

# Esperanza Lifetime Achievement Award

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I hardly know what to say, particularly since I have been told that I have 2 to 4 minutes to say it. But that is just an excuse, for if I had an entire hour I still would not know what to say.

Even so, the first thing I must say is that I am **honored**. I am honored that you are here. I am honored to receive this distinguished award. Particularly, I am honored in having you as my friends, brothers, and sisters.

Secondly, I must say I am **grateful**. I am grateful for the family and the church in which it pleased God to place me. I am grateful for my pastors and my teachers, all the way from kindergarten to graduate school, all but two now deceased. I am grateful for other teachers and mentors, long deceased before I was born, but whose companionship and guidance have been with me for over half a century. And I am grateful above all for my best companion and my most influential teacher, Catherine, whom I love with all my heart.

Finally, while I am indeed honored and grateful, I must say that I am also **concerned**, and this for two reasons.

I am concerned **first of all that a mistake has been made** in giving me an award that in truth so many others deserve. The truth is that I was just there, resting as on a beach under a shade of

contentment, when a mighty wave picked me up and tossed me onto the present unforeseen shores. You who are here today, and the many others whom you represent, you were that mighty wave, and therefore it is you, not I, who deserve an award for your achievements.

And **secondly, I am concerned lest achievement become an inducement to complacency.** As people who serve a God of love and justice, there is still much for us to do. There is much to do as long as there are children excluded from quality education. There is much to do as long as there are women denied equal rights. There is much to do as long as there are people having to live in hiding just because they lack some papers. There is much to do until we reach the glorious vision of the prophets Micah and Isaiah, of a day when they will sit, each under their own fig tree, and no one —no one, not even the Migra!— will make them afraid.

Until that day, God be with you!

The logo for AETH features a stylized 'A' composed of a yellow triangle on the right and a pink triangle on the left, with a fan-like pattern of lines extending from the base of the 'A'. Below the 'A' is the word 'AETH' in a large, light purple, serif font.