

**Final Vows Homily for Alfredo Olvera Ledezma, CSC
September 6, 2008
San Matías Chapel, Guadalupe, Nuevo Leon, Mexico**

Many years ago a priest from the Congregation of Holy Cross began his ministry in Ahuacatlán, San Luís Potosí.

His missionary service had two characteristics that identify us as “Holy Cross.”

- 1. A great and preferential concern for the needs of the poor.**
- 2. And a fire in the heart to be an educator in the Faith.**

This priest was the pastor of Ahuacatlán, the protector of a contemplative order of nuns, the servant of the poor – visiting families, baptizing their sons and daughters, celebrating their weddings as well as their funerals.

He celebrated the wedding of Cornelio Olvera and Florentina Ledezma, Alfredo’s father and mother.

He blessed the scapular of Alfredo’s grandmother, Seferina, who was a member of the Legion of Mary for which this priest served as chaplain.

The name of this Holy Cross priest, Federico Schmidt, appears on Alfredo’s baptismal certificate.

Perhaps because of his apostolic zeal and presence in Ahuacatlán many years ago, Federico planted the seed of a vocation to the religious life in Holy Cross.

Without a doubt, Federico is with us tonight in spirit, smiling at this young man.

About twelve years ago a seminarian from the Congregation of Holy Cross made a visit to the parish in Ahuacatlán.

His goal – speak about vocations and invite young men to join Holy Cross.

During his visit, this seminarian spoke with a young boy who was thirteen years old. He also spoke with his father and mother, explaining the community life and the apostolic zeal that is Holy Cross.

This seminarian eventually made his own profession of final vows in Holy Cross – the first Mexican to do so.

He's here this evening, celebrating. His name – Marin Hernández.

Marin is smiling too, looking at his younger brother, Alfredo, with whom he was speaking twelve years ago.

Five months ago, after ten years of formation in Holy Cross, Alfredo presented his petition, asking for the opportunity to make a profession of perpetual vows.

It is a pleasure to read his petition, in fact his petition is inspiring.

Let me share with you two sentences from what Alfredo wrote.

“I believe that the Lord has called me ... come and follow me....

“...I believe that in the Congregation of Holy Cross, I am identified by it's charism and it's mission, and I believe that it is in this community that the Lord invites me to serve him for my entire life.”

Powerful words! Powerful words!

And behind these words there is a question that is very important for every one of us.

It's a simple question for us as human beings. At the same time it is a profound question for us as people of faith.

That question – “Why have I been created by God?”

Or in other words, “What is my mission in this life?” Put in another way, “Why am I here in this world?”

Many people never take this question seriously. As a result they live by chance, not by faith or trust or commitment. They live without taking life seriously, without giving much importance to concrete decisions about how to live.

Thinking about the question, “Why was I born?” Fr. Fernando Torre Medina Mora, M.S.Sp. wrote, “A life without a purpose is a life without meaning. A person who doesn’t know his mission becomes either a statue or a marionette.”

Why have I been created by God? Tonight we are celebrating your response to this question.

We don’t know the answer to this question when we are children. We discover it little by little, progressively.

Or more precisely, God reveals it to us throughout the length of our days, as we listened to the conversation between God and the young man, Jeremiah, in the first reading:

“Before I formed you in the womb of your mother, I knew you. Before you were born, I consecrated you. I destined you to be a Prophet.”

Yes. The truth is that long ago the love of our Lord took the initiative with you, Alfredo.

And tonight we celebrate your response. Marked by the charism and mission of Holy Cross, I believe that I am called by God to serve him in this community.

It is not easy to prophetically live these vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. And just as other prophets like Jeremiah and Jesus encountered distractions and temptations, so will you.

The modern culture in which we live communicates to everyone a seductively false promise – that we can discover happiness in material wealth, doing what we want to do when we want to do it, in relationships that require little or no commitment.

And for sure, you are not immune from this seduction. We are not immune.

In truth, we know that it is not easy to live the faithful commitment of husband and wife, or to live the commitment of a single person of faith. In this culture it’s also difficult to take on the responsibilities of parenting children. And if there are any doubts, we need only ask the

many married couples, parents and faithful individuals who are present this evening.

Even though it is not easy to live in this modern culture as a celibate man, committed to a simple life, obediently doing what the community discerns to be the will of God;

Even though it is not easy, you will live in true happiness – that is, an intimate friendship with the Lord who is love, in the service of his reign that is characterized by justice and peace.

Although at times you will experience the cross in your commitment, you will find that “there is no failure the Lord’s love cannot reverse; there is no humiliation he cannot exchange for blessing.”

In truth, because of the Cross of Jesus, “All is swallowed up in victory.”

Blessed Basil Moreau, the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, meditating on the crucifix, gave us the motto, “Spes Unica” – the cross is our only hope.

Together with Federico Schmidt, CSC, and all of our ancestors in Holy Cross; together with Marin and Paulino and Daniel and Pedro and David and Aaron and Juanita and Patricia and Mica and all of our confreres in Holy Cross; together with the Olvera Ledezma family, and all of our friends who form the People of God;

We gather tonight, smiling, not just because we are celebrating your profession of perpetual vows.

We are here in order to support you and help you from this day forward so that you can live your entire life in an excellent manner as a religious of Holy Cross.

We pray that you will move without difficulty among those who suffer because you also know the cross as a man with hope to bring.

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