

38TH ANNUAL ARIZONA ROSARY CELEBRATION
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WORLD YOUTH DAY TESTIMONY

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Good morning. Thank you Mr. Tracy, the Knights of Columbus, the Diocese of Tucson, and the members of the Arizona Rosary Celebration Committee for allowing me this opportunity to speak today.

Less than three months ago, I had the privilege of being one of three and a half million Catholic youths, who stood on the shore of Copacabana Beach and participated in what is now the second largest World Youth Day gathering. Standing next to me were my brothers and sisters in Christ, pilgrims from all across the world, whose cultural and language barriers were nonexistent as we joined hands and actively praised and worshiped God by being living testaments of our faith as the youth of the Mystical Body of Christ.

World Youth Day is a continuous pilgrimage, one that began under the guidance of Blessed Pope John Paul II and continued on by Pope Emeritus Benedict XIV and His Holiness, Pope Francis. It was the example of Pope Francis that made this World Youth Day so unique. It was a life changing experience that is beyond unforgettable, where placing into words does not do it justice. It was a peaceful moment that lasted for days, with a deafening silence whose intense power spoke louder than thoughts, words, and actions combined. At the same time, it was the most graceful uproar, as we were filled with the Holy Spirit, danced with joy, sang with enthusiasm, and above all prayed with our hearts and souls. Millions of youth, one at a time, cleared their lives of all distractions and began sacrificing in order to focus on Christ alone.

My journey on this pilgrimage began with a prayer. A continuous prayer that took me from wanting to visit Brazil as a tourist destination, to wanting to stand proudly with my generation and say that I am Catholic. And it was through this prayer that I found myself asking for guidance and imploring Mary

for her protection. I had the honor of being able to take this journey with students and chaperones all gathered from the Immaculate Heart High School community. When our stay in Brazil presented many challenges, the biggest coming before we even departed the country, the rosary became a sigh of relief. We were tested emotionally, physically, and spiritually. With those tests, we were reminded that when we put our trust in God, God will provide.

It was through our pilgrimage to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and our participation in World Youth Day, that the Catholic Church made obvious their trust in us youth, to make World Youth Day a week without boundaries, as we were sent out with the mission to go and make disciples of all nations. My experiences in Brazil reminded me to open my eyes and reach out to the poorest of the poor, the sickest of the sick, and the most disoriented of the lost. As a Catholic, I need to listen to those who have no voice, help guide those who are blind, and aid those who are weak. Most importantly, I received a wake up call that those people, our neighbors, are closer and greater in number than we have ever acknowledged.

Going out and making disciples of all nations takes more than me standing up here and sharing my testimony. It calls on not only me, but all of us to go out and create these experiences with our brothers and sisters in Christ. It calls on us to pray and plant the seed in those who don't know, who don't believe, and who don't realize the blessings of our faith. It was that call at World Youth Day that I found most extraordinary. It was a simple truth that took me until just a few days ago to realize. Three and a half million youths stood as one body, and although there are many parts to this one body, we had only one voice. A voice that said prayer after prayer, praying decade after decade, in language after language, and from dialect to dialect. It was with this one voice that we, as a whole, went beyond showing the world we are the youth of the Catholic Church, to saying, "Christ, we love you. Make us your hands in the twenty-first century; because through you, no barriers will prevent us from spreading your word." It was a universal and personal connection that called on the vocations of my generation.

From the decision to go to World Youth Day and the fundraisers that followed, to the return home and the beginning of our mission, I became close

to those who took this journey with me and I am proud that it was a journey I took. So with great enthusiasm, I invite the youth present here today, as well as the youth of the Diocese of Tucson, to become part of this pilgrimage. Begin your journey now by praying, and in the year 2016, join the youth of the Mystical Body of Christ as we stand tall and proud in Krakow, Poland, city of Blessed Pope John Paul II. Also, I reach out to everyone present here today, to pray for the youth of the Catholic Church. We are the youth of today; the Pope has reminded us to begin our mission now, as we prepare to be leaders tomorrow. Continue to teach us and support us as we grow in our faith.