

Fr. Oswaldo at his installation as pastor

*(In the summer of 2017 the Assumptionists were entrusted with a parish on the outskirts of the city of Orizaba in the eastern state of Veracruz, Mexico. See http://www.assumption.us/news/1572-new-assumptionist-community-in-orizaba-mexico
. Fr. Oswaldo Garcia Sanchez, A.A., was appointed pastor; it is his first assignment as such. Formerly he served as a formator and professor in Mexico and the Philippines. Here presents some of the challenges he is facing in Orizaba. This is second part of his reflections.)*

Part II

As I mentioned in the Part One, the **major challenge** in the parish is **fostering unity** among

parishioners who live in 12 separate communities, each with its own chapel…. first of all, unity within each community, unity among members of different political parties, unity among individuals and/or families that have had longstanding conflicts, etc.... Then, even more difficult, we need to create a parish identity. We have a situation in which two of our communities are quite large, the one around the main church in Tlilapan, and another that is much closer to downtown Orizaba. For a long time there have been parishioners in each community who have been working hard, buta ll of them for their own community without ever developing an awareness that they belong to one parish...Our parish is really diverse --- in terms of socioeconomic status, culture, language, traditions, history, Church involvement, etc. Nevertheless, at least now, everyone has expressed an interest in working together and pooling our resources in order to achieve common goals. So that's what we're trying to do.



main church: St. James the Apostle, Tlilapan

The **second challenge** we face is that of **formation**. All groups throughout the parish are

calling for training sessions. That they see a need and want to follow up on it has motivated us already to offer a number of programs and courses which have been met with satisfaction up till now.

The **third challenge** has to do with **restoring the place of Nahuatl culture** in the parish, a culture that has gradually been lost over time. Only three of the Christian communities in the parish have maintained it. In the others, only the elderly have and a few adults. Most of the kids have lost it. We need to restore the place of the Náhuatl language, local traditions and customs of the community like the role of volunteer and teamwork, respect for nature, knowledge of herbs and natural medicine, the cult of the saints and of images, respect for the dead and holy sites, the role of authority at the service of the community and not as exploiters of it. For the moment we're still learning so much. We need to get involved with ministry to indigenous peoples at the diocesan and national levels. There are lots of opportunities. We're also hoping to take advantage of our own Fr. Chucho who himself comes from an indigenous background, who speaks Nahuatl and who has received some training in this kind of ministry.



Nahuatl dress

And the **fourth challenge** is one that goes above and beyond all the others, namely, how we **maintain our sense of balance as a community**
in the face of all these challenges…..time for prayer, for community life, and for rest; how we provide a solid witness to the candidates who are living with us and helping us out in our pastoral work.

Fr. Oswaldo Garcia Sanchez, A.A.: A New Pastor’s Reflections on the Challenges He Faces - Part I