

## **June 14, 2015 sermon at the Church of Grace in Boulder, Co.**

Hello brothers and sisters, first of all I stand before you to present myself, where I come from and who I am.

I was born in the state of Jalisco, Mexico, a very special and worth visiting place, there I grew up and I got to know my faith and gradually, I lost myself in the process of serving and being aware of the needs of others. There emerged my vocation to service.

Later, when I was married and decided to move to Los Angeles, Ca. there was a chance to work in a church and I took it, it helped me grow personally, professionally, and made me a familiar face. I had many very nice experiences, and then they invited me to work at a nonprofit corporation called PIQE that significantly helps Latino parents with little or no preparation. These classes were encouraged to accompany their children in the study process so that they could go to college here in the United States.

Time passed and I was invited to work in the County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, accompanying the Latino community, I had beautiful and varied experiences. This motivated me to create a corporation nonprofit and start serving the Hispanic community by helping them live better in this country and become better people wherever they are, showing that Hispanics are not all what we are sometimes believed to be.

So, my life continued when the invitation came to work in Denver, as a pastor in a church, also dedicated to the Hispanic community. It was called Cristo Rey, and I did not know exactly what conditions the church was in. However, when my wife and I came to visit we were at a Sunday service and partook of the sacrament with the community. The interim pastor encouraged me to take the offer to come work here as the two families there were good, humble and desired to know God and announce their life by their experience of God. After talking and making arrangements, we moved my family from Los Angeles, Ca. to Denver, Co., and this radically changed our lives and our whole perspective of what we had been doing until then.

When we got to Cristo Rey, I came across two realities. On the one hand I did not regret having made the decision to come with my family together, but on the other hand, every time I wondered what I had done and what would control this decision.

Working with the community is something that has helped me not regret coming to work in Denver. The people are good, simple, hardworking, excited and eager to serve the community, so I have focused on continuing this community and hoping it does not stop. I have tried to encourage the congregation in spiritual growth and commitment in working with and for young people, motivate parents to not be discouraged and continue to support their children to study, achieve, and go to college. And to show that it is better when working in a team to discover and analyze the reality in which we are asking for help if we need it, but first knowing what help it is that we need.

The second reality is very sad, but it is there, the church was left with very few things and with many debts; there were eight churches that helped Cristo Rey each month with a little. We had help from other places and other sponsors, but in changing the pastor, we no longer receive the help of the 8 churches, we no longer receive help from sponsors and not until only a month ago did we begin to receive help from the National Church of Chicago and the Synod to which we belong. For a church this makes it very difficult to survive and continue the ministry that we want to implement.

But this reality, rather than limit us, made us stronger and able to go for help for the church to continue working in the community.

Right now we have focused on reorganizing the entire structure of the congregation, we have given workshops on motivation, and personal growth, we have strengthened spirituality, we have cultivated many children for first communion and confirmation, and we have support groups. We have invited some corporations to make activities with the neediest communities, we have received several new families to share the Lord's Supper with us, when I came, we had 6 people in the community, we now have about 65 people per week, they are committed to themselves and this

is very good. But our community is poor, most of the people, who come have two or three jobs, and some are unemployed, they never speak of tithing or economics to the church obligations. Now we want to train people differently, we make plans, have goals, work together with other churches, organize events, get involved in society, and we ask people for more commitment.

Considering the Gospel of the day, we want to plant that seed in the community, we want you to grow in all aspects, and we want that growth to be strong and steady. This is so that everything we want to do is seen as manifested in creating strong and healthy relationships within the community.

Therefore, encourage different communities to learn more about our Hispanic community, to support us and understand us. They know we're different, but we also want to collaborate with others in need, we want to move forward with everything. We want to motivate young people, children, and young couples to act responsibly in the area of commitment to the church as this is very important and very necessary.

We want to establish good relationships with other churches so that we can support one another and in that way, we can walk together because as our synod theme says, we are better together.

Now I have been invited to meet the Grace Church in Boulder, Co. And I had gone so that they may come to know me, we want to work together, we want to make new plans and we want to enjoy this encounter between us. The Hispanic community in the US has many limitations, such as language, time, transport, and schools. Many people are very good, hardworking men and women, others have to do it because they have large families, this is no one's fault, but this means they have to split the profits of their work in many things, many shoes, too many clothes, lots of food, lots of rent, a lot of gasoline and therefore, there is little that is given to the Church. It is just a weekly offering, but many people do not do their tithing, so we have to teach them and educate them on this issue, and we will do so, but I think

now is not the time, we are in a slow process of change and we must be patient with it.

We have now begun working with a council within the community, that are doing good, reporting responsibilities and commitments that must be acquired in order to progress on the road towards the growth of the community itself.

We therefore need a lot of support in many ways and help from our members to understand their own commitments and how we organize ourselves to move forward. And I think here we have many members that can support and help organize ourselves, we're not that close but we're not that far.

The community has now chosen a new name for the congregation that is "the Lord of Mercy"; though the name has been chosen there are many legal things we have to do before we start using the name, and this has been done because there were things we wanted to do and we had not done yet for the name of Cristo Rey. These were things we already had used, for example on the website, twitter, facebook, or e-mail, but this has helped us to understand that this change has to be radical and new.

I conclude by saying that we wish to grow the community, that we wish to strengthen our community and walk by ourselves, we hope that as a congregation, you support us to achieve our goals, and you can be assured that we will do the same, perhaps in a different scale, but we will. The support we get from here on will be our largest momentum to continue God's work and continue using our hands, that the Holy Spirit might pour out its grace upon our hearts, so we can continue walking together and live in the experiences that God gives us in this new adventure. Amen.