

## **'THE HOUR OF THE LAITY'**

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(Archbishop Gómez delivered this homily at the closing mass of the Fifth National Meeting of Hispanic / Latino Ministry on September 23, 2018, attended by nearly 3,500 delegates.) The homily was delivered in Spanish and English. Grapevine, Texas.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Our reading of today's Gospel begins with these words: "Jesus and his disciples departed from there and set out on a journey."

This is our story, yours and mine. This is the history of the Church.

We are his disciples. That means that, at some point in our lives, each one of us has come to know Jesus. How we came to find him, or how he found us, is already part of the history of our lives. And each story is different because each life is different.

What is a fact is that for all of us this encounter with Jesus changed the direction of our lives. This encounter made us leave behind the past and start a new journey with him. That's why we're here today.

And what a beautiful gift is the gift of faith!

There is nothing more beautiful than to find Jesus and discover the truth of his love, the truth that he gave his life for us on the cross, that he died and rose to free us so that we may live in holiness and become saints, so that we may become the men and women that God wanted us to be when we created ourselves.

Brothers and sisters, this Fifth National Meeting has been discussed.

Yes. The Encounter has made us see our identity and missionary responsibility as Latino Catholics of the United States. But above all, the Meeting has made us reflect on the personal "encounter" with Jesus Christ.

It has tried to make us realize, once again, that we are disciples who are making a trip. To understand and be convinced that the meaning of our life is found in walking with Jesus and sharing his mission to build his Kingdom.

Our lives are part of something much bigger than us.

Your journey is now linked to his. Your story is now a part of the history of salvation, of the journey of God's people through history.

What began with Jesus and his disciples on those dusty paths of Galilee and Jerusalem, finally reached

Rome. And from there, the trip continued to the ends of the earth, reaching the peoples of Europe, Africa and Asia.

The trip of the Church continued towards the American continent with the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, in 1531.

We all know that story. We learned it when we were children, and we passed it on to our children. It is a beautiful narration of the tender love of God, manifested in history.

As we know, the Virgin entrusted a mission to San Juan Diego: she sent him to go and tell the bishop to build a church for our Lord.

Think about that, my dear brothers and sisters: Jesus entrusted the mission of his Church in the New World to a layman. Not to a priest or a bishop. Not a member of a religious order.

Jesus called a layman to be the first to lead his mission in the Americas.

You are the sons and daughters of the Virgin of Guadalupe in our time; you are the spiritual heirs of Juan Diego. The mission entrusted to him is now entrusted to you.

In the spirit of St. Juan Diego, I believe that our Lord is calling you, each one of you, to "go with the bishops".

My dear brothers and sisters, I believe that this moment of the Church is the hour of the laity. It is the time of the saints.

He is calling the lay faithful to work together with the bishops to renew and rebuild their Church. Not only in this country, but throughout the entire American continent.

This is the great responsibility that you have at this moment. But we must remember that leadership in the Church is not like the leadership of a government or a corporation.

That is what Jesus is talking about in today's Gospel.

It is very interesting Jesus is teaching them, but the apostles still do not "catch" what he tells them.

Instead, they begin to discuss their own privileges, arguing to see which of them was the greatest. I thought that this scene of today's Gospel can be the beginning of clericalism in the Church.

We know that that is not what Jesus wants. In the second reading, the Apostle James says that there is no place in the Church-or in the heart of any Christian-for "jealousy and selfish ambition."

And we remember, of course, those words that Our Lady addressed to her. She told him: "I have many messengers whom I could send to carry my message. But it is absolutely necessary that you yourself go."

Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ has a message that he wants you to transmit with your lives. And it is absolutely necessary that you transmit it yourself.

Let's always move forward with confidence. Let's be men and women of the encounter! May each one of us lead many people to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

And may Our Lady of Guadalupe always go with us on the journey we make as disciples of Jesus.

May she help us to be saints, to be heroes, instruments of unity and healing. These times demand it. And for this is what we were made for.

Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe!

Long live San Juan Diego!

Long live San Oscar Romero!

Long live Christ the King! VN

Archbishop Gomez encourages people to visit and share their new website: [www.TheNextAmerica.org](http://www.TheNextAmerica.org), a resource to learn about and participate in immigration reform.

The archbishop's writings, homilies and speeches can be found at [www.ArchbishopGomez.com](http://www.ArchbishopGomez.com).

To receive a free copy of the new Pastoral Letter of Archbishop Gómez, "You were born for bigger things," write to [valeman@vida-nueva.com](mailto:valeman@vida-nueva.com)

Follow the daily reflections of Archbishop Gomez on Facebook and Twitter.

The new book of Archbishop José H. Gomez, 'Immigration and the future of the United States of America', is available in the store of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. ([www.olacathedralgifts.com](http://www.olacathedralgifts.com)).

If you wish to follow Archbishop Gomez on his Facebook social network site, connect to: [www.facebook.com/ArchbishopGomez](http://www.facebook.com/ArchbishopGomez)