

**HOMILY FOR THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH, TEXAS**

**Sunday, August 09, 2009
Fort Worth, Texas**

Bishop Kevin Vann

In this day which truly the Lord has made, we come together as a family, as a communion of Faith, to give thanks to God for the blessings of these forty years of Faith.

We set out once more in a journey full of hope, but one in which we must always look to the Lord to know how to follow and where to go, and how to journey together as a people of Faith. The reality and beauty of the Liturgy, and praying together today, is a sense of timelessness an eternity, in which we are united with the life of God's people in the pages of sacred Scripture which narrate our salvation history; in the lives of all who have heard the voice of Christ to follow after Him; in those missionaries who came to the New World, especially to Texas, (most especially the people of North Texas in the year of 1969) and all that has followed after that, and all that will be,. In ways that we cannot truly understand, all of those events and those people are present right here and right now with us.

En este día que verdaderamente hizo el Señor, nos arrimamos unidos como en familia, en comunión de Fe, para dar gracias a Dios por las bendiciones de estos 40 años de Fe.

Emprendemos de nuevo en una jornada llenos de esperanza, pero una jornada en cual debemos siempre buscar al Señor para saber como seguir y a donde ir, como caminar unidos como un pueblo de Fe. La realidad y belleza de la Liturgia, nuestra oración en unidad hoy, tiene una sensación sin tiempo, de la eternidad, en la cual estamos unidos en la vida de pueblo de Dios en las paginas de la sagrada Escritura que nos narra la historia de salvación; en las vidas de los que han escuchado la voz de Cristo para seguirle, en esos misioneros que llegaron al mundo nuevo, especialmente a Texas, (y de modo especial al pueblo del norte de Texas en el año 1969) y todo lo que ha seguido después de eso, y todo lo que vendrá. En maneras que no podemos verdaderamente comprender, todos esos eventos y gentes están presentes aquí con nosotros ahora.

Perhaps it would be well, for those who can, this day to remember the year 1969, to go back to the future, as it were! I had just graduated from High School, and have some recollection of the events of that year. It was a year of great highs and lows, of exhilaration and turmoil, and one in which the world seemed to have turned upside down. There was a landing on the moon, in which our possibilities seemed limitless, and in which we surely would be the master of our own destiny. There was, however, all of the upheaval of the social revolution of the 1960's, in the Church and in society, the unrest on college campuses which would culminate months later in the sad events of Kent State. It was the Age of Aquarius and all of that accompanying noise!

There was the unrest of war and search for peace. It was a time of testing, of becoming, of not being quite sure of where to go and what we were called to do and be. It was a time of testing and unrest, not too much different than what the prophet Elijah experienced of his 40 days and nights, and the grumbling then which would later repeat itself during the deepening controversy of Jesus' identity as the Bread of Life. Yet, in the midst of all of that, new life was beginning, and another journey was about to begin. The diocese of Fort Worth, born from the Diocese of Dallas-Fort Worth and resting on the foundation of Faith laid for years before in Texas began her journey of Faith.

In the pages of the Sacred Scripture, 40 signify a period of preparation, a time of becoming. The sense is that there is something great and glorious coming after this time of preparation, a time which is a time of falling love. We have been in this time of preparation, of falling in love with the God who calls us to faithfulness to eternal life in these past years. In the desert, God woos Israel to come to a deeper relationship with Him; the 40 day journey of Elijah to Horeb is a period in which Elijah is prepared for an intimate encounter with the Lord which will then pave the way for a new time, a time in which the prophetic mantle of Elijah is passed to Elisha. So too we have been in this time of pilgrimage, of preparation for becoming whom God wishes us to be.

En el desierto, Dios le hace corte a Israel para que se una en una relación mas profunda con El; la jornada de 40 días de Elijah hacia Oreb es un periodo en cual Elijah es preparado para un encuentro intimo con el Señor que entonces pavimenta el camino para un tiempo nuevo, un tiempo en cual

el manto profético de Elias es pasado a Elisha. Así también nosotros hemos estado en este tiempo de peregrinación, de preparación para ser lo que Dios desea que seamos.

The new life of our Diocese was perhaps not on the radar screen to the bigger world, yet was certainly evident here in North Texas. A heritage of Faith that began with Bishop Odin and his people in Galveston, and spread to the North and the South in the Republic of Texas was to once more bring about a new and larger family of Faith in Fort Worth. When Bishop Cassata received this crosier from Bishop Gorman to spread the faith “Where the west begins”, it was like an infant who starts to crawl and then to walk, in Bishop Cassata’s own words. Something new, which had been created, and we began to walk toward the Lord who loved this people, and called us forth day after day in the years and days that followed. This crosier -- and matching chalice in use today -- accompanied Bishop Cassata, Bishop Delaney, and all of us in these years.

Perhaps it can be said that we, in these past 40 years, like Elijah, we have been led through a time of testing, preparation and time of falling in love with the God who called us into being, the God who is made visible in His Son Jesus Christ. It is the God who has loved us all of these years and now calls us to journey further with Him to the future He has in store for us.

Quizás se puede decir que nosotros, en estos 40 años pasados, al igual que Elias, hemos sido llevados a través de un tiempo de prueba, de preparación, y un tiempo de enamoramiento con el Dios que nos llamo a Ser, ese Dios que se hizo visible en su Hijo Jesús Cristo. Es el Dios quien nos ha amado a todos por todos estos años y que ahora nos llama a seguir la jornada mas adelante con El hacia ese futuro que El nos tiene preparado.

He who in the Gospel for this Sunday tells us that He is the Bread of Life; He has been and is our food of Eternal life, the Food for those who journey. Perhaps we, like Elijah, may want to rest in the midst of unrest or discontent or discouragement, but as God pushes Elijah on, so too the Lord urges us on, with Himself for strength and eternal life.

This is our family of God, our local Church, we have been walking this pilgrim journey of faith together, through all of the ups and downs, still knowing that God who teaches us and feeds us calls us forth into the next chapter of our history. This time of preparation of these years now calls us

into a time of a deepening relationship with each other in a communion of Faith, with the Lord, the Bread of Life in our midst. God continues to call us, and to feed us.

The Life of our family of God, the new life that was just beginning for us 40 years ago, has dispelled the uncertainty and has outlived the false promises of the Age of Aquarius and the turmoil of the late 1960's. 40 years later, who and what remains? Not the Age of Aquarius for sure! The voice of Him who raises above all turmoil and murmuring who says "I am the Bread of Life...whoever eats this Bread will live forever."

The headlines of the late 1960's and the characters associated with them have vanished, fading images and words on the newsprint of that era. But here we are, having been called and led in these 40 years to witness to the eternal love and presence of Jesus Christ in the Bread of Life, having grown beyond what could have ever been imagined at that time. We are here, because the Lord is indeed faithful and continues to call us, even with our unrest: just like He taught and called the crowd in the Gospel to know the Truth where we will be truly set free, and be nourished by His very self as the Bread of Life in the Eucharist which forms us and brings us together.

Más aquí estamos, habiendo sido llamados y guiados por estos 40 años a ser testigos del amor eterno y de la presencia de Jesús Cristo en el Pan de Vida, habiendo crecido aun mas allá de lo que nos pudimos imaginar en aquel tiempo. Estamos aquí porque el Señor es en verdad fiel y continua a llamarnos con todo y nuestras preocupaciones; tal como El nos enseñó y como llamo a la muchedumbre en el Evangelio para conocer la Verdad en cual seremos realmente liberados, y seremos nutridos por su mismo Ser, en el Pan de Vida en la Eucaristía, que nos forma y nos une.

In a news release of August 27, 1969, Bishop Gorman said, speaking of all of the people who helped him in his years as Bishop "In a thousand ways that would be impossible to describe in detail, they have been my strong arm. Whatever we have been able to accomplish has been due to their understanding and cooperation." These words mirror what is spoken of by St. Paul today when he exhorts the Ephesians of what kind of life they are to lead before the unbelieving world of ancient Rome. These words of St. Paul with the thoughts of Bishop Gorman, have been reflected again and again in these 40 years in the lives of God's people here in North Texas, and must be seen in our lives today and into the future.

The Age of Aquarius has vanished because it had no foundation. As we look back to that time, we see what has lasted, we know what the foundation must be, and we look forward to the next part of our story. We now see our beginning 40 years ago with the eyes of Faith as we see how the God that has called us to follow has indeed been with us on the next part of our journey.

It is said of the early pioneers in the Church in Texas that their story is “not one of perfect people who always got it right but rather the story of men and women who strived, in spite of their weaknesses and prejudices, to dedicate themselves to eternal ideals in the service of others.” These words have shown themselves again and again in the lives of Christ’s faithful around the world, and here in Texas. These words were lived here 40 years ago, and they are lived right now.

Thank you for being examples of these very words of the past, for living your faith, and for all you have done for the local church of Fort Worth and all you will do in the future.

Se dice de los pioneros de la Iglesia en Texas que es su historia “no una de un pueblo perfecto al cual siempre todo le sale bien, sino la historia de hombres y mujeres que lucharon, a pesar de sus debilidades y prejuicios, para dedicarse a los ideales eternos en el servicio de los demás.”

Estas palabras se han mostrado una y otra vez en las vidas de los fieles de Cristo en todo el mundo, y aquí en Texas. Estas palabras se vivieron hace 40 años, y viven aun aquí ahora.

This a complex, complicated, and sometimes course age in which we find ourselves Yet the foundations laid and the journey which begin 40 years ago can bring the light and love of Christ to each and every situation. The alternate closing prayer for today’s Mass could well be ours for the next part of our history and journey of the Church in Fort Worth, together with the Universal Church: “Father . . . touch our hearts help them grow toward the life you have promised. Touch our lives and make them signs of your love for all men.”

As we, with the grace of God strive to become signs of His love for all whom we meet, may we be united ever more closely in bonds of Faith and

communion, and be accompanied and prayed for by the Mother of His Son, whom we know here as Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Mientras que, con la gracias de Dios tratamos de ser muestras de su amor por todos los que conocemos, seamos unidos aun mas cerca en lazos de Fe y comunión, y ser acompañados y en las oraciones la Madre de su Hijo, la que conocemos como aquí como Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

Thank you and God Bless You!
¡Gracias, que Dios los bendiga!

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