

When the church finds itself in times of trouble, imitate Mary, bishop says

DALLAS (CNA) - Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS, of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, said that the Catholic Church is currently in a “very dark moment” in its history, and that Catholics should look to the example of Mary in reacting to the abuse crisis.

Speaking in a closed session to reporters at the National V Encuentro conference in Grapevine on Sept. 22, Archbishop Gustavo was asked how lay people can work to engage fallen-away Catholics who were upset by the recent sexual misconduct scandals.

Rather than turn away from the crisis, Archbishop Gustavo said that “we need to face how people are dealing with it,” and not just have emotional reactions to the stories of sexual assault and harassment. He acknowledged that the problem of sexual abuse has existed in the Church for a long time, “and painfully.”

Archbishop Gustavo suggested that people “have to evangelize” during this time, despite everything that is happening in the church. He said he’s seen suffering in his own archdiocese, and he has worked to let the survivors of abuse know that he will be there for them. He compared the current abuse crisis to the crucifixion of the Lord.

“People are suffering for many reasons. It is the way of the cross,” he said.

“And Jesus was very bold about it. It is the way of the cross,” he repeated.

The bishop shot down the idea of having to “re-evangelize” people who have fallen away from the church during the crisis, saying that “somebody has to evangelize, (they don’t) need re-evangelization.” He said that they should work on ensuring proper formation for those who have already been exposed to the Church.

He cautioned against the mentality that people do not need to continually experience Christ. People “cannot grasp who he is and his work of love once,” and cannot be satisfied with one singular Church experience.

“We forget,” he said, “that the Holy Spirit will remind us who Jesus is and what is the work of the Kingdom.”

Archbishop Gustavo drew an example from Cardinal Sean O’Malley’s homily earlier that day, when the cardinal spoke of the Blessed Virgin Mary as the first “missionary disciple” of Jesus Christ, before the apostles.

In his homily, Cardinal O’Malley said that Mary was courageous in her “yes” to the Lord, even when Jesus was on the cross.

“Mary was standing, a pillar of strength, courage and faith, even with her broken heart, she said ‘yes Lord, your will and not mine,’” the cardinal said.

Now, Catholics should strive to imitate Mary during “this time of pain and suffering,” including the victims of abuse, and “in mysterious ways, the perpetrators, and the bishops,” Garcia-Siller said.

“All of us, to cope with this, we’ll be needed everywhere,” he noted.

“We need everyone, everyone,” he said, because the Church, as “the Body of Christ -- when one hurts, everybody hurts. When one is joyful everyone should be joyful.”

“May we, by the mercy of God, carry on what He started.”