

El Paso Diocese Priest Will Be Honored By Parishioners

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In Anthony this June the Rev. Monsignor Gonzalo Morales of the El Paso Diocese will be honored by parishioners and townspeople in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

As in most celebrations of this kind there will be a blending of the feasting and the fasting, the secular and the religious.

Anthony's planned activities will range from Mayor Adrian Baca's declaration of "Monsignor Morales Day," to an elaborate community reception and supper with mariachi entertainment, to a comprehensive commemorative book compiled by the people of the parish, to a most solemn Thanksgiving Mass.

Letters and expressions of commendation and congratulation are beginning to be received from friends and public figures in Texas and New Mexico.

The reception and supper will be in St. Anthony's Parish Center from 6 to 9 P.M. June 4. Interested parties may call 882-2264 for information and reservations.

Mass will be co-celebrated by 25 priests, including Bishop Metzger of El Paso and Bishop Flores of San Antonio, Diocese priests, and priests from Mexico City, Torreon, Chihuahua, Juarez, and other points. Mass will be said at 4 p.m., June 5, in the Gadsden High School, as St. Anthony's Church is not large enough to accommodate the more than 3,000 well-wishers expected to attend.

Monsignor Morales came to St. Anthony's Church in August 1961, one year after the new building was dedicated.



THE REV. GONZALO MORALES

In the early days Monsignor expanded his time to provide all services, Mass, confessions and counseling, to the prison population of La Tuna, the Federal Correctional Institution in town during their chaplain's extended illnesses. He continues his willingness to offer support services to that facility as needed.

Some current programs at St. Anthony's include the popular Curillos (retreats) conducted for men and women three days each month, and the possibly even more popular Queen of Our Lady of Guadalupe contest and festival.

Although Monsignor Morales has been a good shepherd and has tended St. Anthony's devotedly, he is not above making innovative changes. One of the most spectacular was his commission of an artist to paint a backdrop on the walls behind the altar. Working from Monsignor's sketches, the artist created a masterpiece of rivers and tall trees to give one the feeling of worshipping outdoors.

"It's all symbolic," Monsignor says, "the Fountain of Grace... the River of Life..."

His work has financed through a legacy left him by his brother.

Monsignor Morales was ordained in St. Patrick's Cathedral in El Paso in 1952. He has just returned from a class reunion commemorating that event at St. James Church in San Antonio, Texas where he was one of seven jubilarians to be honored at a

special ceremonial Mass involving 92 concelebrants.

Before he became pastor at St. Anthony's, Monsignor Morales served at Holy Family Church, was the chaplain for Providence Hospital, and taught Religion and English Literature at Loretto Academy. He was pastor for five years at San Elizario Mission, during which time he remodeled the rectory and the church.

He was elevated to the rank of Monsignor in 1971 and currently is assigned to the Diocesan Curia as Defender of the Bond in the

Matrimonial Court. He is also Diocesan Director for the Spanish Speaking for the Diocese of El Paso and is consultant and examiner for parish priests.

Monsignor studied in San Francisco and Santa Barbara, Calif., Mexico City and San Antonio, Tex. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Prominent in Monsignor's office is a framed certificate from the legislature of the State of New Mexico conferring on him an "official expression of Pride" based on his outstanding achievements.

Next to it, another document says the same thing in a different way. It's an invitation—one of many to be mailed out—on heavy sky-blue paper with silver engraving. It reads: "The parishioners and their committees of the Church of St. Anthony cordially invite you to join them in honoring their pastor, the Rev. Monsignor Gonzalo Morales, on the Silver Jubilee of his ordination to the sacred priesthood."

What it amounts to, it's an invitation to a celebration of the people, by the people, for what they consider "one very special person."