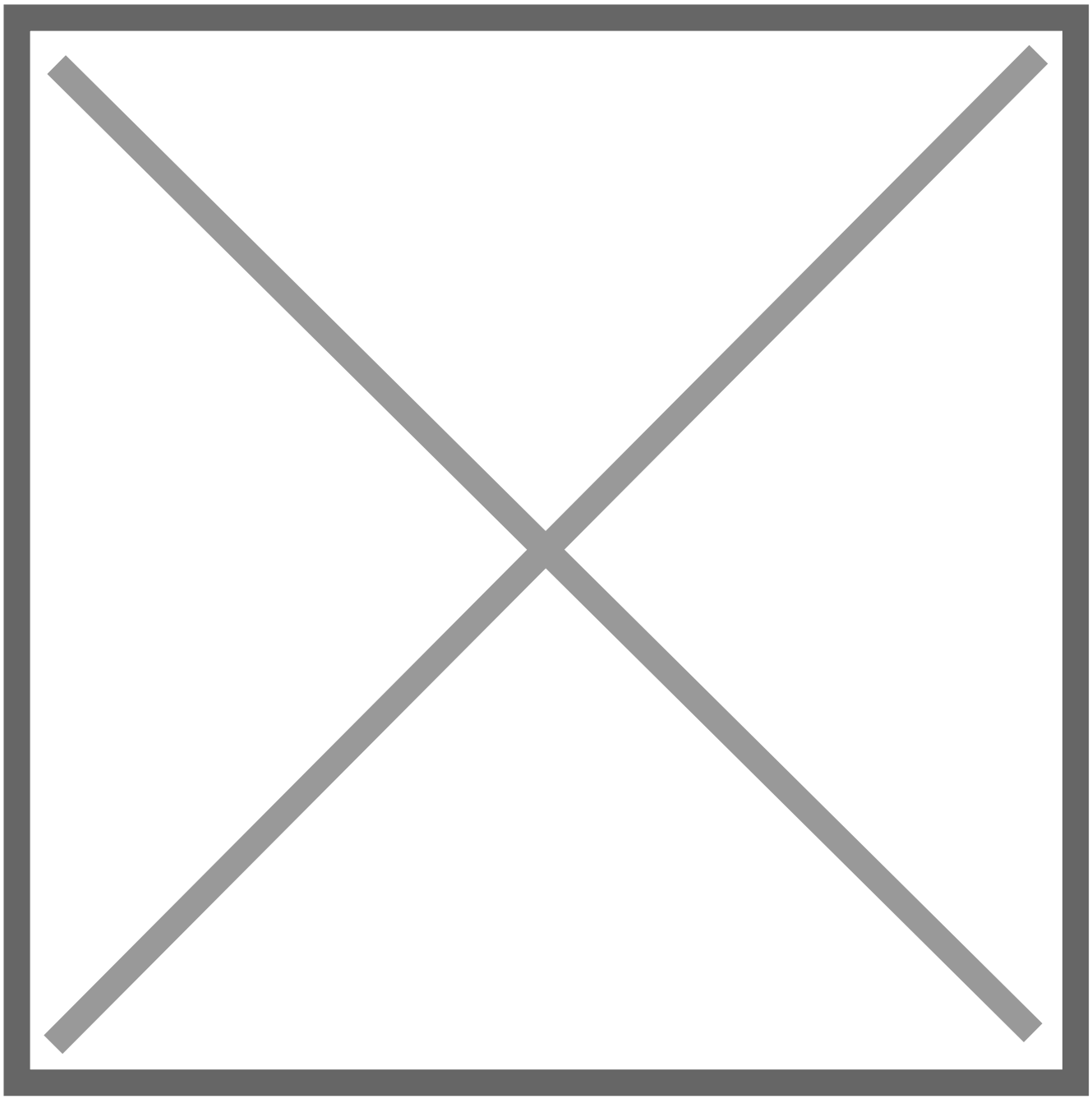
News



Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chávez of San Salvador, El Salvador, is pictured in a July 2, 2017, photo. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



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San Salvador, El Salvador — August 9, 2021
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On the eve of the country's national feast, Salvadoran Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chavez urged peace and unity, while voicing worries that increasing political polarization is causing aftershocks caused by a "political earthquake" in the Central American nation.

"The culture of confrontation and the culture of indifference prevail among us," the cardinal said in an Aug. 5 homily at the Cathedral of San Salvador. "It is urgent to fight it with the culture of peace."

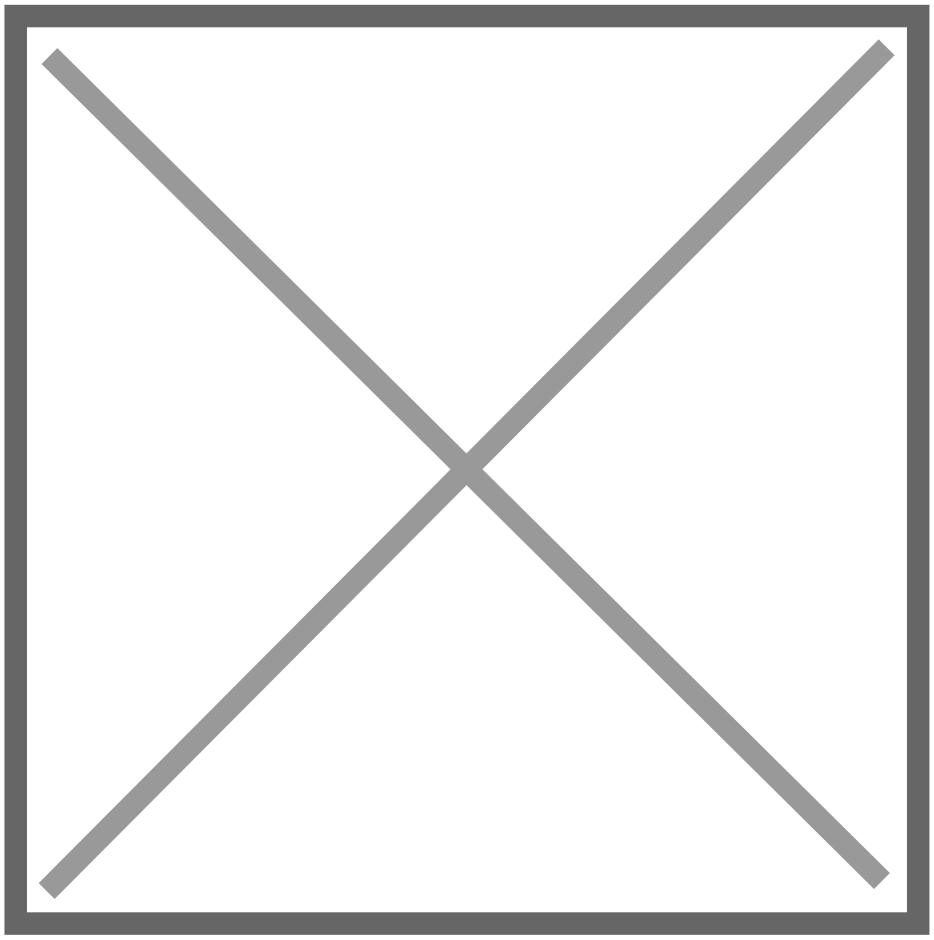
El Salvador, which means "the savior" in Spanish, celebrates the Aug. 6 feast of the Transfiguration of Christ as a national holiday , much of it centered in the capital, San Salvador.

In his homily, Rosa Chavez made mention of the country's moniker as "the valley of the hammocks" because of the constant seismic movement.

But at this point in history, the country used to a lot of shaking is suffering from different kinds of earthquakes, the cardinal said, and the first is the pandemic. Though he praised the government for moving fast on vaccinations and measures to care for its citizens, COVID-19 is still on the rise, and many Salvadorans have died and been buried alone, as strict protocols have robbed families of mourning

processes and rituals important in this Christian nation, he said.

But the second earthquake, he said, "is a political earthquake" producing aftershocks in the form of indifference and animosity among many Salvadorans. Before contentious midterm elections in February, the country saw the killing of two people during a political rally, an act of political violence that been absent in almost three decades since peace accords ended the country's civil war. Fears have been high about what polarization could lead to in a place that lost more than 70,000 civilians in a war.



Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chávez of San Salvador, El Salvador, is pictured in a July 2, 2017, photo. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

While reading a newspaper article about the deterioration of the beloved statue of Christ in a plaza that's supposed to be heart of the capital city, the cardinal said he remembered how an earthquake had once toppled the statue, which sits on top of a globe representing the earth, and he recalled a subsequent campaign to restore it. It

was the symbol of a broken people.

He said he pondered "How is El Salvador (the country) doing?" today.

He said that when older generations want to share and talk about the past of the country, including the civil conflict of the 1980s, with the young, "dialogue becomes almost impossible." But in order for El Salvador to have a future, "we have to know who we were, where we've come from and where we're going. Without (historical) memory, there is no future," he said.

At the same time each year, the cardinal said, the church invites her children to answer the question: "Who do you say I am?"

The cardinal said that in El Salvador, Jesus, its namesake, invites people to answer that question by continuing with the country's transfiguration, so that his light shines. That means, as the country's bishops have said, people must do away with the emerging culture of confrontation, much of it based on politics, he added.

"It's urgent to combat it with the culture of peace," he said.

Salvadorans must ask: "What country do we want? What kind of country do we dream of? What kind of country do we need?"

Though there may be a range of political views, it's important "to dream together," the cardinal said.

"You only run the risk of a mirage when you dream alone, when you see what is not there," he added. "Dreams are built together. Let us dream as a single humanity ... as children of this same earth that shelters us all ... each with his or her voice but all brothers and sisters."

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