



Archdiocese of San Antonio

Most Reverend Gustavo Garcia-Siller



Homily – Archbishop’s Appeal Donor Mass

January 17, 2015

Imagine Jesus walking along the seashore as he encounters people and enters into dialogue with them. It seems simple enough, does it not? However, something deeper is happening. Jesus is not simply telling people to have a nice day. He is sharing the good news of God’s enduring love, compassion, and mercy. Jesus is able to look into a person’s eyes, establish a true human connection, and gently lead the person into greater intimacy with his heavenly Father.

In today’s gospel he encounters a toll or tax collector, someone who was working for the Roman occupation army. Such a person was considered the worst of sinners, a traitor to his people, someone who was greedy and cruel. Jesus does not call down fire and brimstone on the man. He gently but firmly says two incredible words: Follow me. And Levi, son of Alphaeus, does something equally incredible: he follows Jesus! This is the most important encounter of his life, and he invites his friends to a dinner to celebrate the moment – but his friends are other tax collectors and public sinners. Some are scandalized that Jesus has entered such a person’s house and sits at table to enjoy a dinner there with “those people.” Jesus’ explanation is also simple but profound – “I did not

come to call the self-righteous but sinners.” And, my sisters and brothers, we are all sinners.

The Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that Jesus “is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring, for he himself is best by weakness.” The Son of God is fully human, like us in every way except sin. He has walked the highways and the byways proclaiming the gospel in word and deed – healing, teaching, guiding, casting out demons, feeding the multitude, embracing the whole world with God’s enduring love as he hung upon the cross.

He says to us today: Follow me. Follow my example. Go out and encounter those who are needy and vulnerable, dialogue with people whose beliefs and values and skin color or language may be different from yours. Pope Francis has often described his vision of an effective Church, faithful to the gospel – a field hospital on the battlefield where we are to take care of the wounded as we encounter them. Once they are whole, he has said, we can check their cholesterol.

The Archbishop’s Appeal is an important vehicle that allows us as a community of faith to go out, encounter, dialogue with others about the gospel. Not to proselytize but to attract them to God’s church.

The Appeal helps us fund priestly ministries, supports seminarians, helps provide social services, finances evangelization and outreach programs, supports pastoral ministries, education, and parish stewardship/grant acquisition.

This past year we exceeded our goal of \$4,000,000 by over \$900,000. We have also increased the number of donors. Our goal for 2015 is \$4,500,000. I am very, very grateful to all of you who have made the Appeal a great success this

past year, and I know I can count on your assistance this year as well.

Transforming the Future is our motto for this year. We have a sacred obligation to listen attentively to Jesus words – follow me – and to follow him, holding nothing of ourselves back!