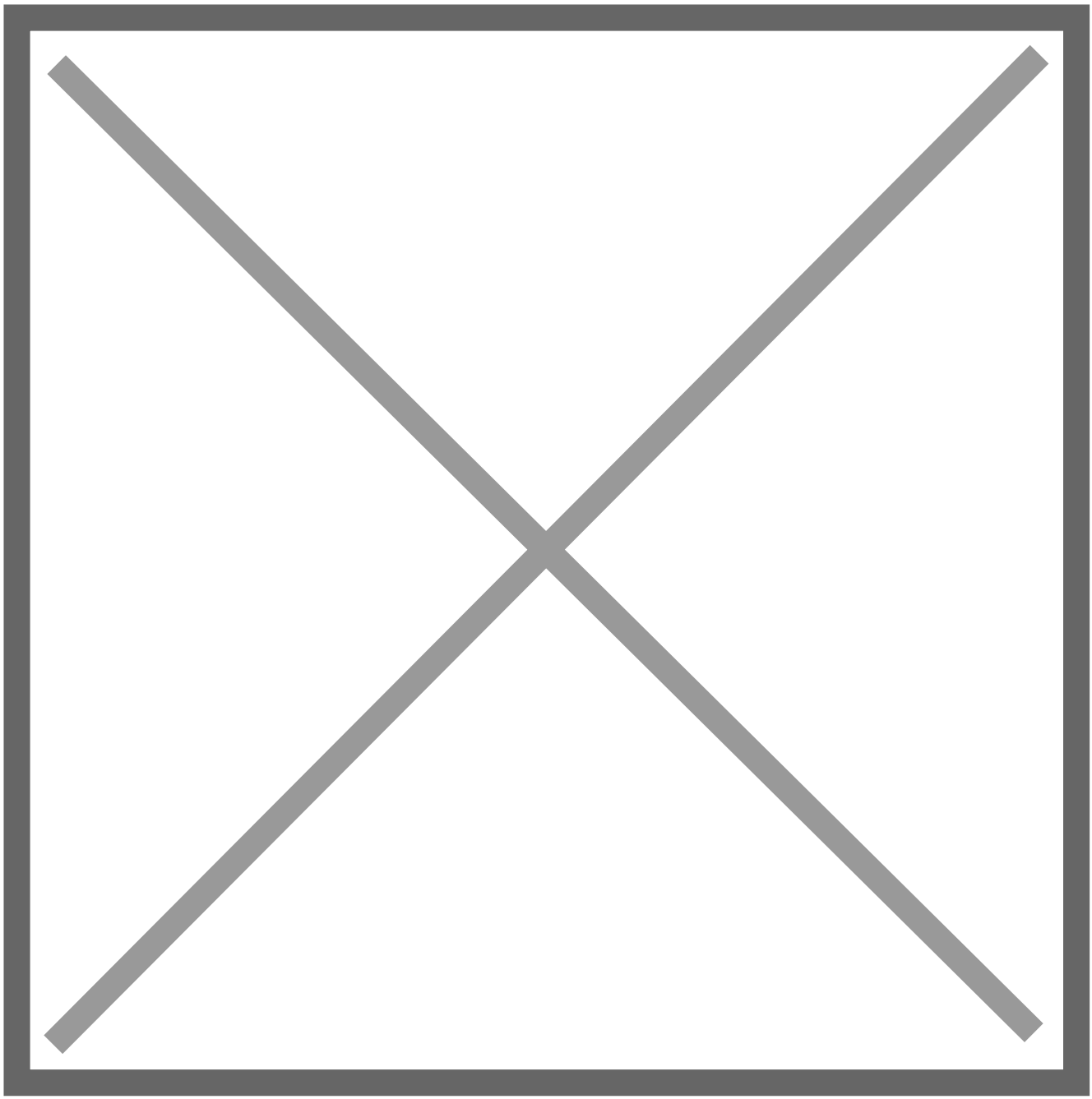
News



An Adidas advertisement featuring Lionel Messi for the FIFA World Cup 2026 is displayed at the E-Central Los Angeles hotel May 28, 2026, ahead of June 11-July 19 soccer matches. (OSV News/Reuters/Kirby Lee-Imagn)

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Los Angeles — June 2, 2026

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As the 2026 FIFA World Cup approaches, Catholic dioceses across the United States are preparing for what many see as both a pastoral opportunity and an unprecedented moment of global encounter.

The tournament — set to be played across the United States, Canada and Mexico — will be the largest in FIFA history, featuring 48 teams and 104 matches.

In the United States, 11 host cities will stage games from June 11 to July 19, with the championship scheduled for July 19 at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, which sits just across the Hudson River from New York City.

The 11 U.S. host cities: Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Houston, Kansas City in Missouri and Kansas, Los Angeles, Miami, Philadelphia, the San Francisco Bay Area, Seattle and the New York/New Jersey metro area.

Across these cities, Catholic leaders are already preparing for the convergence of international visitors, local parish life and public witness.

In Kansas City, a coordinated effort known as OneKC Catholic — a joint initiative of the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas and the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph — has been created to prepare for the influx.

According to its overview, OneKC Catholic is "an effort of evangelization, hospitality, and charity aimed at welcoming visiting Catholics to the KC metro area."

It adds: "Whether you are visiting, passing through or considering making the Kansas City
area your home, our Catholic parishes are ready to welcome you."

The initiative includes coordinated parish listings, multilingual resources, and collaboration with Catholic Charities on hospitality and planning during the tournament. A kickoff Mass is planned with Bishop James Johnston of Kansas City-St. Joseph and Archbishop Shawn McKnight of Kansas City in Kansas.

In Atlanta, the archdiocese has also begun preparations that combine outreach, hospitality and public safety awareness.

Maureen Smith, chief communications officer for the Archdiocese of Atlanta, told OSV News that the city initiated early coordination with the Church.

"The City of Atlanta approached one of our pastors early in the planning process to let him know about training for faith leaders in how to recognize and respond to human trafficking," Smith said. "Experts in human trafficking tell us there is always an increase in activity during large sporting events, so we felt like this was an appropriate and important place to start with our own planning."

Smith also described a broader effort to welcome international visitors through parish engagement.

Advertisement

"We also wanted to offer a welcome to fans and teams who are coming to Atlanta for the World Cup matches," she said. "We sponsored a contest for a Catholic artist to design a two-inch sticker welcoming guests. We will provide stickers to the parishes and encourage them to get photos of fans with their stickers at church."

Parishes will also promote Masses in multiple languages, including Portuguese, Haitian Creole, and Spanish, with social media outreach to help visitors locate worship opportunities.

Other host cities are developing their own pastoral and hospitality responses.

In Houston, an official World Cup 2026 resource page created by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston offers access to Mass, confession and Eucharistic adoration in

the city, along with a parish locator tool to assist international visitors. Local ministries are also preparing hospitality and fellowship outreach during the tournament.

In Seattle, Catholic leaders have coordinated pastoral care initiatives focused on travelers and migrants, alongside public prayer efforts for peace during a period of global tension involving some participating nations.

In San Francisco's host region, Mission Santa Clara on the campus of Santa Clara University has been highlighted as a Catholic focal point tied to the tournament's presence in the Bay Area.

In Miami, Catholic communities are preparing for a large influx of international visitors, with emphasis on multilingual access to the sacraments and parish hospitality. The archdiocese has also noted the Catholic heritage connected to the World Cup's origins, including FIFA founder Jules Rimet, a devout Catholic who envisioned the tournament as a means of fostering international fraternity.

In Dallas, Catholic institutions such as the University of Dallas and parish networks are preparing volunteer participation in tournament-related roles, including FIFA-linked programs such as player escort opportunities.

In Philadelphia, preparations include awareness that World Cup matches will coincide with the 250th anniversary of the United States on July 4, adding a unique national and civic dimension to the city's hosting role.

In Boston, Catholic communities are preparing for international visitors through parish outreach and hospitality coordination tied to the expected influx of fans.

In Los Angeles, SoFi Stadium will host multiple matches, including games featuring the United States team. Local Catholic communities are preparing for large-scale visitor engagement and multilingual pastoral outreach.

Underlying many of these efforts is a shared theological reflection on universality.

The Catholic tradition itself is rooted in the word katholikos, meaning "universal" or "according to the whole."

That meaning resonates strongly in the episcopal motto of Pope Leo XIV: *In Illo uno unum* ("In the One, we are one"), drawn from St. Augustine's exposition on Psalm

Augustine's reflection — "although we Christians are many, in the one Christ we are one" — has often been cited in discussions of global gatherings marked by cultural and national diversity.

In that sense, Catholic leaders note, the World Cup becomes more than a sporting event. It becomes a lived image of encounter: nations gathered, languages interwoven, cultures present in one shared space.

For Catholic communities across those 11 cities, the weeks ahead represent both preparation and invitation — preparation for the practical demands of hosting the world, and invitation to live out a vision of hospitality rooted in faith.

As OneKC Catholic's mission states, the goal is simple: that visitors "feel known, welcomed, and connected."

In that spirit, dioceses across the United States are approaching the World Cup not only as an international event, but as a moment of encounter — between Church and world, between local parish and global visitor, and, for many, between hospitality and grace.

This story appears in the **World Cup 2026** feature series. View the full series.