

Mexico City cathedral to reopen Saturday

The Miami Herald
Nov. 23, 2007

MEXICO CITY --

Church officials said Mexico City's world-renowned cathedral will reopen Saturday, six days after more than 100 protesters barged into the cavernous building and interrupted Sunday Mass.

A new city plan to guarantee the cathedral's security persuaded church leaders to reopen the religious landmark, the Archdiocese of Mexico said in a statement.

"We trust that there won't be any more acts that put people at risk and desecrate the sacred grounds of the metropolitan cathedral," it said.

Protesters burst into the cathedral Nov. 18, angry that its bells seemed to toll longer than normal, drowning out a speech at a rally outside in favor of former leftist presidential candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. Lopez Obrador claims conservative President Felipe Calderon robbed him of last year's election.

Roman Catholic officials said the call to Mass was routine and not designed to interrupt the rally. Cardinal Norberto Rivera closed the building to the public for "security" reasons, they said.

But the Latin American Episcopal Council questioned the closure in a letter released Friday, and called on Rivera to reopen the cathedral so that "Mexico's faithful can use it."

Mexico City Mayor Marcelo Ebrard promised Monday to assign a special police unit to the cathedral and install security cameras around and inside the building.

Ebrard had increased security at Rivera's request weeks ago, after several smaller political protests were held inside the cathedral building.

But Sunday's demonstrators blew past police, startling churchgoers and overturning pews.