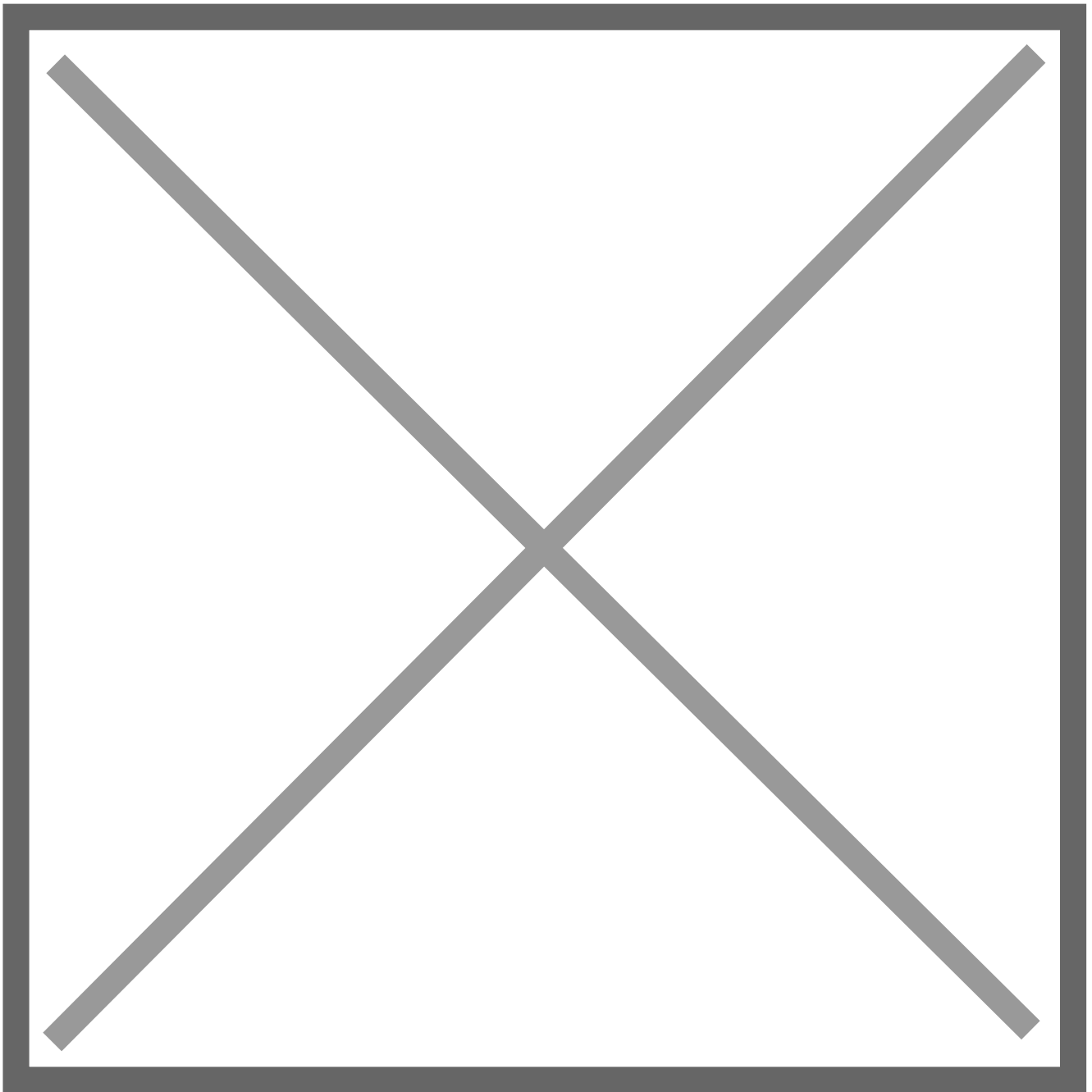




A drone image shows a statue of Christ atop a church in Quimbaya, Colombia, Aug. 18, 2026, damaged by the earthquake. Priests from the Archdiocese of Bogota, led by their bishop, Cardinal Luis José Rueda Aparicio, embarked on a five-day mission to provide spiritual assistance to people living in cities affected by the Aug. 10 earthquake. (OSV News/Reuters/Luisa Gonzalez)

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Bogotá, Colombia — August 20, 2026

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Dozens of clergy from the Archdiocese of Bogotá embarked on a five-day pastoral mission to cities in Colombia devastated by the Aug. 10 earthquake.

According to the archdiocese, a group of 80 priests and deacons, led by Cardinal Luis José Rueda Aparicio of Bogotá, as well as his auxiliary bishops, left by bus Aug. 18 "on a mission of 'Spiritual First Aid' to urban and rural parishes affected by the earthquake."

Addressing the priests before departing, Cardinal Rueda said the mission was the first of several planned in the coming months.

"We will pay close attention to the lessons learned during this first outreach, so we can organize others this year or in different emergencies requiring our humanitarian and pastoral service," the cardinal said. "May the Lord rebuild us all from the heart, and may the Virgin Mary accompany us with her Motherly love to guide the path of hope after the earthquake."

In an update posted to X Aug. 19, Colombia's National Unit for Disaster Risk Management, known as UNGRD), said the death toll from the 7.4-magnitude quake had risen to 319 people, while 260 remain missing and 4,469 injured.

An estimated 151,995 homes were damaged, while 30,803 were destroyed and 302 buildings collapsed, the UNGRD reported.

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According to Colombia's Geological Service, the quake's epicenter was in the northwestern department of Chocó, and the intense magnitude made it "the strongest earthquake felt in Colombia in the last decade."

The Archdiocese of Bogotá said the cardinal, bishops, and priests participating in the "Spiritual First Aid" mission will divide into six groups and visit the hardest-hit cities, including Cartago, Pereira, Cali, Palmira, Buenaventura, and Buga.

The Aug. 18-22 mission "aims to accompany local parish priests and their lay faithful through closeness, listening, and prayer, while also offering the Sacrament of Reconciliation amidst pain and devastation to consolidate the Church as a 'meeting point,'" the archdiocese said.

The priests were also advised to travel light "so as not to generate any economic burden for the host communities," it added.

After returning from the mission, the priests will host a day of prayer for the parishes they visited in their respective church communities.