



Archdiocese of San Antonio  
Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller



## Centennial of St. Philip of Jesus Parish September 1, 2014

Lately I have been blessed to celebrate moments of grace in the life of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. A little over a week ago, we began the Centennial Year celebration of Assumption Seminary. That night we rejoiced and gave thanks for the many faithful priests whose vocations were formed there...including your pastor, Father Stephen Gamez. Today I stand with you as we celebrate your 100 years during which the faithful built this parish from those early days when Father Gerard Alsina, the founding pastor, began his 39 years of service here.

As I drove the few blocks from St. Henry's Church, I realized the role Divine Providence played when that first Mass was celebrated in a small building on September 1, 1914. When I look around this neighborhood and this campus, I am grateful for the many blessings that have come from the people who have built the legacy of faith we celebrate today.

Philip, your patron saint, with his last breath spoke the holy name of Jesus as he was martyred along his brother missionaries. His faith, courage, and ultimate sacrifice led him to become Mexico's first saint<sup>1</sup> and the patron saint of Mexico City<sup>2</sup>. Philip had spent only a few months living the monastic life, and quickly grew tired of it and journeyed to the Philippines to pursue a new career. Little did he know it was God who was pursuing him across the ocean. It was there his heart was captured again by God's

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<sup>1</sup> The Catholic Sun Newspaper – Diocese of Phoenix – April 19, 2013 Issue

<sup>2</sup> Lives of the Saints for Every Day in the Year by Father Alban Butler

calling, and while he was martyred on his journey to ordination, he remains an inspiring reminder that God never gives up on us.

This sanctuary was dedicated on October 2, 1966. It was one of the first Catholic churches in the area built after Vatican II. Following the instruction of the Council Fathers, this sacred place must have looked like a strange but beautiful wonder to those who could see the Church's future unfold before their eyes. Those who were present were the first to experience the instructions of the Council Fathers: "The main altar should be freestanding, away from any wall so that the priest can celebrate facing the people." This sounds like a small and familiar detail today, but at that time it was a new invitation to a holy communion between the priest and the people, together giving thanks for the saving grace of the Eucharist.

In today's Gospel we read about the great Feast of the Tabernacle. For the Jews it was a day of thanksgiving for all that made life possible and happy. It was a reminder to the Jews that they once were a wandering people who were saved by God who was faithful to His promises. Their celebration reminds us to give thanks to the Father who led us on a much shorter journey to build this house of prayer and faith, guiding us through 100 years of blessings mixed with tears.

Jesus stood up and exclaimed, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me as scripture says: 'Rivers of living water will flow from within him.'" Jesus is telling us that through our faith in Him, we will receive the refreshment of the Holy Spirit that gives us life.

On the Pentecost Vigil, I consecrated the people of the Archdiocese of San Antonio to the Holy Spirit, so that our lives will be nourished and fortified by its living water of faith that flows from the heart of Jesus into the souls of every person who calls him "Lord". Much like Jesus promised to the Samaritan woman at the well, that the gift of Living Water would quench our thirst forever. When we receive the Holy Spirit, he purifies all that we are, strengthening us with His gifts.

In the letter to the Hebrews we see how the Holy Spirit prepares to recognize and live our lives reflecting the essential qualities of a Christian life, calling us to a spirit of

hospitality and unconditional love that provides for those most in need. Through the power of the Holy Spirit our hearts will be opened to share in the depth of sorrow and the brightness of joy with our brothers and sisters. The living water of the Holy Spirit brings life into families built on a foundation of faith, and through the Spirit's gifts of wisdom and understanding we will be content with those life-giving things that the Father gives us.

On September 14th we will begin the Season of Welcome during which we will be called upon to extend our hospitality to those who have thirsted for the Living Water far too long. This faith community was born, has grown, and thrives on the invitation and love that continues to fan the flame of faith in our souls through a loving encounter with Christ that satisfies our hearts. I ask you to share this unconditional gift of love with a generous spirit welcoming everyone.

Upon reflecting on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Pope Emeritus Benedict wrote, "God shares himself with love in the Holy Spirit...The essential and central concept summing up what the Holy Spirit is and what he effects is, in the end, not "knowledge" but love..." As God seeks each one of us and asks "Whom shall I send" to carry out his work, let us proclaim as Isaiah did, "Here I am Lord, send me."