


# Our Lady of the Candles

FEAST DAY: SEPTEMBER 17





Explain that this story takes place in the Canary Islands. Use a world map or globe to point out the location of the islands. You may also wish to share some fun facts about the islands. Several lists are available online.

## *The Story*

Long ago, in the year 1400, two shepherds sought shelter from a storm in a cave. In the cave, they found a statue. The shepherds had never seen a statue before, and at first, they thought it was a living person. They motioned for the statue to go away. When the statue did not move, one of the shepherds threw a rock at it. But when he tried to throw the rock, his arm would not move! The other shepherd took out his knife and tried to cut one of the fingers on the statue, but his own finger began to bleed instead!

The two shepherds were so frightened that they left their belongings and their sheep and ran from the cave. They went to tell their chief, who told them to go and bring to him what they had seen. So, the shepherds went back to the cave and found the statue. When they picked it up, the shepherd who had the wound on his finger was instantly healed.

The chief knew that the statue was special, and he displayed it in a way so that it had a place of honor. A few nights later, when he went out to check on the statue, he heard beautiful music and saw several strange beings of light setting candles around the statue. The chief and his people had never before seen candles, because there were no bees on the islands to make wax.

The people built a special place for the statue, and for many years there was music, light, and a beautiful fragrance all around the statue that no one could explain. People brought offerings of fruits and flowers. They knew this was a special place.

Over a hundred years later, one of the boys on the island was captured and taken to Spain. There he learned about the Christian faith. He told missionaries about the people of the island, and they traveled there to share the Christian faith.

The story of the statue spread, and one group of people from another island felt that the statue should not be in the care of those who were not Christians. So, they stole the statue for their own church, and they gave it a special place of honor. But when they returned the next day, the statue had turned its back on the people, and they could not turn the statue around. Then, many people on the island became sick. They soon realized that they needed to return the statue to its rightful owners.

Devotion to Our Lady of the Candles spread to Spanish countries, South America, and the Philippines. It is said that, on occasion, large quantities of a very good quality wax are found on the island, and that even today candles and candle stumps are found near the cave where the shepherds found the original statue of Our Lady of the Candles.