

Remarks by Archbishop José H. Gomez

January 4, 2008

Bishop Patrick J. Zurek's appointment as Bishop of Amarillo

Yesterday was a special day for the people of the Diocese of Amarillo and a day of mixed emotions for all of us here in San Antonio. I know that you join me in congratulating Bishop Zurek for his appointment by Pope Benedict XVI as the Bishop of Amarillo.

Bishop Patrick Zurek has been a blessing in many ways to me personally and to all the people of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. We who have worked alongside him will miss a good friend and a talented and dedicated bishop. However, I am happy that the Diocese of Amarillo will now benefit from his inspired leadership and dedication.

As I pointed out in our gathering yesterday, it seems San Antonio has had a steady connection with the Diocese of Amarillo. Bishop Yanta, served the archdiocese in many ways and of course was an auxiliary bishop here and Archbishop Lucey eventually was to become our Archbishop. Bishop John Louis Morkovsky had roots in San Antonio as a parish priest and a teacher at St. John's Seminary, and Bishop Laurence Fitzsimon served as a parish priest and the Chancellor of the archdiocese. We are proud to lend Bishop Zurek's name to that list of great San Antonio contributions to the Church of Amarillo.

I have heard that yesterday's official announcement in Amarillo went very well and Bishop Zurek was received with a warm welcome. They have only begun

to discover the very special shepherd they have been given.

We, in the Archdiocese of San Antonio know what we will be missing. For nearly a decade Bishop Zurek ministered effectively in a variety of areas throughout the archdiocese of San Antonio. His ability to work with a collaborative spirit enriched the implementation of the Archdiocesan Synod, ACTS Missions, Assumption Seminary, CTSA and many other ministries and initiatives.

He has continued to work tirelessly as a powerful advocate for the Archdiocese of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, helping them to rebuild their lives in the wake of Hurricane Mitch.

His great gift for speaking several languages and his personal appreciation and sensitivity to the many cultures that enrich our archdiocese has been a wonderful gift to all of our people. He always seemed at home with any parish community, and they felt comfortable with him.

And people of many faiths felt equally at home with him. His spirit of respect and good will did much to encourage solidarity in our joint efforts with the interfaith community as we worked for the common good on a variety of issues in the archdiocese.

Bishop Zurek has been willing to take on the tough jobs when needed. He was instrumental in helping both Archbishop Flores and me establish policies and procedures to conform with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young

People. Bishop Zurek's compassion and dedication helped the archdiocese to implement the *Charter* in a true spirit of reconciliation.

His supervision of the Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment guided them in their efforts to make every Catholic parish, school and place of ministry a safe harbor for our children.

Since my arrival in San Antonio, Bishop Zurek has been a valued friend and trusted confidant. Working with him has been a special source of Grace for me as we shared the opportunity to serve God, by serving the people of the archdiocese.

He will remain in my prayers as he begins this new and exciting chapter in his own personal journey of faith.

Vaya con Dios...Bishop Zurek.