

Preparations for 500th Anniversary of Apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe

At the June bishops' plenary assembly, Bishop Oscar Cantú, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Subcommittee on Hispanic/Latino Affairs gave a briefing on an international pastoral initiative for the 500th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe in 2031:

In partnership with the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Latin America, the bishops of Mexico have organized a nine-year period of preparation. Mexico began their preparation four years ago and they have now invited the bishops of the Americas, including the United States and Canada, to participate in the remaining five years of the novena.

Bishop Cantú emphasized the enduring theological and evangelizing significance of Guadalupe, recalling insights from a recent theological congress in Mexico City attended by approximately 70 theologians. He cited Stefano Cecchin, president of the Pontifical International Marian Academy, who described Guadalupe as “the queen of the Marian apparitions,” noting the breadth of its theological meaning—touching ecclesiology, Christology, the role of the laity and hierarchy, and the Church's work of inculturation.

Referencing Saint John Paul II's description of Guadalupe as “a perfectly inculturated evangelization,” Bishop Cantú proposed that the Church in the United States draw not only from the message of Guadalupe, but also from Mary's evangelizing methodology. He noted that Pope Leo XIV's message to the Mexico City congress called Our Lady of Guadalupe “a lesson in divine pedagogy on the inculturation of saving truth,” reflecting God's way of drawing close to his people.

Three-phase pastoral proposal

Bishop Cantú outlined a proposed three-phase pastoral approach designed to integrate with ongoing ecclesial initiatives:

- **Phase 1:** Missionary activity in dioceses and parishes leading up to the National Eucharistic Congress.
- **Phase 2:** Continued parish-to-parish pilgrimages following the Eucharistic Congress, supported by local missionary efforts.
- **Phase 3:** A national observance in 2031, in conjunction with the international celebration expected in Mexico City, followed by continued pastoral momentum toward the Jubilee of Redemption in 2033.

“Una tilma, un corazón”

As a key pastoral sign for the coming years, Bishop Cantú described a proposal titled “Una tilma, un corazón” (“One tilma, one heart”). Under the initiative, which is already underway in Mexico, each diocese would be offered an exact replica of the tilma of Our Lady of

Guadalupe, printed on similar cloth and touched to the original, making it a third-class relic.

The tilma would be intended for veneration in the cathedral or a bishop-designated location and could also serve as a visible missionary presence during parish-to-parish catechesis and evangelization.

The catechetical materials prepared by the Mexican bishops are being translated into English and are expected to be available through the USCCB's website this summer. Translation into Tagalog is also underway as the Filipino bishops have committed to participate in the novena as well.

Bishop Cantú concluded his presentation by inviting dioceses to consider how the Guadalupe preparation can strengthen missionary discipleship in the years leading to 2031.

For updates, please visit: <https://www.usccb.org/committees/hispaniclatino-affairs>.

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