



Archdiocese of San Antonio

Most Reverend Gustavo García-Siller



Homily – Vigil of Pentecost

May 14, 2016

We gather in blessed unity in the midst of our diversity. Unity does not mean uniformity. It means we share one faith, one baptism, one Lord. The Catholic Church is like a big tent in which people of different backgrounds and cultures find a home – a place where they encounter their sisters and brothers in the risen Lord.

We gather in faith and fellowship here this evening in solidarity with our brothers and sisters throughout the Archdiocese – in hospitals and nursing homes; in orphanages, prisons, and detention centers; the homebound, the elderly, children, young adults, those alienated and marginalized by poverty or substance abuse!

Furthermore, we gather in communion and solidarity with our sisters and brothers throughout the world, especially the sixty million refugees driven from their homes and homelands, those forced to flee because of enduring violence and numbing poverty and misery, and in communion with our beloved Holy Father Francis.

Our prayer of the faithful this evening will be in several languages, representing our diversity. But our prayer is one because of our faith and commitment to the Church's mission.

The world is a very dangerous place today. There is so much anger, hatred, and extreme poverty. Violence begets more violence. We experience much alienation – in our families, in our nation, in the Church. At times we seem to be poles apart, refusing to seek common ground, to arrive at compromises that do not violate our faith or deepest values. The story of the Tower of Babel should be a clear warning to us about what the world is like when people can no longer communicate with each other – about anything!

The antidote to the alienation in the world – our inability to communicate effectively with one another – is reconciliation, a gift of the Holy Spirit. God sends the Holy Spirit to revive God's people when they seem to be only dry bones scattered on a desert battlefield. God's Spirit is given a remnant of God's people who keep God's commandments. Led and inspired by the Holy Spirit we are able to dream dreams together and develop a wonderful vision for our life as a community of faith. St. Paul reminds us that the Holy Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness and makes us strong!

God spoke to his people living in exile, far from their homeland, questioning if God had abandoned them: “All you who are thirsty, come to the water! . . . I will make with you an everlasting covenant” (Is 55:1.3) Jesus calls out to us this evening: “Let anyone who thirsts, come to me and drink... rivers of living water will flow from him.” (John 7:37-38). This flow of life-giving water anticipates the flow of water and blood from Jesus’ side at the crucifixion. The image ties together the Last Supper, Jesus’ crucifixion and death, his resurrection, and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

My dear brothers and sisters, are we not thirsty for something more in life? Do we want the new life that comes to us through Christ and his Church? Will we respond to Pope Francis’ challenge to proclaim the Lord Jesus and his gospel in all we say and do -- especially in how we reach out and serve those less fortunate, the most vulnerable in our midst – from conception until natural death, in all of life’s stages and all its circumstances?

God, whose name is mercy, will give us all we need to bring about reconciliation to the Church and the world – through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We need to open our minds and hearts to these gifts! “Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful!” *Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!*