

# **Bilingual Mass in Los Angeles celebrates immigrants, immigrant spirit in U.S.**

LOS ANGELES (CNS) – Catholics from the Los Angeles Archdiocese and the San Bernardino, Orange and San Diego dioceses came together for a bilingual Mass Sept. 18 to celebrate “the immigrant spirit in the United States.”

Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez was the principal celebrant of the “Mass in Recognition of All Immigrants” at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in downtown Los Angeles.

“Our country has always been a beautiful collection of many immigrant peoples,” Archbishop Gomez said in the homily. “This nation has been a beacon of hope, a refuge for peoples who have no place left to turn. America is a nation of nationalities, a nation of migrants and refugees.”

“We need to pray harder for our government officials and lawmakers, he said. “Let’s pray today in a special way that we can create a society that better serves the poor and the least among us, a society of solidarity and compassion.”

“We know that times are hard, that things aren’t easy for many of our family members, our loved ones and friends,” he added. “It has been decades now – literally decades – and our nation has still not resolved the problems and injustices of our immigration system.”

“But we should never lose hope,” he told the congregation. “Our Father holds us in the palm of his hand, he loves us with an undying love, and he has a special love for the poor and the vulnerable.”

The Mass commemorated the U.S. Catholic Church's National Migration Week, observed Sept. 19-25 this year, and the global Church's World Day of Migrants and Refugees observance, which is Sept. 25. "Building the Future with Migrants and Refugees" is the theme for both.

The English-Spanish celebration at the Los Angeles cathedral began with a pre-liturgy procession inside the church. Civic and diplomatic leaders, including the consuls of Mexico and Guatemala, also were present.

During the Mass, more than 50 ministry volunteers and leaders were recognized. After the liturgy, Massgoers were invited to venerate relics sitting by the altar of three saints who hold great significance to the Catholic immigrant community in the U.S.

The relics were of St. Junípero Serra, evangelizer of California who founded the San Diego mission in 1769, the first of a string of 21 missions integral to the state; St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, a patron saint for immigrants; and St. Toribio Romo, a Mexican Catholic priest and martyr killed during the anti-clerical persecutions of the Cristero War for his refusal to obey the government's orders for Catholic clerics to cease practicing their faith.

"We come to this altar today to thank God for his blessings on our families and our communities," Archbishop Gomez said in his homily. "We come also bearing our burdens, our sorrows and dreams. We lay everything down before Jesus on this altar today."

Calling on all of the faithful to "intensify" prayers "for those in authority" to resolve the nation's immigration crisis, he referenced the day's second reading in which St. Paul "tells us to pray for our civic leaders" and "offer 'supplications, prayers, petitions and thanksgivings ... for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in

all devotion and dignity.'”

He pointed to Pope Francis’ message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees, saying in it the pope “reminds us that ‘if we want to cooperate with our heavenly Father in building the future, let us do so together with our brothers and sisters who are migrants and refugees. Let us build the future today.’”

Once again the Catholic faithful is “called to help our neighbors and leaders to feel compassion for the common humanity and destiny that we share with one another, including our immigrant brothers and sisters,” Archbishop Gomez said.

“So, let us keep praying for our nation and working hard for immigration reform and let us remember to keep our lives always centered on Jesus,” he said.

“And let us ask Our Lady of Guadalupe, to continue to intercede for us. May she keep us always in the tender mantle of her care, and may she help us to always stay faithful in the little things of love,” he concluded.