



**Homily by Bishop Felipe J. Estévez on the
Feast of Our Lady of La Leche
Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine
October 11, 2012**

Text: Luke 11, 27-28

Jesus had a true Eucharistic heart. His heart was full of gratitude – He had an art of recognizing the smallest sign goodness in others.

i.e. A good woman amazed in seeing Jesus in action, said aloud full of praise and wonder:

“Blessed the womb that carried you
And the breasts at which you nursed.”

Jesus knew his mother was praised and recognized and said, “Menoun” = even more!
There is more – blessed are those who hear the Word of God and observe it.”

St. Augustine said, More important than being the Mother of the Redeemer, it is her faith in the Word addressed to her. She is the first disciple of Jesus for she states her Fiat – let it be done – according to your Word. She excelled in faith better than all saints together.

In this diocese, the Feast of Our Lady of La Leche, we are celebrating an historic Mass: Today for the first time we recognize liturgically in the entire Diocese of St. Augustine, her presence among us since 1574 where she was placed at the Mission of Nombre de Dios. There a chapel was dedicated to her. It was the first Marian Shrine in what is

today the United States of America. The first nation—the Native Americans who were the first evangelized in this land had a great devotion to her. They understood the traditional principle: To Jesus through Mary. Many hurricanes, wars and devastations, fires and famines passed through the centuries, four different countries held power – yet somehow she has survived the passing of turbulent times. Today she is honored by all of us as we are facing a culture that has made abortion legal, restricted the space of religious freedom, altered God’s plan for marriage, as a terrible surge of paganism.

She is the nursing Mother, seeing her one cannot but welcome the Gospel of Life, the beauty and dignity of the woman/mother, the protection of the child ...“blessed in the womb that carried you” as the lady told Jesus on the roads of Palestine.

Our Lady of La Leche y del Buen Parto welcomes the pleas of husbands and wives who desire the gift of a child. Hundreds of witnesses stand as living proof of her powerful intercession.

Our lady of La Leche intercedes for women who suffer from breast cancer and in her compassion, Our Lady consoles them in their affliction and the Nursing Mother prays for their well-being!

Church historians know the love of the first Bishop of St. Augustine, Bishop Agustin Verot, for Our Lady of La Leche and his care for her chapel. The same zeal was shown by Archbishop Hurley who asked every new priest joining the diocese to begin his ministry celebrating a Mass at the foot of Our Lady of La Leche at Mission Nombre de Dios.

I look with anticipation to the future Crowning ceremony of Our Lady because she is the beloved mother of all of us. We become a true child in her gaze, and in her arms we trust with total conviction for we learn that we are truly loved by her.

Hail Mary...