

Morning Plenary Session - Bishop Oscar Cantú

Good morning. How are you today? Very well.

Good morning to everyone. I'm going to stand over here so I can see you and maybe you can see me as well.

I was talking to my mom a few weeks ago when it was announced by the Holy Father that he was assigning me - a new pastoral assignment - and moving from the Diocese of Las Cruces in New Mexico to California, to San Jose. My mother responded, "My son, the Pope is moving you closer and closer to the ocean. You're going to end up in Japan." When, more than 5 years ago at the time, Pope Benedict sent me from Texas to New Mexico, it was a new experience for me. I grew up next to the Gulf of Mexico, with humidity and mosquitoes. And now to the desert. And it was a new culture, with a different history and an experience that I did not know about. Something that I saw for the first time in real life were these plants that dry up in the desert and because they do not have deep roots when the strong winds of the desert come, they lift them up and there they go rolling - rolling and rolling.

A new experience when I was sent from Texas to New Mexico was that I had never seen a tumbleweed in person. I had seen them in the movies. I didn't realize that they were actually real. And so, when they came and they crashed into my house and when they crashed into my car and when they crashed into me, I picked them up and examined them. What is this? And I realized that they were plants that didn't have sufficiently deep roots and in the dryness of the desert they would become completely dried. And with the harsh winds of the desert they would be uprooted and they would tumble and tumble and tumble.

For three months in New Mexico is the rainy season. We get these thunderstorms. Is New Mexico here?

Where is New Mexico? They are half asleep. It's because last night I saw them dancing on the tables and I ran away.

It's Saturday so you can go to confession. It's alright.

I wonder sometimes reflecting on a very changed world, a world that is changing before our very eyes, so rapidly and so drastically. I wonder and I worry sometimes. Are we becoming spiritual tumbleweeds?

Are we becoming these dry plants that are lifted by the winds and that are rolling and rolling?

If we do not have sufficiently deep roots that when the dry season comes – and the dry season is here my friends, and it will be a long one. And this is a time for you and me to dig deep. To dig deep so that our roots may find water, that our roots may find living water. Let us not become spiritual tumbleweeds.

Way back when, when I was in the seminary - about three years ago – my friends and I in the seminary had just finished exam time and so we had been studying hard all week. We had been taking exams, we had been writing papers, we were staying up half the night. And finally, we were done with exams and we were finally able to relax a bit. So, a group of us decided to go out on a Saturday evening to have a burger together and to catch a movie. And so, we had a nice meal and we caught up with each other

and we had some fun and we went to a movie. By the time we got to the theater the previews had already begun, so the theater was dark and since it was a Saturday evening it was rather full. We had to wait until there was light coming from the screen so we could see where the seats were. So, we would walk a couple steps and then we would stop in the darkness. Then the light would come on and we would see some seats so we walked a little bit forward. And we found three or four seats together so I let my buddies go in first like a good gentleman. And when it was my turn to go in, I genuflected and...

I realized what I did as soon as I did it. Thank goodness the theater went dark right at that moment. But it seems to me that, that is what so many people in today's world are doing. We're genuflecting to something that is not sacred. There is something within our hearts, there is something within our spiritual DNA that searches for something sacred and makes us want to genuflect to something, to someone. And people are not finding what is truly sacred. Because they encounter you and me, that are supposed to show signs of the sacred, and maybe they don't see it. Brothers and sisters, this is a time for you and me, during this dry, long, season, for you and I to dig deep. That we may find those living waters that will nourish us. That will nourish us and allow us to finally bear fruit. To bear fruit that is sacred. To bear fruit of joy and of happiness and of peace. So many things have changed in our culture right before our eyes. So quickly. But one thing that has not changed is the human heart.

The human heart continues to long for love. It continues looking for beauty and it still wants what is good.

The human heart still yearns for what is beautiful. What is good and what is true. We have that. The Church has this.

The Church has that - what is good, beautiful. And it is this - it comes in the name of Jesus Christ. But you and I have to be his hands, you and I have to be his voice, you and I have to be his presence in this world.

Let us dig deep that we may bear fruit.

There was a man who went out on a Saturday to clean up the yard of his house and while he was cleaning the sun was very strong, very beautiful. When he was almost finished cleaning the yard, a man selling fruit was passing by. Thirsty and a little hungry, he approached the man who had his wheelbarrow and saw a fruit he did not recognize. And he asked the gentleman, "what is this fruit?" He picked it up, saw that it was beautiful and that it had a sweet smell. Yellow, orange, red. The gentleman said, "It's a peach." The man bit into it and it had such a tremendous sweetness. It was like he died and went to heaven. The juice trickled down his beard and he stared up at the sky with this beauty of sweetness and juice. Before he knew it, he had finished it and with tremendous joy he wanted to share it with his family. He looked for the man with the wheelbarrow but he was gone. He was not there anymore. He ran to see if he could find him and nothing. He had disappeared. No.

He ran inside the house, went into the kitchen, found his wife and showed her the seed. He said, "Honey, look what I found. A beautiful fruit with so much juice, so sweet. It's called a peach." And he showed her the seed. This dry, ugly seed. She looked at her husband and said, "Honey, come in out of the sun." He went to his children who were watching cartoons. "Children, I found a fruit that is so sweet, so delicious, so beautiful. With different colors. Look what I found." They said, "Dad, you've lost it." Sad, he went back out to the yard. He sat and looked at this dry, ugly seed. Sad, he threw it. But

then an idea came to him. He went to the garage and returned with a shovel. He began to dig. He planted this seed. He put a good amount of fertilizer. And began to water it. And every day without fail he went out to water it. After a year the plant had sprouted and later it became a tree. And after a few years it began to bear fruit that he shared with his family.

Brothers and sisters if we want to bear fruit as a Church, we have to mind the roots. From roots to fruits.

If we want to share the fruits of the Church, of love, of peace, of joy, we have to care for and water the roots. We have to sow seeds, put good fertilizer and water them, so they have nourishment. The water of love, the water of faith, the water of hope.

All of us want to enjoy and to share the sweetness of fruit. But in order to do so we have to mind the roots.

God bless you.