

MISSION MESSAGE

The Catholic Church in Venezuela Needs Our Help

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When the ground shook beneath Venezuela on the evening of June 24, it did so twice: A 7.2-magnitude earthquake was followed — just 39 seconds later — by a 7.5-magnitude mainshock. Together, they unleashed destruction not seen in that country in more than a century.

More than 4,000 have lost their lives. The numbers are still moving, and the full scale of the tragedy has yet to be counted. Thousands more are injured. Tens of thousands are missing. In the coastal state of La Guaira — declared a disaster zone — entire city blocks have been reduced to rubble. In Caracas, the Cathedral stands damaged among the many churches that bore the force of the quake.

But even as the earth was still trembling, the Church was already at work.

Parish doors swung open across the archdiocese to shelter families who had nowhere to go. Caritas Venezuela activated its network in every affected diocese, gathering information and coordinating relief. Archbishop Raúl Biord Castillo of Caracas walked through the rubble of his churches and, rather than lament what was lost, pointed to what remained: the people helping one another. “Amidst all of this,” he said, “we must all form a great network of solidarity to help those brothers and sisters who are suffering material losses. Human life is what is most important.”

Pope Leo XIV, moved by the suffering of the Venezuelan people, has already sent an initial emergency donation through the Dicastery for the Service of Charity



A young man reacts amid the rubble of a destroyed building in La Guaira, Venezuela, June 25, 2026, following 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes that rocked the country June 24. (OSV News photo/Gaby Oraa, Reuters)

— and the Vatican has made clear this is only a beginning, with further assistance to follow as the local Church identifies needs on the ground.

Father Ricardo Elías Guillén, National Director of Pontifical Mission Societies Venezuela, was on his way to La Guaira — the hardest-hit area — when he spoke with the US National Office. “The priests are safe,” he said. “But many parishes have been severely damaged, and much will need to be rebuilt.” And among the dead are children and young people who were part of the Missionary Childhood Association — the Pontifical Mission Society that nurtures the faith of the youngest members of the Church and channels their generosity toward children in need around the world. In La Guaira, some of those children are now among those the Church mourns.

On the ground, the immediate priorities are food, water, and medicine — supplies the local Church is already gathering and distributing. Father Guillén’s request was direct: help to keep buying what the people need most.

But before anything else, he asked for prayer. “This is a very hard trial for us,” he said, “for a people who already had so many difficulties. But we can only put ourselves in God’s hands, trust that He will sustain us, and console the people.”

That is the mission of the Church in Venezuela right now — to console, to serve, and to rebuild. It is a mission that belongs to all of us.

Please pray for the people of Venezuela. And if you are able, please give.

Bishop Bambera has invited all parishes of the Diocese of Scranton to consider taking up an optional second collection to assist those impacted by this tragedy.

All donations will be forwarded to the Catholic Relief Services Venezuela Relief Fund. You can also give online by visiting crs.org.



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