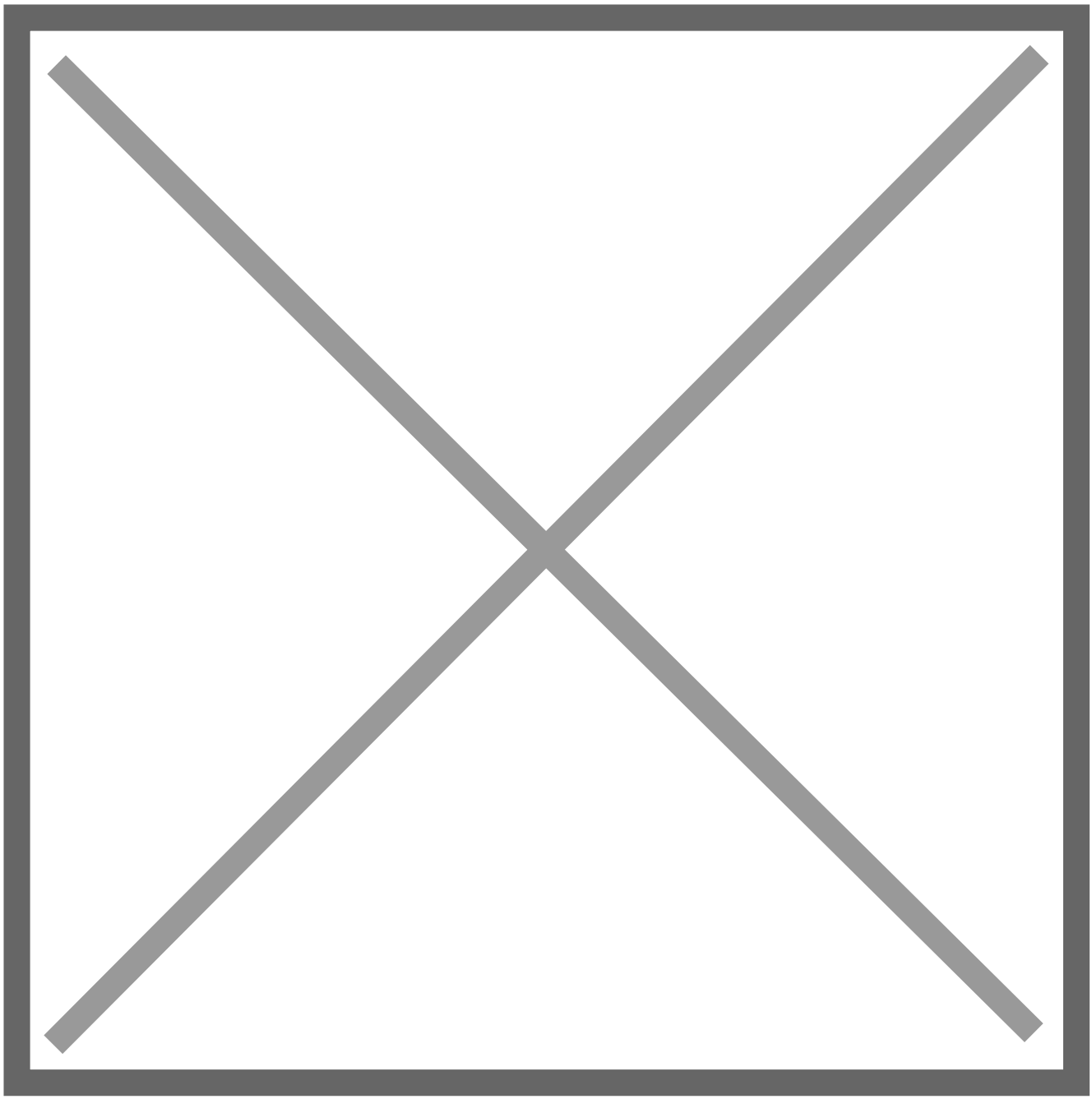
News



Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City, now president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, speaks during a Nov. 12, 2024, session of the fall general assembly of the USCCB in Baltimore. (OSV News/Bob Roller)

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Artificial intelligence, migration and signs of church renewal are expected to be on the agenda when the nation's Catholic bishops hold their annual fall meeting next month.

In an Oct. 20 press release, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops named the three topics as likely issues for discussion during the bishops' upcoming Nov. 16-19 plenary assembly in Baltimore. The gathering's public sessions on Nov. 17 and 18 will be livestreamed via the USCCB website.

Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City, USCCB president, and Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, apostolic nuncio to the U.S., will open the public sessions with addresses to the bishops.

According to the USCCB press release, the as-yet unfinalized agenda is slated to feature an update on the bishops' recently created AI task force, which is led by Bishop Oscar Cantú of San Jose, California — home to Silicon Valley and the hub of AI development.

On Oct. 16, the USCCB announced the full list of the committee's eight episcopal members, who include Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago, and its three lay consultants: theologian and ethicist Charles Camosy of The Catholic University of America, philosopher Meghan Sullivan of the University of Notre Dame, and Kim Daniels, director of Georgetown University's Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life.

The task force will focus on underscoring the centrality of human dignity and the common good in AI development — a message explored at length by Pope Leo XIV in his encyclical Magnifica Humanitas.

A year after releasing their high-profile "special pastoral message on immigration" — which pushed back on several hardline Trump administration policies and opposed "the indiscriminate mass deportation of people" — the bishops will also be briefed by the conference's Committee on Migration.

The USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, chaired by Bishop Robert Brennan of Brooklyn, New York, will provide a status report on the Intercontinental Guadalupan Novena, a multiyear prayer ahead of the 500th anniversary of Mary's apparition as our Lady of Guadalupe in 1531.

The USCCB also noted a planned "panel presentation on recent signs of new life in the Church," pointing to "a marked increase in the number of people entering the Church, and surveys indicating that young people are showing renewed interest in religion."

In recent years, religion demographers have disagreed as to whether year-over-year religious disaffiliation has reversed, with some noting methodological problems (particularly with opt-in surveys) in certain studies.

In March, researcher Mark Gray of the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University told OSV News that "statistical evidence of an overall rise in Catholics is not yet available."

Pew Research Center has previously found that while the multiyear decline in Christianity in the U.S. may have leveled off, Catholics see the greatest net losses of believers compared to other religions in the U.S.

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Data indicates that for every one person received into the Catholic Church, another 8.4 individuals have left the faith, either altogether or for another worship tradition — up from the figure Pew cited in 2014, when 6.5 Catholics left for every one received into the Church.

Rounding out the tentative agenda will be votes on several action items.

Among those are USCCB guidelines on diocesan finance reporting and socially responsible investment and the conference's 2027 budget.

A new edition of the Lectionary for Mass and Book of the Gospels, an annual observance of a Day of Prayer for Racial Justice and a move to update the USCCB's pro-life pastoral plan will also be considered.

The bishops will weigh in on two canonical consultations for potential sainthood causes — those of Maria Middleton, a Philadelphia-area teen who heroically maintained her faith amid an inoperable and fatal brain tumor; and Thomas Steven Vander Woude, a Virginia man who died to save his son from drowning in a septic tank.

Several key leadership positions will also be decided upon at the assembly, with the bishops electing a new conference secretary as Bishop Kevin Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, completes his interim term, having been chosen to do so after the previous secretary, Coakley, was elected USCCB president. Six USCCB committee chairs and a new general secretary for the conference will also be elected.

This story appears in the **USCCB Fall Assembly 2026** feature series. View the full series.