloud.” The tradition was taken up by nuns in Lima, Peru, and continued to spread across Peru and Ecuador. Since then, artists throughout history have honored the Lady of the Cloud in their works.

In 2020, the United States Postal Service featured a painting of Our Lady of Guápulo on a Forever stamp. The painting was completed by an unknown artist in 18th-century Cuzco, Peru. The painting depicts a sculpture of the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus in elaborate royal garments. A painted version of the sculpture was toured throughout the Andes to raise money for a new sanctuary honoring the Lady of the Cloud. This created great interest in the sculpture, leading several local artists to produce paintings such as the one on the 2020 stamp.

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