

Homily – Funeral of Archbishop Flores

January 17, 2017

In Scripture God often calls someone least expected to be a leader among God's people and to play an important role in the history of salvation. Consider David the little shepherd boy. Or the young lady, Mary of Nazareth. This is God's wondrous way of caring for his flock. St. Francis reminds us "If God, in the Christmas mystery, reveals himself not as One who remains on high and dominates the universe, but as the One who bends down, descends to the little and the poor earth, it means that, to be like him, we should not put ourselves above others, but indeed lower ourselves, place ourselves at the service of others, become small with the small and poor with the poor." La pequeñez y la sencillez son características de Jesús. La historia de la salvación tiene como agentes principales los pequeños: David en el Antiguo Testamento, María, la Madre de Jesús en Nazaret, la mujer sencilla dispuesta a la obra de Dios.

Patricia Flores was born into a poor Mexican American family here in Texas and worked as a young boy in the fields picking cotton. He and his family were migrant farmworkers who harvested crops all

the way to California. They often experienced discrimination. Moreover, the Flores children often did not return to school until after the harvest, a month or so after the new school term had begun. When he was tempted to drop out of high school, a bishop paid for his education and a nun encouraged his desire to be a priest. After entering the seminary, he was often told that he would never make it through his studies and be ordained.

His vocation came from God, su vocación vino de Dios. Dios lo llamó y a Dios sirvio. Patricio overcame all these obstacles and was ordained a priest on May 26, 1956. In 1970, only fourteen years later, he became the first Mexican American bishop in the United States and eventually, in 1979, Archbishop of San Antonio after one year as Bishop of El Paso. God clearly had an important mission for this cotton-picking boy! Archbishop Flores became first servant then leader. God called him, and he answered with simplicity and generosity. Today in honoring him and celebrating his life among us I am wearing his episcopal ring and using his beautiful crozier, a great shepherd's staff!

Archbishop Flores never forgot his roots and what it meant to be poor and looked down upon. The Spirit of the Lord was upon him That

and he was anointed to proclaim good news to the afflicted, bind up broken hearts, proclaim liberty to captives and release to prisoners. He showed great simplicity of life, solidarity with the poor, a solid commitment to social justice. He was concerned to build bridges and build the community of faith. He was a kind servant and a great leader, especially on behalf of the Hispanic community. El arzobispo fue un gran apostol y reconocido líder por asr ante todo servidor de sus hermanos. Nuestro arzobispo fue llamado por Dios para ser el líder de la comunidad hispana en los Estados Unidos. He was very sympathetic with migrants and immigrants, welcoming them truly as sisters and brothers in the Lord. He is a beacon of light in a world of darkness tear by divisions, hatred, racism and exclusion. Pope Francis describes this reality as a culture of discard, where only economy reigns, money is what counts, not people, and where the poor and vulnerable not find a place. Archbishop Flores welcomed all as his motto indicates: WORK NOT FOR MYSLEF, BUT FOR ALL OTHERS. “Trabajar no para uno mismo, sino en favor de otros, de todos” Pope Francis said: “Let us become bold in exploring new ways with which our communities can be homes where the door is always open. An open door! And it is important that the welcome is

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followed by a clear proposal of the faith; many times a proposal of the faith may not be explicit but it is conveyed by attitude, by witness.” His door was always open. He promoted life from the moment of conception to natural death and all in between. The unborn, the born and in between always found a place in his heart.

He was widely respected here in the Archdiocese of San Antonio and throughout the Church in the United States. He had some pet idea – for example, insisting on always being on time. (I know I can learn this better from him!) He also did not like to do press conferences or interviews, but he did them well and with great grace – despite his apprehensions.

He was known for his deep faith, prayer life and, especially, his great love of people. Se le conoce por su profunda fe, su vida de oración y amistad con Dios y su gran compasión por la gente, el pueblo de Dios, especialmente los pobres y vulnerables, los excluidos de la historia. He was very charitable, keeping nothing for himself, always helping those less fortunate than himself. St. Paul reminds us that love is more important than anything else. Love of God and neighbor is at the heart of the Christian, the priest and the

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bishop. We know that without love we become the most selfish and narcissistic individuals in the world.

The source of his perseverance and the wonderful, simple way he exercised his shepherd leadership was his close intimacy with the risen Lord Jesus. He knew that he was a branch on the Vine. He remained in the Lord, and Jesus helped him bring forth much good fruit. He was a cheerful person, a happy archbishop. He loved to sing and celebrate, especially visiting families. He believed that families are the hope for the church and a hope for the world. He knew that Jesus called him a friend, and filled with the Holy Spirit enjoyed people calling them friends.

Archbishop Flores helped with the bishops of the dioceses of Texas to bring St. John Paul II to our city. La visita de santo Juan Pablo II es una de las glorias de San Antonio. He was faithful to all the successors of Peter, now Pope Francis. His legacy reminds us of the importance of keeping communion with the universal Church in words and deeds. The visit of Saint John Paull II will be forever one the glories of the city of San Antonio.

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His love for Our Lady of Guadalupe ran deep. Un verdadero enamorado de la Virgencita. Mary has promised to be with us always. Mary of Nazareth became the mother of the Savior, the Mother of the Church. El Arzobispo se sabia tan amado por ella, al grado de gozar tenerla en su pensamiento, en cantarle y ofrecerle su voz, sus cansancios y sus amores; ella fue su madre y compañera. Our Lady, *la Morenita*, bridged two cultures and is revered throughout the Americas. Our Lady, be with us, bring us together as Archbishop Flores did, lead us to follow your beloved Son in carrying out our God-given vocations as missionary disciples!

Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe!

Viva Cristo Rey!