

Seminarian Felipe Suárez arrived at St. Anthony's for the first time on December 7, 2012. I had been working here less than six months and had just returned from a week in Guadalajara, Mexico, trying to improve my Spanish. At the time, my Spanish was not very good, but Felipe's English was worse. So we communicated in Spanish. The vocation office was not very happy with me, because they were more interested in his progress than in mine. Today Father Felipe's English is much better. If you want to learn a language, you work on it not just with your head but with your heart. If you love other people, you will want to speak in a language that they can understand.

On the first Pentecost, the proof that the Holy Spirit had come upon the disciples was their ability to speak in a language that others could understand. As St. Luke tells the story in Acts of the Apostles, God did not choose an ordinary day to give the Holy Spirit. God chose a day when "devout Jews from every nation under heaven" were in Jerusalem for a festival. God had created every one of them and loved every one of them. God wanted all the world to hear the news of the resurrection in a language that each person could understand. So the sound of the Holy Spirit "filled the entire house" where the disciples had gathered. Tongues divided and "came to rest on each one of them." The divided tongues signified the gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed upon them, empowering them to go forth and proclaim the gospel to all nations. Each person that day heard the disciples speaking in his or her own language. Luke says that because of this, "they were confused." You would think that because of this, they would understand! They heard their own language, but they were confused - they had to rethink what they had previously thought about God. God used other people to send them the message they most needed to hear.

My brothers and sisters, God has spoken to each of us in a language that we can understand. And God has given each of us a message to speak to others. When we open our hearts to hear God's message, we can share it with the world.

Father Felipe, today we thank God for speaking to your heart in a language that you could understand. The Holy Spirit has filled you with gifts and expects you to share those gifts with the Church and the world. You are through with the seminary, but the Holy Spirit will continue to speak to you. I have learned in my 36 years of priesthood, 26 of them as a pastor, that I often hear God's message through other people. The Holy Spirit also speaks through the people of the parish. God has taught them my language. They teach me what kind of priest I need to be. I listen carefully to the people because sometimes I do not hear God very clearly by myself. The Holy Spirit has given some gifts to them. Sometimes I get confused. When my ideas are not the ideas of my parishioners, I have to be ready for the difficult news that the Holy Spirit is using them to speak to me. We will not always agree with everyone else in our Church, but we can draw closer together in the Spirit through the gift of love. When we love one another, we will learn each other's language. That will make every day Pentecost.

Thank you for answering the call of the Holy Spirit, and congratulations on your ordination, Father Felipe Suárez.