



Archdiocese of San Antonio

Most Reverend Gustavo Garcia-Siller



Homily-Mass for Jubilee of Ordination for Fr. Varghese Antony **January 30, 2016**

This is a wonderful celebration, as we mark the 25th anniversary of Father Antony's ordination to the priesthood. His home diocese in India seems a world away, but his faithful service to God and His people has been the constant in his ministry of love and service. His life's mission has been formed by the Holy Spirit through the many people and challenges he has faced throughout the past quarter of a century. This has helped him to become the priest he is today. St. John Vianney, the patron of parish priests, helps us to understand the goal of all priests. He says, "We are like a small mirror in which God searches for his reflection." Truly the people we serve as priests look at us in a special way, yearning to see Jesus in us, wishing to experience the love, mercy and compassion of the Lord in the priest who serves them.

In St. Paul's letter to the Hebrews the source of Fr. Antony's calling and the invitation to the priesthood is clearly defined: "No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God." Father Antony heard God's voice in his heart in the

witness of many good priests and laypersons. He was nourished by the Grace of the sacraments. I join Father Antony in sharing with you that nothing has given me more joy than celebrating Mass and serving God's people.

In today's Gospel, we hear the familiar story of Jesus calming the storm. In the midst of the walls of water crashing around them and threatening their very lives, the disciples' faith in Jesus' was shaken as we hear them say, "Don't you care?" It is no wonder that Jesus responded to them so harshly, "Have you no faith?" The disciples were not much different than we often are in moments that threaten our lives and our very souls. Surrounded by the uncertain and the unexpected menacing events, do we sometimes wonder if Jesus is paying attention and if we will be saved.

Our faith in him should set us free from that doubt. Through our baptism we all share in the responsibility to live the gospel of faith and hope and witness to that deeply held belief with our words and our lives. In the darkest moments of fear, we are called to proclaim our faith in the same Jesus who calmed the wind and the waves. It is through our faith that others will see the reflection of Jesus and his dominion over evil. "Quiet. Be still." That is all Jesus needed to say to quiet the wind and the sea.

We live in a world and at a time when fear and uncertainty fill our days. In the gospel, Jesus tells us so many times, "Do not be afraid." He gives us these words of assurance so that the storm that may threaten us today, does not destroy our peace. Worry is the great enemy of the peace we have been promised. It is natural to be shaken by the events of the day, but we should be humble enough to confidently reach out to Jesus so that our momentary concerns and even fears do not turn into despair.

The headlines each day point to the fear that remains the great source of division among us. Pope Francis, speaking of our response to these worldly threats, says: "Fear provokes a self-centered selfishness which leads to a sort of paralysis. It harms us. It weakens us, it diminishes us. It even paralyzes us." Many experience unreasonable fear of immigrants and refugees who are merely seeking a life free of violence. Fear is creating suspicion and fear in people just because of the religion they profess. Is the world a dangerous place? I think most of us would agree that it is, and that like the Sea of Galilee, storms can catch us by surprise. However, we must not let life's uncertainty wound our souls and rob us of Christ's inner peace.

As we seek the peace of Christ amid the dangers that may rock the tranquility of our hearts, let us remember that Jesus is with us. Blessed Mother Teresa, who faithfully served those most in need in Father Antony's homeland, told us why the anxiety we face remains. She said, "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."