

**Brothers and sisters, what a great joy it is to come together as one Church family tonight! To you Bishop Mike Boulette, to all our pastors, priests, deacons, and men and women in consecrated life, Seminarians, welcome! But most of all, welcome to all of you, the faithful, the members of the living Body of Christ! You are light to the nations!!! You are a light to us!!! You are a light to your brothers and sisters!!! You are the source of our joy in coming together this evening!**

**Las mismas palabras que usamos para describir los premios de esta noche, es decir *Lumen Gentium*, significan literalmente “Luz de las Gentes”, o “Luz de las Naciones”. Estas son las primeras palabras del importantísimo documento del Concilio Vaticano Segundo que conocemos como la Constitución Dogmática sobre la Iglesia.**

**In this beautiful document, Lumen Gentium, we are reminded by the Church that it is you, the People of God, who form the strength and bulwark of the faith! It is here that we are reminded about the universal call to holiness as a result of our baptism! It is here that we are reminded that not only our words, but most especially our deeds, as disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ, are the means by which the light of God’s love is made known in the world!**

**Light. The world needs light! There is too much darkness in our world! Too many places where unkindness, injustice, lack of charity, and a lack of a basic sense of human decency prevail. So many people in our world walk in this darkness, stumbling about in life**

looking for the right direction. They are thirsty! They are hungry! They want to see and to know the truth! And only Jesus can supply this truth! Only Jesus can show the way! And Jesus is present in this world through His living Body, the Church! When we work together in Christ, we are helping to shed this much needed light in our world.

¡Esta noche celebramos esa luz! Cada uno de ustedes ha sido presentado por su párroco, habiendo consultado a otros líderes parroquiales, como alguien que muestra el significado de la Luz de Cristo en su comunidad parroquial. Cada año hay personas que me dicen que piensan que no se lo merecen, o que el trabajo que llevan a cabo en su parroquia no es para que se les agradezca o se les reconozca, y eso lo se. Se que hacen lo que hacen por amor y para servir a los demás. Se que hacen lo que hacen porque aman a Dios y al prójimo. Se que hacen lo que hacen ¡simplemente porque es lo correcto! Pero también se que su amor y su servicio son un ejemplo de lo que significa seguir a Cristo con todo el corazón, con toda el alma y con todas las fuerzas. Esta es mi oportunidad para decir “¡gracias!” Gracias, gracias, ¡gracias! This is my opportunity to say to you, thank you, thank you, thank you!

We celebrate this award on the Vigil of the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord. This is the day when Christ was presented, by the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, in the Temple. Sacrifices were offered for newborn children at the Temple and they were dedicated to God’s service. On this day an old man named Simeon saw the Christ child and gave thanks to God for being able to come to this

day of life when he would see the Christ, who would be the Light to the World. On this day an elderly woman named Anna also beheld the Christ child and offered her thanks to God for the salvation of Jerusalem.

When you were baptized, you were presented to God and anointed into the three ministries of Christ as priest, prophet, and king! The Vatican II Second Vatican Council, wanted to bring special attention to this aspect of our baptismal grace. Sharing in Christ's life as priests, prophets, and kings, our call is to *encounter* the world with the mind of Christ. To be present in the world as Jesus was present in the world. This means being in the world in a different way than most people are! It means having a heart that is open to the grace of God at work in each person in the unique circumstances of their lives. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has reminded us that it is this spirit of *encounter* that should mark our presence as Christians in the world. "Jesus has no house, because his house is the people; it is we who are his dwelling place; his mission is to open God's doors to all, to be the presence of God's love." "The Church must pattern her behavior after the Son of God who went out to everyone without exception."

Tal vez no se crean santos, ¡pero si son santos! Puede ser que no piensen que son especialmente buenos, ¡pero qué buenos son! Probablemente no consideren que lo que hacen es un sacrificio sacerdotal, ¡pero se están sacrificando! ¡Se están entregando! ¡Están viviendo la misión! ¡Están trayendo luz al mundo!

**So, tonight is a small way of saying thank you. Tonight is a small way of recognizing the good that you do. Tonight is a small way to glorify God for all the wonder and joy that He gives us. And tonight is just a little way of saying, “keep on going!” “Keep honoring God with your life!” “Be a light in this dark world!” Amen. Amen.**

**Our Lady accompany us as we offer our lives to God for the salvation of God’s people.**