

National collection for church in Latin America set for Jan. 22-23

WASHINGTON - The year 2010 was extraordinary "in terms of needs but also in terms of the response of Catholics all across the United States" to their fellow Catholics in Latin America and the Caribbean, according to Coadjutor Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles.

The archbishop, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Subcommittee for the Church in Latin America, said the challenges facing the church in Latin America include a shortage of clergy, strong proselytism by other faiths, migration and a lack of resources and personnel to offer adequate religious education.

The annual national Collection for the Church in Latin America is slated for the weekend of Jan. 22-23 this year, with the theme, "Keep Faith."

Donations to the collection will support evangelization in some of the poorest parts of the church by promoting lay leadership programs and the education of seminarians and religious brothers and sisters who help keep the faith alive in parts of the world where the majority of Catholics live.

In 2010, the collection was able to distribute \$7.5 million to 423 projects. Of that amount, 23 percent went to the formation of seminarians and religious, 13 percent for the formation of lay pastoral agents, 43 percent to support pastoral activities and nearly 5 percent went to construction of temporary chapels in Chile after the February 2010 earthquake there.

Assistance to the church in Haiti totaled more than \$1.3 million and is expected to increase substantially in 2011 to rebuild chapels, convents, churches and houses of formation in the earthquake-stricken country. Funds from the collection in 2010 went to catechesis and Catholic communications after the January 2010 earthquake, as well as to post-trauma counseling for survivors and pastoral care.

"Through our generous support for the church in Latin America, we are serving the body of Christ and are sharing communion in that same body," Archbishop Gomez

said.