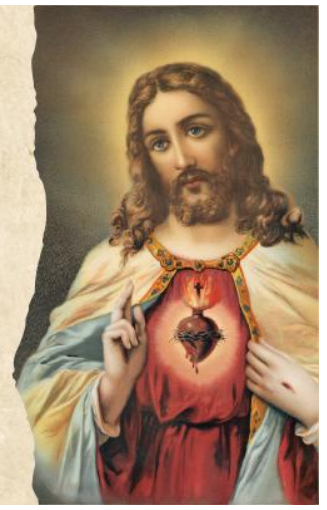




## ANCHORED IN LOVE: THE GIFT OF FAITH AND COMMUNITY THIS CHRISTMAS



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I was thinking recently about my parents, who I trust are now enjoying the Lord's presence in heaven. I was recently thinking about their initial journey to the United States from Mexico, when they arrived newly married, with the hopes of raising a family and making a new life in a new country with new hopes and dreams.

I have often wondered what sustained them personally and as a young family in a country not their own, in a new culture and a different language. It was incredibly difficult for them to navigate raising a thriving family, especially when far from their own families of origin and familiar surroundings.

I have come to realize that it was their unwavering faith and the steadfast support of the church community that sustained them during those initial years as they made this country their home. My parents brought with them two images that remained in their bedroom throughout their marriage: a small statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. My parents had grown up with those images. Not only were they "a piece of home" that offered consolation to them in their new circumstances, but they also symbolized the abiding presence of Christ and of Mary, both of whom promise to accompany us, their children.

My parents' Catholic faith and their new church community became the anchor that grounded them in this new reality of a new country, culture, and language far from their homeland. A warm and joyful young priest who spoke their native language gave them a hearty welcome and guided them spiritually. A lay Catholic movement, the Christian Family Movement, also known as Movimiento Familiar Cristiano Católico, became like family to them (many became our pseudo-cousins,) offering friendship and support in their vocation as spouses and parents.

In this Christmas season, as our focus turns to family and loved ones, let us also ponder the One who anchors our souls, Jesus Christ. The One who is Love itself! May the newborn Christ-child dwell in your hearts and your homes. May he and his blessed mother, Mary, and her loving husband, St. Joseph, sustain your families and loved ones.

Merry Christmas!

Most Rev. Oscar Cantú  
Bishop of San José