

Gomez to Encuentro: Jesus sent disciples, Guadalupe sent Juan Diego, God sends you

DALLAS (CNA) - At the final Mass of the National V Encuentro gathering, Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles encouraged Hispanic and Latino Catholics to go out into the world and be missionary disciples for the Church, like the many holy lay people before them.

“Our reading of today's Gospel begins with these words: ‘Jesus and his disciples They left from there and started a journey,’” he said, referencing Mark 9:30-37.

“This is our story, yours and mine. This is the history of the Church. We are his disciples.”

Gomez gave the homily on the final day of the National V Encuentro, a meeting of Hispanic and Latino Catholics from throughout the United States that was the culmination of a years-long process of consultation at the parish, diocesan and regional levels.

The theme of this National Encuentro, held Sept. 20-23 in Grapevine was “Discípulos Misioneros: Testigos del amor de Dios” or “Missionary Disciples: Witnesses of the love of God.”

Missionaries are made because they have first encountered Jesus, who then sends them on a journey, Gomez said.

“Your journey is now joined to Jesus. Your story is now part of the story of salvation, the journey of God’s people through history,” he added, like the disciples who spread the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, Asia and Africa.

“The journey of the Church continued towards the American continent with the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, in 1531,” Gomez said.

“We all know that story. We learned it when we were children, and we transmitted it to our little ones. It is a beautiful narration of the tender love of God, manifested in history.”

As Jesus sent the disciples, God through the Virgin of Guadalupe entrusted a mission to San Juan Diego - to go tell the bishop to build a church.

“Think about that, my dear brothers and sisters: Jesus entrusted him with the mission of his Church in the New World to a layman,” he said. “Not to a priest or a bishop. Not a member of a religious order.”

“You are the sons and daughters of the Virgin of Guadalupe in our time; you are the spiritual heirs of Juan Diego. The mission entrusted to him is now entrusted to you.”

Just like Juan Diego, God is calling the Hispanic and Latino Catholics of the United States to be saints, missionary disciples and leaders of the Church, Gomez said.

“He is calling the lay faithful to work together with the bishops to renew and rebuild his Church. Not only in this country, but throughout the continents of the Americas,” he said.

Hispanic and Latino Catholics are being called to lead not for power or ambition, he added, but “to lead by your holiness. True unity in the Church will only come about if every one of us - clergy and laity - is striving to be holy as God is holy.”

“Let's always move forward with confidence. Let's be men and women of the encounter! What each one of us leads many people to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ,” Gomez said.

“And may Our Lady of Guadalupe always go with us on the journey we make as disciples of Jesus. May she help us to be saints, to be heroes, instruments of unity and healing. These times demand it. And for this is what we were made for.”