

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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Assembly Convocation 2021

Embodying a church on the move

Assembly Convocation 2021 saw those in the local church journey as companions, side by side with one another on the same road in liturgy and listening sessions at St. Matthew Church on November 6.

The largest annual gathering of Catholics in the archdiocese looked a little different this year, as 800 invited guests and their pastors gathered at one of the largest sanctuaries in

San Antonio for Mass with Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSPS, and a keynote address from Sister Teresa Maya, congregational leader for the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

Sister Teré has been a member of her religious community since 1994, having served as a teacher, history professor, and administrator. She earned her bachelor's degree at Yale

“Whenever we listen with the heart: people feel that they are being heard, ...they feel free to recount their own experiences and their spiritual journey.”

—ARCHBISHOP GUSTAVO GARCÍA-SILLER, MSPS

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Construction on new \$1.6 million athletics upgrades underway.



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Centers offer opportunities to connect with God in simplicity.



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Catholic Charities headquarters features new artwork of homeless Jesus.

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University, her master's degree at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, and her doctorate from El Colegio de Mexico in Mexico City. She is also the former president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

The theme of the Saturday morning meeting, "Living as a Synodal Church," marked another step on the beginning of the process of Synodal transformation called for by Pope Francis.

Archbishop Gustavo, in his homily, related his remarks about the convocation to the Gospel reading from Mark. "God's Word is planted in our hearts as seed which is sown. Synodality is the style through which the seed is sown in us by others and in them by us. And it is sown in the Church through our communion, as we dialogue to discern God's will."

The archbishop explained that, in the Gospel, the Lord invites us to examine our hearts and our lives, preparing ourselves for the time of sowing; as a farmer would do with his land. This promoted the following series of questions from the prelate: "Is there fertile ground that we have neglected, allowing it to become a path where anyone can tread without our even paying attention? Do we leave others out, either because they think or seem different, or because we feel like owners of the land? By doing that, are we turning some areas into rocky terrain? Are we hostile in any way against anyone, acting like thorns against the gifts that the Holy Spirit could offer us through them? How much fertile land do we have to offer? How much more can we prepare?"

Likewise, he continued, we are invited to see the world as a field. "People offer different types of terrain for the message that we are called to bring to them," he explained. "We need wisdom to help them prepare the ground before sowing the seed, so that it does not go to waste."

Pope Francis describes this as meeting people where they are. He says that Jesus prompts us to propose, to encourage and to motivate. "He keeps telling his disciples to go, to go out. He urges them to go out and meet others where they really are, not where we think they should be. Go out, again and again, go out without fear, go out feeling disgust. Go out and proclaim this joy which is for all the people."

The first reading, of the First Letter to the Corinthians, requires the faithful to recognize that no



VERONICA MARKLAND | TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Sister Teresa Maya, congregational leader for the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, speaks on the theme of "Living as a Synodal Church" during the Assembly Convocation held at St. Matthew Church on November 6.

one should be left out, Archbishop Gustavo emphasized.

"No one is to spare. Each person has an irreplaceable place and role. We are all needed to carry out God's plan. We are a single body animated by the same Spirit," he stressed. "Fortunately, we do not have to explain exactly what each should contribute. Only Christ is the head and he has constituted the college of the apostles, represented today by their successors, the bishops in communion with the pope. But we all have an irreplaceable duty, as pieces of a beautiful mosaic."

He asked, "How are we going to do this?" The Holy Father says that "we too are called to become experts in the art of encounter ... taking time to encounter the Lord and one another. We have to listen to each other in order to listen to the Holy Spirit. Whenever we listen with the heart: people feel that they are being heard, not judged; they feel free to recount their own experiences and their spiritual journey. Finally, the Lord calls us to ask ourselves what it is that God wants to say to us in this time."

The San Antonio prelate focused on the fact that discernment can only occur in adoration, in prayer and in dialogue with the word of God. "We pray to our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe, so that she helps us to listen with the ears of the heart, to encounter her Son through the



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—POPE FRANCIS

encounters between us and to discern the path through which the Holy Spirit guides us," he concluded.

Following the Mass and Sister Maya's presentation, attendees met in table groups in either the McDonald Family Center or St. Matthew's Athletic Center to dialogue about what each has to offer and the role that the faithful will play in the future of the local church. They discussed two

fundamental questions of the Synodal process, including how we are "journeying together" and the steps we need to take in order to walk together.

In closing comments from Archbishop Gustavo told listeners that their insights are very important, and these conversations will not only impact the future of the Church in San Antonio, but also the universal church.

Additional information can be found in the Synod microsite in the archdiocesan webpage at www.archsa.org and on archdiocesan Facebook pages.