

**Invocation & Meal Blessing – Rose Window Gala
October 26, 2023**

What a gathering! Welcome! And thank you for being here! Thank you, Deborah, for the introduction! Thank you, Rebecca, and the Gala Committee members, for making it possible for us to come together for tonight's celebration. Thank you, Bishop Mike, Bishop Gary. We welcome all of you tonight, full of gratitude; County Judge Peter Sakai and his wife Rachel; Council Woman Phylis Viagran; Commissioner Rebecca Clay-Flores; our partners from the World Heritage Office, Colleen Swain; and Mission Heritage Partners, Karla Vasquez; as well as from the National Park Service, Allison Young. The list is long, but we are delighted with the presence of each one of you. Thank you!

What is it that attracts people to travel around the world to see great monuments? What is it about the pyramids in Egypt, or the great wall of China, or Saint Peter's Basilica. What makes the effort of preserving them and seeing them worth it? What is the point of calling these places "World Heritage"? Culture does not merely mean the set of actions and works that human beings develop in order to survive. Beyond preparing for the next hour or the following day, human beings are in constant search for the expansion of our individual existence in the context of social coexistence. Together with all the other great works of art and human achievement, architectural monuments like this elevate our aspirations to transcendence. Our rose window is a silent witness of a time that surpasses us as individuals and even as a community bound by a

space and a moment in history. Moreover, when these human considerations have the perspective offered by the Christian faith, landmarks like this can tell us not only who we are, but inspire our hope in what we can, and in fact, will become. That is why this place is so vital to us.

Eternal Father, through our gathering tonight, communicate to us who we are meant to be, thanks to the merits of your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Increase our gratitude to our forebearers, our love for one another and our hope for generations to come. Help us walk together, following the lead of Pope Francis, as a journeying people who cherish our unity over our differences. Bring about among us the harmony we need to continue building your Church, your People.

Bless us O Lord and these your gifts which we are about to receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.