

Homily by Bishop Felipe J. Estévez
For the Blessing of the Catholic Student Center
University of North Florida
March 28, 2015

Just hours before Holy Week begins – in providence of God the blessing of the Chapel and the Student Center here at UNF – let us contemplate on the most recent story of how this center came about, which is part of a greater design of God’s plan.

First let us acknowledge with gratitude and awe to our benefactors for the Bishop’s Vision Project. It is their generosity that has made this all possible.

I am grateful for the appointment of Father Blair Gaynes and his “yes,” to his commitment to campus ministry as his first assignment.

I want to express my gratitude to the Focus missionary team and the enthusiastic collaboration of administrators at the Diocese of St. Augustine. They found the land, took care of permitting, and the financing, loans, etc.

All signs of God’s purpose: I feel such gratitude to the Eternal Father: source of all blessings. (Ephesians 1, 3-4).

We are simply stewards of his abundant blessings. God is a God of relation, of communion and covenant. “I will be your God and you will be my people.” Jesus is the mediator. It is He who attracts our youth to that life in Him. He does not call us as individuals... not alone but in a community of faith. Campus Ministry is not a club; not a fraternity set apart but a community of students, staff, and faculty open to all, so Jesus’ love becomes accessible to all ...come to the waters... come to the light. Mercy is given... It is God of presence made accessible, available and incarnate: “I will make my sanctuary among you.”

This space is sacred because his presence will be revealed, his word will touch thousands. He will be adored in submission of mind, of will, of heart and body. Be still for I am God!

Once talking to President John Delaney he shared how he appreciated campus ministry while he was a student at UF. He witnessed the value of the Student Center for prayer during exam time, for family visits, for encounters and friendship. People of faith have a contribution to a culture of love on campus. Faith is proposed never imposed. We do not ever engage in proselytism, using others for our satisfaction.

In a few hours we will enact the beginning of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and his entry into Jerusalem. Caiaphas words do reveal a mystery of the Lamb of God suffering for our sake.

Eucharist is the new covenant. It is always a renewal of God’s desire: the unity in Him of all his children. St. Augustine coined it: Mystery of faith, sign of unity, link of charity.