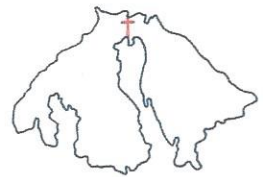
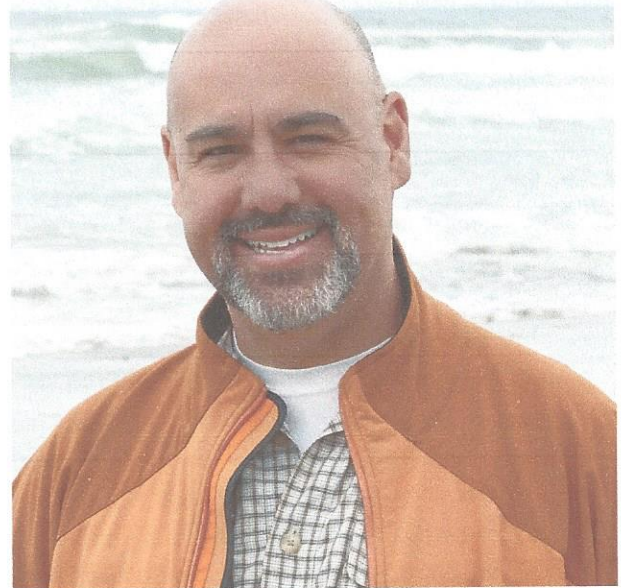


# emmanuel episcopal parish of ORCAS ISLAND



## Introducing our new Rector

The Rev. José Roberto Gándara-Perea, or Berto as he is better known, has accepted the call to become Rector of Emmanuel Episcopal Parish of Orcas Island. He will begin his ministry on August 17, 2014. Berto was born in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico to a family with a long tradition of physicians begun by his great-grandfather. After living in Germany for three years, while his father served as a major in the US Army, he attended a Benedictine school (1972-1982) that instilled in him a deep love for the monastic/contemplative life and the first inklings of a vocation towards Church service. In 1983, he entered the Redemptorist Congregation, a Roman Catholic missionary order, where he made vows in 1986.



Berto completed a BA in philosophy with the Dominican friars in Bayamón, Puerto Rico and then a four years master degree in theology in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. He was ordained a priest in 1992 and served as a curate for five years in the parish of Santa Lucía in the town of Las Matas de Farfán, near the Dominican-Haitian border. Berto was also the director of Christian Education for the Diocese of San Juan de la Maguana in the Dominican Republic.

In 1996, Berto went to Europe to further his theological education in France, Belgium, Austria, and Spain. After learning French and a year of studies at L'Institut International Lumen Vitae, a Jesuit school in Brussels, he obtained a Diploma in Pastoral Theology and Catechetics. Berto then studied two years at the Pontifical University of Salamanca in Spain obtaining a Licentiate of Sacred Theology, specializing in Practical Theology.

Berto returned to Puerto Rico serving as the director of a parish mission team for three years. He then served another three years establishing a new parish, Santos Apóstoles Pedro y Pablo, in the town of Guayama. During this time, he also served in the government of the Redemptorist Missionaries as first consultant to the Provincial Superior.

In 2004 Berto began an arduous process of discernment concerning leaving the Roman Catholic Church and its priesthood and entering The Episcopal Church. He obtained a Diploma in Anglican Studies from The General Theological Seminary (GTS) in New York City and, after much prayer, made the decision to "swim the Thames" in 2006. Berto worked for three years as program director, case manager, and mental health counselor at Harlem United Community AIDS Center. He also worked at GTS as Director of the Hispanic/Latino Theology Program, adjunct professor, and Field Education Director. In 2009 he was received as a priest in The Episcopal Church and served for four years as priest-in-charge at the Church of the Intercession in Harlem, New York City.

Berto is passionate about parish ministry, contemplative spirituality, photography, drumming, Native American flute playing, inter-religious dialogue, and outreach, especially to the Latino community. He has shared his life for the past eight years with his spouse, the Rev. Hugh McPhail Grant, an Episcopal priest from Atlanta, Georgia. Hugh recently served as an associate priest at the Church of St. Luke in the Fields in New York City. Hugh is also a licensed clinical social worker, a wilderness spirituality guide, and a money/stewardship mentor.

In 2013 Hugh and Berto began to discern next steps in their ministries, with a desire to move to a more rural setting. When a friend offered use of their home on Orcas Island for nine months, they decided to put their possessions in storage and give themselves an extended period of sabbatical time for retreat, study, and travel. This period has helped them develop their skills and visions of how they can further their ministry in the church and in the world. Perhaps the *greatest surprise* of this time has been discovering that Emmanuel was in the midst of a rector search process five months after arriving on Orcas; certainly the *greatest delight* of this time has been loving the people and land of Orcas Island so much that serving at Emmanuel was the clear first choice amongst several ministry possibilities around the country!