

Mexican cardinal urges priests to promote vocations among US Hispanics

Marnie McAllister Catholic News Service | Oct. 18, 2012
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Mexican Cardinal Juan Sandoval Iniguez said he sees "many possibilities here in the United States for vocations from the Spanish-speaking people," and urged priests and other church leaders to work for vocations among Hispanic Catholics.

"Go to the children, speak to the children" to cultivate new vocations, he said in an interview with *The Record*, newspaper of the Louisville Archdiocese.

He also had a message for Hispanic Catholics in the United States. "Don't lose your faith in Christ. Maintain yourselves inside the church," he said.

Sandoval, retired archbishop of Guadalajara, Mexico, was one of the keynote speakers at the annual conference of the Asociacion Nacional de Sacerdotes Hispanos (National Association of Hispanic Priests). Held Oct. 8-11 in downtown Louisville, it drew nearly 100 Hispanic priests from around the nation.

The conference focused on the new evangelization to coincide with the theme of the world Synod of Bishops at the Vatican, which opened Oct. 7 and closes Oct. 28.

Speakers included Bishop Ricardo Ramirez of Las Cruces, N.M., who talked about the church's new evangelization efforts. Fr. John Guthrie, associate director of the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, spoke about vocations among Hispanic Catholics.

The conference included two public Masses, the one at St. Joseph Church in Butchertown and one at the Cathedral of the Assumption.

Sandoval was the main celebrant of the Mass at St. Joseph Church. Speaking in Spanish, he told the congregation to live and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to work for an increase in religious vocations.

The congregation included families from St. Joseph and Holy Name parishes. Both have a large and growing Hispanic membership. Fr. David Sanchez, pastor at both parishes, is a member of Hispanic priests' association.

He said the organization is critical for him and other priests who face the challenges of leading immigrant communities.

"It's a brotherhood for me," he told *The Record*. "I see brothers who think about, work and experience Jesus Christ with their bilingual communities," just as he does.

Fr. Francisco Quezada, a priest of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, Colo., who is president of the association, said the group "promotes and animates priestly fraternity for Hispanic priesthood in the U.S. church."

"Today more than ever we need to be in solidarity together because the mission is more difficult," he said, noting that society is leaning more and more toward "secularism, individualism and relativism."

Sandoval offered the priests encouragement and instruction during his homily at St. Joseph. Fr. Matthew Munoz, a priest of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, translated a portion of the homily, which was delivered in Spanish.

The cardinal called on priests to "exhort, inspire and proclaim the message of Jesus Christ to bring good news to the poor," Munoz said. The cardinal also told the priests to "not only preach when it's convenient but when it's inconvenient, out of season."

The cardinal also brought a bit of humor to the celebration, drawing several rounds of laughter.

Munoz said one of the laughs came when Sandoval warned the priests to avoid "sitting on our 'sentadera,' or rear ends, taking care of only administrative things like counting the collection."

Instead, the cardinal said, priests should "preach tirelessly by our words and deeds," Munoz said.

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