

Today as we formally install Fr Carlos as the rector of San Fernando, it is a good reminder to always affirm every person who comes here as a child of God and a person of dignity and respect. Everyone here is someone, someone special. This community celebrates all people of every ethnic and racial group, poor and rich, citizen and immigrant. It is the gathering place of San Antonio for almost three centuries. It is the religious address of the city, the marker of faith that stands in the center of our community proclaiming to all that God is in our midst. It is especially a place for the poor and the lowly, for those who need consolation and comfort in God's presence.

It is important to note that the gospel today on the feast of the Assumption shows the first thing Mary does after accepting to carry God in her womb and be the mother of Jesus. She immediately thinks, not of herself and her many needs to prepare for her first childbirth, but of her elderly cousin, Elizabeth. The gospel says Mary went in haste. She is carrying the Word of God to others from the moment of Incarnation. She is doing what we must all do as we carry Christ to the world. We do it urgently, in haste. It cannot wait! There are too many who need the consoling and healing power of Jesus now. Like Elizabeth, many people in our community are in great need in so many ways. We certainly have seen that with the terrible pandemic that has affected so many around the world and here in our city. People need each other now more than ever.

Mary is the model disciple, who takes Jesus to others, especially those in need. She goes in haste to see her cousin and to help her in whatever way she can. That is the role of the disciple. Mary is the first disciple of her son.

The gospel also gives us a beautiful and rare moment in scripture, two women speaking to each other in faith. Mostly the speakers in scripture are men, and women speak much less, and almost always they speak to men. Women were not considered equal to men. Elizabeth makes a profession of faith in the baby Mary carries. As a response to that faith, we are privileged to listen to Mary's canticle, called the Magnificat, which celebrates the "great things God has done" for Mary and for us! God chooses the lowly, those on the bottom, not considered important by most, but very special in God's eyes. This is a moment for people of faith to see as God sees. God lifts us up, so that we can lift others up. In God's eyes we are all "hidalgos," we are all someone special. God lifts up the lowly, and reverses what the world does. God restores what was intended at creation. The world is completely different for the person who carries Jesus in them. Mary is overwhelmed by God's goodness and generosity. God has mercy on His servant. Mary, as the first disciple, feels great gratitude and also feels called to give back these blessings by sharing them with those in need.

The Magnificat is Mary realizing everything God has done for her. Luke presents her as a symbol of all God has done for us. Do we realize everything God has done for us? Mary returned to her home in Nazareth and today we celebrate the Assumption as she returned to her home in heaven. She completed what God sent her to do. Have we completed what God has sent us to do? Our life is to be a witness to what God has done in us, just as Mary witnessed with her life, all the way to the foot of the cross and beyond.

San Fernando Cathedral is also a witness. It is a witness to faith. For over 290 years it has stood at the center of this community as a testament to the faith of those who built it, sustain it and gather in it for worship. To be in this place is to taste a little bit of paradise. The sturdy stones, the soaring ceiling, the stained glass depicting great saints of the past, the inspiring retablos, the beautiful statues all inspire us on our journey of faith towards heaven. The many traditions here from the Passion Play to the Serenata de Guadalupe remind us of the mysteries of faith.

As rector of this cathedral, Fr Carlos, always take time to be inspired by the faith of the people here, especially the poor, the elderly, the immigrant, and the homeless. They are totally dependent on God since they have such few things in this world. In many ways, they are the privileged ones who show us God's love and care. They show us how we must live our lives dependent on God and then share what

we receive from God with others. Pray that you will have that kind of faith to live your life recognizing your dependence on God.

Mary and Elizabeth celebrate what God has done: an elderly woman becomes pregnant and a young virgin becomes pregnant. Both women were in some sense the forgotten, the rejected, the poor, the unnoticed, until they heard God's call, accepted God's will and acted on it.

On this feast of the Assumption of Mary let us be committed as Mary was to celebrate all God has done for us and to respond by carrying Jesus inside of us to others.