



Bishop Garcia reflects on the first year of the *Encountering Christ* campaign

After 30 years as a priest and bishop of the Diocese of Austin, Bishop Daniel Garcia will become the bishop of the Diocese of Monterey next month. We asked him to reflect on the first year of Encountering Christ, and how the campaign will shape his ministry in California.

Q. What are your reflections on the first year of *Encountering Christ*?

A. It has been positive, from the perspective of the people who have received it, the parishes as well as our priests. It has provided an opportunity for us, as a diocese, to reach out, to make them aware of the church and its growth, to encounter our people who comprise the church. It's really an opportunity to sit down with your brothers and sisters in Christ and have a conversation about what is important to them in the church, or of concern in the church and their particular parish. Without it, I'm not so sure we would be having those kinds of conversations.

Q. Why did you feel *Encountering Christ* was important for our diocese?

A. It acknowledges the reality that the church in Central Texas is alive and well. Bishop Vasquez has always stated that, "We're not doing this because there's something broken or something wrong in our diocese." It's quite the opposite. It's really to build on the successes of those before us. That being said, as we look to the future, we realize there's so much more we can and could do if we have the financial means. *Encountering Christ* creates that opportunity for us to plan for the future, and to dream for the future. Not just in the diocese through the pillars of the campaign — every parish has projects they've been longing to do.

Q. How have your conversations with pastors and parishioners about the campaign brought you a sense of hope?

A. People want to be part of something that enables the church to grow and to be strong. We're all struggling, but I think when people see that it's all of us together, they want to be part of that. Even in the current climate, where the church is certainly under the scrutiny because of, unfortunately, the sexual scandals that have surfaced from years ago, people have not given up hope on the church. People see the good that the church does.

Q. Why does a campaign bring a diocese together?

A. It's a reminder that we can't do things alone. When everybody comes together to sacrifice, to work hard, to share the good gifts that God has given them, then dreams are no longer dreams. They become solid realities.

Q. What experiences from *Encountering Christ* will help guide you in your ministry in Monterey?

A. The *Encountering Christ* campaign will remind me that we're here as brothers and sisters to help each other. Whether it be the kinds of ways that we can come together to support each other or how we're obliged to help each other and to share our gifts. I will bring this experience and certainly the enthusiasm that I've experienced here.

Q. As you prepare to become Bishop of Monterey, what do you wish for the Diocese of Austin and its faithful?

A. My hope for the diocese is that they never lose sight of how strong the church we have here in Central Texas is. Every year, I'm in awe of how people want to build on what's been given to them. I've been a priest here for 30 years. It's where I've served 99 percent of my priestly ministry and then as a bishop for almost four years. This will always be home. I hope they can continue to be the example of a church alive, as it has been for me throughout my ministry.