

## FM-3 Religious Visa FAQs

### What does Mexican law say about foreign ministers?

In 1993, a new law for religious associations and public cult came out in Mexico, stating that every church had to be registered as a religious association. When churches register, they are assigned an AR number, which is a registration code for Mexican churches. According to this law, the only way a foreigner can perform religious activities in Mexico is by obtaining a FM-3 visa. This is obtained through the legal invitation of a registered religious association in Mexico with an AR number. The Mexican pastor must complete the paperwork and turn it in at the immigration office in Mexico.

### What is a FM-3?

This visa is required of people not of Mexican citizenship and grants them permission to perform certain activities in Mexico (e.g., religious, scientific, artistic, athletic, etc.). The visa will be good for the duration of the event. You may request an extension if you want to come back some time later in the year. This visa requires the written invitation of a Mexican church registered with an AR number, a letter of acceptance from your church, copies of your passport, and the Mexican pastor's signature on the application form available through the Religious Affairs Office in Mexico.

### How can I get a FM-3?

This visa can only be obtained through a Religious Affairs Office in Mexico. Mexico Outreach will only facilitate the process by giving you the most recent information and making contact with the Mexican church and an attorney in Mexico, but every other part of the process is your responsibility.

Mexico Outreach has partnered with an attorney in Mexico that will help us process an FM-3 for those pastors who are interested. If you wish to apply for the FM-3 with Mexico Outreach's help, you will need to:

- Be completely committed to the ministry.
- Request a complete check list of all requirements needed from Mexico Outreach.
- Pay a fee of \$400 that will cover the cost for travel expenses and attorney fees in Tijuana and Mexico City. (The money goes directly to the attorney. Mexico Outreach makes no profit out of this process).
- Present a valid passport good for six months after day of entry into Mexico.
- Choose a conveniently located Mexican Consulate in the U.S. or Canada where the FM-3 can be sent. You'll have to pick it up and sign it. For a list of consulates in the U.S. and Canada, go to [www.mexonline.com/consulate.htm/](http://www.mexonline.com/consulate.htm/).
- Obtain a letter on your church's letterhead signed by the leader of the church validating that you are a minister in that church and that they support your ministry in Mexico. Contact Mexico Outreach for a sample letter written in Spanish that should be proofed by Mexico Outreach staff before signing. This letter needs to be notarized as well.
- Obtain an Apostille from the U.S. Department of State. For more information about an Apostille and locations of local offices, go to the U.S. Department of State's website under Office of Authentication at [www.state.gov/m/a/auth/](http://www.state.gov/m/a/auth/).
- Complete a background check from the Sheriff's Office (preferred).

The attorney in Mexico will contact the Mexican pastor to fill out the necessary documentation. He will send your authenticated letter of acceptance along with the letter from the Mexican church inviting you, copies of your passport, and other forms to Mexico City. An attorney in Mexico City will turn in your documentation to the main immigration office and complete the appropriate process. The main office in Mexico City will process the petition and will send

notice to the Mexican Consulate that you choose. You will then need to take your original passport to the Mexican Consulate to receive your FM-3. The final step is to stop at the border on the way into Mexico and get an entry stamp on your FM-3.

**What are the deadlines to apply for an FM-3 and what do I need to turn in?**

- First, notify Mexico Outreach of your intentions to apply for a FM-3 so we can guide you through the process and check your paperwork before it is submitted.
- Next, submit the following documents along with a check for \$400 made out to our attorney in Mexico at least five (5) weeks prior to the day you wish to cross the border:
  - A copy of the page in your passport with your photo and the expiration date
  - The letter from your church already notarized along with the Apostille. This letter needs to be reviewed by Mexico Outreach staff before notarization and Apostille.
- Mail all documents and payments to:  
Mexico Outreach  
Azusa Pacific University  
PO Box 7000  
Azusa, CA 91702-7000

**What kind of ministry can I do if I don't have a FM-3?**

Check the "Government Regulations" section on page 27 of the Registration Manual.

**The Mexican pastor usually asks me to preach during one of the evening services. What should I do if I don't have a FM-3?**

Mexican pastors should be aware of how you can participate without a FM-3 and of the consequences of preaching without one. If for some reason your pastor asks you to preach, you should make him aware of the rules. If he desires more information, have him get in touch with the Mexico Outreach staff at base camp.

**What are the penalties for performing religious activities in Mexico without a FM-3?**

Penalties could range from deportation from the country, a fine of up to \$10,000, or time in prison for up to three (3) years. This law has not been enforced in all areas of Mexico, but we know of cases in the state of Baja California where this law has been enforced and penalties have been attributed to individuals performing religious activities without a FM-3.

***Disclaimer:** As we have experienced in the past, this law could change without previous notice and the process could be modified. If this happens, we will inform you as soon as possible.*

If you have any questions regarding FM-3 visas, you may contact Mexico Outreach at (626) 812-3027, [moreg@apu.edu](mailto:moreg@apu.edu).