

HOMILY AT CLOSING MASS OF THE YOUTH RALLY 2026 IN ALAMOGORDO

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time · Year A

Dear young people of the Diocese of Las Cruces,

In the first reading, the Lord appears to Solomon in a dream and says to him: “Ask something of me and I will give it to you.”

The Word we have just heard is living and effective. Today, through this Word, God addresses each one of us and says: “Ask me for what you desire.”

What are you asking him for today, at the end of these days you have spent with him?

Perhaps you are asking him to free you from suffering you carry within, to resolve a difficult situation, to grant you a hopeful future or a united family.

Solomon could have asked for a long life, riches, power or victory over his enemies. Instead, he acknowledges that he is “a mere youth” and asks the Lord for “an understanding heart” to judge his people and distinguish right from wrong.

He does not seek mere intelligence or a storehouse of information. He asks for a heart able to listen to God, discern his will and serve others with justice. Biblical wisdom is born from this listening: it sheds the light of God’s Word on reality and enables us to choose what is good.

Solomon’s request concerns you as well, because you live in a world crowded with voices. Friends, advertisements, influencers and algorithms all try to tell you what to desire, how to look and who to become.

Then there are the voices of our own fears: “You are not attractive enough. You are not intelligent enough. No one understands you. You will never succeed. You will never change.”

Amid all these voices, how can we recognize the voice of God?

We need what Solomon asked for: a listening and discerning heart, one that does not confuse what is attractive for a moment with what gives lasting happiness, a heart able to recognize the pearl of great price.

Ask the Lord for a heart that listens, so that amid the many voices you may recognize Christ as the priceless treasure; and allow him, in the Eucharist, to make you builders of the civilization of love.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus speaks of a treasure buried in a field. A man comes upon it and, “out of joy,” sells everything he owns to buy that field. Jesus then tells us of a merchant searching for fine pearls who, upon finding one of incomparable value, sells all he has to acquire it.

One discovers his treasure unexpectedly; the other searches for a long time. Yet both recognize something beyond price. The man in the field gives up everything joyfully, because what he has found is worth more than all he possessed before.

Christian faith is not born from having to give something up, nor from fulfilling a list of moral obligations. It springs from an encounter with Jesus Christ and the discovery that in him the Kingdom of God has drawn near. Christ is the true treasure: in him we receive a love, a truth and a life that nothing else can offer.

But this discovery calls for a decision. We all spend our lives on something. The question is not whether we will give our life, but to whom and for what.

**What is your treasure? On what foundation are you building your life?
And what kind of world are you helping to shape?**

Speaking to young people at World Youth Day in Toronto, Saint John Paul II said: “Christ alone is the cornerstone on which it is possible solidly to build one’s existence” (Toronto, July 27, 2002).

Without a firm foundation, we may succeed and still feel empty, remain constantly connected and yet be terribly lonely, receive everyone’s approval and no longer know who we are.

Our choices, however, shape more than our personal existence. Through our words, relationships, studies, work and use of technology, we lay a stone each day in the world taking shape around us. The question is: what kind of city are we building?

In his Encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope Leo XIV says that humanity faces a pivotal choice: Babel, or “the city in which God and humanity dwell together” (no. 1).

Babel rises from pride and the claim that we can live without God. The city of God, by contrast, is founded upon listening, communion, justice and recognition of the dignity of every person.

The heavenly Jerusalem is not a paradise manufactured by human ability. Revelation shows it descending from heaven as God’s gift. Yet he calls us to cooperate with him, so that even now its signs may become visible in the world.

Technology also confronts us with this choice: what kind of society will we fashion with the tools entrusted to us?

Technology is an extraordinary human achievement. It enables us to communicate, study, cure diseases and accomplish what once seemed impossible. Artificial intelligence can also be of great value. Yet no instrument can determine the purpose for which it should be used. We need sound criteria, personal responsibility and a discerning heart.

The same technology that connects people across great distances can separate us from the person beside us. It may advance knowledge, yet also spread falsehood. More information does not necessarily bring wisdom, and a greater number of contacts does not guarantee genuine friendship.

An algorithm can analyze your data and measure your performance, but it cannot tell you what you are worth. As Pope Leo XIV writes, no computational system, however sophisticated, can create “a heart that gives itself” or “a conscience that discerns good from evil” (*Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 233). Artificial intelligence may simulate words of empathy and friendship, but it cannot replace an authentic relationship. If we accept every ready-made answer passively, we risk weakening our judgment and even losing the desire to seek a real encounter with another person (cf. nos. 99–100).

Your value does not depend on your achievements or the image you project. You are precious because God thought of you, willed you and loved you; he created you in his image. In Baptism he made you his children and called you to be conformed to his Son.

In the second reading, Saint Paul proclaims: “We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

This does not mean that everything that happens is good. Sin, violence, abandonment and death remain evils.

Rather, the Letter to the Romans announces that God is so powerful in love that he can weave even our crosses into a history of salvation. With him, no tear is wasted, no fall is final and no life is lost. Grace heals what sin has wounded and makes us sharers in the divine life.

Perhaps some of you are thinking: “My life is too confused. I have made too many mistakes. My family is too complicated. No one could make anything beautiful out of my history.”

The Word of God answers you today: hand that history over to Christ, so that evil may not have the last word.

Today I stand before you to announce, with all the strength of my heart, that Christ has died and is risen for you. He has taken sin and death upon himself, conquered them in his Passover and given you his Holy Spirit, so that you may live in freedom as true children of God. In him you can learn to love God and your neighbor and receive life in its fullness, no longer ruled by fear—a life that, already here on earth, is a foretaste of the eternal joy awaiting us in heaven.

This victory is not achieved through the means offered by the world. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, Christ confronts the noisy power of this world with “the defenceless power of love” (Cologne, August 20, 2005). On the Cross he freely gives his life for us and transforms the violence he suffers into an act of total self-giving; thus death opens onto life.

In a few moments, this same mystery will be made present upon the altar.

In the Eucharist, Christ does not give us something; he gives us himself. The treasure we have sought comes to meet us as the Bread of Life. Under the species of bread and wine, the Son of God nourishes the life we received in Baptism, conforms us to himself and gives us a foretaste of eternity.

Benedict XVI taught that this transformation cannot stop at the bread and wine; it must reach us as well (Cologne, August 21, 2005). We receive the Body of Christ so that our whole existence may be changed from within and his love may spread through us into the world.

This is how the city of God begins to rise within the city of man: not through isolated individuals or people who impose themselves, but through a people made one Body, renewed by Christ's love and built into a spiritual house of living stones.

Dear young people, the Diocese of Las Cruces needs you.

The Church does not need only young people who attend an event. She needs young men and women who have found the pearl of great price and are ready to cooperate with God in making his dwelling visible among us.

This land knows the desert well. There are deserts in our cities and within the human heart: loneliness, addiction, violence and fear. The Lord sends you into these places to make the heavenly Jerusalem visible by bringing the mercy of God and the joy of the Gospel.

Saint John Paul II told the young that the civilization of love needs a new generation of builders. He then entrusted them with this hope: "You must be those 'builders'!"

Begin with actions that may seem small: take part faithfully in Sunday Mass, receive God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and share in the life of your parish communities, because the Gospel cannot be lived alone.

Forgive those who have hurt you. Draw near to the lonely. Defend those who are excluded. Speak the truth. Place your gifts at the service of others. Every such act is another stone laid in the civilization of love.

Dear young people, do not settle for a small, closed-in life spent seeking comfort and approval. Do not sell your heart for something that tomorrow will have lost its value.

At the beginning of this homily, God invited us to ask him for what we truly desire. Now we can answer together: "Lord, give us a listening heart, so that we may recognize Christ as our greatest treasure. Transform us through his Body and Blood, so that in this world we may make visible the signs of your city."

Ask the Lord for a heart that listens. Seek the pearl of great price. Build your life on Christ, the cornerstone. Let the Eucharist renew you. And when you return to your families, schools and parishes, show by your lives that the city of God is near—not through arrogant judgments or condemnation, but through joy, service, forgiveness and love.

May Mary, a young woman with a wise and willing heart, teach you to listen to God's voice. In her the Word became flesh and God made his dwelling among us. May she, the image of the Church, help you to recognize Christ, entrust your whole life to him with joy and become builders of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Amen.