

Archdiocese collects scrap metal for statue of Pope John Paul

MEXICO CITY – The Archdiocese of Leon is collecting scrap metal to create a life-size statue of Pope John Paul II.

Archbishop Jose Martin Rabago has asked the archdiocese's 2.5 million Catholics to bring old keys, coins and every kind of metal to parishes, which have set up collection bins.

"People have responded with a lot of enthusiasm," Father Pasqual Lopez, archdiocesan chancellor, told Catholic News Service in a telephone interview. "They want to show their affection and their gratitude to this man whom they venerate as a role model for a true Christian life."

The idea for some kind of recognition of the former pope was born two days after his death in 2005. The first plan was to name a major highway in this industrial city after him, but people wanted more than just a street name. They wanted something visible, touchable, said Father Lopez.

They planned the life-size bronze statue, but the project never got off the ground, so the archbishop launched his appeal for scrap metal. The collection is scheduled to last until July 31.

"It can be anything: old keys, coins, any kind of metal, as long as it is not contaminated or mixed with chemicals, and it cannot contain plastic or wood," said the archbishop's appeal.

Father Lopez said plans call for the statue to be more than 15 feet tall, including the pedestal and papal miter. He said it would be placed a prominent location inside the city's cathedral.