

Homily – 300th Anniversary of San Antonio

Patronal Feast of St. Anthony of Padua

June 13, 2018

Jesus sent pairs of disciples on their first mission to announce that the kingdom of God is at hand. At the synagogue in his home town of Nazareth Jesus adopted the program of an earlier prophet of Israel to proclaim “glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, to comfort all who mourn.” The Church continues this mission and ministry today.

In the thirteenth century Saint Anthony of Padua was a Franciscan missionary who proclaimed the gospel in an understandable but very inspired way. He brought the message of God’s love and mercy to countless people. We remember and honor him today as our patron, our model, our missionary guide.

On St. Anthony’s feast day in 1691, Father Damien Massanet and a small group of explorers came to this area and named our river in honor of San Antonio de Padua. Father Massanet celebrated the first Mass here on the banks of the river, a site we will visit during our river trip this evening. The Catholic faith had arrived and has thrived in what is now San Antonio.

In 1718, three hundred years ago, a contingent of military and religious figures from New Spain established a presidio and a mission here named San Antonio de Valero, now called the Alamo. In his missionary work at that time Venerable Father Antonio Margil de Jesús, the Apostle of Texas, established a foundation that would eventually become the city of San Antonio.

The Catholic faith has deep roots here. From the initial missions and settlement by people of diverse backgrounds the City of San Antonio has grown, built and sustained by the faith of those who came before us.

As disciples of the risen Lord, we are called and challenged to continue his mission and ministry, proclaiming the good news of God's enduring love for everyone – not only by our words but, especially, by our actions. My prayer for all of you is St. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend...and know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Our Lady of Guadalupe, you are with us as you promised. Draw us nearer to one another in unity and harmony so that we may effectively continue your Son's mission and ministry here and now! Holy Spirit, set our hearts on fire with zeal for the gospel we proclaim!

