



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller



50th Anniversary Mass-Holy Spirit Church
August 12, 2014

We live at a time when even durable institutions and personal relationships are rarely defined in terms of decades. So celebrating the 50th anniversary of The Church of the Holy Spirit, is even more remarkable when measured against the too-often fleeting world that surrounds us.

Our joy, however, is tempered tonight by the absence of the founding pastor of this family of families, Bishop Bernard Popp, of fond and loving memory wrote in a letter that marked your 25th anniversary with his usual warmth and wit; “Yes, it was a time when there was nothing on the property except the mesquite trees, inhabited by a few jack rabbits, and myself and about 300 families that comprised the parish.” So allow me to join my voice with his as he affirmed that, “You have come a long way and so we pause today to give thanks to the Lord for his blessings for your zeal and dedication.”

In St. Peter’s epistle we are encouraged to continue to build on the legacy of faith that surrounds us. “Like living stones let yourself be built into a spiritual house...” It is your spiritual gifts that have nourished this community through the years and continue to nurture it into the future. Certainly, this is a beautiful sanctuary and this campus that has seen mesquite trees and jack rabbits be replaced by beautiful buildings that are now valued resources to help our children and families build community and seek the Lord, making Him the “...cornerstone of our lives.”

Former Pastor, Msgr. Larry Walsh's words echo in this sanctuary this evening as he once wrote, "God only can measure the torrents of grace which have flowed to His people because Holy Spirit Parish has been here...The people here had a vision of parish...as the universal Church in miniature...and have tried, and keep on trying, to realize that dream." This vision was born in the hope that continues to be strengthened by love of God and by all that He has done for His people.

In the Gospel Jesus explains to the Samaritan Woman in very clear terms the nature of the Father and our relationship with Him. He tells us that God is Spirit, and that we, as His children and his followers, must "worship Him in Spirit and truth." Jesus also explains that because God is Spirit, that He is not confined to any one place or person. Thus every person is given access to the Father and that our gifts are not to be imprisoned behind these walls.

This is where we are spiritually born in baptism, strengthened by the Holy Spirit in confirmation, and nourished by the power of the Eucharist. But this is where we only begin to experience the banquet table of the Lord. It is through the spiritual life of the Church we begin to understand that "...God dwells among men on earth." We must, however, allow the Grace that we have shared here, when we worship together, to be shared outside these doors in our lives.

This parish has long been an example of how we can glorify God with our lives. The many ministries that you have embraced and sustain have provided homes for the homeless, hope to the marginalized and isolated, feeding their hungry hearts, and filling their souls with "Spirit and truth."

Next month, as an expression of our Pastoral Priorities, you will be invited to join your brothers and sisters throughout the Archdiocese of San Antonio in "A Season of Welcome". This will be a time when we all will be called upon to proclaim the saving love of Jesus Christ and invite others to an encounter Him in the beauty of the Mass. In the spirit of the New Evangelization, each one of us will be encouraged be an instrument of God's Grace and help them to come home and feel the welcoming heart of the Church in us.

The Mass is the right place to begin. Pope Francis said, “The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving.”

I, along with Fr. Carlos, encourage you to open wide the doors to your parish and allow it to overflow with the love of God. As St. Peter reminds us, the blessings that we share here are for those of us who believe, but also “for those without faith.” It is this realization that is the binding force that continues to fortify the people of this parish, the living stones of the Church. For fifty years in the past and for the unknown future I pray that you continue to evangelize and proclaim the intimacy with the Father that we are all privileged to share. So in the many seasons of welcome that are yet before us. let us be lovers of God and one another, so that we may “...announce the praises of Him who called you into the wonderful light.”