



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF LAS CRUCES
Office of the Bishop

Dear brothers and sisters,

As you may have recently seen in a *New York Times* article, among others, our Diocese is currently the subject of an application by the United States government to exercise eminent domain over diocesan land situated on Mount Cristo Rey.

At this site, Christ the King, with open arms, rises above two countries. Since the sites' founding nearly a century ago, many have come together in devotion and journeyed to the top of this mountain seeking Him and offering prayers of thanksgiving and hope. The government now seeks to take part of this land for the construction of a border wall. Our government is within its rights to secure its border, however, our Diocese is defending itself against the means by which the government now seeks to do so. The erection of a symbol of division in the shadow of Christ runs contrary to the very person of Christ, who gathers people of all backgrounds and walks in unity and love to himself.

This is not a matter of politics, but a matter of preserving and defending a sanctuary and devotion which has brought many people in our community to God. The spiritual value of this site cannot be compromised by politics or financial gain.

At this juncture, whether our Diocese will prevail rests in the hands of our courts and civil leaders. In light of this, I and Bishop Mark J. Seitz, Bishop of the Diocese of El Paso, invite all the priests and faithful of our Dioceses and the region to join in prayer and pilgrimage on June 28, 2026 to ascend the mountain. Our ascent will begin at 4:30 p.m. and culminate in Holy Mass under the statue of Christ the King at 6:00 p.m. offered by myself and Bishop Anthony C. Celino, auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of El Paso. All are welcome and strongly encouraged to join us.

We will meet to begin our pilgrimage at 4:00 p.m. at the foot of the mountain (1 Cristo Rey Rd, Sunland Park, NM 88063). Please be advised that summer is already upon us, so please dress appropriately for the heat, bring hats and sunscreen, and be sure to hydrate. The day may also cool significantly by the time Mass ends and we descend the mountain.

I look forward to being with you all on June 28, 2026, as we pray for the Dioceses of Las Cruces and El Paso, and for our government and its leaders.

Yours in Christ,

+ *Peter Baldacchino*

✠ Most Reverend Peter Baldacchino, Bishop of Las Cruces