

To be living stones of faith

Written by Archbishop José H. Gomez

Every church has a story to tell. It tells the story of the people who built it. It reflects where they have come from, the times they are living in, their struggles and sacrifices, and what they are hoping for.

Every church tells a story of faith. Because people gather there as a family of faith. They gather as children of God, made brothers and sisters by their faith in Jesus Christ. And they gather in the presence of God. So every church is a house of God and also a household of faith.

It has always struck me that “Church” is the name that Christians give to the buildings we worship in; but it is also the name we give to ourselves. We worship Jesus Christ in a church. And we are his Church.

In the words of Jesus and the apostles’ writings, his Catholic Church is often described as a building. We are “God’s building.” We are “God’s temple” — built on the cornerstone of Jesus Christ and the foundations of his twelve apostles.

In the Scriptures, St. Peter and his successors as Pope are described as the “rock” upon which Christ is building his Church. The apostles and their successors, the bishops, are compared to “skilled master builders.” And each one of us is a “living stone” who is called to build up the “spiritual house” of his Church.

A cathedral is a very special church. Like every church, it is a house of prayer for a family of faith. It is the place where we meet the living God. But it is also something greater.

A cathedral is the bishop’s “seat” (his cathedra in Latin). And because the bishop’s ministry forms the foundation of Christ’s Church on earth, every cathedral is a sign of the Kingdom that Jesus came to proclaim and to establish.

The builders of our Cathedral placed themselves in the service of this great story of salvation. And this is a task for every one of us. We are called to continue building on the foundations they laid.

In every age and every place, the cathedral is the first church, the mother church, and the foundation that generates and unites all the other churches in the great mission that Jesus entrusted to his Church.

This weekend we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the consecration of our Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels on September 2, 2002.

This is a very special moment in the life of our local Church. And it is a moving experience for me. Because I was not here for the building of this Cathedral. Yet in his grace, God has entrusted me with responsibility for this “seat.” He has called me to work with his grace and to build on the strong foundations laid by those who have gone before me.

This is the way it is in the Church. We are always God’s fellow-workers. We are always working with his grace, building on foundations set down by others.

The builders of our Cathedral never saw Jesus. They never talked to him. They were born 20 centuries too late for that. Yet they heard his Gospel. It came to them through the witness of others who went before them. It came to them through the “living stones” of his Church, built on Christ and the foundation of the apostles.

The apostles spread the faith from Galilee and Jerusalem throughout Europe and Asia. Their successors sent missionaries to Mexico and the New World. And these missionaries evangelized California, and brought the faith to this city they named for Our Lady of the Angels.

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God wants each one of us to be a living stone in his Church. He is calling us to do our part and to participate in his great plan of redemption for the world. We are here to build for God and with God. We are here to serve the mission of his Church.

As a sign of our faith as “living stones,” we are also dedicating this weekend a new Shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe, located inside the Cathedral.

I pray that this new shrine will serve as a sign of our dedication to the Church’s mission of the new evangelization of our city and our continent.

As we pray for one another this week, let’s pray that this anniversary and this new shrine will inspire us to live our faith with new joy and new strength.

Let’s ask Our Lady of the Angels to make our Cathedral — and every church in this great Archdiocese — a place where the family of God is nourished, and where new generations can meet the living God and know his mercy and salvation.

TIDINGS, August 30, 2012