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Denver and San Antonio, one Church

By Most Rev. José H. Gomez, S.T.D.

On December 29, the Holy Father appointed me the new Archbishop of San Antonio as the successor of Archbishop Patrick Flores.

This means that beginning in February, the ways of the Lord will take me to southern Texas, a place far away from this Archdiocese I've learned to love.

This is the moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for the great blessings I have received during these years in which I had the gift of serving the Catholic faithful of northern Colorado.

I thank God, first and foremost, for having served with Archbishop Charles Chaput, O.F.M. Cap. By sharing with him the joys and difficulties of these years I was able to observe closely his extraordinary soul of a shepherd, his courage, and his deep love for Jesus and the Church. I will always treasure his example in my heart.

Everything the Lord has allowed me to do in Denver wouldn't have happened without an extraordinary group of people who supported me. They helped me with great effectiveness and generosity. Their humility and love for the Church don't allow me to name them one by one; but each one of them knows how thankful I am for their service. And I know that each one of them, those from the Chancery as well as those elsewhere throughout the Archdiocese, will have the promises of the Lord fulfilled in their lives, of receiving back a hundredfold in God's kindness.

These years of service in the Archdiocese of Denver have been filled with intense learning. To be candid, I've been evangelized again and again by the faithful I have met at the many different places I visited across northern Colorado: at all our parishes, at Centro San Juan Diego -- a dream come true -- at the Pastoral Center, at our Seminaries and at the parishes where I served as pastor, the Cathedral and Mother of God.

The generosity, simplicity, devotion and love for the Church of the faithful in the Archdiocese of Denver are wonderful strengths, for which we all should be thankful. I believe these virtues will continue to make this Archdiocese an extraordinary place for the Church in the United States and the world.

Now the Lord is calling me to exercise a new ministry in San Antonio. And even though I leave the Archdiocese of Denver with a sadness, I will arrive in San Antonio with gratitude and excitement, in the city where my mother - now in heaven - grew up, and where the Lord led me to spend my first years as a priest in the United States.

I've always been struck by the greatness of the Catholic community in San Antonio, nourished by a rich ecclesial history, and always pressing forward to a promising future. With the help of its priests, religious and lay people, I hope to "most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your sakes," as St. Paul says.

When I was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Denver, I chose as my episcopal motto this phrase from the Letter to the Hebrews: "Let us go forth with confidence to the Throne of Grace."

Today I entrust myself with all my heart to the prayers of the faithful whom I leave in Denver and of those that I'll find in San Antonio. God is the author of all good, and despite all human weaknesses, I trust in His Grace. For this reason I invite us all to go forth with confidence to the throne of Grace - "with confidence" because God is greater than all our limitations.

As I depart to serve in the Archdiocese of San Antonio, I'll take in my heart all the faithful I've met here. San Antonio and Denver, along with all the dioceses in the world, are part of the same, one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church. Knowing this fills me with joy and hope, because it reminds me that we will be always united through the reality of the Communion of Saints.

I gave my life to the Lord when I first heard his calling to follow Him. To Him I now entrust myself again, as I begin this new service at the request of our Holy Father.

I entrust myself especially to Our Lady of Guadalupe, our tender Mother. Like St. Juan Diego, on my knees, I approach the feet of the tender Guadalupana, so that she may also recognize me as the littlest of her children, and that she may cover me with her holy mantle throughout all the days that the Lord gives me in the service of my brothers and sisters in San Antonio.

Please keep me in your prayers, and be assured of mine for each one of you and your families. May the Lord, through the intercession of the Virgin of Guadalupe, give you all the blessings of peace and joy.

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