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Q & A: Bishop Gabino Zavala

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Distinctly Catholic

This week at Q & A, we are following up on the coverage of the ordination of Bishop David O'Connell by interviewing American bishops about their role in today's Church. Yesterday we heard from Archbishop Gregory Aymond of New Orleans. Today, we hear from Bishop Gabino Zavala, auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles and chairmand of the USCCB Committee on Communications.

The question: What is the best thing about being a bishop in 2010?

Bishop Zavala:

As a Bishop, I live in a Church without borders -- my concerns are universal! I have an opportunity to interact with a diversity of people -- young, old, women and men, people of many diverse life experiences, cultures, ethnicities, perspectives. In any given week, I can meet with the condemned on death row, children in a parochial school, government officials, celebrities, Church leaders and people in the pews.

As a Bishop, I reflect on and look at faith and the living out of the Gospel in contemporary times, in the world today. I have an opportunity to dialogue on topics that affect the common good. Being a bishop challenges me to be a person of discernment, reflection and prayer.

As a Bishop I have the opportunity to speak for the voiceless, the marginalized, those who live in the shadow of society, such as immigrants. This lets me live out the Gospel to do ?for the least? as Jesus calls us all to do. Opportunities come my way to make their needs known, be it from the pulpit, at a town hall meeting, or in the

halls of Congress. Because of the Catholic Church's long history of being there for people from every level of society, people trust me to represent them well. It's an honor and a responsibility.

More so, as a Latino Bishop I can be a leader and a source of pride among my people whose voice needs to be heard in our Church. The contributions of the Latino community are many. We bring a sense of devotion, particularly to the Mother of God, that enriches the entire Catholic liturgical and devotional experience. We bring a sense of family and embracing others into our family; a sense of community that celebrates life through "fiesta" and a profound respect for the gift of life and for the dignity of each person.

My Latino background surely informs my pastoral approach to exercising my office as bishop; but as a Catholic bishop I watch for each one of the sheep commended to my care. From catechetical formation and evangelization, through old and new means, to the pursuit of charity and justice, as demanded by the Gospels, the needs and wants of the People of God are my care and concern as their shepherd.

Tomorrow's Interviewee: Bishop Ricardo Ramirez of Las Cruces, New Mexico.

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