



FRATERNAL MEETING OF THE DELEGATED BISHOPS OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF NORTH AMERICA

Joint Communiqué

To the Churches in North America

Cuernavaca, Morelos · September 4, 2026

**Three Nations, One Church,
One People Walking in Communion**

“How good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1).

In a spirit of fraternity, prayer and dialogue, the Fraternal Meeting of the delegated bishops of the Episcopal Conferences of Mexico, the United States and Canada came to a close in Cuernavaca, Morelos — a space that allowed shepherds from the three nations to share their realities, to listen to one another and to discern paths of collaboration for the mission of the Church in North America.

The meeting was attended by Bishop Ramón Castro Castro, President of the Mexican Bishops' Conference; Bishop Daniel Flores, Vice-President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; Bishop Pierre Goudreault, President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops; Bishop Óscar Cantú, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Hispanic/Latino Affairs of the Bishops' Conference of the United States; Bishop Eugenio Lira Rugarcía, responsible for the Episcopal Dimension for the Pastoral Care of Human Mobility; as well as their collaborators.

During these days, the social, political, economic and ecclesial realities of their respective countries were shared, and some of the main issues that today challenge the Church in the region of North America were addressed: in a particular way, human mobility and the question of migration, the dignity of the human person in the age of artificial intelligence, evangelization, and the possibilities of pastoral collaboration among the Churches in Mexico, in the United States and in Canada.

An experience of communion

More than a working meeting, the encounter sought to be an experience of communion among brothers. Fellowship, prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist accompanied the days of reflection, allowing the participants to deepen not only awareness of the challenges they share, but also of the bonds that unite them as shepherds within the one Church.

This fraternity was also lived in everyday life: in the welcome dinner that opened hearts, at the shared table — including the meal at the home of the Bishop of Cuernavaca — and in the visit to the Cathedral, which Bishop Ramón Castro showed to his brothers as his own home, corner by corner. The work also began with a Conversation in the Spirit, listening to one another in prayer in the style of the synodal path before entering into discussion.

At a time when relations among nations may experience tensions and differences, this meeting offers a particularly significant sign: it is possible to listen to one another, to recognize one another as brothers and to work together even when our national realities are different.

The Churches in North America, from their own mission, wish to help build bridges, to foster dialogue and to promote a culture of encounter (cf. Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, 216). It is not a matter of ignoring differences, but of learning to walk together from what unites us: the dignity of every person, the pursuit of the common good and the mission of proclaiming the Gospel.

The encounters with the people of the State of Morelos, a first fruit

Among the fruits of these days were the encounters with the local communities. In the parishes, in the towns and in the ancient convents of Morelos, the pastors and collaborators were received with the warmth and simple faith of the people. The guided visits, with explanations of great richness, the gastronomy and the cultural expressions opened a living window onto the history and the faith-life of this land. Far from being a mere backdrop, these encounters were part of the heart of the meeting: they reminded everyone that communion is woven not only in the working sessions, but also at the shared table, walking along the way, and in the close face of the People of God.

The experience of the Church in Mexico

As the local Church, the Mexican Bishops' Conference opened the path of reflection with an overview of the social, political and economic reality of Mexico and of its ecclesial reality: a country of great contrasts and challenges — inequality, violence, and migration, as a land of origin, of transit and also of destination — and, at the same time, a people of profound faith, of rooted popular religiosity and of Guadalupan vitality, in which the Church continues to be close and credible for many.

A reflection was also presented on the Encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* of Pope Leo XIV, which gave the meeting an anthropological key: “the mystery of man is only clarified in the mystery of the Incarnate Word” (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 22); technological development is authentic only when it serves the person;

responsibility for artificial intelligence cannot be delegated — we cannot leave in the hands of an algorithm the decisions that affect our dignity, defining who we are, what we are for, or who should be discarded —; and, in the face of the narratives of transhumanism, the true “more than human” is attained by grace, in Christian humanism. To safeguard the human — evoking the choice between Babel and the rebuilding of Jerusalem — is today a common task of the Church in North America.

A shared mission

One of the themes of the reflection was the need to safeguard the human as a common responsibility of the Church in North America. On the basis of the reflection on the Encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* of Pope Leo XIV, the participants reaffirmed the importance of placing the person at the center of the mission and of every pastoral decision, and of accompanying the situations that especially affect those who live in conditions of vulnerability.

In the words of Pope Leo XIV himself, the way in which a society treats migrants and the most fragile “shows whether its idea of justice is guided by fear or by fraternity” (León XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, 81).

In a special way, the reality of human mobility occupied a central place. It was presented, in the first place, by Bishop Eugenio Lira, responsible for the Pastoral Care of Human Mobility of the Mexican Bishops’ Conference, in a trinational key that embraced Mexico, the United States and Canada. To contemplate the phenomenon from the country of origin and transit, and then from the countries of destination, made it possible to look together at the two shores of one same journey: a profoundly enriching exercise that confirmed that this is a challenge common to the three nations. In the faces of those who migrate we recognized stories, needs and hopes that call for our closeness, accompaniment and solidarity.

For this reason, the delegated bishops of the three Episcopal Conferences identified common initiatives which, as proposals to strengthen the paths of collaboration, will be presented to their respective Permanent Councils for discernment and, where appropriate, approval.

The experience of the Church in the United States (USCCB)

Bishop Daniel Flores, Vice-President, and Bishop Óscar Cantú, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Hispanic/Latino Affairs, shared in depth the experience of their particular Church. They recalled, first of all, that charity always entails a commitment to social justice (cf. Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, 6); for this reason, the vocation of service to life and of promotion of human dignity is essential to the mission of the Church. Love for God becomes concrete love in love for one’s neighbor; it is in contact with reality — with the face of those who suffer — that the

Church finds a privileged place of life, of knowledge and even of theological reflection; and it is there that the Church's richness is revealed: in her capacity to face reality and its challenges.

This experience was lived in a particular way at the southern border. As the arrival increased of children and families, many of them Central American, seeking asylum and protection, the local Churches of the border cities went out to meet that need: people would stop and simply ask what was needed; and on more than a few occasions it was the authorities themselves who brought the children and their mothers to the parishes, because there was no one else to feed them. The Church welcomed those who arrived and became, before all, the human face of hospitality.

In recent years, the hardening of migration policies has transformed that landscape: the border has been almost entirely closed — even to those fleeing nations at war — and programs of mass deportation have been set in motion. In public discourse the distinction between a civil offense and a crime has been lost, so that the mere condition of being an undocumented migrant tends to be regarded as a crime, when in reality it constitutes a civil offense. All of this has sown fear and anxiety in the local communities, destabilized by the separation of families who have been left exposed and without the protection of the law.

In this context, the charitable action of the Church faces new and delicate challenges: in some cases the Church has had to defend herself before the courts, in the face of the attempt to present as complicity what has in reality been a service to the poorest, the neediest and the most vulnerable. The pastors acknowledged the tension this entails — also for Catholics who take part in public life — and reaffirmed that the defense of the common good and of the dignity of every person is an inseparable part of the mission of the Church.

As a sign of vitality and of hope amid these difficulties, the Church in the United States has expressed its solidarity through various initiatives, such as the “*You Are Not Alone*” campaign and its National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry; the latter, the fruit of a broad journey of listening and discernment, will guide the work of evangelization and the accompaniment of communities in the years to come.

The experience of the Church in Canada (CCCB/CECC)

Bishop Pierre Goudreault, President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, offered a complementary view from a society that is at once profoundly diverse and strongly secularized. Canada is today one of the countries with the highest proportion of population born abroad, a true mosaic of cultures, languages and religions — enriched, moreover, by the foundational contribution of its indigenous peoples: the First Nations, the Inuit and the Métis. In this context, the Church lives

her mission guided by four priorities: the development of initiatives for synodality, the implementation of a national strategy for ecumenical dialogue, discernment in the face of artificial intelligence, and healing and reconciliation with the indigenous peoples.

In the north, too, human mobility is a sign of the times. After years of record growth, the migratory landscape has entered a phase of greater restriction; and yet, in many dioceses it is migrant families and clergy who have come from other nations who renew the vitality of some parishes: the migrant becomes a missionary as well, and human mobility sustains the life of the Church. The greatest challenge is structural — to accompany with human and spiritual quality, and to organize the pastoral care of mobility, still under development — and for this reason the Episcopal Conference of Canada will put in place a new National Service for Human Mobility, which will weave a network among the dioceses, will offer formation and foster a culture of welcome rooted in the Gospel.

In this way, the decision of the Episcopal Conference is to organize the National Service for Human Mobility that confirmed the conviction shared by all: the reality of migration transcends national borders and calls for responses that likewise transcend ecclesial borders.

Walking together to proclaim the Gospel

The meeting also made it possible to identify projects of collaboration among the particular Churches; among them stand out the initiatives related to the exchange of priests and evangelization missions, as well as other areas of cooperation that may be developed in the future. All of them will first be presented to the Permanent Council of each Episcopal Conference. This will to collaborate expresses a shared conviction: communion is built by walking together and by placing the gifts of each Church at the service of a common mission.

The encounter with the seminarians of the Diocese of Cuernavaca was another sign of hope: during the visit to the Seminary, welcomed by the rector, the bishops spent time with these young men. A simple and fraternal dialogue took place; among their questions, one resonated in a special way: “how can one know that the Lord is calling?” Each of the bishops offered them words of encouragement and closeness, sharing from their own experience the way in which God makes himself present in the discerning heart. The visit concluded with some songs offered by the seminarians. This encounter reminded everyone that the communion among the three nations extends into the care of vocations: to cultivate and accompany vocations to the priesthood and to the consecrated life is a shared responsibility and one of the most concrete expressions of hope for the Church in North America. For this reason, the Lord’s invitation resounds with force: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are

few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2), together with the call to promote an authentic culture of vocations (cf. Second Vatican Council, *Optatam totius*, 2).

Mexico, the United States and Canada are nations with diverse histories, cultures and realities. Nevertheless, millions of Catholics from the three countries are part of one same Church and share one same faith. For this reason, this meeting wished to recall that the borders between nations need not become borders between hearts: the Church can be a space where differences meet, where dialogue is possible and where fraternity is translated into service.

In communion with the whole Church in the Americas

The meeting also opened to the horizon of the whole continent. The pastors made reference to the recent Message to the People of God on Pilgrimage in the Americas, prepared jointly by the USCCB, the CCCB/CECC and the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Council (CELAM), which gathers a conviction shared by the Churches of the north and the south: we are one Church in the Americas.

Along these same lines, the desire was expressed to advance, gradually and prudently, toward a region of episcopal fraternity in North America: a stable bond of communion among the three Conferences, in union with the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV. The aim is to establish a forum for encounter to promote a continental awareness, and an effective collaboration respecting the identity of each Conference.

It is hoped that pastoral action — especially in the face of human mobility, which crosses countries, systems and borders — may be marked by greater coordination and solidarity across the continent.

We recognize that no migrant is a stranger to the Church: in the one who leaves his land seeking safety and dignity we see the very face of Christ on the move.

Put out into the deep

In the Eucharist that closed the working sessions, on the memorial of Saint Gregory the Great, the Word of the Gospel placed before us a simple and demanding image: a boat, empty nets, and a word of Jesus: “*Put out into the deep*” (Lk 5:4). In his homily, Bishop Ramón Castro pointed out that, like Peter, who knew the lake and had worked all night, we too know our realities and have structures, programs, resources and projects; and yet we must recognize before the Lord that some nets remain empty. The Gospel does not propose that we begin by doing more, but by listening to Christ anew: the shepherd is not the owner of the Church; he is the one who remains listening to God in order then to hear the cry of his people, and before being a shepherd he remains a disciple.

“At your word I will let down the nets”: it is not merely a matter of finding effective answers, but evangelical ones. A Church may have magnificent analyses and lose the Gospel; many resources and lose hope; great principles and forget the concrete face of the person; very efficient structures and cease to be a home where someone feels welcomed. That is why the question of migration is not only a question of borders but of faces: behind every policy there are families, behind every statistic a story, behind every border a person who keeps the hope of a more dignified life. The shore is safe; the sea brings uncertainty, and every authentic renewal means leaving the safety of the shore, without confusing fidelity with immobility: fidelity to Christ does not consist in standing still, but in advancing with him. We have not gathered because the world has become simple, but because it has become complex and we need to discern together how to proclaim the Gospel in this new hour.

When the catch was abundant, Peter signaled to his companions in the other boat. One boat is not enough: Mexico cannot walk alone, nor the United States, nor Canada. Diversity need not become distance, nor difference division, because we belong to the same Lord: *“you belong to Christ, and Christ to God” (1 Cor 3:23)*. The Church does not belong to Mexico, nor to the United States, nor to Canada, nor to an Episcopal Conference, nor even to its shepherds: the Church belongs to Christ.

Agreements, conclusions and common projects will be important, but they will be fruitful only if they are born of the conviction that we need the other boat. If we have come only to exchange information, we will have done very little; if we have come to listen together to the Spirit and to discover how better to serve the People of God, these days can become a true ecclesial event. May we return to our Churches carrying more than documents: faces, names, stories, shared concerns, and the certainty that our Churches can help one another. Christ is in the boat; that is why we can cast the nets again, row farther into the deep and call to the other boat, trusting in the grace of the One who said to us: *“Do not be afraid” (Lk 5:10)*.

Under the protection of Holy Mary of Guadalupe

The path of these days was placed under the protection of Holy Mary of Guadalupe, Mother and Star of the Evangelization of the Americas. Each day, the participants joined the Intercontinental Guadalupan Novena, which gathers the peoples of the continent in one same supplication: through it they entrusted to the Mother of the Americas the work of the meeting and the needs of their particular Churches, aware that the communion of North America is also woven on our knees. The meeting concluded at the feet of Holy Mary of Guadalupe, in her Basilica: before the Mother of the Americas, the shepherds from the three nations laid down the fruits of these days and renewed their commitment to walk together.

Before her, the delegated bishops of the Episcopal Conferences of Mexico, the United States and Canada place the hopes and needs of their peoples, especially of families, young people, migrants, the poor and all those who need to experience the closeness and mercy of God.

The Fraternal Meeting of the delegated bishops of the Episcopal Conferences of North America thus leaves a sign of hope for our continent: three nations, one Church and one Catholic people who, in their diversity, wish to continue walking in communion. May this meeting not be merely a moment on the agenda of our Conferences, but the beginning of new paths of collaboration, fraternity and shared mission — for to walk together is also a way of proclaiming the Gospel.

Today, more than ever, North America needs to hear a message of fraternity, dialogue, hope and peace. With their gaze fixed on Christ and under the protection of Holy Mary of Guadalupe, the Churches in Mexico, in the United States and in Canada renew their commitment to walk together, to safeguard human dignity and to serve their peoples, making their own the prayer of the Lord: “*that they may all be one*” (Jn 17:21).

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