



AMERICAN NATIONAL  
CATHOLIC CHURCH

**Homily Delivered by  
The Most Reverend George R. Lucey,  
Presiding Bishop  
On the occasion of the Installation of Rev Fr. Anthony Testa  
Pastor, Our Lady of Guadalupe American National Catholic Church  
Long Branch, NJ  
November 13, 2013**

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

I am so pleased to be able to be with you today for this wonderful celebration of the installation of Fr. Anthony Testa as the first pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe American National Catholic parish. Our celebration is made more joyous today because of Rev. Valarie Redpath's presence and participation in the installation. Because of her and the congregation of St. James Episcopal Church, we are able to share this beautiful and scared space with them as witness to the love of God at the heart of our shared belief in the reality of the unity that flows from the Eucharist.

We are graced this morning by Fr. Testa's wife, and are grateful for her support of Fr. Tony in this new position of responsibility.

This is a tremendous moment in the life of the Church and in the life of the parish community of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Your love and dedication for holy mother, the Church, is demonstrated by your determination, as a parish within the Catholic Church, to stand as a witness to the extravagant and all inclusive love of God at the heart of the Catholic Church.

All of us are here today because we love the Church. Our love for the Church has led us to want to establish a Catholic faith community, which we believe, more closely represents our understanding and our experiences of God's love at the center of our ancient traditions, and incarnated in our sacramental theology. What we do here today, with the installation the first pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe American National Catholic Church, is another courageous step in your maturing as a parish. Today the American National Catholic Church celebrates with you, the parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the fact that because of your

faithfulness and diligence to your Catholic this community has persevered, and blossomed into a vibrant Catholic parish in need of a full time pastor.

A little less than a year ago Joyce called me to ask if the parish council could speak to me about how I might be able to help Our lady of Guadalupe become an expression of Catholicism not directed by the Vatican. During my first meeting with the parish council I listened to how the parish was born out of the struggle of many of the people at St. John's to maintain their identity. I listened to the pain of the apparent discrimination which was the criteria being used to close the parish and sensed the disappointed astonishment at the Church's refusal to listened to your pleas to be reasonable. I shared with the parish council the all-inclusive theology of the American National Catholic Church, they shared it with all of you, and we decided to join together in this great adventure.

Since that first encounter I have had regular meetings and telephone conferences with the leadership of the parish, celebrated with the parish the Eucharist, baptism, confirmation, penance, and the joy at finding the faith community of St. James Episcopal Church as a place of worship and a partner in our spiritual journey.

Together we have demonstrated to those who would like to see us go away or fail, that we are, in this time and place, sustained by God's grace, and blessed with God's continued countenance on our efforts.

Today the history of Our Lady of Guadalupe American National Catholic parish adds another chapter to its rich history, and we give thanks to God for calling us together in this great work.

Today we install your first pastor, Fr. Anthony Testa. Fr. Testa responded to your request to come and say Mass for you. Over the time he has been with you, he has become, in fact, your pastor. His care for you, his attention to your pastoral needs, his dedication of his prayer on your behalf are all the requisite attributes of a pastor. He has already demonstrated these qualities to you and to me his bishop. What we do today in this installation is no more than saying yes to God in God' choice of Fr. Testa as your pastor and giving thanks to God for Fr. Testa's yes to God's invitation to serve as you first pastor.

Take care of each other.

Let your new pastor dream his own dreams. Father, let the parish help you shape the vision of the community.

Let your pastor be himself. Father, celebrate the individuality of your parish. Remember your duty to daily pray for them.

Commit to stand with him through hard times. Father, stand with your people in all the moments of their lives.

Let your new pastor lead. Father, be an example of the gentleness of the Good Shepherd

Look for opportunities to encourage and affirm your new pastor. Father, let your people join you in the work of the Kingdom.

Stay focused on the big picture. Father, remember that we are all called to witness to the Kingdom

St. Paul, in fifth Chapter of his letter to the Thessalonians, sums up for us the attitude that will allow for this mutual caring of each other:

"Now we ask you to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard and love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you all, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances for this is God 's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire. Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good; avoid every kind of evil."

Amen