Lord, I am not worthy that you should come to me, but just one word from you will be enough to heal my soul... and thus be able to give an account of our hope to our community.

Officiant: The Lord be with you.
People: And also with you.

First, I want to thank the Creator for life and for guiding me to this beautiful church: All Angels by the Sea. I also want to thank the Very Reverend David Marshall for giving me the opportunity to speak of him as one of my mentors on my journey to the Sacred Order of Priests. I thank Reverend David's family for opening their hearts to me. And finally, I thank you, brothers and sisters, members of this vibrant congregation.

My name is Antonio Leal, and I was born in Mexico City in 1969. My parents, Rafaela Olmedo and Antonio Leal, passed away a few months ago; may God grant them eternal rest. My father was the most honest and honorable man I have ever known. He was a hard worker, with extensive knowledge in many fields; he was a man of science. However, and this was his weakness in

my opinion, he didn't believe in God. My mother was an exceptional woman, an example of academic achievement despite unfavorable circumstances. I believe I inherited my mother's character and her zest for life. Her good humor was contagious. She was Catholic, though not very devout. I have a sister, Marcela Leal, who is a year younger than me. She is the artist of the family; she was born to paint and sculpt, and she has a great passion for archaeology, especially ancient Egypt. She lives in Mexico.

At this point, two key people come into play: my paternal grandmother, Eloisa Rullán, and my great-aunt, Salvadora Rullán. After my sister and I were born in Mexico City, my father decided to move to the southeast of the country, to the state of Tabasco, specifically to Villahermosa, where they lived.

My grandmother was like a second mother to me. She oversaw my studies and homework; I read the Bible with her, and she explained it to me. We slept in the same room and talked at night about my day's adventures. My great-aunt was our great catechist. She and my sister slept in another room, and every night I would go to her room to pray. For me, it was wonderful to know God. What was incredible about them was that, despite their age, they explained everything about God in a simple way, without

focusing excessively on the saints or Mary (as sometimes happens in the Roman Catholic Church). They taught me the most important thing: that she is the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of God, and that the saints are exemplary lives whose writings and works we should follow. They instilled in me who Jesus is, that he suffered and died for us.

I attended a Catholic school from kindergarten through college, run by nuns (amazing teachers) and Jesuit priests. There, I was taught the Roman Catholic view of Jesus, the Trinity, the saints, and Mary, which sometimes conflicted with what I learned at home. I believe that, by that point, the Jesus I was taught about at home was already deeply imprinted on my heart.

Time passed, and I grew up. I pursued my dreams of becoming a scientist, but Jesus faded from my life. I became arrogant, believing I could achieve everything through my own efforts. I forgot that Jesus was always walking beside me. As a result, I made mistakes, and some time later, I found myself here in this beautiful country. I met my wife, but my life could never be the same. I had to learn to work hard in jobs that required physical strength. I no longer had faith; life passed by without meaning, except for the responsibility of raising my children. And so, 16

years ago, I came to the Hispanic Ministry of the Church of the Redeemer.

At that time, the priest in charge was Rev. Dr. Richard "Dick" Lampert. With him, I rediscovered Jesus. He spoke to me only about Christ. At the same time, I learned about the Episcopal Church, where Jesus, the Christ, is the center. Reverend Lampert was only interested in bearing witness to Christ. That awakened in me the deep love I have for Him. Reverend Lampert didn't speak ill of the Catholic Church or refute anything; he simply prayed for me and presented to me the love, the Gospel, the glory, the justice, the beauty, the greatness, the sovereignty, and the grace of Christ. As the Bible says, I fixed my eyes on Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. He brought Christ back into my heart.

Within the Hispanic Ministry, I felt called to serve the Lord among His people through the Sacraments. The Creator placed me in the best place for me: the Episcopal Church. This Church allows me to live the Word of God through the Bible, explain who God, the Trinity, and Christ are using the teachings of the Church Fathers and tradition, and preach who Jesus is through the Creeds and the Sacraments.

Now I find myself among you. God wants me to grow more spiritually and has led me to the Very Reverend David Marshall, his family, and the entire All Angels community. But I must acknowledge that my spiritual growth here at All Angels is also due to the music and teachings of Maestro David Stasney.

I still have many challenges to face in order to achieve what God asks of me, but now I have Jesus again, and you, my brothers in Christ.

This moment in my life can be summarized in three stages, using today's Gospel from our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew:

The Harvest Is Great, the Labourers Few

Jesus summoned his twelve disciples

The Mission of the Twelve

Amen

Just as I was lost and found by His grace, I now hear His call to be a labourer in His field, ready to join the mission of the twelve and share the same transformative love that brought me home.