



Diocesan Pastoral Plan for  
**Hispanic Ministry**

Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester

Office of Cultural Ministries  
Department of Pastoral Services



# Introduction

In 2015, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops invited all U.S. Catholics to embark on a four-year journey towards the Fifth National Encuentro for Hispanic/Latino Ministry. The main goal of the Fifth Encuentro is to discern ways in which the Church in the United States can better respond to the Hispanic/Latino presence, and to strengthen the ways in which Hispanics/Latinos respond to the call to the New Evangelization as missionary disciples serving the entire Church.

The Fifth Encuentro began at the grassroots level with a 5-part process of reflection and consultation in small communities and led to a Parish Encuentro. The Parish Encuentro was followed by diocesan, regional and national gatherings of delegates who represented the needs of the local community and identified recommendations to address the pastoral challenges at each level.

In our Diocese, a total of 477 participants took part in the parish process from February through August 2017. On October 21, 2017, 100 parish delegates participated in a Diocesan Encuentro which resulted in the following conclusions and diocesan pastoral priorities for Hispanic Ministry over the next 3-5 years. In June 2018, 300 diocesan delegates from across New York State gathered in Albany, NY for a Regional Encuentro where they shared successful practices and identified pastoral priorities for the New York State region. The four-year process culminated with the celebration of the Fifth National Encuentro event in September 2018 with 3,000 delegates from across the United States, and outlined a renewed vision for Hispanic/Latino Ministry.

It is our hope that this Diocesan Pastoral Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry will be a resource to our local faith communities as we strive to be a Church that “goes forth” as “a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice” (EG, 24). The successful pastoral practices outlined in this document are applicable across cultures and the identified areas for growth are a reflection of the present-day challenges in our communities.

## Our Diocese

According to the Official Catholic Directory from 2016, the Diocese of Rochester is 7,107 square miles and is comprised of twelve counties in Western New York. There are approximately 1,516,430 people living in the diocesan boundary, of which 312,750 are Catholic. There are 94 parishes in the Diocese; however, that number is decreasing as parishes continue to cluster and merge. There are 18 Diocesan and Parish Catholic Elementary Schools, 8 privately run Catholic Schools, and one Catholic graduate school for Theology and Ministry.

Regarding the ethnic/linguistic and socioeconomic composition of the Diocese, the most accurate information available comes from the 2015 update of the 2010 United States Census. Within the diocesan boundary, 5.8% of the general population is Hispanic/Latino; 8.7% is African American; and 5.1% is Asian. All three categories are projected to rise slightly in the next five years.

Across the Diocese, the average household income is \$68,737, and the per capita income is \$27,689. However, there are pockets of extreme poverty in every part of the Diocese, most especially seen in the inner city and rural communities.

In the Diocese, we celebrate 6 weekly Sunday liturgies in Spanish. Three Spanish Masses are celebrated on a monthly basis. We have 8 Hispanic priests, as well as 9 non-Hispanic priests and 4 non-Hispanic women religious that speak Spanish. Several of our priests also celebrate Mass by reading the Spanish translation, even though they do not actually speak Spanish. Currently, we have 9 Hispanic deacons serving in the diocese and 7 Hispanic lay ecclesial ministers working full-time in the Pastoral Center. In our parishes, we also have two full-time and one part-time, Hispanic lay ecclesial ministers.

# Hispanic Ministry in our Diocese

Hispanics arrived in large numbers in the Diocese of Rochester beginning in the late 1940's. The majority came from Puerto Rico, where unemployment forced people to leave their homeland in search of better lives for themselves and their children – the same need that motivates immigrants from other Spanish-speaking countries today. Yet, the fact that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens migrating within the U.S. national borders establishes a key cultural difference even within Hispanic Ministry itself. Today's immigrants from Mexico and farther south cannot easily establish themselves safely and legally in the U.S. Their struggle gives Hispanic Ministry a different focus and sense of urgency.

## Our Mission Statement

*We, the Hispanic community of the Diocese of Rochester, commit ourselves to: proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God; celebrate the Eucharist which calls us together in community, nurtures our faith, and sends us in mission; actively participate in civic and ecclesial life by sharing our traditions, gifts, and values.*

## Our Core Values

**Community** - We form communities that live in fraternity and foster the dignity of the family and a passion for life.

**Tradition** - We live a deep experience of faith and an authentic spirituality, inspired by the witness of our Catholic Hispanic culture.

**Service** - In the spirit of mission, we seek to reach out to those who are alienated, poor and marginalized.

**Unity in Diversity** - We value the great and rich diversity of our local church, working together in shaping an inclusive Church.

**Eucharist** - We venerate the Most Holy Eucharist which nurtures us and strengthens our vocation to be leaven for the Kingdom of God in society.

# The Voices of Latinos in the Peripheries

## Present-day Challenges in Our Diocese

A number of common themes were identified regarding the present-day challenges that prevent Hispanics/Latinos living on the periphery from reaching their potential in U.S. society and that require pastoral attention. Hispanics/Latinos living in rural areas expressed high anxiety for their own and their loved ones' safety and wellbeing. For example, the rural migrant and temporary farm workers identified indebtedness, lack of employment, experience of racism, loneliness, fear of deportation, cultural alienation, and dread of family separation as some of the situations and obstacles that they face.



Those living in urban and suburban areas, by comparison, identified more general concerns such as struggles with faith, family, physical and mental health issues and finances. Racism and a general lack of cultural *sensibilidad* (emotional and mental responsiveness) in society and the Church were also described as contributing factors to the difficulties experienced by Hispanics/Latinos. Other social issues include workers' rights, affordable housing, and access to education and healthcare.

Young people, primarily U.S.-born Latinos, expressed the need to feel included in the Church. They want to belong and not feel judged. The inability to speak Spanish makes it difficult for some to participate fully in the Spanish Mass. Parents described the challenges of raising a family, passing on cultural traditions, and maintaining family unity across long distances as children get older and move away from home. In Catholic schools, students identified low self-esteem, family situations, and the cost of a Catholic education as challenges or obstacles. The school workload can be overwhelming and stressful for students, and sometimes they have difficulty feeling like they belong.

Incarcerated Latinos who participated in this process expressed gratitude for any attention on the part of Church visitors and ministers. Sharing the Word of God becomes a truly life-giving encounter in their circumstance. Their challenges include being kind and respectful to one another, being separated from family during significant life moments, and trusting in others. They naturally seek reconciliation and forgiveness.

## Hopes and Dreams

The hopes and dreams among the rural and temporary migrant farm workers focused on providing for basic family needs and security (i.e., housing, food, and financial stability). Hispanics/Latinos from urban and suburban areas expressed hopes and dreams in terms specifically related to their identification with the norms of the U.S. culture. Finding better employment, paying for healthcare, planning for retirement, and worrying about their children's schooling and advancement are primary concerns. They are also eager to build up their parish community and their faith life within it. Young people expressed a keen desire to contribute to U.S. society and to the promotion of equality throughout the country.



# The Voices from the Faith Communities

As part of the consultation process participating groups were asked to share their successful ministerial practices, as well as some ideas of how the Church can better serve Hispanic/Latino Catholics. The categories were defined by the National Fifth Encuentro process.

## Welcoming, accompanying and embracing Hispanics/Latinos

Successful Practices	Room for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parish evangelization and faith formation programs</li> <li>• Masses, retreats, and celebration of Sacraments</li> <li>• Cultural celebrations and devotions</li> <li>• Use bilingual songs and prayers</li> <li>• Establish a Hospitality Ministry</li> <li>• Invite Latino representation on Pastoral Council</li> <li>• Recognize first time visitors and parish volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more resources to support small ecclesial communities</li> <li>• Offer training on planning culturally diverse liturgies</li> <li>• Offer Saturday Mass in Spanish</li> <li>• Provide follow up with new visitors</li> <li>• Create evangelization teams to do outreach</li> <li>• Encourage members to register in the parish</li> <li>• Make room for new leaders</li> <li>• Take full advantage of the spaces available in parish facilities</li> </ul>

## Affirming the presence and contributions of Hispanics/Latinos

Successful Practices	Room for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be compassionate and non-judgmental</li> <li>• Actively support the gifts of Hispanics/Latinos, especially of those at the margins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote bilingualism and the understanding of cultural differences</li> <li>• Promote/support Latinos learning English as a second language</li> <li>• Provide information in both languages to facilitate two-way communication</li> <li>• Reach out and promote leadership among bilingual youth and young adults</li> </ul>

## Fostering family ministries

Successful Practices	Room for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide pastoral support and accompaniment during times of need and comfort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer support groups for families with young children and single parents</li> <li>• Provide retreats for families and married couples</li> <li>• Create marriage enrichment teams</li> <li>• Identify and connect with parish families</li> <li>• Provide day care during parish activities</li> <li>• Host family gatherings in homes</li> </ul>

## Accompanying settled Hispanic migrants and temporary farmworkers

Successful Practices	Room for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diocesan regional coordinators of migrant ministry</li> <li>• Welcome and support new arrivals whether or not they have papers or work visas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize more activities with temporary farm workers</li> <li>• Provide more practical support for the undocumented for fear of being detained, i.e. shopping or laundry</li> <li>• Increase advocacy</li> </ul>

## Welcoming, accompanying and embracing Hispanic/Latino youth

Successful Practices	Room for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide safe spaces for youth to gather and good adult role models</li> <li>• Participate in cultural celebrations and devotions</li> <li>• Use bilingual songs and prayers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Quinceañera preparation resources</li> <li>• Include youth-friendly music during the Sunday Mass</li> <li>• Offer more youth retreats</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for leadership</li> <li>• Preach homilies that are inclusive of the reality of young people</li> <li>• Organize programs for neighborhood kids, i.e. sports</li> <li>• Provide vocational discernment</li> <li>• Organize study groups</li> <li>• Provide anti-bullying programs</li> </ul>

## Supporting Catholic school students

Successful Practices	Room for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide financial aid to Latino families in need of assistance</li> <li>• Promote Catholic school values</li> <li>• Provide peer-to-peer support</li> <li>• Organize clubs and afterschool activities</li> <li>• Increase diversity in the student body</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the parish Catholic school by fundraising for student scholarships</li> <li>• Improve accessibility to counseling services and/or peer mentors</li> <li>• More leadership opportunities and training</li> </ul>

## Fostering ministries with the incarcerated

Successful Practices	Room for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities to celebrate Mass and learn about the Sacraments</li> <li>• Offer daily scripture study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire additional chaplains</li> <li>• Provide more opportunities for encountering Christ</li> <li>• Increase involvement from different Catholic organizations</li> </ul>





## Providing social outreach to Hispanics/Latinos in need

Successful Practices	Room for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ministries of food, clothing and furniture</li> <li>• Coordinate neighborhood outreach efforts, i.e. community meals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness about available community resources</li> <li>• Organize fundraisers to help the poor</li> <li>• Provide better accessibility to mental health and counseling services</li> </ul>

## Promoting and discerning vocations

Successful Practices	Room for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer ongoing leadership development and ministry formation programs thru the Instituto Pastoral Hispano</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the current deacon formation requirements to accommodate language and educational barriers</li> <li>• Foster relationships between the Hispanic community, the clergy and women religious, especially among Hispanic youth</li> <li>• Develop relationships between the vocations office, religious congregations and the Hispanic parishes</li> <li>• Provide discernment opportunities for vocations such as organized trips to monasteries and chapels</li> </ul>

## Promoting and developing Hispanic/Latino lay ecclesial ministers

Successful Practices	Room for Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer courses through the Instituto Pastoral Hispano</li> <li>• Offer continuing education workshops at the parish and diocesan levels</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for formation-in-action</li> <li>• Participate in national trainings</li> <li>• Offer peer ministry course for Catholic high school seniors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more opportunities to learn about liturgy, family life, technology, catechism, the Eucharist, ecumenism, evangelization and ecclesiology</li> <li>• Offer training for pastoral ministers on building intercultural competencies</li> </ul>

# Diocesan Pastoral Priorities

The following pastoral priorities emerged from the grassroots consultation process that took place in our diocese and were finalized at the Diocesan Encuentro in October 2017.

## Area 1: Vocations

- Increase religious vocation awareness within the Hispanic community
- Build stronger relationships with the Bishop and diocesan personnel through new or current channels

## Area 2: Immigration

- Intensify advocacy efforts on behalf of many migrant families that are suffering because of the way the new immigration laws are being applied
- Actively participate in collaborative, interreligious and ecumenical advocacy efforts for the rights and needs of immigrants

## Area 3: Intercultural Competence

- Create educational tools to confront racism and discrimination
- Assist with integration efforts between cultural communities within the same parish

## Area 4: Families and Married Couples

- Develop bilingual resources to help couples discern marriage and continue in their life-long vocation
- Offer professional development workshops for pastoral leaders that promote family ministries

## Area 5: Leadership Development and Formation

- Promote an understanding that Hispanic/ Latino immigrants are full members of the Body of Christ and recognize their gifts and contributions
- Provide opportunities for clergy and pastoral ministers to learn the Spanish language and increase cultural awareness

## Area 6: Youth Ministry

- Develop adult and youth leaders to coordinate Pastoral Juvenil Hispana/Comprehensive Youth Ministry in a multicultural context
- Sponsor gathered youth events that strengthen Hispanic/Latino identity through a process of personal reflection and intercultural encounter

## Area 7: Prison Ministry

- Develop spiritual resources specifically for the incarcerated
- Develop ministries that provide support to the incarcerated and their families

## Area 8: Catholic Schools

- Offer training that prepares students to serve in age-appropriate liturgical ministries
- Promote a culture of vocation in Catholic schools through dialogue, presentations, and distribution of informational materials



## Conclusion

The Diocesan Encuentro has brought attention to the importance of a conscious commitment to reach out, integrate, and engage the many cultures which exist in our faith communities. Integration of the many cultures in our parishes should occur at various levels (staffing, liturgies, music, committees, activities, etc.) and cannot be the concern of a few people. Leadership awareness and commitment of pastoral councils and committees are also critical. Communication and multicultural educational opportunities are essential for creating a sense of inclusiveness within the parish.

The Hispanic/Latino community brings many gifts and talents to the Catholic Church and society. The gifts of the Spanish-language, cultural traditions, and willingness to share their faith freely with others can enhance and support the mission of the Church in evangelization and catechesis. The gifts of music and song, of popular devotions and fiestas, and their participation in liturgical ministerial roles help contribute to joyful celebrations of worship. The hard work ethic common to Hispanics/Latinos, their compassion, and their desire to help those in need, lead to a dedication to serve others. Their gifts of humility, faithfulness, hospitality, and hopefulness help foster communities of faith that welcome the stranger and the lost.

Despite the wonderful ministries and programs taking place in our faith communities and their good works, those who participated in this consultation process expressed the need to become more empathetic in welcoming people to their communities—that is, to try harder, through prayer and better listening skills, to place themselves in the position of the stranger/newcomer; and to become more creative in inventing ways of smoothing his/her welcome.

In general, those consulted expressed anxiety that the Church as a whole – their own communities not excluded – is not doing enough to become a beacon of hope for all people. They expressed a strong need for better ways of communication in order to strengthen relationships within the communities, such as more direct contact especially through email and text messaging. Events and activities need better promotion. Shared, multicultural parishes, in particular, mentioned the importance of strengthening cross-cultural relationships, respecting the language limitations of others, and providing all printed materials both English and Spanish.

Over the next 3-5 years, the Office of Cultural Ministries will continue to work in partnership with pastoral leaders, parish and diocesan staff, and Catholic organizations to implement the Diocesan Pastoral Priorities identified during the Fifth Encuentro process. For more information about how you can get involved, please contact the Diocesan Coordinator of Cultural Ministries at (585) 328-3210.