

# DIOCESAN PLAN FOR HISPANIC MINISTRY

## Addendum

### 1. Introduction

Preparing ourselves to evaluate our Diocesan Plan for Hispanic Ministry, some time ago we did a survey on the scope, strengths and deficiencies of our pastoral plan and action. Parish pastors and associate ministers from various parishes that have special programs to attend to the Latin community participated in this survey. The results of the survey helped us refocus our activities as a diocesan team and, at the beginning of this year, allowed us to evaluate our pastoral plan and daily efforts with broader criteria.

### 2. The Strengths of our Pastoral Plan

- a. Our plan for pastoral action has given vision and direction to Hispanic Ministry; in the diocese it has contributed to the appreciation of cultures in the bosom of the Church and to their integration. The plan has allowed us to be faithful to the example of our predecessors opting for social justice and promoting the ecclesial participation of the Hispanic people.
- b. We have had a direct impact in the life of many parishes and we have promoted cultural sensitivity among the clergy and among the faithful. As a fruit of this we can see today a greater integration of the diverse cultures that share a temple together.
- c. The formation of lay leaders has contributed to a greater participation of Hispanic people in parish life.
- d. Through diverse programs such as *Proyecto Socorro*, we have been able to reach out to a great number of families in times of urgent need.
- e. The active participation of all members of the diocesan pastoral team in the promotion and advocacy for the rights of the Hispanic community has contributed to its being better served in many institutions.
- f. The restructuring of the “Regions” or Pastoral Zones has allowed us to redistribute our human resources to respond to the new challenges that arise due to the demographic explosion in the diocese.
- g. The organization of sport and cultural activities has been very valuable, enabling the community—especially the youth—to interact and find a healthy atmosphere where they can form friendships and process their experience as immigrants.
- h. Through programs coordinated from our regional offices and the presence of pastoral associates, increased attention to the migrant workers has been achieved.
- i. The pastoral plan has had an impact on the work of various secretariats and diocesan institutions that wished to include the Hispanic community in their services. The *pastoral de conjunto* that has

always motivated us has enabled us to coordinate our efforts with diverse public and private agencies to benefit the local community; it also has allowed us to go far beyond diocesan frontiers to participate on state, regional and national levels in several areas, contributing to the affirmation of a common vision. Much has been accomplished, but even greater is the road ahead that we must still travel.

### 3. Social Challenges of the Hispanic Community

- a. Among us there are Hispanics who are second and third generation residents born in West Michigan; nevertheless, the Hispanic community in our diocese is **characterized by a high index of demographic growth**. Many people come looking for work and hoping to achieve the American dream, making West Michigan their new environment. Others are agricultural workers who remain in our area for much of the year. In both groups we find those who are trying to settle in the area. In many cases, this process of establishing themselves here takes more than a decade.
- b. Those who are recently establishing themselves in the area, as well as those who have already been in this process for years, have become a **floating population that is unable to put down roots in the area because they lack attention** in cultural, economical and religious areas. **They haven't been able to process their experience of uprooting themselves from what was once their land and to assume this land as their new environment**. This has created a dilemma that goes far beyond the existing resources and demands the participation of every member of society and the Church.
- c. Although great **joint efforts** have been realized with other institutions to attend to the basic problems that afflict immigrants, there still are many immigrants who live in very limited conditions. This is not due to a lack of effort on their part; rather, it is because of their ignorance about the help that is available, or due to unscrupulous people who abuse immigrants because of their migratory status or ignorance of the law. But the main reason is their **lack of representation and leadership**. The fact is, there are a great number of inhabitants who **lack the basic services of housing, health and education, areas for sports and recreation, and religious assistance**.
- d. Although a great majority of the immigrants seek better conditions and make an effort to work and to cooperate in the development of our cities, there exists **the problem of insecurity and a growing culture of violence**. Gangs are multiplying and **attention to young people is practically non-existent**.
- e. Distance, migratory obstacles and a secularized society have undermined families, a value always identified with the Latino community. Today, family life as an essential means of fulfilling people has very much distanced itself from being able to fulfill its mission as the first educational unit. **The disintegration of families and divorce have become a common practice**. There are a great number of **young single mothers** who are forced to leave the care of their children to daycare or relatives. **Sexual promiscuity** and the **lack of education** have scourged our community with **AIDS** and other diseases. On the other hand, materialism, consumerism and the lack of values have decisively influenced our homes.

#### 4. Pastoral Challenges

- a. In the ongoing mission as a Church to bring the presence of Christ to the world, today especially we find ourselves with the challenge of discovering the multiple faces in the house of God, His Church. Although the seed of the kingdom can be seen reflected in the celebrations of our diversity within the unity to which we are called, it is important that we recognize that **the sin of racism is still present in the Church**. Many times ignorance, as well as the lack of good will, makes it difficult to have a harmonious *encuentro* with the diverse ethnic groups of which the Church of the diocese of Grand Rapids is composed.
- b. Religious attendance in our diocese, in the best of cases, reaches some 7,000 Latinos out of a total of 72,000 and this attention is limited in most cases to only a sacramental accompaniment due to the demographic growth and to the lack of bilingual ministers ordained or not ordained. This difficult situation is made even worse as we observe the **increasing proselytism** of fundamentalist churches and **pastoral activity with unilateral measures that do not contemplate the whole panorama and are lacking a common goal**.
- c. **The evangelization of culture, the problems of laypersons and the growing secularism in our environment require our attention**. In many cases, our pastoral ministry is limited to the sacramental aspect. It is necessary to create and promote a plan for gradual catechesis at the diocesan level that is adapted to the special characteristics of the Spanish speaking population. A difficulty exists in reaching out to the masses as well as to those Hispanics who have been climbing the economic and social ladder.
- d. In the liturgical-sacramental area we are able to verify that **there is a lack of unity of criteria among the pastors relating to preparation for the reception of the sacraments**, which motivates the faithful to seek out the parishes with fewer requirements. There is also indifference and ignorance about the sacraments on the part of many Catholics, that transforms them into mere social acts.
- e. There is a lack of understanding, promotion and application of Catholic social teaching.
- f. Many lay people participate in **diocesan and parish movements and associations** such as cursillos, guadalupanas, prayer groups, and pro family movements. For many years these groups have been the welcoming place of the immigrant, a refuge where they could find themselves and identify with their culture. It is necessary that these noble efforts **be integrated into a pastoral de conjunto** in the Diocese. Leaders who are conscious of their Christian commitment participate in these groups. Nevertheless, most of those who have been baptized are not fully conscious of belonging to the Church.
- g. Attention to the youth ought to be a priority in our pastoral project. Until now we haven't achieved the convocation of the enormous youth population of our Diocese, who are seeking a clear and coherent answer to their needs.

- h. The organization of a sports, culture and art ministry has created places where the Hispanic population is able to maintain and promote mental health; **this program needs to be expanded to provide more recreation and leisure activity for families.**
- i. **Religious sects have greatly increased** among us, with economic resources and access to the social media. It is necessary, in the face of these campaigns of proselytism that we effectively respond, not only through mass communications but by providing more information to the community regarding this danger.
- j. **Integral preparation of young couples is urgent**, in premarital preparation of couples, in family education and in formation for responsible parenting. Another thing that is of great concern is the pastoral attention given to divorced people and couples who are not able to get married in the church and who find themselves marginalized in community life, making them fertile ground for the sects.
- k. Although there have been great advances in the area of the formation of lay leaders (short programs designed for specific ministries and especially the ICLM program), **it is urgent to get more laypersons involved.**
- l. Assistance to the **sick, incarcerated and handicapped** requires greater coordination. **Bilingual ministers are needed**; those who are doing this work need to be prepared to reach out to Spanish speakers.
- m. Moreover, it is especially imperative to rediscover and promote the beauty of each one of the vocations with which the Lord has called us to serve His people, the matrimonial vocation as well as the priesthood and other religious vocations.
- n. The lack of bilingual personnel, in the parishes as well as in Catholic schools—especially in areas where the Hispanic population is growing—limits the possibilities of appropriately welcoming Spanish-speaking Catholics.

## 5. Challenge of Collaboration

- a. In our Diocese, there are various programs and individuals working in diverse areas that benefit the Hispanic community. These are highly valued, but **it is necessary for our efforts to be integrated into one project.**
- b. The “regions” of Hispanic ministry have contributed to respond to the needs of the different areas of the diocese. It would be very useful in the future **to try to insert them within the ministry of the deaneries.**
- c. In general, there is a good spirit of collaboration between the different diocesan institutions and secretariats. However, it would be desirable for this collaboration to become deeper in matters that ought to be attended to in an integral way and dealt with not by just one diocesan office but by a group of personas from different secretariats.

- d. It is necessary to establish channels of communication with separated Christians to define forms of collaboration that will benefit the community in general. Especially attending to the needs of families who have members of a different creed.

## 6. Transforming the Challenges into Hope: A COMMON VISION

Beyond the celebration of our achievements and the identification of our challenges it is necessary to transform these challenges into hope, and this is possible if always we reaffirm our greatest challenge and mission has been, and always will be, evangelization; in other words, our challenge is to be a sign of contradiction, a sacrament for the world, community and communion so that the world will believe in Jesus (John 17:21).

In this call to be evangelizers—promoters of community and communion—as we are guided by the Spirit, we ought to purpose within ourselves to respond with effectiveness to the complex reality of our internal diversity and by means of a *pastoral de conjunto*.

Throughout history, the experience of being a communitarian Church has arisen as a fruit of the efforts and participation of all members and pastoral ministers in the local churches and because of their conviction that it is the communion and participation of the members of the People of God that will make it and them to be a sign of contradiction for the world.

At this very moment in which our diocese is called to incarnate the gospel, diversity in all aspects within the Church as well as in society in general is a sign that demands of us competent action to bring to pass a communion-community, and as a Hispanic ministry we are able to contribute to this task by promoting a *pastoral de conjunto*. The fundamental task of the *pastoral de conjunto* is to promote unity in the Church, making the ideal of the Church-Communion a reality, because the Church is essentially a communion in its being and in its work.

The *pastoral de conjunto* is the harmonious coordination of all the elements of the pastoral ministry with the actions of all the pastoral ministers and structures in view of a common goal: the Kingdom of God. It is not only a methodology, but it is the expression of the essence and mission of the Church, which is to be and to make communion (# 6 National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry—NCCB)

The *pastoral de conjunto* is a response to the authentic spirit of the New Evangelization: new spirit, new methods, and a new expression. Our *pastoral de conjunto* will become a reality only through new attitudes, efficient organization, functional ecclesial structures, and through renewed and committed pastoral ministers, well-planned pastoral actions and living and dynamic ecclesial levels.

Based on this vision that arises out of our very identity as Catholics, from the results of surveys given to pastoral ministers of the diocese this past year, the demographic results of Census 2000, as well as in the light of documents from the Catholic Church in the United States and from the Americas and the areas of focus that Assembly 2005 will be proposing, it is evident that the greatest priority in our ministry is **Evangelization**. So we could redefine our general objective in the following way:

## 7. GENERAL OBJECTIVE FOR HISPANIC MINISTRY

- a. To be an **evangelizing** church in a permanent process of conversion that will strengthen the communion of the Body of Christ through **the celebration and valorization of cultural diversity** within the Church and in society.
- b. A **prophetic** church incarnated in the local reality that defends and is supportive of the new immigrants, the poorest, the undocumented, the migrant worker, the incarcerated and the most vulnerable: children, youth and women.
- c. A church of **stewards** where Latinos from all generations and non-Latinos are ministers and subjects of evangelization.
- d. A church **committed** to a *pastoral de conjunto* among the parishes and with the different diocesan offices.
- e. A church that **promotes, recognizes and expresses cultural diversity within the leadership** in all its levels.
- f. A church that finds its energy in **liturgy and a life of worship**.
- g. A church that values the diverse calls (marriage, priesthood, religious and consecrated single life) in which we respond to our common **baptismal vocation**.

## 8. NEW MISSION

“The mission of the office of Hispanic Ministry is to support the parishes in their evangelization task by means of a *pastoral de conjunto*<sup>1</sup> and provide leadership in the promotion of the full participation of Hispanics, residents and non-residents, in the sacramental, communitarian, missionary and social life of the parish and diocese, enriching the church through the sharing of cultures and languages.”

## 9. PRIORITIES

- a. Formation of leaders for today’s multicultural church
- b. Development of a Hispanic youth ministry
- c. Stewardship and participation of the Latino community
- d. Valorization and expression of our cultural diversity
- e. Renovation of our commitment to social justice
- f. Celebration of prayer and Liturgy

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<sup>1</sup> (# 6 National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry—NCCB)

- g. Valuation of the diverse calls (marriage, religious and priesthood) from which we can respond to our common baptismal vocation.

## 10. Biblical Support for our Priorities

- a. **The Formation of leaders for today's multicultural Church:**

Matthew 28: 19-20: "Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age."

- b. **The development of youth ministry:**

1 Timothy 4:12: "Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but be an example for the believers in your speech, your conduct, your love, faith and purity."

- c. **Stewardship and Participation of the Latino community:**

Acts 4:32: "The group of believers was one in mind and heart. None of them said that any of their belongings were their own, but they all shared with one another everything they had."

- d. **The Appreciation and Expression of our Cultural Diversity:**

Romans 12:4-8 – Many parts, one body: "We have many parts in the one body, and all these parts have different functions. In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body...."

1 Corinthians 12:4-31 – Unity and diversity: "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to all for their particular service...."

- e. **The Renewal of our Commitment to Social Justice**

Matthew 25:38-40: "When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you? The King will reply, 'I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!'"

- f. **The Celebration of our Life of Prayer and Liturgy**

John 17:20-23 – The Prayer of Jesus: "I pray not only for them, but also for those who believe in me because of their message. I pray that they may all be one, Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you."

1 Timothy 2:8: "In every church service, I want the men to pray, men who are dedicated to God and can lift up their hands in prayer without anger or argument."

g. **The Promotion of our Baptismal Vocation while living out our particular vocation to Holy Orders, Marriage, Religious Life or committed single life:**

Ephesians 4:3-5 y 11 -12: *“Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace that binds you together. There is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called you.”* *“There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism....”* ... *“It was he who gave gifts to people; he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers.”*

## 11. Church Documents that ought to clarify our pastoral planning and Action

**Diocesan Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry** (Diocese of Grand Rapids): *“To evangelize is to bring the message of the Good News to those who do not yet know it, the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Good News of the love of the Father for each one of us. We must evangelize as Our Lady of Guadalupe did. We must evangelize as Our Lady of Guadalupe did. We must evangelize as [San] Juan Diego did, bringing the message of our faith in the love and the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Bishop Robert J. Rose, Homily on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe in St. Jean Baptiste Parish, Muskegon, Michigan, December 10, 1995.

**Encuentro & Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry.** A statement of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, as an inspirational goal for all to:

- Develop a common vision and mission for Hispanic ministry.
- Consolidate the structures of Hispanic ministry.
- Develop a strategy for a Pastoral de Conjunto.
- Promote the development of Hispanic leaders.

**Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity.** A Statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

*“The Church of the twenty-first century requires a profound conversion in spirit and in its institutions to reflect its own cultural pluralism.”*

**The Church in America: On the Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ: The Way to Conversion, Communion, and Solidarity in America.** Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation.

*“As a particular Church, the diocese is charged with initiating and deepening the encounter of all the members of God's People with Jesus Christ,<sup>119</sup> respecting and fostering that plurality and diversification which are not obstacles to unity but which give it the character of communion.<sup>120</sup> The spirit of participation and shared responsibility in the working of diocesan structures will certainly be strengthened if the nature of the particular Church is better known and appreciated.”*