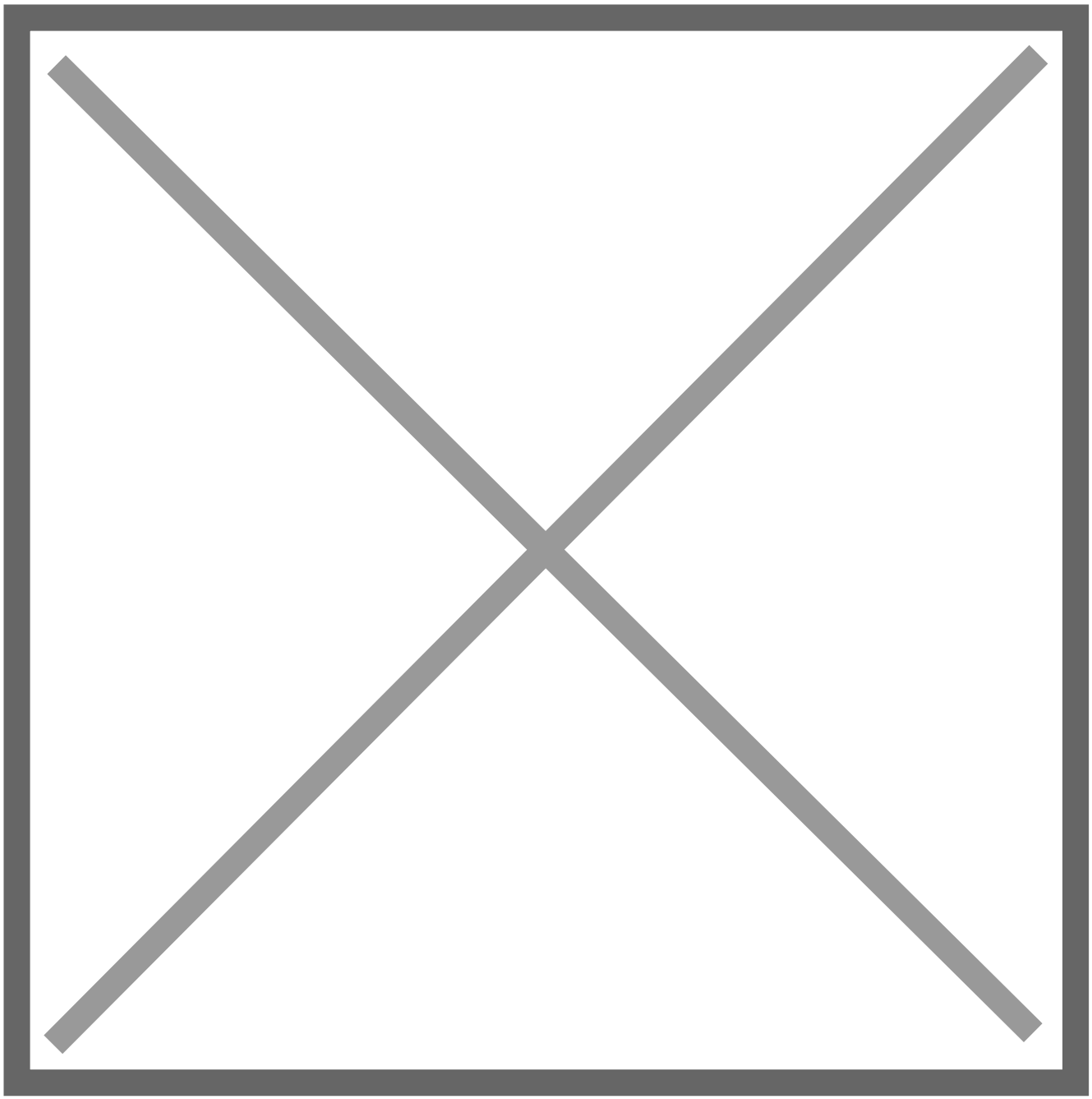
News



Church leaders give blessings at the end of Mass in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, Sept. 22, 2019. Pictured from left are Bishop Gabriel Malzaire of Roseau, Dominica; Archbishop Jason Gordon of Port-of-Spain; and Archbishop Fortunatus Nwachukwu. (OSV News/Catholic Media Services/Catholic News, Trinidad/Elmo Griffith)

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Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago — January 7, 2026
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Just a few days before the Jan. 3 U.S. strikes on — and temporary takeover of — Venezuela, the Catholic bishops of several Caribbean nations had repeated their earlier plea for peace while expressing support for the Venezuelan people, amid a pre-attack buildup of U.S. military in the region.

"We stand in solidarity with the people of Venezuela at this critical moment in their nation's history," wrote Archbishop Charles Jason Gordon of Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, and president of the Antilles Episcopal Conference, in a Dec. 29 letter issued by the conference.

The archbishop noted that since the conference's October statement calling for peace, "the geopolitical landscape of our region has changed at an alarming pace."

"What was then a troubling build-up has now intensified into active military operations, tanker seizures, the expansion of naval assets, and airspace restrictions that affect the daily lives of our people," said Gordon in the Dec. 29 letter. "As bishops of the Caribbean flock, we cannot remain silent when developments threaten human dignity, regional stability, and the long-held vision of the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace."

He noted the bishops' previous expression of "deep concern" that the Caribbean, "home to fisherfolk, seafarers, coastal families, and migrants," had increasingly

"become a theatre for confrontation not of our making."

Gordon pointed to "recent lethal maritime incidents," an apparent reference to months of deadly strikes by the U.S. on alleged drug-smuggling boats in the Caribbean and in the Pacific. Some 115 have been killed in 35 such attacks since September.

He also cited "the blockade of oil tankers" and "increased surveillance activity elevate risks to innocent lives and aggravate humanitarian suffering, particularly in Venezuela."

"These actions also strain maritime commerce, tourism, and the welfare of thousands whose livelihoods depend on safe and open seas," wrote Gordon.

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While recognizing "the legitimate responsibility of states to address transnational crime and uphold international law," wrote Gordon, "we reaffirm more urgently than before that militarisation is not the road to durable security."

He stressed that "heightened operations in our region, whether by global powers or regional actors, further entrench mistrust, disrupt economies, and endanger the most vulnerable."

Echoing the words of St. John Paul II — repeated by Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV — Gordon wrote, "War, or the threat of war, is always a defeat for humanity."

"Guided by the testimony of their own bishops and by conversations with regional Church leaders, we acknowledge the overwhelming desire of the Venezuelan people for democratic renewal and for leadership that restores justice, peace, and the integrity of their institutions," Gordon wrote. "Their quest for a nation rebuilt on these foundations deserves the attention, respect, and solidarity of the Caribbean community."

The archbishop urged "all governments with influence in the Caribbean basin including the United States, Venezuela, the nations of CARICOM" — a regional organization representing 21 Caribbean countries — "and our hemispheric partners to choose dialogue over force, diplomacy over intimidation, and cooperation over

unilateral action."

He also endorsed "the call for CARICOM to meet urgently to address the raft of divisive geopolitical disputes straining regional unity," adding, "I implore Caribbean leaders to speak with one voice on behalf of our peoples and to desist from publicly criticising one another, as this deepens fragmentation at a time when unity is essential."

CARICOM noted in a Jan. 3 statement that its conference heads of government "met very early" that day "following reports of military action in Venezuela."

The group said it is "actively monitoring the situation which is of grave concern to the Region with possible implications for neighbouring countries."

"As bishops, we remain committed to working with ecumenical partners, civic organisations, and regional leaders to safeguard the dignity of every person and to ensure that our Caribbean remains a space of hospitality, coexistence, and hope," wrote Gordon. "May our nations choose the path of dialogue, justice, and fraternity, and may God grant peace to our beloved region."

This story appears in the **US in Venezuela** feature series. View the full series.