

MARIACHI MASS HOMILY
Pan American Center
November 15, 2009

Welcome to this great celebration of the Eucharist. Once more, this Pan American center becomes a great cathedral, where the most important ritual of the Church is repeated. Here we re-enact, re-present what Jesus did at the Last Supper. Here we bring the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross from ages past to the present moment. We announce that Christ has died, Christ has risen and that Christ will come again.

Yesterday we buried the remains of Fr. Virgilio Flores, a wonderful priest of our diocese, known to many of you and loved by all who knew him. Where is he now? Our faith tells us that he is not here – he is risen – and is now enjoying the glory of God, for he sees him fact to face.

We, too, will die. We also know from that Jesus has told us that the world as we know it will end, but WE won't. The Prophet Daniel says, "THE WISE SHALL SHINE BRIGHTLY LIKE THE SPLENDOR OF THE FIRMAMENT, AND THOSE WHO LEAD MANY TO JUSTICE SHALL BE LIKE THE STARS FOREVER." And Jesus says that even though the sun and the moon be darkened and the stars fall down, we will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. Do you believe this? I do, because Jesus said so...and he keeps his promises.

We don't always keep our promises. I have kept the one I made here 27 years ago. I promised I would be with you the rest of my life. And here I am, still kicking!

In less than two years I will submit my letter of resignation. That's the law. I want to leave the diocese in good shape and that we be prepared to take care of our responsibilities. One of these is to make sure our retired priests are taken care of and that they receive a just and

comfortable retirement. Right now we are not ready to meet that responsibility. I need your help. You are the only ones I can turn to.

I don't have to remind you that providing for our retired and infirm priests is not a question of charity...it is a matter of justice. We owe them an adequate retirement, and they certainly earned it. Some of our priests have served us for many years. Father Virgilio had been here 33 years...33 years of his life. That's a big chunk!

We also need to educate men to the priesthood. Who pays their education? You guessed it, WE do! It costs around \$30,000 a year to educate one seminarian. Right now we have six in the seminary, and we are sure there will be more. We have no choice, we have to do everything we can to make sure your children and grandchildren have priests to serve them.

You will be asked to pledge to the capital campaign, *Together in Faith and Hope*, with a generous amount, to be paid over the next three years. Since God has been generous with you, please be generous with him, that his work be done on earth.

I thank God for what we have done together in the past 27 years. I look forward to the few years I still have as your bishop, and to continue to serve you even into my retirement. Yes, I plan to stick around.