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**By Steve Taylor, October 9, 2017**

EDINBURG, RGV – When Bishop Daniel Flores could not attend Friday’s groundbreaking ceremony for the Raymondville Drain project he asked Father Alfonso Guevara to attend. Guevara said he was honored to attend and bless the fertile land with holy water.

“When the Bishop asked me to represent him, I was honored to go. The Raymondville Drain project is so grand, so important, it is a wonderful project that is going to affect the lives of so many people. It is a tremendous example of what we can do when we work together,” Guevara said.

When fully-developed, the \$400 million Raymondville Drain system will cover 63 miles in Hidalgo and Willacy counties, starting near Edinburg Lake and ending at the Laguna Madre. The drainage ditch is slated to be 350 feet wide and 12 feet deep. Local officials believe they can fast track the project now the federal government has agreed to reimburse 75 percent of the project.

Guevara said the thousands of colonia residents on the eastern side of Hidalgo County that will benefit from improved drainage deserve help. He said the project took him back to his time as priest at Christ the King in Brownsville, when he had led colonia residents in a lengthy fight for better flood control measures.

“I can relate because when I was working in Brownsville, at Christ the King, whenever we had a downpour it would flood so many of our colonias. On one occasion, we lost a young person because of the drainage system. We worked for years, with Valley Interfaith, with the water district, with the City of Brownsville, to make sure water flowed into the Brownsville Ship Canal and not into the colonias.”

Guevara said the proposed Raymondville Drain is not only an important infrastructure project but a catalyst for economic development.

“What a blessing it was to attend the groundbreaking ceremony. I was so proud to be there. To see the children singing. We are doing this for our children. It was such a wonderful, public display of goodness. I thought, I have this holy water in a coffee cup, I have to use it. I thought, this is going to be the first water to flow through this drainage system and it came from God. It is going to help so many people, for so many years. It is a blessing, a nod of approval from God.”

Guevara said he was also struck by the many happy faces he saw at the ceremony.

“It felt good to be there. There are so many tragedies and things we are fighting about. It was a goodra feeling, to bless our land, our soil, that is so fertile. It was good to banish all this fake news. This was a worthy thing to celebrate.