

Homily040719

IT IS SO VERY GOOD TO BE BACK HOME.

My friends, it is so good to be back home here and to be celebrating the Mass with all of you. My recent experience in Mexicali was a great blessing on my life. It is one of the most important experiences of my life. The people in Mexicali were very welcoming and warm in their greetings. Their hospitality, their food, their interest, their prayer and their care all touched me at different times.

I lived and worked in a parish called Santa Isabel de Portugal. That parish also had four smaller chapels in which Mass was celebrated each weekend. I celebrated Mass in Spanish each day and preached each day. I celebrated usually three Masses each Sunday. I heard confessions, did a wedding, funeral and a Quinciniera. I still struggle to understand conversations when I hear them although I have gotten better. I can hold a conversation and usually I am able to make myself understood.

While there I attended and participated in the ordination of the parish deacon who is now a priest, Padre Max. I also concelebrated his first Mass. Father Francisco who has been here to Ambler several times asked me to convey to all of you his peace and his love. I was able to spend a couple of days at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City and that was a blessing just to sit and listen and pray and watch people come from all over the world and walk on their knees as they approached the sanctuary or viewed the tilma. I even went to confession in Spanish there myself.

I was very blessed. I rested and took daily walks and prayed and visited the schools. I visited a convent of contemplative sisters and celebrated mass with them and then ate with them. Holy sisters. An oasis in a desert. Literally.

At the end of my visit I was presented with a plaque from the parishioners who pray at the Chapel of the Holy Child. It read:

The community of the Chapel of Santo Nino de Atocha

Grant the present recognition to

MSGR. Stephen P. McHenry

For his dedication and service to this portion of the people of God during the months of January to March of the year 2019.

Father Esteban, you will always be in our hearts because we have experienced the love of God through your kindness, your joy, your generous willingness to listen to others, your desire to please God, to learn and your wonderful homilies. our hearts burned like the disciples of Emmaus. It is not in vain that we call him:

THE FATHER OF LOVE

"Father my home is your home, Mexicali is your home."

See you soon God bless you always

Abundantly and never stop having a heart of the Nino.

Mexicali BC from January 2 to March 31, 2019

The plaque was a big surprise and when I read it it moved me to tears. I thought to myself: How can these people know these things about me after having been here for so short a time? Then I recalled that I had said that my goal for the sabbatical was not so much to learn Spanish but that I could be me in Spanish. Because I know who I am and I know who the Lord wants me to be and that is what i want to be but in Spanish.

And there I was, on the last day of my sabbatical, holding a plaque which validated and confirmed that what I sought to accomplish on my sabbatical indeed had been accomplished. Even though I am not able simply to understand everything I hear in Spanish or completely express myself. In a way those things don't matter. But even moreso, In the Spanish words I recognized myself. Those words could have come from you but the Lord needed me to go away, to another place, so He could speak a word to my heart and I would know that it was his Word in an undeniable way. That plaque became a personal validation of my life and ministry as a priest these forty-six years.

So when I am asked if my sabbatical was successful. The answer is a resounding yes--although I still have some work ahead of me in the area of speaking and understanding Spanish. But what the Lord wanted done. That definitely happened. I am glad. I am happy and I am very glad to be back home.

4May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.

