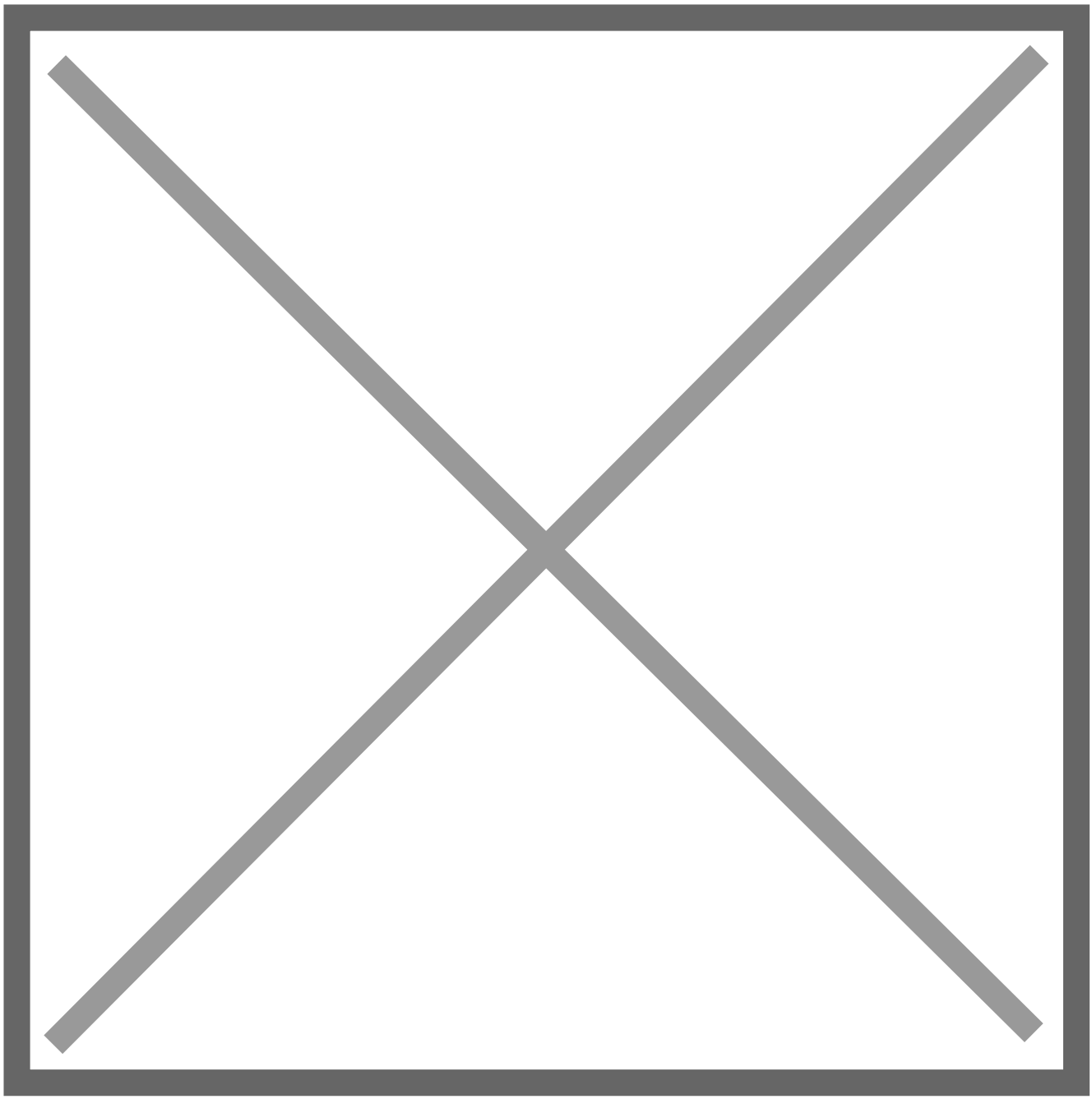
News



A musician is seen in a file photo playing the guitar next to a shrine honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe during a Spanish-language Mass marking the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Resurrection Church in Farmingville, N.Y., Dec. 12, 2021. Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patroness of Mexico, the Americas and the unborn. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz)



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CHANTILLY, Va. — October 8, 2026

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For half a century, the National Association of Pastoral Musicians helped define much of the sound of Mass and other sacramental experiences throughout the United States, teaching and empowering musicians to make music a spiritual food for tens of millions every Sunday.

They plan to do the same and further enrich the life of the church for another 50 years, but under a new name as of Oct. 6: The National Association of Catholic Church Musicians.

"We want them to have an encounter with God. We are that instrument (which) hopefully the Holy Spirit is working through, so that the people that come to worship have an encounter through the music," said Anna Betancourt, NACCM's vice chair, who led cathedral choirs in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the Diocese of Anaheim, California, before a recent move to Texas.

"It's wonderful to have all the musical skills and to learn the notes. How are we going to make it beautiful? How are we going to pray these words? That to me is key," she told OSV News.

The group received a special blessing from an American Catholic whose faith life was fostered by Catholic music, Pope Leo XIV, through special greetings shared earlier for its national convention in July.

"The Holy Father therefore hopes that your efforts will enable the Church to continue to offer reverent and dignified worship in the parishes, schools and other institutions where you serve. In this way, he is confident you will help American Catholics to sing of the steadfast love and mercies of God in a continuous hymn of praise," said Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican Secretary of State, in a letter to the NACCM.

Jennifer Kluge, the organization's executive director, told OSV News the Second Vatican Council planted NACCM's roots by opening up the musical worship experience to the congregation.

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"We had this huge role to play. There was this brand new opportunity for congregational singing. The congregation for the first time ever, not only had the opportunity to participate musically in the liturgy, but actually had a responsibility and an obligation to participate," she said. "Our members came to us saying, 'How do we enliven this?'"

Amanda Bruce, NACCM's senior associate director of marketing & communications, said that since 1976, NACCM answered that question by helping create frameworks for dioceses, archdioceses and parishes to find and nurture the life of pastoral musicians, and to incubate much of the music heard during Mass.

"We talk very often in leadership about how we so often minister (to) those who are celebrating the highs and the lows of their lives, weddings and funerals," Bruce told OSV News.

"So many of the songs that so many Catholics bring to us in music ministry are often songs that premiered at our conferences," she said. "Our association was a lot of the conduit for some of that music."

NACCM Board Chair Meyer Chambers, a 38-year member who has sung or led music ministries in cathedrals, Newman centers and Black Catholic parishes from Boston to New Orleans, told OSV News he sees how the name change can help attract Catholics who share music outside the choir lofts on Sunday, whether it's through Gregorian chant, guitar-folk or Gospel sound.

"We need to go out and proclaim this beautiful thing that God has given us," he said, "this ability to make music to praise the Lord on the highways, the byways, the corners, the woods, everywhere, because that's where you'll find us."