

# Most joyful moments on Sunday, gathered with the faithful

Sometimes the faithful ask me what I enjoy the most about my ministry as the Bishop of the Diocese of Brownsville here in the Valley. I usually give the same answer: I live my most joyful moments on Sunday, gathered with the faithful around our Lord's altar at the parishes and chapels of our local Church. Together with the priests and deacons of the parishes, I enjoy living this gift of life and communion, celebrating the triumph of Christ over sin and death.

I wish that all the faithful could travel with me along the roads of the Rio Grande Valley, especially on Sunday, visiting our parishes and sharing the abundance of community life that is found there. Whether it be in the churches established for more than a century, like the Immaculate Cathedral in Brownsville or Our Lady of Refuge Church in Roma, or in the more recently established ones like San Cristobal Church in Mission, or the parish of Our Heavenly Father in Olmito. All the communities have different features and special celebrations; each reflects the richness and variety of God's grace poured over the Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Not long ago, God favored me with the opportunity to celebrate Sunday Mass in Sullivan City and in the Pueblo de Palmas colonia in Peñitas. What a blessing for me to see the faith and hope of these communities, so fully expressed in the faces of the faithful, adults and elderly, as well as in the youth. I see the face of the Church every Sunday, and it inspires me to thank the Lord for what he has given us. After Mass, each community celebrated with lunch and dinner, inviting everyone to share in the Lord's joy. These moments of hospitality are precious and give witness to the vitality of our communities.

Before, these communities of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Sullivan City, and St. Anne in Peñitas, as well as the chapels of San Miguel in Los Ebanos and San Juan Diego in Citrus City, were part of Our Lady Queen of Angels Parish in La Joya. After several consultations, I decided to divide the parish in La Joya, thus establishing the quasi-parish of St. Anne.

The population on the entire west side of Hidalgo County is growing at an astonishing rate. I am convinced that the Church should be established with more strength precisely where the people reside. Additionally, taking the step towards the establishment of a new parish implies that the formation of the community, as a community, has reached a certain level of maturity. I thank the Lord and congratulate the parishioners of St. Anne quasi-parish for reaching this moment in their history as communities of faith.

In some ways, these new communities lack the material resources for their new role as a parish; but I am confident that the most valuable resource of the Church are the faithful themselves, and by working together they can do wonders for the Lord. The Church needs to be fully present in the poorest communities, precisely because it is there where we would find Jesus Christ if he were preaching in his own flesh today.

The growth of the Church in the Valley is what inspires me most and what preoccupies me most. I ask for your help in strengthening these communities that are forming. You can do this with your prayers and with your donations to the Annual Bishop's Campaign. Information about the campaign is available at your church. As the Church continues to grow in the Rio Grande Valley, she will do so with the help of the Holy Spirit and everyone working together.

*Amen.*

**MOST REVEREND**  
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