

Homily – 300th Anniversary of San Antonio

May 6, 2018

My dear sisters and brothers, God has first loved us! That is the truth! Not because we are worthy of his love or blameless. He loves us just as we are – fully human, weak, sinful. The only worthy response is to love God in return and to share the love God has poured into our hearts with everyone we encounter. Jesus says to us today and every day: “Love one another as I love you” – totally, holding nothing back, making no exceptions! This is what we must do if we wish to be Jesus’ friend, his follower, his disciple.

We just heard “love one another because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten of God and has knowledge of God.” We are most like God when we love! However, we also know that love costs. Love demands. Love can be tough, and it can be compassionate. In loving, we give away part of ourselves for the sake of the other. Love is always life-giving, for, love is of God.

Peter learns a powerful lesson when he visits a household in Caesarea – God does not play favorites. God shows no partiality. The Holy Spirit descends upon the Gentile Cornelius and his whole household, and they enter the Christian community of faith.

This year we celebrate the three hundredth anniversary of San Antonio. Although the first Mass was celebrated here in 1691, an expedition established a presidio and a Catholic mission here in 1718. There were indigenous people here. Sacramental records indicate that some of the earliest settlers were Spanish, others were *criollos*, while still others were *mestizos* and *mulattos*.

Intermarriage among these groups became commonplace. San Antonio was a diverse community from its very beginnings.

Life was very difficult for everyone. Most were quite poor, and they were isolated from their places of origin. But they established a firm foundation here – by working together, by arguing, and by resolving differences – that has led to San Antonio being the seventh largest city in the United States today – and still growing!

As missionary disciples, we need to celebrate our diversity and commit to ongoing dialogue so that we can resolve problems as they arise – striving together for unity and harmony, welcoming newcomers, respecting every human life, building bridges not walls. Love one another, as I love you, says the Lord today! Our Lady of Guadalupe has always brought diverse people together. Dear Lady, help us love one another as you and your Son love us!