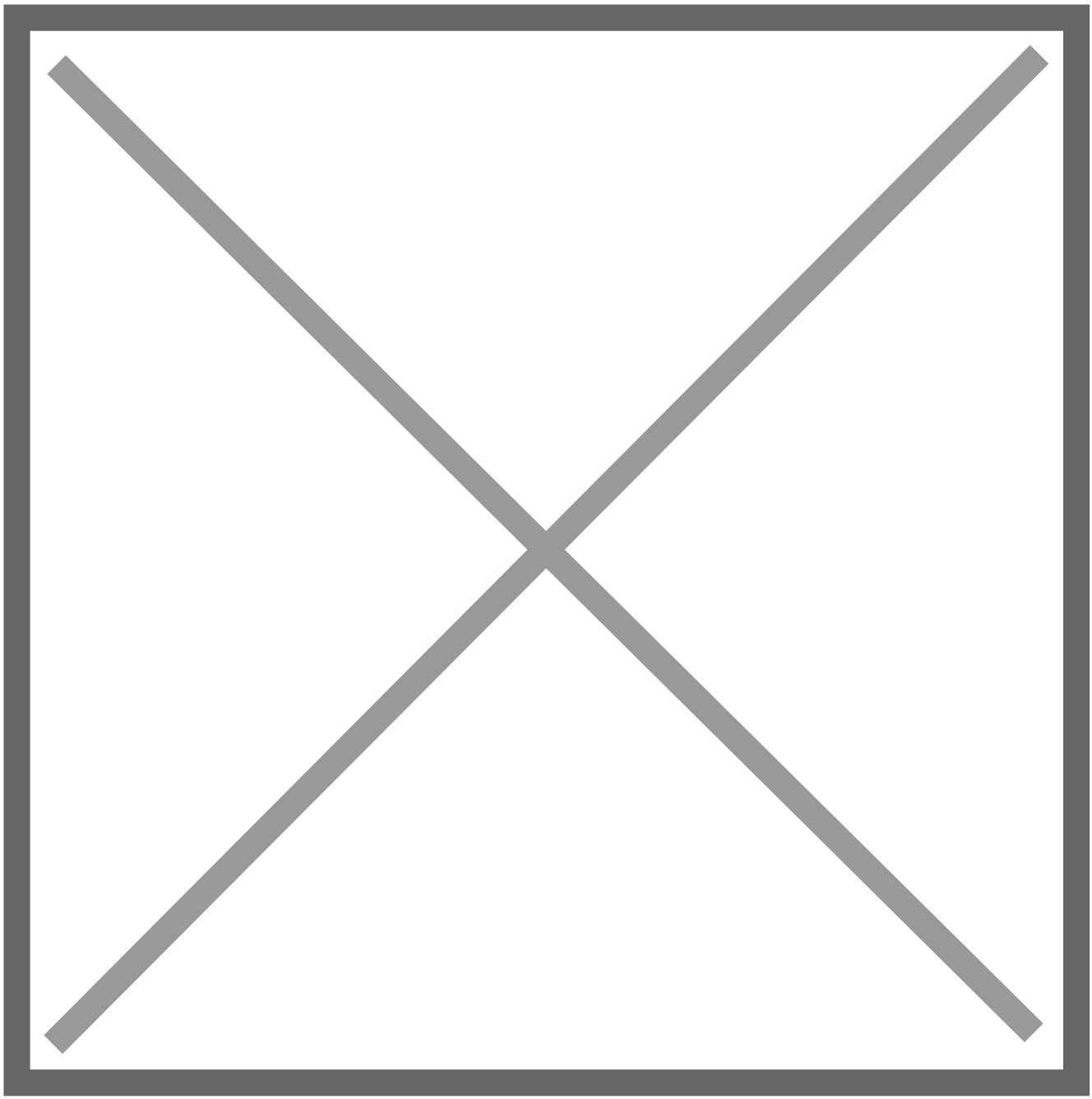
News



Families of missing people take part in the International Women's Day march in Guadalajara, Mexico, March 8, 2026. In Guadalajara, Catholic women formed a human chain to shield their church from International Women's Day demonstrators. (OSV News/Reuters/Michelle Freyria)



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Mexico City — March 11, 2026

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The Mexican bishops' conference expressed dismay with a spate of vandalism against churches in the country — including a parish church dating to the 17th century — during marches for International Women's Day, saying, "Mexico needs justice and peace, not more violence."

"We hope that these demonstrations will help to highlight the urgent need to address the legitimate demands of so many women more effectively, both by the authorities responsible for guaranteeing their safety and by those responsible for administering justice," the bishops said in a March 9 statement signed by the conference's president, Bishop Ramón Castro Castro of Cuernavaca, and its secretary general, Auxiliary Bishop Héctor Pérez Villarreal of Mexico City.

"Churches are places of prayer, encounter, and solace for thousands of people, especially for those seeking spiritual comfort after suffering injustice. Hence, we find the violence directed toward these places of hope and peace deeply troubling as violence will never lead to peace," the statement continued. "May the pain

suffered by women not divide us, but rather inspire us to seek paths of justice, dialogue, encounter, and fraternity."

The bishops expressed sorrow for the vandalism at the Sagrario Metropolitano parish church in the north-central city of San Luis Potosí -- known popularly as "Templo de la Compañía" – which was built in the 17th century and was being restored. Social media videos showed the church doors on fire and the building later graffitied.

"It pains us to see buildings and iconic areas mistreated and they shouldn't be," Archbishop Jorge Alberto Cavazos Arizpe of San Luis Potosí told local media. "But, as Jesus said, an offense against a person, however small, will always be much more serious. And women have been very mistreated. … That's why they continue to speak out about something that keeps happening."

The archbishop added that young people from the archdiocesan family ministry tried to protect the church, but were acting on their own.

Fr. Jorge Aurelio Ramírez Torres celebrated Mass in front of the church for the parish community on March 9. The archdiocese announced a Mass of reparation to be celebrated March 11.

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Vandalism can occur at protests in Mexico as some in the demonstration break windows, graffiti buildings and clash with police — acts that analysts say are sometimes carried out by non-affilitated persons infiltrating the demonstrations to discredit the cause.

Marches for International Women's Day unfolded across Mexico on March 8 as women demonstrated against a series of indignities, including workplace discrimination, groping on public transit and the murders of women and girls — an atrocity known as femicide, which occurs 10 times daily, according to human rights groups.

Mexico elected its first female president in 2024 — Claudia Sheinbaum — while gender parity rules require equal numbers of men and women in Congress and institutions such as the supreme court. But Catholic leaders recognized the societal shortcomings still facing women.

"The demonstrations and protests we witnessed yesterday remind us of a reality we cannot ignore: thousands of women in our country continue to cry out for justice, safety, and respect for their dignity," the bishops' statement said. "As a Church, we echo their cries and stand in solidarity with those who have suffered such violence."

Participants in previous demonstrations demanded the decriminalization of abortion, which happened with a 2021 supreme court decision. Mexico's bishops denounced that decision, which decriminalized abortion in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, as "murderous."

Violence has gripped Mexico for the past two decades as the government cracked down on drug cartels and criminal groups battled each other in turf wars.

The Catholic Church has not been spared from Mexico's violence. A priest in southern Chiapas state, Fr. Juan Manuel Zavala Madrigal, was found dead on March 9, having gone missing after celebrating a Mass the night before in an outlying village in the municipality of Ocotepec.

TV Azteca reported the priest's backpack was found in a different location from his body and his cassock and other priestly garments were found on the ground alongside his car, which was abandoned near an ecological park.