



Archdiocese of San Antonio

Most Reverend Gustavo Garcia-Siller



**Homily – New Our Lady of the Lake University President
Inaugural Mass
November 6, 2015**

My brothers and sisters in Christ, I am happy to be with you this morning as we begin an important day for this university, its students, the Sisters of Divine Providence, the Archdiocese of San Antonio, and our whole community. Today the honor and responsibility of leadership of this great Catholic institution of higher learning will be passed on for only the 9th time in its distinguished 120 year history. Dr. Melby, it is my privilege to join with the Our Lady of the Lake University family in prayer for your installation as its President. May the Holy Spirit be your guide as you undertake the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Your predecessor, Sister Jane Ann Slater, has been a blessing to this institution during her administration. She continues to be an important woman of influence and leadership for the Church as she serves as Chancellor of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Sr. Jane Ann, on behalf of all those you served as president, I thank you for your distinguished and inspired vision.

It is a vital vocation and noble ministry to lead this Catholic University as it fosters the integration of Catholic values and quality education. All members of the leadership, faculty, and staff should be rightfully proud of its commitment to make available the blessing of Catholic higher education, especially to those who would not otherwise have the opportunity to cultivate and enrich their God-given gifts. Dr. Martin Luther King understood that the integrity of education hinged on more than academics when he said, "Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education."

In the gospel chosen for today's Mass, Jesus calls his followers to be both salt and light to the world. Each day, you are given the opportunity to educate and form your students, preparing them to be inspired and creative witnesses to the Catholic values that are an inseparable part of their academic achievements and personal growth.

We live at a time and in a culture, that too easily has allowed its moral standards and objective understanding of truth to shift like sand under its feet, blown in the winds by personal passion and its collective appetite. Society has been willing to exchange deeply held conviction for easily swayed opinion, thus no longer being defined and led by its foundational values.

When Jesus calls us to be "Salt" to the world, he is challenging us to preserve the "truth" that underlies life, justice, and human dignity. Salt

is not intended to stand alone, it is supposed to be mixed and blended, changing the character and flavor of whatever it touches.

Higher education, blended with the salt of faith and placed in the hearts and minds of the men and women you serve, uniquely empowers them to be a force for the preservation of what is good and righteous, while being instruments of positive and just change for the benefit of the common good.

Jesus also calls us to be light, to be other Christ(s) in the world. He is the "Light of the World" and we are all called to this vocation to reflect His light for others to see. Pope Francis reminds us that, "The Christian is always bright, always communicates the light, a light that is not his own, but comes from God...God gives us the light and we give it to others." Like salt, we must never lose the flavor and zest of our faith. We must never allow the light of Christ to grow dim as we serve mankind. Jesus warns us that if we allow the salt of faith to lose its flavor, "It is no longer good for anything." The same holds true if we hide our light under a "bushel basket". We must never let the light of Christ be extinguished in us. That light of faith leads others to encounter Him and the truth of our salvation. In that spirit, the psalmist writes, "The Lord has made his salvation known; in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice." We are his voice and his hands, so let us "sing joyfully", in the world so all the earth will see God's "Saving Power."

Catholic Universities have historically been catalysts for salt and light as they fortify academic excellence with the power and durability of the gospel. The Holy Father, speaking about the legacy of Catholic institutions of higher learning said; "Again and again, the Church has acted as a mediator in finding solutions to problems affecting peace, social harmony, the land, the defense of life, human and civil rights." The Holy Father encourages all Catholic universities to prepare their students to be salt to the world by proclaiming what is right and true, even when society does not want to hear the message. Just as St. Paul encouraged the young church in Rome. We must be living signs of the Gospel to those who have not encountered Christ in their lives so that; *"Those who have never been told of him shall see, and those who have never heard of him shall understand."*

Let us ask, through the intercession of the Blessed Mother, trusting in Divine Providence, that we will faithfully carry out our mission; never being salt that is harsh or light that is blinding, but instead sharing a faith that is both beautiful and filled with joy.