

HOMILY
BORDER MASS
NOVEMBER 2, 2009

We have gathered here today to celebrate a Mass in order to express our solidarity to one another. Today, even though we are separated by this fence, we are strongly united, inasmuch as for God there are no boundaries. The Eucharist is the most sacred moment that more than anything unites the faithful; it is the power that most makes us one. These two tables today become one altar, for the Lord, who sacrifices himself, is one. It is the one sacrifice that saves us, it is the same bread and the same wine that are consecrated in order that we might eat of the same Body and Blood of our Lord.

Together we feel the loss of so many human persons who have died crossing this border. Together we feel the loss of so many human persons who have been assassinated in Ciudad Juárez in the last few years. The roots of this violence in Mexico are in the United States. Drug trafficking is due to the demand in our country and the weapons used in these assassinations have their origin in the United States, where the laws for the sale of weapons are extremely liberal. The weapons that kill people in Mexico are American or at least bought in the United States.

The sum total of those who have died in the desert trying to cross the border since 1992 are at least 5,000. It is reported that what has killed them is thirst, hunger, the heat, or rattlesnakes. Nonetheless, it should also be said that what has killed them are unjust immigration laws, cruel treatment on the part of smugglers and the political and economic systems of our countries. These deaths have their roots in the lack of sensitivity on the part of the powerful who often create structures that carry with them grave injustices.

Together we feel the pain of so many inhumanities: separated families, separated spouses, children separated from their parents; the unjust treatment that immigrants receive when they arrive in unjust wages, a hostile environment against every immigrant; inadequate housing and food; the lack of medical attention; having to hide from the authorities without the freedom to move from one place to another for fear of being deported.

It is tragic when there is an emergency in Mexico and the son or daughter or the parent here in the United States cannot travel to be with his loved ones. Today, for example, how much immigrants would like to be with their families offering prayers for their loved ones who have died in their native land.

Nonetheless, we are united in the same hope and the promises of our Lord Jesus Christ that death does not mean the end for anyone. Today, and also in Las Cruces and throughout our country, we create altars in honor of the dead and we exchange candy skulls. These gestures are in accord with the words of St. Paul: “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The Risen Lord has conquered you, and for this reason we do not fear you. This is the faith that unites us, and from this faith, comes hope. And hope comes from the love of God. “We even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

This is what we say to our brothers and sisters in Mexico and in all of Latin America: that we are very aware that we are one Church in America, that we journey together in hope, that there is more that unites us than separates us. In the Synod for America we declared that we are one Church; in the document *Strangers No Longer, Together on the Journey of Hope*, we spoke

in unanimity on issues of immigration; in Aparecida we identified ourselves together as disciples and missionaries.

We are in solidarity. We bishops in the United States commit ourselves to continue fighting for comprehensive immigration law reform in our congress. We will continue to offer immigration and citizenship services; we will continue to offer hospitality through our programs and pastoral activities. Please know that those who come to us will not be rejected: they will receive food, clothing and all they need to survive; for we are brothers and sisters, and we form a single family. You would do the same for us.

Let us then celebrate our hope. In conclusion, I invite all of you to look towards the east, to the mountain where we find the monument to Christ the King. Let us reflect on what our Lord sees from that cross. He sees the many inhumanities, violence, and injustice. He sees all that happens along this border with sorrow and tears. What he sees is contrary to what the Kingdom that he came to preach and establish. We ought not just see the reality of our times but we must also have the same vision that he had when he preached about his Kingdom. We are to see not only the way things are but also the way things should be. Christ wants us to share the vision of his Kingdom and that we continue to fight for a more beautiful world and that his people may be more joyful. Let us keep working that his Kingdom be fulfilled here on this earth, the kingdom of justice, peace and love.