

[News](#)

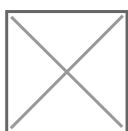
[EarthBeat](#)

A priest walks through the debris of a collapsed building in La Guaira, Venezuela

A priest walks through the debris of a collapsed building in La Guaira, Venezuela, July 17, 2026, in the aftermath of earthquakes on June 24. Two catastrophic earthquakes hit Venezuela in quick succession, leaving more than 5,000 dead with thousands still missing. (OSV News/Reuters/Gaby Oraa)

Junno Arocho Esteves

[View Author Profile](#)



OSV News

[View Author Profile](#)

[**Join the Conversation**](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

July 24, 2026

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

The bishops of Venezuela called on the faithful to reject the superstitious notion that the twin earthquakes that struck the country were a divine punishment.

In a pastoral letter published July 22, the Venezuelan bishops' conference said that amid the death and destruction wrought by the natural disaster, Christians are called to instead become witnesses of hope that comes from Christ's victory over death.

"For this reason, we must reject the manipulation of those who, guided by superstition and fundamentalism, have claimed that the earthquakes are a punishment from God, a kind of divine vengeance," the bishops wrote.

Although humans can "aggravate or accelerate the causes of such phenomena and their consequences," the bishops said it was important "to understand what God asks of us at a personal and community level."

Nevertheless, the bishops added, "it is not correct to attribute them to a punishing higher will."

Venezuela's National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez posted an update on X July 21 announcing that the death toll rose to 5,346.

The country has experienced 1,405 aftershocks since the twin earthquakes, measuring 7.2 and 7.5 in magnitude, struck the northern Venezuelan state of La Guaira in the evening June 24, Rodriguez announced.

Destroyed buildings are seen in La Guaira, Venezuela, July 17, 2026

Destroyed buildings are seen in La Guaira, Venezuela, July 17, 2026, in the aftermath of earthquakes on June 24. Two catastrophic earthquakes hit Venezuela in quick succession, leaving more than 5,000 dead with thousands still missing. (OSV News/Reuters/Leonardo Fernandez Vilorio)

Catholic charitable organizations, such as Caritas Venezuela and Aid to the Church in Need, continue to mobilize relief efforts in the country.

In its July 16 report, Caritas Venezuela said it has distributed 15,963 metric tons of aid, which includes water, food, hygienic supplies and clothes, so far. Nearly 100,000 units of medical supplies and medicines have also been distributed to hospitals and medical centers in the country.

However, the report noted that as thousands continue to remain in camps, aid consumption is outpacing intake and called for financial donations to facilitate local purchasing according to shifting needs.

In their pastoral letter, the Venezuelan bishops said that the devastating earthquakes caused a number of people to ask, "Where is God in the midst of so much anguish?"

Responding to a question that "spans human history," the bishops said that "God is precisely in and with the victims; they are the favored ones of the Lord Jesus, who is

the true Good Samaritan spoken of in the Gospel."

"He lovingly anoints all who have fallen along the way, carries them on His shoulders, and hosts them in the inn of the Church, where they can be nourished with heavenly and human delicacies to live in fullness: 'Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest,'" they said.

The church, the letter stated, "is called to walk" this path and Christians can see that "God is also in all the Samaritans who, like Jesus, help those most in need."

A drone view shows newly prepared graves for victims in La Guaira, Venezuela, July 22, 2026

A drone view shows newly prepared graves for victims in La Guaira, Venezuela, July 22, 2026, following the aftermath of the June 24 earthquakes. Two catastrophic earthquakes hit Venezuela in quick succession June 24, leaving more than 5,000 dead with thousands still missing. (OSV News/Reuters/Leonardo Fernandez Vilorio)

As Venezuelans continue the long road to recovery following the devastation, the bishops said Christians are called to be "compassionate Samaritans" who share in the sufferings of others and unconditionally commit "to relieve their pain and eradicate its causes."

"We exhort everyone to share in the pain of the victims of these earthquakes and to carry always in our hearts and memories the crying of mothers and fathers who have lost their children, the tears of so many orphaned children, and the anguish of those who searched for days among the rubble for their loved ones," they said.

The Venezuelan bishops said they were deeply moved by the solidarity shown to their country by people at home and abroad, from first responders working to rescue people trapped in the rubble and to foreign volunteers who "demonstrated to us that all human beings are brothers and sisters beyond borders and flags."

They also expressed their gratitude to Pope Leo XIV, "who is continuously attentive to the current situation in Venezuela," and to Caritas and other institutions "that have opened their doors since the beginning of the tragedy to anyone in need, regardless of creed or ideology."

"The Church continues to be a source of hope and encouragement for all victims through her prayers and accompaniment in grief," the bishops said.

As the country continues to rebuild, the Venezuelan bishops highlighted the needs of those who were suffering before the earthquakes, including political prisoners, workers barely surviving "on miserable wages or pensions," the sick and migrants.

The bishops echoed the complaints by victims "who felt neglected by public institutions" in the wake of the earthquakes.

According to a July 18 report by the Reuters news agency, civilians spearheaded the initial response while delayed orders and lack of direction caused military and government officials to arrive late and not aid victims.

Noting "the indignation of the earthquake victims," the bishops said that while natural disasters are "unpredictable," government officials are obligated "to be prepared to face them."

"Moving forward, we must all ensure that the same past mistakes are not repeated in the reconstruction efforts; otherwise, the most vulnerable will once again suffer the consequences of corruption and apathy," the bishops said.

Advertisement