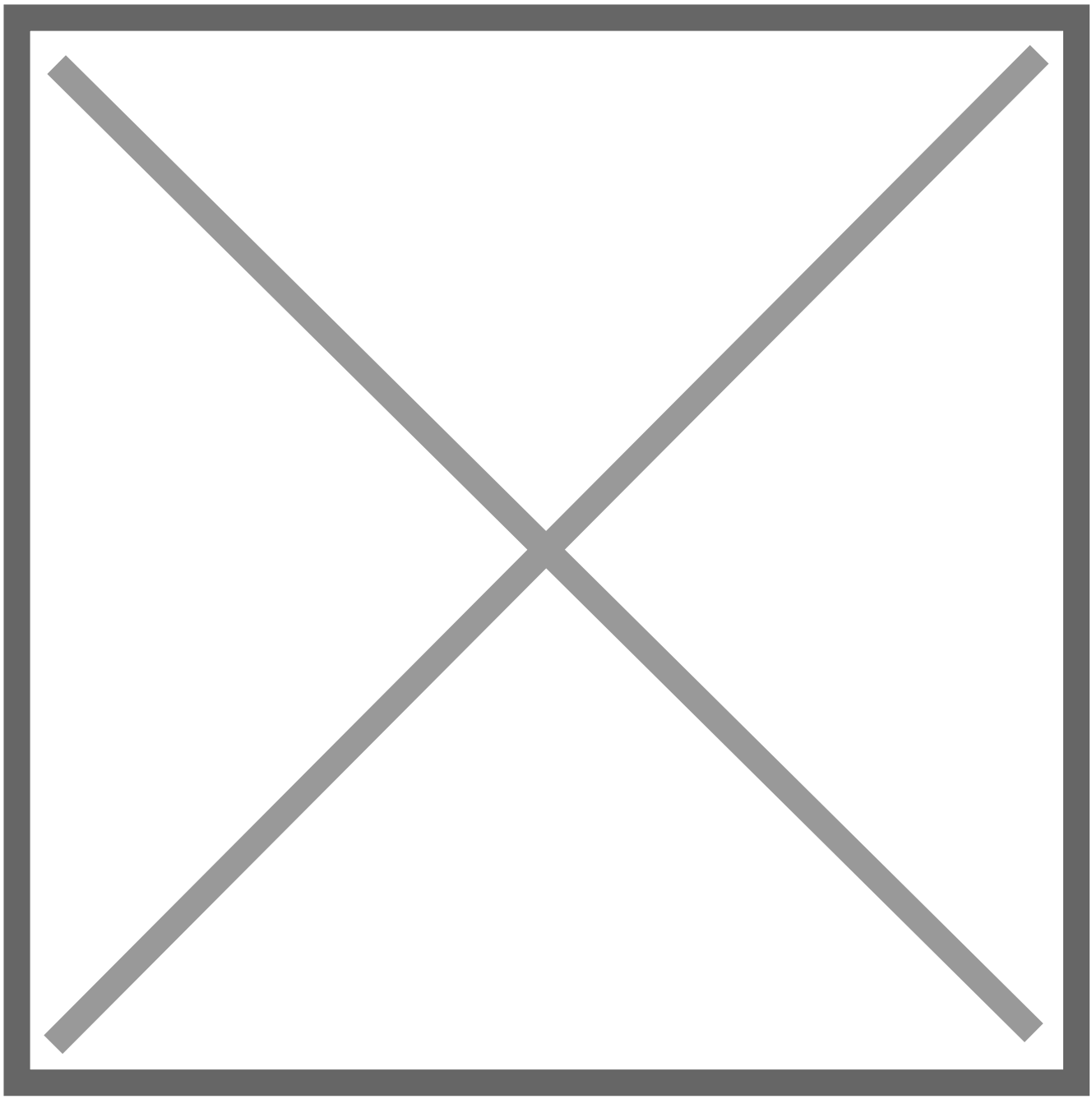
News



The congregation gathers at a memorial Mass for Redemptorist Fr. Patricio Alfredo Sánchez Molinari Oct. 18, 2026, at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Guayaquil, Ecuador. A day earlier he was fatally injured when a large crucifix tipped forward and fell, striking the priest directly on the head while he was celebrating Mass at the church. (OSV News/Courtesy of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Guayaquil)



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GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador — October 19, 2026
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A priest in Ecuador was struck and killed by a falling crucifix while celebrating Mass, a tragedy captured during a livestream of the service on Oct. 17.

Redemptorist Fr. Patricio Alfredo Sánchez Molinari, 53, was standing behind the altar at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city, when a large crucifix tipped forward and fell, striking the priest directly on the head. He collapsed behind the altar after being struck.

Shouts of, "Padre!" ("Father!") could be heard from the congregation as people rushed to assist him. It's uncertain why the crucifix fell during the service.

The livestream of the Mass and a recording of the tragic incident went viral across the world, with the parish taking down the original video with sensitive content.

The Archdiocese of Guayaquil confirmed Sánchez's death in a short statement posted Oct. 17 to its Facebook page. A post from the San Lorenzo de Vinces Parish, 65 miles north of Guayaquil, where Sánchez previously served as pastor, read, "As

the Redemptorist family, we join in prayer for the eternal rest of his soul and we ask the Lord to grant comfort to his family, his brother priests and all the faithful who cherish his legacy and memory with gratitude."

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A Mass remembering the life of Sánchez was celebrated Oct. 18 at the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church.

In his final homily, Sánchez urged parishioners to prioritize God above all else and to spend their time wisely.

"In our lives, sometimes we fail to give that time, that space, to God. ... God should come first: before money, before work, and before the activities of our family and our home," Sánchez said just minutes before being mortally wounded, according to a transcript in the Guayaquil newspaper El Universo.

"One day, all of us here will also die, and sometimes the time we have spent on certain things does not hold as much meaning as the time we have spent with God," he continued. "The quality time we dedicate to God, to our brothers and sisters, to our spouse, to our children, and to our family, that is time spent in the best possible way."