

**Homily – 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Opening of the Synodal Path
San Fernando Cathedral – October 17, 2021**

“The Lord was pleased to crush him in infirmity.” (Is). What a mystery! God so loves us that He sent his only Son to the world to die on a cross to save us!

Jesus referred to James and John as the sons of thunder. Faithful to that nickname, they dared to ask for a place of prominence over their peers. They weighed pros and cons and went for it. They knew that sitting at the side of the Lord in his glory was worth the bet, even if it meant sacrificing friendships and their own lives. They were serious about it. But at this point, they still did not really understand what the kingdom is about. The Lord taught them a lesson that turned their audacity into self-humiliation. It was a preliminary test of true courage, as they did not run away, but accepted the humiliation and remained in the midst of those they had just offended. They both proved their faithfulness later. John stood at the foot of the cross. James was the first among the twelve to be executed.

We need to learn from their courage to go through the journey that the Church throughout the world began a week ago, and which we officially open for the Archdiocese of San Antonio here today. The Pope has summoned all Catholics to walk together for the next two years, in a process that involves truly listening to one another, challenging our views and breaking through our comfort zones, growing in humility. In the last few decades, our social circles of people we fully trust – and with whom we share our worldviews and identity – have shrunk tremendously. We have become increasingly divided and polarized in society and even within the Church. That needs to stop and be overturned! It’s on us, all of us! The way is Jesus himself, his whole self. Not just bits and pieces that we like to hear from the Gospel and Church teaching, or the knowledge we think we have, but the living Lord in person. We need to become more the People of God, through communion, participation and mission.

Last Sunday Pope Francis opened the synodal path with the Mass at St Peter's Basilica. During his homily, he said that Jesus *“shows us that God is not found in neat and orderly places, distant from reality, but walks ever at our side. He meets us where we are, on the often rocky roads of life. Today, as we begin this synodal process,”* the Pope said, *“let us begin by asking ourselves – all of us, Pope, bishops, priests, religious and laity – whether we, the Christian community, embody this ‘style’ of God, who travels the paths of history and shares in the life of humanity.”*

With his Incarnation, Passion, death and Resurrection, the Lord has revealed to us the purpose for which the Father “was pleased to crush him in infirmity.” We insist asking why. “Because I love you”, He says to each one of us. We need to experience the mystery! God is Love! He loves you and I, He loves us! **“Us”!** He walks along with us, leading us to God's own inner life. But in order to be “us,” we need to care for one another, listen to each other and believe that God will speak to us through our neighbor. Encounter, listen and discern. So let us begin this journey praying like Blessed Conchita: “Jesus, Savior of all people, save them!”

The Letter to the Hebrews tells us to hold fast because God sympathizes with our weakness. So much so that He, through whom all things were made, became one of us and “has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin.” As the High Priest, He offered the sacrifice of himself for our salvation. Let us confidently approach Him as we begin this path together with the whole Church, “to receive mercy and to find grace” for our time and generations to come.

Walking in the darkness of the world at our time, we pray like we responded to the psalm: “Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.” Walk with us, Lord! We are overwhelmed by evil, suffering and our own sin. We do not understand! But we trust in You. We believe that you

walk with us through your own suffering. You are especially close to those who suffer the most. You shall justify many because You bore our guilt. As you commended your spirit into the Father's hands, for his glory we entrust ourselves and our work into your hands for the salvation of all people.

Blessed Mother of Guadalupe, guide us through this path!

(The Prayer of the Synod: Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus)

**We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.**

**With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;**

**Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.**

**We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.**

**Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.**

**Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.**

**All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!