

Youth Spectacular Mass
March 24, 2018

My sisters and brothers, we are here celebrating God's love and grace in our lives. We are the disciples of our Lord! This is a wonderful truth to celebrate, but we know that there are also many horrible things happening in this world. There is so much pain, and violence, and even death. We just experienced the horror of people dying right next door in Austin, because of a man sending bombs in the mail. Two years ago, Pope Francis spoke some difficult words to the young people at World Youth Day in Poland, but they still speak to us today. The Pope asked: "Where is God, if evil is present in our world, if there are men and women who are hungry and thirsty, homeless, exiles and refugees? Where is God, when innocent persons die as a result of violence, terrorism and war?" My friends, these may be the same hard questions you are asking yourself. How did the Pope answer these questions? "God is in them. Jesus is in them; he suffers in them and deeply identifies with each of them. He is so closely united to them as to form with them, as it were, one body... In the face of evil, suffering and sin, the only response possible for a disciple of Jesus is the gift of self, even of one's own life, in imitation of Christ; it is the attitude of service."

We can turn these questions around and ask, where were God's people when this man felt he had to blow people up to feel peace. Where are God's people when our fellow human beings suffer hunger, rejection, racism, discrimination. Where are God's people when innocent people die? You are young, but you grew up in this world knowing about how so many suffer. When you ask where is God, I hope you know the answer is that God is in you.

If we look at the Gospel today, we see the Pharisees talking about Jesus. They were looking for way to keep him quiet and to stop his ministry. They decided that because the high priest felt that Jesus was destined to give his life for the people, they would go out and find a way to *take* his life. But they didn't

have to try and take it, Jesus *laid down* his life on purpose. Jesus came to give his life for us. “The Lord will guard us, as a shepherd guards his flock” (Jer). He was not going to leave us out in the darkness. He came to give everything of himself for our sake.

And now he leaves that work to us. We are the members of his body. We are the ones who follow in his footsteps. In this country we live in, we will probably not be asked to give our lives like Jesus did, but people *will* come for you like they came after Jesus. They will ask you where God is when all these horrible things are happening. You are called to show them where God is. Show them that God shines in your hearts and in your actions. Who are those people in your classes and youth groups that are all by themselves? Who are the people that others call “weird” or “stupid?” Can you go and show them God’s love? All of the pain and anger and shouting in our world does nothing. It does not solve a single problem. You don’t have to fight with people in a comment section on the internet. No. You and I have to open our eyes and see who is hurting around us. Recognize that they are a child of God, they are our brother or sister, and then go and talk to them, listen to them, help them, LOVE them!

Where is God, my friends? Where is God? He is right here! Alive in this place. Alive in all of you. Do not hold back God’s grace in your life. Give yourselves to the mission of the Lord, and love those who have not known God’s love in their lives. Be there for each other. Do not be afraid to give of yourselves. You know this world in a very unique way, and the Lord has sent you to show his love and grace to everyone you meet.

Know that we love you, my brothers and sisters. As your archbishop, I hope you know that I love you. And please know that God loves you more than we could ever understand. Then go share that love with those who are still in the darkness. Be faithful missionary disciples of the Lord, and let everyone hear his saving words: “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.