

**Homily – The Epiphany of the Lord  
60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Msgr. Juan Ignacio Alfaro – January 8, 2023**

This Sunday we celebrate that the Lord constituted his Church “Catholic”, that is, universal. Before the Holy Spirit descended onto the apostles and the Blessed Mother, every nation in the world had its own mythology, according to which they responded to their natural desire of transcendence. Throughout the centuries, the people of Israel had been led to accept the gift of wisdom, which comes from the Holy Spirit. Gradually, the Israelites opened their hearts to the true God, who revealed himself first through Abraham, then through Moses and the prophets. The Child God – a descendant of King David regarding his humanity – is the fullness of the identity of the Holy People of God.

It is very significant that, on this Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, we are completing eight days of honoring the memory of the Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI. By praying to God for his eternal rest, we begin to gain historical perspective to ponder the legacy of that good man whom God called to be Peter’s Successor, to lead his bark for almost eight years. He put the gifts he received from God at the service of the truth and the Church, out of love for God. Among these gifts was perhaps the most brilliant mind in the Church throughout the 20th century and so far in the 21<sup>st</sup>. This proclamation, from his spiritual testament, sums up the focus of his legacy: *“Jesus Christ is truly the Way, the Truth, and the Life - and the Church, in all her shortcomings, is truly His Body.”*

The fullness of time – which has come with the Incarnation of the Son of God in Mary’s womb – is God’s gift to us. It consists precisely in the fact that God has become one of us, because he *“wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.”* (1 Tim 2:4). As the ancient peoples of the world had to overcome temptations of narcissism – a sense of entitlement

showing psychological and spiritual immaturity – we too need to grow in order to become more truly “Catholic.” We are called to be more open to the infinite variety of God’s gifts, also coming through new people in our lives. The three wise men are witnesses of the dialogue and mutual respect which are necessary to get past the complex of the tower of Babel and into the spirit of Pentecost. Pride and self-centeredness cause confusion and division – scattering people – while the love of God brings us to walk together as his Holy People.

Catholicity is precisely one of the characteristic notes of Monsignor Juan Ignacio Alfaro’s priestly ministry of 6 decades. He was born in Spain, continued his formation in English Literature and Theology in the Philippines and earned a second doctorate, this one in Sacred Scripture, in Rome. In San Antonio he was an instrumental figure in the early years of the Mexican American Cultural Center, now MACC, and a Scripture professor as well at the University of the Incarnate Word, Oblate School of Theology, and St. Mary’s University beginning in 1973. He outstandingly served several parochial communities through a long series of appointments throughout the years, until his retirement in 2016. He is a member of the Catholic Biblical Association and the author of many well-known, best-selling books, as well as articles on the Bible. He is also a member of CELAM, the Latin American Episcopal Council.

Thank you, Monsignor Alfaro, for following the true star of God’s Word your entire life, after the example of the Magi. Thank you for being a star yourself, pointing to the place of encounter with the Lord for thousands of people. Thank you for leading so many, throughout these years, to encounter one another and walk together as a synodal Church. May Our Lady of Guadalupe continue to bless you, and many through you, for many more years.