



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller



St. Louis Day
St. Louis Church
August 24, 2014

Good morning, and thank you for inviting me to celebrate St. Louis Day with you today. I am often reminded of the long and rich history the Church has in building so many communities throughout the Archdiocese. Castroville and St. Louis Church were founded in the same year.....1844. Together the city and this parish have grown, shaped by the culture and the values of the people who migrated here from Alsace-Lorraine.

Your love for the Church and the people of this community also reflects the spirituality of your patron saint, St. Louis, the only King of France to be canonized. He was known for his faith, his piety, and his charity. It is said that beggars were fed from the King's table, he ate what they left behind, washed their feet, ministered to the lepers, and daily fed over one hundred poor persons. Monday, would be the 800th anniversary of his birth. His spirit still edifies and enriches this community and many others around the world that bear his name.

In today's gospel, I am struck by the contrast between St. Peter, our first Pope, and the saintly King Louis. Peter could not be further from being royalty. He was a rough fisherman, who lacked the social grace, education, and stature of a king. Yet, Jesus selected Peter to be the foundation of the Church that would outlive every Kingdom but His own. Following in the shoes of the Fisherman, Pope Francis has from the beginning of his papacy challenged the Church to profess our faith in Christ through our commitment to the poor. The Holy Father echoes, "Poverty calls us to sow hope....Poverty is the flesh of the poor Jesus, in that child who

is hungry, in the one who is sick, in those unjust social structures.” The Holy Father echoes the spirit of St. Louis’ proclamation that “Blessings of the realm came through the poor.”

Jesus asked the disciples “Who do the people say that I am?” Their answer did not satisfy Jesus, for faith is expressed through the witness of ones’ personal encounter with Christ, not based on hearsay. So this time Jesus asks, “But who do **you** say that I am?” Peter becomes the first disciple to discover and proclaim who Jesus is, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This truly is the bedrock upon which Jesus would build His Church, and through the power of the Holy Spirit would call upon each one of us to be living stones that would build on Peter’s foundation, creating a community of faith and love that would save all of humanity. Just as Peter’s faith grew from his encounter and friendship with Jesus, our faith springs from a personal encounter and profession of faith that declares who we believe Jesus to be. With that comes our commitment to build the Church, the community of believers, by showing others how they can encounter Christ in our communities of faith, the sacraments, and the moments in life where God’s love and mercy helps us to understand who He is. “Our responsibility is to build on the legacy of Peter and his successors, making the Church...the visible body through whom Christ communicates truth and Grace to all men.”

The first power that Jesus endows on Peter and the Church is one that brings to life God’s mercy and forgiveness to those who seek it. As we have shared in God’s compassion and mercy through our encounter with Christ, it is our vocation to show others how to personally know Jesus’ saving love and unending mercy.

September 14th will mark the beginning of the Season of Welcoming in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. During this time you will be encouraged to invite those who are challenged to answer, “Who do you say that I am?” It will be an opportunity to invite them to become part of our family of faith and encounter Jesus in our parishes and we believers who follow him. I ask you to express your gentle invitation by opening yourself to answer Jesus’ question with your own witness to Jesus as your savior. The whole church is built on that profession of faith. During this time we can evangelize and catechize by letting others see in our lives how, in the words of

Pope Emeritus Benedict, that we are all called to “Be Friends of Jesus so that we can be friends with God.”