



*Homily – Youth Day 2011*

*Most Rev. José H. Gomez  
Archbishop of Los Angeles*

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My dear young brothers and sisters in Christ:

I want to thank Ruben and Camille for their wonderful testimonies.

It seems to me that the first lesson that we have to learn today after hearing them and the readings of today's Mass is that Jesus loves us to the end, my friends. He loves us with a love that is stronger than death.

We must never forget how much he loves us! We must never forget how he gave himself for us! That's why he left us this sacrament of his Body and Blood.

That's why we celebrate Mass in memory of him.

In Jesus, we find the meaning of our lives. In Jesus, we see revealed the great dignity that we have as sons and daughters of God.

We are each born at a certain time and place. But before the world was created, God knew our names. Before there was a sun and the stars, he had a destiny for each one of us. He had a plan for our lives.

This is true! It is not just my nice idea. I could never think up something so beautiful!

Jesus revealed this to us. He said that our every hair is numbered. He said that each of us has an angel in heaven who watches over us before the face of God.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus tells us this again in the Gospel we have just heard.

Our Father loves each of us with a deep love. With a love that we could never imagine. He sees us. He listens to us. He knows our every need even before we ask. He longs to give his children every good and beautiful thing.

When we are aware of this beautiful reality it is amazing what we can do for our brothers and sisters with the talents that God gives us.

My friends, we need to live like we really believe this. We need to believe that there is so much more to this world than meets the eye!

The Eucharist is the key.

I can share with you that my own personal journey started with a simple decision when I was a teenager to attend daily Mass. For a number of reasons, I decided to take my faith seriously and for that, I started going to daily Mass and that changed my life totally. If I look for a reason for all the blessings that I have received, it always goes to that moment when the Eucharist became the center of my life!

We are challenged in the readings we have just heard to walk by faith.

We are challenged to pray with the courage and confidence of Queen Esther. We are challenged to truly believe what Jesus tells us today — that our Father loves us and that he has a plan for our lives, and for our world.

So my dear young friends, I urge you today, in this holy Eucharist, to renew your faith in the promises of Christ.

Ask our Father in hope to show you what he wants you to do with your lives. And believe that he will give you every good gift that you need.

Seek to do our Father's will in love. And believe that he will show you the face of God.

Knock on the door to our Father's house in faith. And believe that in this house, in his Church, you will find the Kingdom of heaven!

When we open that door, we see the beautiful truth of this Eucharist we celebrate.

I want to share with you the story of Maria de la Luz Camacho González. She was a very talented and beautiful laywoman who dedicated her life to serving the Gospel as a catechist.

In 1934, during the dark days of the persecution of the Church in Mexico, a mob of revolutionary thugs known as the Camisas Rojas, came to burn down Maria's church, San Juan Batista, in the Coyoacán section of Mexico City. They came during the Sunday morning children's Mass.

Maria organized a group of parishioners to block the entrance to the church. She told the mob: "We have no fear. We are ready to die for Christ and we would be happy to do that!"

They gunned Maria down on the steps, but her martyrdom saved the church and the children. She was 27 years old. Her last words were *!Viva Cristo Rey! !Viva Santa Maria de Guadalupe!*

Open your arms wide to embrace God, my friends. Live your lives beautifully. Bring everyone you meet to the love of Jesus. Invite everyone you meet to this heavenly banquet in our Father's Kingdom.

I ask Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Mother of God and our Mother, to watch over you and your families, always.

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<sup>i</sup> Matt. 18:10. Luke 12:7.