

**Homily – Fourth Sunday of Easter
Confirmations at St. Anthony Parish, Elmendorf – April 21, 2024**

Are you ready to receive the Holy Spirit? I am so glad to be here, with this community of St. Anthony Parish in Elmendorf!

Today's readings remind us that – through Baptism – we have been made children of God, the flock of Jesus the Good Shepherd. Children and sheep are vulnerable, easily preyed upon, tempted to wander away from the flock and the shepherd. Therefore, we must live as children of God and members of his flock, to be safely led to green pastures and still waters. God is a merciful and compassionate Father. Jesus knows us and calls each of us by name as he leads us to the Father. He is willing to lay down his life for our sake. The Holy Spirit is given to us as a gift who brings us into deeper union with God the Father and Jesus the risen Lord.

In the first chapter of the book of Genesis we read: *“God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness.”* (Gn 1:26). There is a distinction. On behalf of Pope Francis, a Cardinal in the Vatican recently reminded us that *“the image of God is entrusted to human freedom so that – under the guidance and action of the Spirit – the person’s likeness to God may grow and each person may attain their highest dignity.”* (Dignitas infinita, 22). Today, I will lay my hands on you and call down the Holy Spirit upon you, the same Spirit you received in Baptism. Today, the Spirit will come into your lives in a new and powerful way. I will also anoint you with Sacred Chrism. Today, God calls you to continue the mission of his beloved Son. God will give you whatever you need to carry out your responsibilities as disciples

of the risen Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit bears witness that we are children of God, called and sent to share the good news of God's love with everyone we meet.

This is a new, blessed moment in your lives. It is also a great challenge! It is hard to be faithful to Jesus in our world. In a different passage of the gospel, the Lord warned his disciples: *“Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves.”* (Mt 10:16). The ways of the world are to seek power, possessions, pleasure – by whatever means! Daily we face a tendency to justify every kind of evil, an atmosphere of mistrust and falsehoods that divides, alienates, and polarizes us into camps and tribes, building walls rather than bridges. The kingdom of God, on the other hand, is one where everyone is respected because he or she is created in God's own image. The kingdom of God is a place of justice and peace, of harmony and unity, of love and concern for the poor, the brokenhearted, the captive, those who mourn.

The Sacrament of Confirmation will strengthen you to live a life of discipleship, faithful to the word of God. The Holy Spirit will empower you to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to others, especially by the way you live and act. We rightfully pray daily for a better life for our families and our communities. We must be familiar with the voice of the Good Shepherd. God needs us to be his eyes, ears, mouth, and arms, to bring the kingdom to fulfillment. Have courage! Be confident! Be faithful to the Holy Spirit!

Our Lady of Guadalupe, help us be attentive to the voice of your Son Jesus, so we may be obedient to the Holy Spirit. Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!