



Archdiocese of San Antonio

Most Reverend Gustavo Garcia-Siller



**Homily – Respect Life Mass
January 24, 2016**

Today’s readings focus our attention on the importance of the whole community of faith and the urgency of the present moment!

The first reading describes a covenant renewal ceremony with Ezra the Scribe, but the emphasis is on the whole Jewish community. The phrase “all the people” is repeated ten times! They listen attentively. They are eager for the word of God. They worship God together. In renewing the covenant they accept their shared responsibility for carrying out God’s law, the *torah*. We gather as a community of faith today, united in our commitment to defending and nurturing every human life, renewing our covenant with God.

In the gospel Jesus is at home in the synagogue at Nazareth surrounded by family and neighbors. He describes his mission and ministry, identifying himself as a prophet whose message is that God’s word is being fulfilled **today! Not sometime in the future.**

Today! Here and now! He is God's servant who brings to fulfillment the longing of the poor, the oppressed, the imprisoned – brings sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf – proclaims a jubilee year, a year of freedom, a time of mercy.

Paul's analogy of the church as a body acknowledges the importance of unity amid diversity. Thank God, we are not all the same! We each have particular gifts from the Holy Spirit, but we are bound together in solidarity, with a common interest and mutual affection – in defense and protection of human life. The work we do on behalf of life is a sign of God's kingdom present here and now! The words of the prophet and of Jesus are being fulfilled through us.

So, today is a special day. We live in a time of great danger and numbing polarization. The Lord has called us to a quiet place, a safe place, a safe harbor today to be close to him and to one another. Today, the word of God calls us to deeper unity and recommitment to our work on behalf of the unborn and the born: the poor, the vulnerable, the forgotten, the neglected, the young, the old, persons with disabilities, strangers and migrants, the enslaved and the free. Our mission especially during this Jubilee Year of Mercy is to bring God's compassion and mercy to all those whom we encounter.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe accompany us on our earthly pilgrimage in life -- today and always!