



Ministry with Young Hispanic Catholics: Towards a Recipe for Growth and Success

A Summary Report of Initial Findings from the National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth

By Hosffman Ospino, PhD



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School of Theology and Ministry

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“We need projects that can strengthen [young people], accompany them and impel them to encounter others, to engage in generous service, in mission”
(Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, n. 30)

Serving Hispanic Catholic Young People: An Ecclesial Imperative

Seizing the Moment: A Younger and More Hispanic Catholic Experience

For nearly half a century, Catholicism in the United States has been engaged in a process of profound renewal and transformation thanks to the Hispanic presence, today nearly 43% of the entire U.S. Catholic population. Immigrant and U.S. born Hispanics constitute the largest body of Catholics among those younger than 40. The median age of Hispanics is 29. About 60% of Catholics younger than 18 self-identify Hispanic. To speak of Hispanic ministry in the United States practically means to speak of youth and young adult ministry.

Catholics in the United States historically have invested significant resources to serve the young. Yet, as the number of young Hispanic Catholics grows in every corner of the country, Catholic structures and organizations have been rather slow adjusting to that presence. Some have unfortunately disappeared. Remaining structures and organizations created to serve young Catholics at all levels often struggle to find the right approach to reach out and retain young Hispanic people. They do not know how to engage the complex, diverse and constantly changing Hispanic young population. They often lack the leadership with the intercultural competencies to relate well and accompany Hispanic young Catholic people on their spiritual journeys. In the meantime, millions of Hispanic young people have stopped self-identifying as Catholic.



At some point Catholic pastoral leaders need to ask two critical questions:

1. Are our current structures and organizations for ministry with young Catholics aware, prepared and willing to adjust to meet the spiritual needs of Hispanic young people?
2. Are Catholics ready to create, when necessary, and support new structures and organizations that have the wisdom and commitment to work with Hispanic youth and young adults?

In the Footsteps of the V National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry (2018)

In 2018, about 3,000 pastoral leaders, mostly Hispanic, met in Grapevine, TX for the national meeting of the Fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry (a.k.a., V Encuentro). They represented nearly 300,000 Catholics who gathered for about two years in parishes, ecclesial movements, schools, universities and many other settings to discuss and discern what it means to be an increasingly Hispanic church in the early decades of the twenty-first century. Most of these Catholics were Hispanic as well. The V Encuentro was a true exercise of synodality with Hispanic/Latino flavor.



Those who were part of the V Encuentro process, particularly as they outlined priorities for evangelizing in this country, heard a clear message:

If the Catholic community in the United States wants to have a vibrant and fruitful future during the rest of this century, we must turn our attention and resources immediately to serve and accompany Hispanic youth and young adults. This is not an option but an imperative, given the size of this population within the Church.

Prioritizing the ministerial accompaniment of Hispanic young people echoed the reflections and commitments emerging from the 2006 *National Encuentro for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry*. The sense of urgency is not new. In fact, nearly every document on Catholic Hispanic ministry during the last half a century has named Hispanic young people as a priority. The question is, what are we doing to actually live into that sense of urgency? Good progress has been made in recent decades: the rise of some pastoral institutes dedicated to ministry with young Hispanic Catholics, the emergence of some ecclesial movements focused on accompanying Hispanic young people, Catholic schools and universities opening spaces for young Hispanics, more research about young Hispanic people, and the creation of the National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana-La Red (1997), among others. And yet, much more remains to be done.

The 12 Catholic Organizations in the National Study

(Alphabetical Order)

1. Centro Católico Carismático, Archdiocese of New York, The Bronx, NY
2. Centro San Juan Diego Arts, Cultural, and Faith Formation, Diocese of El Paso, El Paso, TX
3. Corazón Puro, The Bronx, NY
4. Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, Chicago, IL
5. Damascus Catholic Mission Campus, Centerburg, OH
6. Fuerza Transformadora, Diocese of Little Rock, Little Rock, AR
7. Instituto Fe y Vida, Inc., Lewis University, Romeoville, IL
8. Iskali, Chicago, IL
9. Latino Scholars Program, Habiger Institute for Catholic Leadership, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN
10. Ministry in Lo Cotidiano, Dominican University, Chicago, IL
11. Newman Ministry, Teutopolis, IL
12. Southeast Pastoral Institute (SEPI), Miami, FL



Theoretical Framework

Ministerial Organizational Assessment Theoretical Model*

Mission	Structural Viability	Innovation Capacity/Influence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place in history and response to a well-defined need• Compelling vision (i.e., Mission Statement)• Operative understanding of (Hispanic Catholic) youth• Relationship to immediate ecclesial and social universes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organizational structure• Financial vitality• Human resources• Assessment mechanisms: internal and external	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of flagship programs targeting Hispanic youth• Scope of core resources and publications• Ability to collaborate successfully, ad intra and ad extra• Signs of ministerial innovation: demonstrated and perceived

Theological and Ministerial Foundations:

Evangelization / Spirituality Youth Ministry / Pastoral Juvenil Hispana

*Developed by Hosffman Ospino, PhD - © 2023

The ministerial organizational assessment in this study builds upon three core areas, and specific markers associated with each: 1) Mission, 2) Structural Viability, and 3) Innovation Capacity/Influence. Because the organizations engaged in this study are explicitly faith-based, a theological ministerial foundation is presupposed, grounding and inspiring the work of these organizations as they serve young Hispanic Catholics.

1. Mission

Every organization/institution exists to achieve a purpose while inspired by a specific set of values and commitments. Together, such values and commitments constitute the mission of the organization/institution. The criteria in this area seek to understand how the mission of the organization developed, what triggered its philosophical commitments, and who was involved in principle articulating the mission (e.g., a leader, an organization, a religious order, a non-ecclesial influence, etc.). It is important to understand how the organization articulates key anthropological and cultural convictions associated with those it serves, particularly Hispanic young people. Finally, this core area reveals how each organization/institution interacts with larger ecclesial and social ecosystems (i.e., other organizations, relationships, policies, etc.) within which it is inserted. The area is assessed using four units of analysis:



1.1 Place in history and response to a well-defined need.

Historical, social and ecclesial conditions that gave rise to the organization/institution, with particular attention to the need(s) the founder(s) sought to address and how such mission has evolved over time, particularly by identifying patterns of outreach and programming.

1.2. Compelling vision (i.e., Mission Statement).

Texts, symbols and other categories that the organization/institution uses to articulate its mission. An exercise of textual analysis has the potential to yield lists of categories and help to determine potential correlations with similar language used by other faith-based, non-profit and secular organizations working with similar populations.

1.3 Operative understanding of (Hispanic Catholic) youth.

How the organization/institution understands and defines young Catholic people culturally and religiously, with particular attention to young Hispanics. Researchers study materials associated with the assessment as well as practices that evoke cultural identification. Formal definitions of being young, Catholic and Hispanic are compared with definitions emerging from self-identification from young Catholics being served by the organization/institution.

1.4. Relationship to immediate ecclesial and social universes.

The organization/institution exists in a particular context—i.e., universe—shaped by Catholic and non-Catholic influences. The interactions with these influences shape its self-definition and challenge it to articulate its mission in always creative ways—and adjust it when necessary.

2. Structural Viability

There exists a “visible” side to every organization/institution that makes its operations viable. Such visibility becomes evident through buildings, assets, personnel, boards, online presence, etc. Understanding current structures, at least at a basic level, and mapping them is important to appreciate how the different units operate in relationship with one another in order to succeed. This area of assessment seeks to determine whether the existence of a particular set of structures, or the lack thereof, has any impact at the time of measuring agility, responsiveness and success. This area is assessed using four units of analysis:

2.1 Organizational infrastructure.

Development of a basic inventory of physical and virtual structures that allow the organization/institution to establish a visible—or at least perceivable—presence to reach out to and serve young Hispanics.

2.2. Finances / Budget.

Study existing budgets—as available through public records or as volunteered by the organization/institution—and their specific lines to determine financial priorities and best practices. Whenever possible, determining a historical development of budgets within a specific period (e.g., 10 years) and identify to what extent serving young Hispanics has been identified as a priority over time—or not.

2.3. Human resources.

Compile or develop organizational charts that illustrate how the core personnel in the organization/institution operates, lines of relationship and levels of responsibility. Determine various types of personnel directly involved in advancing the mission and operations of the organization/institution: founder(s), hired employees, boards, volunteers, ecclesiastical personnel, etc.

2.4. Assessment mechanisms: internal and external.

Determine levels of accountability on the part of the organization/institution, internally and externally. All oversight mechanisms studied via this unit of analysis are associated directly with the mission and operations of the organization/institution.



3. Impact Assessment

This is one of the most important areas in this ministerial organizational model. It involves collecting data and developing analyses that will lead to a better understanding of the quality, reach, flexibility, creativity and appropriateness of programs, activities and efforts that the organization/institution considers central to its mission. This area assesses impact by looking at how leaders articulate and anticipate success, how the resources identified as central are actually successful doing what they promise, and how randomly selected beneficiaries of those resources perceive that what they receive makes a difference in their lives and in the lives of their immediate communities. The area is assessed using four units of analysis:

3.1. *Quality of flagship programs targeting Young Hispanic Catholics.*

Select at least two flagship programs identified by the organization/institution as effectively designed or primarily at the service of young Hispanics (or other Catholic young population in the case of the organizations that did not yet have programs reaching out to this specific population).

3.2. *Scope of resources and publications.*

Read and analyze representative resources available in print, online or other means (e.g., music, theater) to determine how they affirm the cultural, social and religious experience of Catholic (Hispanic) youth.

3.3. *Ability to collaborate successfully, ad intra and ad extra.*

Determine levels of communication and collaboration, internally and with traditional units of ecclesial life such as parishes, dioceses, ecclesial movements, schools, universities, etc., as pertinent to the organization/institutions. Determine pathways and obstacles for collaboration, potential patterns of competition among ecclesial units, and risks of ecclesial isolation that may undermine the work of the institutional church or the success of the organization/institution's mission.

3.4. *Signs of ministerial innovation: demonstrated and perceived.*

Identify indicators of ministerial creativity and innovation in the core programs identified in 3.1. while comparing them to similar programs in other ecclesial settings with similar populations, Hispanic and non-Hispanic. Consider developing a scale of ministerial innovation that allows to determine the novelty of each program and its particular contributions to the field of ministry with young Hispanics (*Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*). Listen to young Hispanics who participate in the programs, inviting them to name to what extent the programs have had any impact in their lives.



A note on “Theological and Ministerial Foundations”

All organizations/institutions in this study are faith-based and deeply rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition. Much of what happens in them is grounded in a series of spiritual and theological convictions that often transcend standard assessment tools and go beyond basic measurements. Assessing these faith-based organizations requires paying particular attention to how overarching spiritual and theological categories permeate the vision, operations and expectations of an organization. Identifying the core theological categories that inspire each organization is very important, with particular attention to how they define “evangelization” and Youth Ministry / *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*.

Methodology

Boston College, with the support of Porticus, engaged in a process of consultation nationwide asking pastoral leaders working with young Hispanic or advancing Hispanic ministry efforts, to identify 10 to 12 organizations known at the local level for doing something innovative and perceived as successful regarding their outreach to young Hispanic Catholics. Twelve organizations were identified and invited to be part of the project (see p. 3). Most of these organizations had a previous relationship with Boston College and/or Porticus via collaborations through projects, activities and regional or national meetings to discuss best practices in ministry with young Hispanic Catholics.

The Principal Investigator for the qualitative study is Dr. Hosffman Ospino, Associate Professor of Theology and Religious Education at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. Dr. Ospino has led several national studies and is one of the scholars in the nation most knowledgeable about the Hispanic Catholic experience in the United States. Dr. Ospino's research team working on this project included 8 research assistants: a professor of theology, three theology and education doctoral students, two advanced Master's students in theology and ministry, a senior undergraduate student focusing on International Studies, and a pastoral minister. All research assistants have received appropriate training to engage in the different phases of this project with the support of resources provided by Boston College research services. All are mentored in conducting practical theological analysis. Consultants from within and outside of the university have engaged at various points in individual conversations as needed.

This is a multi-phase research study of Catholic organizations serving young Hispanics. The study relies on three forms of analysis: organizational analysis, program analysis and ministerial analysis. For more information see the section *Theoretical Framework* (pp. 4-6).

The team conducted background research on each organization based on electronic, printed and testimonial resources. Each organization was identified as being part of a ministerial universe (e.g., diocesan ministry, pastoral institutes, Hispanic Serving Institutions, etc.) within which it is inserted. Bibliographies and other resources explaining such ministerial universes were procured and attentively studied in order to understand how the mission of each organization is defined. The research team carefully discussed each of the backgrounds and took notes in order to better understand the type of organization under study and confirm that the Theoretical Framework held together.



With a strong understanding of each organization and the ministerial universe within which it is inserted, and gathering in-depth information, the team proceeded to develop organizational profiles for each organization based on resources acquired. Subsequent reports will delve deeper into insights emerging from the analysis of data from interviews. Four interview protocols are part of the study's design: **1) Main Leader:** the founder or current executive director; **2) Second Leader:** a leader in the organization who could be second or third in command, yet in charge of a different area of the organization's operations, particularly program administration; **3) Supporter:** a member of the board of directors, benefactor or advocate willing to share why she/he supports the mission of this organization; and **4) Beneficiary:** a young person older than 18 who had participated in any of the programs sponsored by the organization or was/is involved in one and could attest to the impact of its mission in her/his life.

Each organization identified two programs that they considered carry out its mission in exemplary ways. Detailed documentation was collected for each program. In several cases, program directors provided necessary information to better understand the programs. The study of these initiatives followed a program analysis protocol.

Section I:

Catholic Organizations Serving Young Hispanics: Glimpses



We, the Catholic Latino young people who participate in Hispanic youth and young adult ministry, feel called and committed to the mission of the Church, to wholly form and prepare ourselves through pastoral action, and to lovingly evangelize other young Hispanics according to their own situation and experience.

— “Mission Statement of Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry,” paragraph 1, National Encuentro for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry, 2006.

The 12 Organizations According to Areas of Ministry

Diocesan-Based Organizations

Centro Católico Carismático, Archdiocese of New York, The Bronx, NY

Centro San Juan Diego Arts, Cultural, and Faith Formation, Diocese of El Paso, El Paso, TX

Fuerza Transformadora, Diocese of Little Rock, Little Rock, AR



Structurally Independent Organizations

Corazón Puro, The Bronx, NY

Damascus Catholic Mission Campus, Centerburg, OH

Instituto Fe y Vida, Inc., Lewis University, Romeoville, IL

Iskali, Chicago, IL

Southeast Pastoral Institute (SEPI), Miami, FL



Educational Organizations

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, Chicago, IL

Latino Scholars Program, Habiger Institute for Catholic Leadership, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN

Ministry in Lo Cotidiano, Dominican University, Chicago, IL

Newman Ministry, Teutopolis, IL



Centro Católico Carismático

Archdiocese of New York, The Bronx

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The consecration of Rev. Francisco Garmendia as an Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of New York in 1977 was an acknowledgement of the fast-growing Hispanic Catholic presence in the city. Archdiocesan leaders knew that there was an urgent need to dedicate more resources to Hispanic ministry. As the pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Church in The Bronx, Bishop Garmendia established a retreat center for Hispanics in 1978. It was the beginning of what today is called el Centro Católico Carismático / Hispanic Catholic Charismatic Center. El Centro's activities grew exponentially as well as the number of Hispanics participating in them. Bishop Garmendia recommended to move it to the installations of St. Anthony of Padua's school, which had recently closed. This has been the home of El Centro for more than four decades.

El Centro's is led by mainly lay leaders who have been involved in its activities for several years and are deeply grounded in the experience of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. El Centro currently enjoys the regular support of an Auxiliary Bishop in residence, Joseph A. Espallat II, who was the previous director and the youngest Catholic bishop in the country at the time of his consecration in 2022. El Centro, led by a team of young adult Hispanics and aided by the dynamic presence of a young U.S. born Hispanic bishop, has become a magnet for activities for Hispanic young people, immigrant and U.S.-born. More than 6,000 Hispanics participate in its retreats and formation programs every year.



Ministerial Vision

El Centro works in close collaboration with the Archdiocese of New York, particularly with the archdiocesan Director of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. It serves as a place for retreats and for leadership formation associated with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Charismatic Renewal groups and leaders from around the archdiocese come to El Centro to receive formation and instructions on how to sustain and grow their communities. El Centro serves largely young-adult and adult Hispanics, primarily in Spanish. When working with young Hispanics, much of the work is bilingual (English and Spanish). Through its Ministerio Juvenil initiatives, El Centro supports the spiritual lives of young Hispanics by forming community and preparing them to be evangelizers.

Key Anthropological Presuppositions

The programs and initiatives at el Centro Católico Carismático operate out of the conviction that God's Holy Spirit truly has the power to guide and transforms lives. The Spirit moves the hearts of people to seek God. El Centro is a conduit for people on the journey to conversion and spiritual growth. Many Hispanics who come El Centro have experienced brokenness and pain. Many are immigrants who struggle to find their place in a new country or young U.S. born Hispanics adapting to a society that often fails to embrace them as bilingual and bicultural citizens. All are welcomed as they are, amidst their vulnerabilities and personal journeys, and are invited to experience spiritual healing. El Centro is intentionally dedicated to serving Hispanics, in Spanish and English, valuing their culture and experiences. At El Centro is a home for anyone thirsting for an encounter with God's Holy Spirit.

Collaborations

El Centro works primarily with the parishes of the Archdiocese of New York, and particularly supports groups and leaders associated with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. This is a very focused ministry inspired by a particular spirituality. The relationship with archdiocesan structures facilitates an open relationship with parishes as well as other archdiocesan offices. About 120 Catholic parishes in the archdiocese have Hispanic Charismatic Renewal groups that are constantly needing support, development and leadership formation. El Centro is the main resource for those communities and functions at capacity in their service to them. Outreach through social media and online presence have provided the opportunity to create virtual communities of formation and support, and to expand collaborations. Growth in this area is the next frontier.

Signature Programs Carrying the Mission at the Service of Young Hispanic Catholics

1) Retreats. Each year el Centro Católico Carismático hosts hundreds of retreats for Hispanics who want to have a spiritual enrichment experience, particularly inspired by the spirituality of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. El Centro offers the following retreats regularly:

- **Primer paso:** an introduction to the experience of retreats.
- **Jóvenes 13-17:** a bilingual retreat for teens.
- **Matrimonios:** a retreat for couples to discern important questions about relationships and family life.
- **Bautismo en el Espíritu:** a formal initiation into the spirituality of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.
- **Sanación y compromiso:** retreats that address different topics of spiritual and personal growth for those who have been initiated into the spirituality of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

2) Escuela de líderes / Leadership School. El Centro serves as a key resource for the parishes with established groups grounded in the spirituality of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Thus, hundreds of leaders every year need to be formed to exercise leadership in those communities. El Centro's Escuela de líderes provides theological and biblical classes, spiritual formation, and leadership skills to support, guide and grow the groups.



Signs of Innovation

El Centro Católico Carismático stands out in the following areas:

- **Focus on spirituality.** El Centro is a resource for Hispanic Catholics, especially young adults, to nurture their spiritual lives beyond the regular liturgical services they attend in their parishes.
- **Close alliance with a vibrant ecclesial movement.** The Catholic Charismatic Renewal is the most influential ecclesial movement among Hispanic Catholics in the United States. As such, El Centro builds upon the energy of a very vibrant spirituality while focusing its efforts in promoting communities and leaders associated with it.
- **Working with immigrants to retain the U.S.-born generation.** Most retreats and formation programs that El Centro offers are conducted in Spanish, targeting the needs of the immigrant Catholic population. In doing so, El Centro serves as a way to retain the sector of the Hispanic Catholic population that, once engaged, will have a major say assisting the rest of the ecclesial community in keeping their U.S.-born and U.S.-raised children active in the faith.

Strengths

- 1. A ministry of the Archdiocese of New York.** El Centro plays a key role in the archdiocesan ministerial structure. It works closely with the archdiocese and it serves as a resource for parishes with groups associated with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. The assignment of a Bishop in residence affirms the value of this ministry.
- 2. Attention to Spiritual life of immigrant Catholics.** Attentive to the fact that hundreds of thousands of Hispanic Catholics in the Archdiocese of New York are immigrants, El Centro gears much of its energy and resources to support this population beyond the regular liturgical services to which they have access in their parishes.
- 3. Catholic Charismatic Renewal.** El Centro is explicit in its association with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, thus keeping its work focused and being a resource for one of the fastest-growing ecclesial movements among Hispanic Catholics.
- 4. Proven retreat model.** For several decades El Centro has offered retreats to the Hispanic Community in the Archdiocese of New York. This decades-long experience yields important fruits today with a regular cycle of retreat offerings often filled to capacity.
- 5. Leadership formation.** El Centro provides crucial formation programs that sustain the spiritual and intellectual life of hundreds of Hispanic leaders of Catholic Charismatic groups in the parishes of the archdiocese, many of them young adults. Throughout the years, El Centro has been the place where several priests, vowed religious, permanent deacons and many lay ecclesial ministers began their vocational discernment.

Centro San Juan Diego

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Located in El Paso, Texas, a border town between the United States and Mexico, Centro San Juan Diego promotes models of religious education that draw from hundreds of years of historical tradition, multiculturalism and bilingualism. These models place the family, more exactly *la familia hispana*, at the center. The Centro was founded in 2017 and is presently led by its founder, Dr. Véronica Rayas, who is also the current director of the Office of Religious Formation for the Diocese of El Paso. The Centro promotes religious education by honoring time-honored Mexican-American artistic traditions, including music, dance, theater and border-related culinary arts. The Centro also promotes innovative activities such as media, coding, photography and sustainability.

Ministerial Vision

Centro San Juan Diego accompanies young Catholics, mostly Hispanic, in cultivating a deep encounter with Jesus Christ by creating spaces to form community with which they can authentically identify. Young Hispanics discern the role of faith in their lives as well as ways to serve their community by embracing a fundamental option for the poor. Afterschool programs, retreats and summer camps provide young Hispanics with opportunities to learn life skills such as playing instruments or silk-screening, including an appreciation for the arts as an encounter with God's beauty. Accessible to formation that cultivates these skills is often not accessible to these youth in other educational contexts. The Centro supports these young women and men as they discern how their newly-acquired skills can serve younger members in their local parishes and enhance their individual vocations.



Key Anthropological Presuppositions

Centro San Juan Diego draws from the sociocultural and religious Hispanic wisdom of *familia*. Family life itself is affirmed as a conduit of religious faith formation whereby faith traditions and Catholic rituals foster a living faith. Centro San Juan Diego aims to address two social concerns of iGen'ers: isolation and discernment. Young Hispanics regularly express their longing for God, need to belong to a community where they are accepted, and desire to serve by sharing their gifts and talents. Centro San Juan Diego offers young Hispanics a safe space where they can grow in their Christian identity, learn life skills and values, and delve deeper into the arts. Understanding that young Hispanics must become the protagonists in their own faith formation in order to become disciples, the Centro encourages young Hispanics to engage in service and witnessing that meets the needs of today's Church in new and creative ways. Using the arts and life skills learned at el Centro, young Hispanics are encouraged to transfer them to minister and build community in their own parishes.

Collaborations

Centro San Juan Diego is part of the Diocese of El Paso's Office of Religious Formation. The office serves all 55 parishes in the diocese through their catechist certification program. The Centro strategically partners with 6 nearby parishes. Young Hispanics do not need to be part of a parish to participate in El Centro's activities, yet the Centro encourages young people to become part of their local parish. Centro San Juan Diego has developed partnerships with national organizations such as Catholic Extension. The Centro is a positive influence for the city of El Paso and its neighborhoods as it forms socially conscious young people.

Signature Programs Carrying the Mission at the Service of Young Hispanic Catholics

1) Discipleship Camp is a dynamic, spirit-filled, summer camp where middle-school and Confirmation-age young Catholics come together for three days. Participants engage in activities that help them grow in the knowledge of their faith, discover their talents in the arts (e.g. culinary, visual arts, digital media) and hone social skills as they make new friends. The camp is an opportunity to grow as Christian disciples and learn about the values of community, prayer and service. The camp emphasizes the importance of living the faith in members of a larger community. Young participants engage in various prayer activities and learn how to lead prayer moments, which build their confidence as individuals and as young faith leaders. Through hands-on activities and projects, participants learn about activities that lead to service and encourage critical perspectives directed at social change.

2) The After-School Program welcomes young Hispanics into a safe experience that helps them learn and discover important connections that exist among their Mexican culture, the arts, and their faith while enjoying in moments of play. The pedagogy designed for this program uses innovative and artistic methodologies to teach values, personal and religious. The program encourages young people to grow to be confident, self-directed, cooperative and creative. Young people enter a nurturing environment in which each young participant is encouraged to explore particular interests with the goal of one day form communities and facilitate retreats for other young people in their parishes. Participants develop leadership skills such as creative participation, goal setting, reverse planning, decision-making and evaluation.



Signs of Innovation

The most explicit sign of innovation is the *intentional engagement of the arts* to positively impact young Hispanic Catholics through purposeful visual art education and as a way to learn the faith while cultivating foundational skills for life. The goal of these programs is to expose students to different art mediums while encouraging self-expression and creativity. The *symbiotic relationship with the diocese* gives Centro San Juan Diego a unique platform to advance its mission in connection with already-established faith communities. The potential for innovation lies in the possibility of doing religious education for an entire diocese in different way compared to traditional classroom instruction. Centro San Juan Diego's intentional engagement of Hispanic cultural and religious traditions, and its focus on the family, has a strong potential to redefine religious education.

Strengths

- 1. Arts as curriculum.** Young Hispanics engage the arts not only as a way to learn their faith, but also as a medium to interpret their religious experience in connection with their lives.
- 2. Youth mentoring youth.** The Centro models religious education initiatives that empower young students (high school age) to serve as peer catechesis and mentors for younger students (5th through 8th grade).
- 3. Catechesis for belonging.** More than mere faith formation and learning concepts, Centro San Juan Diego instills in young Hispanics as sense of belonging while cultivating skills to form community.
- 4. Meeting the needs of vulnerable young Hispanic people at the border.** The Centro provides a safe space for young Hispanics in a border town who experience isolation and often confront daily fears associated with the experience of immigrant life and the tensions that led many of their families to migrate to the United States.
- 5. Faith formation for advocacy.** Centro San Juan Diego is committed to forming young people with a strong sense of social justice and public engagement. The Centro's facilities often double up as a refugee camp and are used as a space to serve various underserved communities in El Paso.

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Corazón Puro was established as a ministry to promote an understanding of authentic Christian love. It started in 2008 in the South Bronx as an invitation to share more information about Catholic teachings on human sexuality and chastity in a neighborhood with high rates of divorce, single motherhood, and at-risk behaviors such as alcoholism and drug use. The founder of this ministerial effort is Fr. Agustino Torres, CFR, a Franciscan priest. Corazón Puro promotes a healthy understanding of human sexuality and marriage as foundational commitments to form strong families and build a stronger society. Most young people Corazón Puro serves in the South Bronx are Hispanic and Black. The ministry has expanded via affiliate ministries to other parts of the United States (California, Michigan, New Jersey, Texas) and the world (The Philippines, Nicaragua).

Ministerial Vision

Corazón Puro's mission rests largely on a threefold commitment: innovation, missionary activity, and the cultivation of human dignity. This ministry seeks to quench the world's thirst for authentic love, beginning with young Hispanics, the largest Catholic demographic body in the United States, helping them to embrace their vocations, lead flourishing lives, and achieve holiness. Corazón Puro is influenced by the teachings of St. John Paul II and the rich Franciscan spiritual tradition. Corazón Puro aims at lifting up and strengthening families, renewing Catholic communities by promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and mobilizing youth and young adult leaders to become missionaries.



Key Anthropological Presuppositions

Corazón Puro leaders acknowledge the many social factors that disproportionately affect the lives of young Hispanics in negative ways, individually and as a community. This ministry welcomes young Hispanic people, and other young people engaged in its initiatives, with radical love and invites them to be fully themselves, personally, culturally, socially and spiritually. Attentive to the diversity that shapes U.S. Catholicism, everyone is welcomed to engage in the language they find most comfortable. Affiliates in other parts of the world adapt to the linguistic and cultural realities of the young people they serve. Corazón Puro highlights the beauty and wisdom of Hispanic cultures, recognizing the work of God's Holy Spirit in them. Despite the brokenness that exists in the lives of many young people, and how it impacts family life, this ministry insists in affirming the value of human dignity. In helping young people to see themselves as loved by God and capable of loving others with Christian love, this ministry seeks to transform how they live.

Collaborations

Corazón Puro works in close collaboration with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, based in the Bronx, NY. Its founder, and current president, is a member of this community. The friars serve as spiritual directors for Hispanic young people and use their resources to support the ministry in South Bronx as well as in other locations where the ministry is present. The national and international affiliates have developed relationships with dioceses and parishes, which gives the ministry ecclesial stability, potentially pointing to new ways of partnering with these ecclesial units while supporting local ministries with Hispanic young people. Corazón Puro works in close collaboration with *Latinos por la Vida*, an apostolic offshoot founded also by Fr. Torres. This apostolate is a coalition of organizations that see to unify and mobilize Hispanics to promote the dignity of human life. Corazón Puro is intentionally active in the world of social media and Catholic media, meeting hundreds of thousands of young Hispanic Catholics in those venues.

Signature Programs Carrying the Mission at the Service of Young Hispanic Catholics

1) Project Outskirts. This apostolic initiative draws inspiration from Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, the missionary activity of Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, and the International Observatory of Young Catholics. The project forms young people as missionaries to serve in marginalized communities, particularly those experiencing poverty. This exercise of urban ministry seeks to advance the mission and commitments of Corazón Puro. Young missionaries feed and evangelize the homeless, provide education to immigrants, reach out to sex workers, and accompany the imprisoned, among other apostolic activities, bringing to all of them a message of hope while affirming the human dignity.

2) Leadership Program. Corazón Puro forms young Hispanics, and other young people, to serve as missionaries at two levels. One, most young people who participate in the leadership program prepare to do mission work in their immediate, local context through small acts of service, witness and joy. These missionaries meet monthly, coordinate local retreats and remain connected to local faith communities. Two, some young people prepare to engage in national and international missionary work.

Signs of Innovation

Innovation is at the heart of Corazón Puro, including the engagement of traditional ministerial practices using contemporary resources:

- *Support of a religious order.* Corazón Puro counts on the commitment of a religious order that dedicates personnel and effort to advance the mission of this ministry. Not a new practice in the history of Catholicism, yet few religious orders invest today as much energy and resources reaching out to young Hispanic Catholics as the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal.
- *Partnership with Mass Media.* Corazón Puro partners with one of the largest Catholic television networks in the world, i.e., EWTN, to produce programming to reach out to U.S. Hispanic and Latin American audiences, thus reaching out to millions of viewers.
- *Excellent use of social media and communications technology.* Corazón Puro is actively present in popular social media platforms. The ministry is committed to using language familiar among young Hispanics and testimonies.

Strengths

- 1. Service Opportunities.** Most programs lead to some form of service experience. Young Hispanic people are regularly invited to participate in local, national and international missions.
- 2. National and International Affiliates:** Corazón Puro continues to expand its mission by sending missionaries and entering in partnerships with ecclesial units beyond the Bronx and the United States. The ministry seeks to become a resource to parishes, dioceses and organizations interested in missionary discipleship formation.
- 3. Thorough Leadership Training:** Within a period of about two years, young Catholics involved in Corazón Puro receive 60 hours of formation and perform a minimum of 40 hours of community service. Each stage of the process involves specific duties and responsibilities.
- 4. Expanding Curriculum.** Although Corazón Puro remains committed to a curriculum that highlights chastity and family values, it has expanded its curriculum to address other issues relevant to the lives of young Hispanics, including identity development, relationships and vocational discernment.
- 5. Strong Commitment to Vocational Discernment:** Most activities led by Corazón Puro involve conversations about vocational discernment. Several young Catholics live in discernment communities—Casa Guadalupe (for women) and John Paul II House (for men)—and several have joined religious life. Marriage and family life are regularly discussed within the framework of Christian vocational discernment.



Cristo Rey Jesuit High School

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In the early 1990's, the Society of Jesus sought to respond to the needs of Chicago's Pilsen community, a working-class neighborhood constituted largely by Mexican immigrant families seeking better and affordable educational options for their children. It was a time of peak immigration from Latin America into the United States. Rev. Bradley Schaeffer, S.J., then Provincial of the Chicago Province of the Society of Jesus, asked Rev. James Gartland, S.J. to conduct a needs assessment that included a door-to-door consultation throughout the neighborhood. The recommendation was to establish a Jesuit-sponsored college preparatory high school. Rev. John P. Foley, S.J., with nearly 30 years of educational experience, returned from Perú to help create the high school in Pilsen, which opened in 1996.

The founding team pioneered an unconventional educational and business model that asked students to work five days each month in paid, entry-level professional jobs and assign their earnings to underwrite the cost of their education. The program eventually became known as Corporate Work Study. The school began with approximately 100 students, sophomores and juniors, supported by local business and philanthropic leaders. In its early years the school served primarily students from the Pilsen neighborhood, mainly immigrants or children of Hispanic immigrants. Today, students come from various locations around Chicago, many of them second and third generation Hispanics.

Ministerial Vision

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago aims at delivering a career focused, college preparatory education in the Catholic tradition for students with limited economic resources. The school uniquely integrates rigorous academic curricula and work experience that lead to the development of professional skills. The school is explicitly Catholic in its mission and deeply inspired by the charism of the Society of Jesus. A comprehensive curriculum, religion classes and a strong campus ministry program together support students in the cultivation of their faith and spirituality. The school welcomes students of all faiths and no faiths. Three pillars that sustain the mission of the school: College Preparatory Curriculum, Commitment to Catholic Education, and Professional Work Experience.

Key Anthropological Presuppositions

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago is intentionally rooted in the Hispanic identity of the majority of the school's students, faculty and leaders. In order to serve the student population that it attracts, the school is committed to hiring and promoting Hispanic leadership and faculty. The school intentionally affirms and promotes Hispanic cultural values particularly by implementing a bilingual curriculum, English and Spanish. The school and its programs are instrumental in supporting Hispanic families, immigrant and U.S. born, to integrate into the larger U.S. culture. Catholic identity in the school is broadly channeled through Hispanic Catholicism, including practices of popular religion and celebrations that highlight religious symbols and rituals well known in the Hispanic community (e.g. Our Lady of Guadalupe).

Collaborations

Building relationships and networking are foundational concepts for Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago. Within the school, students are invited to build at least one personal relationship with a mentor called *asesor(a)* (assessor). The *asesor(a)* works with a small number of students (15 to 18) in a holistic manner. This person, who serves as a primary academic advisor, establishes a strong relationship with the student and the family. Students are encouraged to engage teachers and staff for academic tutoring and enrichment, stress management, counseling and other needs, academic and personal. The school invests significantly in engaging parents and other adults in the students' families.



The school has established a strong network of supporters, especially partners who make the Corporate Work and Study Program possible. Cristo Rey High School plays a vital role in the Pilsen community, serving as a beacon of hope for families and young people. The school has relationships with different organizations in the neighborhood which provide opportunities for students to volunteer in various capacities. The school also works in collaboration with its sister school, Christ the King Jesuit College Prep in Chicago's West Side. The school started a program that seeks to build stronger connections with alumni/alumnae, many of whom return to the school with their own companies offering a partnership for the Corporate Work and Study Program. Others become involved as volunteers, ambassadors and financial supporters.

Signature Programs Carrying the Mission at the Service of Young Hispanic Catholics

1) Corporate Work and Study Program. A team of four students covers the equivalent to a full-time position with a Corporate Partner. Each student works during the academic year one day per week from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, starting in the middle of August until early June. All students receive appropriate training that helps them to develop critical, valuable and technical skills demanded by the modern workplace. Students also receive practical human formation that helps them to develop basic human and professional skills for professional interaction. The salary received as part of the Corporate Work and Study Program covers about 70% of students' education costs.

2) Spanish Language Heritage Program. This four-year program aims at developing students' linguistic skills supporting them to be fully bilingual. The program focuses on grammar, literature, and history. Subjects are taught entirely in Spanish. All students are required to take the Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish Literature and Culture exam at the end of the year.

Signs of Innovation

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago stands out in the following areas:

- *Corporate Work and Study Program.* Students learn important skills for work, life and success in college. The model brings in nearly 25% of the revenue the school needs to support the education of the students enrolled in it.
- *Bilingual and bicultural education.* The school's carefully designed curriculum and pedagogical model embrace bilingualism and biculturalism as assets. Most graduates successfully go onto college and professional careers.
- *Commitment to hiring bilingual and bicultural teachers and leaders, especially Hispanic.* Nationwide, about 9% of teachers and leaders in Catholic schools are Hispanic. At Cristo Rey Jesuit High School Chicago, the majority of key leadership and teaching positions are held by Hispanic educators.



Strengths

1. **Family engagement.** Families are required to be part of the students' formation process, which is conducted in English and/or Spanish, as needed. All communications between the school and the families are bilingual.
2. **Trustworthy leadership.** Students, parents, supporters and partners perceived the school leadership as trustworthy, thus ensuring a pathway to growth and success.
3. **Committed faculty and staff.** Teachers and staff perceive their role as a mission/vocation in the school. Many engage in extra projects to support the students and see their experience as enriching their personal and spiritual lives.
4. **Connections with the neighborhood and beyond.** Students volunteer in various outreach and service efforts within their immediate neighborhood where they are located. As service opportunities expand, the influence of the school and its educational model grows.
5. **Alumni network.** Alumni/alumnae in general are very satisfied with their experience. Many come back to support the school and its students, and more and more are growing in number who want their children to study at the school.

Damascus

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Parents at St. Andrew Catholic Church in Columbus, OH wanted their children to have an authentic and joyful experience of faith, a transforming encounter with Jesus Christ. In 2001, the parish established a program called Catholic Youth Summer Camp (CYSC). It was a one-week summer camp experience meeting in leased spaces. The camps proved to be effective and memorable. Young Catholics wanted to learn more about their faith and to live a Christian life. Parents witnessed the positive effects of the experience and shared the word with other families.

Fifteen years later there were no enough spaces in the entire state of Ohio to meet the demand for Catholic camps. In 2016 Damascus Catholic Mission Campus was built in a 471-acre parcel in Centerburg, OH. A second campus recently opened in Minnesota: Catholic Youth Summer Camp Northwoods. More than 6,000 young Catholics between the ages of eleven and eighteen join Catholic Youth Summer Camp every year; about 13,000 in total are engaged in Damascus' retreats and initiatives. Most are from the dioceses in Ohio. About 15% are Hispanic.

Ministerial Vision

Having a centralized campus is proven crucial to advance the mission of Catholic Youth Summer Camp: "Our mission is to awaken, empower, and equip a generation to live the adventure of the Catholic faith through world-class programs and an environment of encounter." Catholic Youth Summer Camp invites young Catholics to have a transformative encounter with Jesus Christ and the richness of the Catholic tradition. Young people engage in moments of prayer, community-building, faith exploration and fun activities. Damascus as a ministry is committed to inviting young Catholics to become faith-filled leaders in their parishes, schools and eventually in society.

Key Anthropological Presuppositions

Damascus engages young Catholics at a critical time in their lives: adolescence. Counselors, leaders, teachers and speakers believe in the ability of these young people to make the important decision to enter in relationship with Jesus Christ and live full lives of engaged Christian discipleship. Camps, retreats and leadership formation activities are age-appropriate with the goal of inviting young people to experience their faith in a joyful and vibrant manner. Damascus invites young Catholics to experience the intensity of a life of prayer, liturgical celebration, sharing faith and having a good time with others. After that, young people are entrusted to carry torch of engaged discipleship in their parishes, schools and homes. The camp experience helps young people to develop important skills to be engaged Christians and citizens.



Although only 15% of young Catholics engaged in Damascus' programming is Hispanic, partly because of the geographical location of the main camps, a growing number of leaders self-identify as Hispanic. They work on making connections to the spiritual and cultural needs of Hispanic young Catholics, their families and their communities. Damascus seeks to expand to regions with larger concentrations of young Hispanic Catholics (e.g., Southwest).

Collaborations

Damascus is located in the Diocese of Columbus where it works in close partnership with several Catholic parishes. It serves as a resource for parishes and families throughout the State of Ohio, and more recently other 30 states. Damascus provides resources for families (e.g., podcast "Beyond Damascus") to reaffirm the experience of their children. Damascus engages young people in schools and parishes through its Youth Leadership Institute.

A good number of missionaries dedicating their time to the camps and other activities are students in Catholic colleges and universities. The strongest body of Damascus collaborators are the tens of thousands of young people who have had a positive experience in the camps, retreats and others programs. Some return to support the work as missionaries, others become benefactors.



Signature Programs Carrying the Mission at the Service of Young Catholics

1) Catholic Youth Summer Camp (CYSC). This is Damascus's main initiative. It is a high-adventure camp that engages young people in deep experiences prayer, sacramental life and community-building. Activities are designed to foster leadership, communication and teamwork skills. All activities are inspired by faith-based themes and conversations. Young people are encouraged to dive into the richness of the Catholic experience to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

2) Retreats. A permanent campus with the capacity to host hundreds of young people has enabled Damascus to expand its programming throughout the year. Damascus offers multiday retreats for young Catholics, aiming at supporting them in their spiritual growth: Faith & Science Retreats, Leadership Retreats, Confirmation Retreats, Abundant Life Retreat, and Made for More Retreat. The retreats are led by Damascus missionaries, often young Catholics who once experienced the camps or the retreats and are convinced of their evangelizing value.

Signs of Innovation

Damascus is a ministry driven by the contagious joy and the creative energy of the young Catholics they serve as well as the leaders and families that ensure its success:

- *Camp Experience.* Damascus has successfully adopted the experience of camps and retreats. These activities provide intense experiences of faith and communal life away from the parish, yet with the ultimate goal of sending young Catholics to renew parish life after a profound encounter of faith.
- *High Adventure Activities.* Programming takes into consideration the high level of energy and expectations of young Catholics ages eleven to eighteen. Activities, including those of religious character, are considered "high adventure." Camps involve physical activity via games and opportunities to collaborate. They also involve intense moments of prayer, reflection and participation in worship experiences.
- *Missionary Program.* The Catholic Youth Summer Camp and several year-round activities are staffed by Damascus missionaries. They are Catholic college students or young adult Catholics who once experienced camps or retreats. Some of these missionaries commit to two years of formation and service. They help raise funds for their missionary support, thus engaging families, friend, benefactors and other supporters in the mission.

Strengths

1. **Camps and retreats.** These are short (a few days long), yet intense faith-based experiences that have a profound impact in the lives of young people. Young people and their families choose how much involvement they want to have. More than 13,000 young people, mostly Catholic, participate every year.
2. **Intentional engagement of Catholic parishes and schools.** Working closely with these ecclesial structures fosters a symbiotic relationship. Parishes and schools send young Catholics to experience the initiatives Damascus offers; Damascus sends young Catholics who have had a profound faith experience back to their communities to live their Christian discipleship in them.
3. **Permanent facilities.** The growth and increasing impact of this ministry is closely associated with the permanent space where activities take place. The location gives identity to the ministry and allows young people and their families to return.
4. **Leadership and empowerment.** Damascus benefits from the energy of young adult missionaries who serve during the summer or year-round. Most have participated of a camp or retreat experience and take the next step. Many of these missionaries go on to serve as leaders in church and in society. Several ordained and vowed religious pastoral leaders began their vocational discernment participating in a Damascus camp or retreat.
5. **Large Network.** Each year Damascus adds thousands of young people and their families to its network. This large network has the potential to ensure an unending stream of missionaries and support to continue the mission.

Fuerza Transformadora

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Serio Torres knew that he had reached perhaps the lowest point in his very young life when he saw his mother cry as she went to get him out of prison. The young, bulky man decided it was time to leave behind the drugs, violence, and gang activity that had defined much of his youth. As a Roman Catholic, his church had not reached out to him. When he tried to join Catholic youth groups, he was not welcomed because these groups were not for “people like him.” He joined a parish with the hope of starting a group for young people needing to break free from addiction and violent behavior. He knew he could help, yet he did not receive permission to use church facilities for this initiative. He then began holding meetings in a public park. One of his first meetings, which included the celebration of a public Mass, brought together nearly 1,000 participants. It was the birth of Fuerza Transformadora. The ministry began in 2003 in Little Rock, AR to help Hispanic youth and young adults struggling with drug and alcohol addictions, gang involvement and violent behavior. Fuerza Transformadora draws from Catholic spiritual resources and programs like Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous. In 2006, Fuerza Transformadora became a ministry of the Diocese of Little Rock with direct support of the bishop. Serio Torres is now the Associate Director of the Faith Formation Office for the diocese.

Ministerial Vision

Fuerza Transformadora exists to evangelize with a particular focus on young Hispanics living in the peripheries of church and society struggling with addictions, violence and gang activity. It also seeks to prevent these behaviors. Fuerza Transformadora’s message is simple, yet powerful: Jesus loves everyone; the Holy Spirit is a transforming force that can change everything. Programs and outreach efforts focus on the possibility of change that leads to healing and restoration. Fuerza Transformadora forms young people to return to their families and faith communities, and to be active citizens. Retreats provide formation that helps those attending understand better their struggles and thus seek professional help. Faith formation efforts introduce participants to the Scriptures, basic Catholic teachings, and practices such as Eucharistic Adoration and healing prayer. All communities associated with Fuerza Transformadora meet in local parishes, strengthening ecclesial connections.



Key Anthropological Presuppositions

Fuerza Transformadora acknowledges the specific limitations of the human condition manifested through addictions and violent behavior. It knows that such conditions lead to brokenness, personal and communal. Fuerza Transformadora is a ministry of healing that believes that Jesus Christ restores lives with the power of the Holy Spirit. Young people experiencing brokenness are welcomed into spaces and activities (e.g., retreats, faith formation courses) where they experience love and are affirmed as having gifts to be discovered and embraced. Fuerza Transformadora invests in human and spiritual empowerment. Young people in this ministry are invited to discover themselves as disciples and evangelizers, instruments of God in bringing others to Jesus. While the ministry affirms the richness of the Hispanic culture, including the prevalent use of Spanish, it is also critical of culturally permissive behaviors that lead young Hispanics to use alcohol and drugs or to condone violence and machismo.

Collaborations

As a diocesan ministry, Fuerza Transformadora works closely with local parishes in the Diocese of Little Rock. A few parishes in other states (e.g., Texas, Tennessee and Illinois) have reached out to explore the possibility of having a Fuerza Transformadora group in consultation with the leaders from Little Rock. Catholic Extension Society has supported this ministry to expand its outreach to other faith communities in mission dioceses. Fuerza Transformadora works closely with health providers and recommends people to seek professional help to treat addictions when needed. It also works closely with community leaders.

Signature Programs Carrying the Mission at the Service of Young Hispanic Catholics

1) **Libres para Vivir Retreat** is the main point of encounter with Fuerza Transformadora. *Libres para Vivir* is an invitation to be Free to Live, not simply survive. The retreat involves engaging in self-knowledge exercises that help participants to evaluate their lives. The format echoes the structure and intentional pedagogy of ministries that use high-impact retreats such as Cursillo de Cristiandad, Encuentros con Cristo, and Seminars of Life in the Spirit.

2) **Despierta (Communication Workshop)**. This workshop provides tools to help participants grow in their communications skills and learn how to resolve conflicts. The workshop focuses on ways to improve family communications, seeking to heal relationships and foster stronger family life. Since family plays a central role in the formative experience of young Hispanics, the conversations associated with this workshop also connect closely with cultural realities.



Signs of Innovation

Fuerza Transformadora models ministerial creativity in its preferential commitment to working specifically with young Hispanics experiencing major instances of brokenness because of addiction or violent behavior:

- **High-Impact retreats.** Fuerza Transformadora has developed its own high-impact retreats using faith-based and therapeutic methods, seeking to heal and transform negative behavior while embracing a commitment to Christian discipleship.
- **Collaboration with health care and social organizations.** Many young people participating in Fuerza Transformadora's initiatives need professional help beyond spiritual accompaniment or faith formation. Leaders are clear about the need to engage health care providers and social partners to work in tandem for integral healing.
- **Work with the whole family.** Addictions and violent behavior affect everyone in the family. Fuerza Transformadora involves families in the process of healing and encourages all members of the family to live and practice their faith together in the context of parish life.

Strengths

1. **Diocesan Investment.** As a diocesan effort, Fuerza Transformadora benefits from important support and resources at that level. It also engages in collaboration with other diocesan offices and parishes willing to work with this ministry.
2. **Aim-Specific Ministry.** Fuerza Transformadora responds to the immediate and specific needs of a subset of the young Hispanic population and their families as they confront the challenges of addiction and violence.
3. **Testimony.** *Testimonios* are the main driver attracting young people and their families to Fuerza Transformadora. Witness is given through storytelling and teaching. People are moved by witnessing young people moving away from negative behavior, families engaging in better communication, and more young Hispanics participating in parish life.
4. **Focus on Adolescents.** Fuerza Transformadora invests significant efforts in early prevention of addictions and violent behavior by working closely with young people between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, and their families.
5. **Strength in Brokenness.** Fuerza Transformadora remains a relevant and necessary ministry. As long as there is brokenness in the lives of young people because of addictions or violence, there will be a need for a ministry that promotes healing and transformation.

Instituto Fe y Vida, Inc.

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Instituto Fe y Vida was established in 1994 in response to the need of forming pastoral leaders specialized in ministry with young Hispanic Catholics. The institute soon began developing models and language to serve this population nationwide. At the time, some pastoral institutes offered regional programs. Dioceses and parishes sponsored efforts with local impact. Fe y Vida introduced language, strategies and formation models that became standard in national conversations about ministry with young Hispanics. Instituto Fe y Vida was preceded by an effort by Saint Mary's Press aiming at producing a bilingual catalogue for ministry with Hispanic young people. Dr. Carmen Cervantes, the team leader, received the approval to convert the initiative into a separate 501(c)(3) organization based in Stockton, CA. The relationship with the press continued and Instituto Fe y Vida still self-identifies as a Lasallian organization. In 1995, the institute launched an annual summer program with focus on leadership formation. One of its major projects has been the production of the nationally and internationally distributed *Biblia Católica para Jóvenes*. In 2015, its main offices moved from Stockton to Lewis University in Romeoville, IL.

Ministerial Vision

Instituto Fe y Vida's pastoral practices and programming are informed by the Prophets of Hope Model: "At the heart of the Model is a **Christ-centered spirituality**, grounded in the Word of God and in an experience of our Trinitarian God, which animates and guides all formation and pastoral action. It follows the **Pastoral Circle** and promotes a **learning-by-doing** methodology. The Model favors the development of small faith communities, in a Church united as a **community of communities**. Each community lives its faith journey responding to the **five dimensions of reality among youth and young adults** (Being a person, Interpersonal relationships, Faith life, Society and Culture). Community members plan and implement their ministry according to the **six components of a comprehensive ministry** (Communitarian, Missionary, Catechetical, Evangelizing Serving, Liturgical), and in the spirit of a **pastoral de conjunto (communion in mission)** with other communities and ministries in the parish and diocese. In their community, they learn to offer their gifts through **shared leadership** for the good of the Church and society."

Key Anthropological Presuppositions

Instituto Fe y Vida recognizes the Hispanic Catholic young person as worthy of strong and supportive ministry. The institute promotes the importance of meeting the cultural and language needs of young Hispanics and their families. In its earlier years, the institute addressed primarily the needs of the immigrant population and thus most of its efforts were in Spanish. The fast growth of the U.S. born Hispanic population, especially those younger than 25, has led to a reconsideration of that emphasis and to pay more attention to the questions, needs and challenges these young people face.

Instituto Fe y Vida sees each Hispanic young person as having the potential for leadership and transformation. Trainings and classes prepare young Hispanics to learn more about their Catholic faith and integrate these lessons into catechetical programming in their respective communities. Instituto Fe y Vida is convinced that Hispanic young women and men have abundant gifts and are essential to advance the Church's evangelizing mission in the United States. Young Hispanics are prophets of hope.



Collaborations

Instituto Fe y Vida coordinates its programming through the Leader Training System (SCL), which includes more than 30 programs at four levels, ranging from fundamental courses to a Training of Trainers (a program to form leaders who will serve as instructors using the organization's models). All programs and resources that Instituto Fe y Vida offers are available to parishes and dioceses. Instituto Fe y Vida collaborates is an active member of La RED Nacional of Pastoral Juvenil Hispana.

The institute has developed also a network of international partners, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean, through its work promoting the Catholic Bible for Young People (BCJ). In the development of its programs and publications, Institute Fe y Vida regularly engages leaders, scholars and practitioners in different parts of the country. The institute has a well-known capacity of convocation.

Signature Programs Carrying the Mission at the Service of Young Hispanic Catholics

1) *Curso Fundamental* is the foundational leadership course on *Pastoral Juvenil* (ministry with young Hispanics) that introduces core theological themes such as Sacraments, Trinity, and Image of God. The course builds upon the Prophets of Hope Model and places the Hispanic young person as protagonist and agent of evangelization as well as transformation. The course aims at fostering a thorough understanding and appreciation for *Pastoral Juvenil*, a spirituality centered on the Word of God, and a practical guide for young Hispanics to live and practice the Catholic faith while evangelizing other young Hispanics.

2) *Summer Symposium* is a week-long summer course that offers an excellent blend of rigorous theological and ministerial courses alongside community-building experiences and spiritual accompaniment. The Symposium is a training process that marks a new stage in the participants' understanding of their ministry with Hispanic youth and the embrace of specific pastoral commitments associated with *Pastoral Juvenil*. The symposium uses a mixed methodology that includes sharing experiences, reading prepared documents, listening to presentations, group discussion, worship together and moments of community-building. The symposium brings to life the vision of the Prophets of Hope Model.



Signs of Innovation

Instituto Fe y Vida's programs and ideas are recognized as groundbreaking in the world of ministry with young Hispanic Catholics:

- *Prophets of Hope Model*. A model of ministry rooted in the experience of Catholic youth ministry in Latin America and the United States. The model is a careful adaptation of the pastoral circle.
- *Leadership Training System*. An integrated approach to programming that places formation, leadership training and accompaniment efforts in relationship with one another as expressions of the Prophets of Hope Model.
- *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*. The institute pioneered this category to differentiate ministry with young Hispanic Catholics from Youth Ministry and Young Adult Ministry as understood in the United States.

Strengths

- 1. Expansive Outreach:** Instituto Fe y Vida collaborates with dioceses and parishes throughout the United States and Latin America. It constantly serves as a resource to other ministerial organizations working with young Hispanics.
- 2. Successful model of leadership formation:** The institute has developed a successful model based on its commitment to empower young Hispanics to do ministry with other young Hispanics.
- 3. Research-based resources/materials/programming:** Instituto Fe y Vida has invested in the development of resources, materials and programming that draw from research in various fields: ministry, theology, education, psychology, etc. Its own research informs several conversations nationwide.
- 4. Prophets of Hope Model:** The entire vision of Instituto Fe y Vida, its programming and publications is guided by this particular model. The model serves as inspiration and as a framework that guarantees consistency across initiatives espoused by the organization.



Iskali is a 501(c)3 nonprofit Catholic organization dedicated to serving young Hispanics in the Chicago area. The term Iskali comes from the Náhuatl (Aztec) language, meaning growth, resurgence and new beginning. It was founded in 2010 by a young Latino, Vicente de Real, who saw the need for better alternatives for faith formation and spiritual accompaniment for Hispanic adolescents and young adults after they receive the sacrament of Confirmation. Iskali first began offering retreats; soon it expanded its initiatives, responding to the eagerness of young Hispanic Catholics to cultivate an engaged faith. In nearly a decade it grew into a multi-ministry effort that focuses on community building, faith formation, and leadership empowerment. Although welcoming immigrants, most young people served by Iskali are second and third-generation Hispanics negotiating cultural, linguistic and religious identities. The organization provides scholarships and mentorship opportunities for young Hispanics. Thousands of young Hispanics have been involved in the various efforts Iskali offers, making this organization one of the most creative and successful efforts in the country serving young Hispanic Catholics today.

Ministerial Vision

Iskali defines its mission as “empower and equip young Latinos with high-quality faith formation that enables them to become transformative leaders.” Iskali is in itself a community of communities dedicated to the evangelization of young Hispanics, forming them as missionary disciples. Inspired by the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe reaching out to St. Juan Diego and the people of his time, Iskali reaches out to young Hispanics to facilitate a personal and transformative encounter with Jesus Christ. One of the main goals of Iskali is to form a generation of Spirit-filled leaders committed to building together a civilization of love. Iskali aspires to cultivate a strong generation of leaders in the Church who mirror faces and voices of the faith communities that are renewing Catholicism in the United States, especially young Hispanic leaders, accompanying them in their human flourishing.



Key Anthropological Presuppositions

Iskali serves primarily second and third-generation Hispanic Catholic young people. Leaders in the organization are young people like them, who one day went through a retreat program or were part of an Iskali community, and understand their hopes, questions and concerns as U.S.-born Hispanics. Iskali has developed experiences of accompaniment through peer mentorship and leadership formation. Iskali leaders model for those they serve what it means to accompany and witness faith as youth and young adult Hispanics. Activities and symbolism associated with the work of Iskali evoke a sense of pride in the rich cultural heritage of Hispanics, most of them Mexican-American in the Chicago area. The organization intentionally emphasizes activities that promote spiritual and personal growth, particularly securing resources for young Hispanics to attend college and join the professional workforce. Young Hispanics are affirmed as people with many gifts ready to reach their fullest human potential.

Collaborations

During its early years, Iskali partnered mainly with local parishes, retreat centers and other organizations to host initiation retreats. Soon there was a need for ongoing formation and the cultivation of communal life. Iskali began forming small ecclesial communities affiliated to local parishes. Besides being spaces to share faith, these communities offer opportunities to mentor and cultivate leadership skills. Iskali maintains a strong relationship with parish communities, where its members regularly support events and services. The organization has a good relationship with the Archdiocese of Chicago, yet it is not under the direct ministerial oversight of archdiocesan leaders. In 2021, Iskali acquired a retreat center, named the Mother Cabrini Community. The mentorship program has given Iskali members an opportunity to cultivate relationships with social and professional leaders in the city. Also, a growing number of corporate relationships has allowed Iskali to increase its scholarship fund to support young Hispanics to enroll in college.

Signature Programs Carrying the Mission at the Service of Young Hispanic Catholics

1. **The Initiation Retreat** is a faith-awakening experience that provides young persons, eighteen and older, with a personal encounter with God through rituals, roleplay activities, and powerful moments of prayer and reflection. The retreat is a profoundly kerygmatic experience. In facilitating an encounter with God in Jesus Christ, the young person participating is also invited to discern her/his relationship with their immediate reality, others and society. The retreat aims at inviting a process of personal and communal conversion.

2. **The Mother Cabrini Community** is closely associated with the retreat center that Iskali owns. It is a community of leaders that meet weekly. The meetings follow a standard itinerary outlined in Iskali's manual: opening prayer, activity/game, *tema* (theme), sharing, closing prayer. The community also engages in social events and service experiences. The Mother Cabrini Community resembles the experience of other Iskali communities throughout the archdiocese meeting in parishes, although this particular community is the only one that meets at the retreat center.

Signs of Innovation

Iskali is a thriving organization run entirely by young Hispanic lay leaders demonstrating strong signs of ministerial creativity and professional entrepreneurship:

- **Small Ecclesial Communities.** Iskali's retreats are not the end of the ministerial experience but the beginning of life in small communities. The organization has capitalized on one of the most successful models of ecclesial life that historically has worked well with Hispanic Catholics.
- **Connection to Parishes.** Even though the retreats are not parochial initiatives or run under the auspices of parishes, these communities are linked to parishes. Members of the small communities are expected to participate in the life of the parish, creating a sense of mutual accountability for Iskali and the local parish.
- **Mentorship for Social and Professional Leadership.** Iskali invests significant resources in empowering young Hispanics to pursue higher education and find professional opportunities. For Iskali, spiritual and personal/professional growth go hand in hand whenever possible.



Strengths

1. **Holistic Anthropology:** Iskali's model is comprehensive in its understanding of what it means a young person. Its initiatives combine instances of spiritual, community, social, financial, educational, civic, and professional mentorship that help young Hispanic Catholics to thrive as whole persons.
2. **Ecclesial Connections:** The symbiotic relationship between Iskali communities and local parishes is essential. Young Hispanics see themselves not only as part of their small ecclesial communities, but also as of their parishes. In turn, parishes are reenergized with the presence of young, formed and enthusiastic young people willing to serve.
3. **Leadership Development:** Young Hispanic Catholics involved in Iskali's initiatives meet m mentors and supporters who see potential leaders in them. Iskali provides young people with multiple opportunities to exercise leadership during retreats, meetings, parish activities, and social service opportunities.
4. **Welcoming Environments:** Iskali welcomes everyone, regardless of their background or situation in life. Hispanic young people are welcomed as they are. Their culture, questions and needs are engaged by other young Hispanics who accompany them as peers and mentors.
5. **Focus on U.S.-Born Hispanic Youth.** Iskali understands that the vast majority of young Hispanics are U.S.-born and wants to serve them in their own terms, yet without excluding immigrant young people. Knowing well the population it wants to serve, Iskali tailors its programming and experiences in ways that make its ministry more relevant.

Latino Scholars Program, Habiger Institute for Catholic Leadership, University of St. Thomas



College of Arts and Sciences

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<https://cas.stthomas.edu/departments/areas-of-study/catholic-studies/habiger-institute/>

Monsignor James Habiger (1927-2012) is remembered by Minnesotan Catholics as a true champion of social justice. He served as the Executive Director of the Minnesota Catholic Conference and lived for more than four decades on the campus of St. Thomas University in St. Paul. He established the Joseph and Edith Habiger Institute for Catholic Leadership within the Center for Catholic Studies at the University of St. Thomas. The Habiger Institute provides students with leadership formation opportunities emerging from a deep commitment to service and transformative education. In the early 2000's Dr. Michael Naughton, currently the director of the Center for Catholic Studies at St. Thomas, and Dr. Bill Cavanaugh were studying the possibility of establishing a Catholic Worker house at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in St. Paul, MN. As they consulted, the community expressed that the greatest need was quality education for their children. Naughton and Cavanaugh shifted their efforts to secure renewable scholarship funds for Hispanic students. It was the birth of the Latino Scholars Program. By 2015, between 6 and 8 Hispanic students were part of the program each year. In 2022 the number was 27.

Ministerial Vision

The Habiger Institute for Catholic Leadership forms students in an organic way to be leaders in the academy, the Church, civil and professional life. The institute is a place of thoughtful analysis concerning what it means to be a Catholic leader in modern society. The Latino Scholars Program removes financial and social obstacles that often prevent Hispanic students and their families from attaining a four-year degree from a Catholic university. The program helps students to grow academically, professionally and spiritually. It also builds leadership skills needed to make the world better in the workplace. The program rests on four core pillars: rigorous academics, strong community, servant leadership development, and engaging faith formation. The goal is to help students grow in friendship, virtue and character. Students enrolled in the program must select a major or minor in Catholic studies. Students who apply to the Latino Scholars Program receive scholarships beyond the financial package offered by the university.



Key Anthropological Presuppositions

All programs within the Center for Catholic Studies are profoundly committed to foster a Catholic identity. Such identity is the thread that helps students and staff at the Habiger Institute to ground their commitments to a holistic and integrated education. Every student is seen and treated as a child of God who is discerning their vocation, their identity and their future. Diversity is a welcome gift, understood as essential to the human experience. The Latino Scholars Program operates with an awareness that Catholic higher education can make a difference in the lives of young Catholics. In welcoming Hispanic students, the Center for Catholic Studies acknowledges the potential of these young women and men, affirms their dignity, and empowers them with the best education to give back to their own communities, and thus build a stronger church and a stronger society.

Collaborations

To advance the Latino Scholars Program, the Habiger Institute engages in partnership with local parishes with Hispanic ministry. There are 25 parishes with Hispanic ministry in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and the program is presently working with 10 of them. The goal is to expand the number of partner parishes. The program has a strong relationship with archdiocesan authorities. As part of a larger university ecosystem, the Habiger Institute works in close collaboration with the Center for Catholic Studies, part of the College of Arts & Sciences, and other offices. The university plays an important role fostering partnerships with organizations in the local area, many of which allow students who are part of the Latino Scholars Programs to secure mentors and placements for internships.

Signature Programs Carrying the Mission at the Service of Young Hispanic Catholics

1) Latino Scholars Program. The Latino Scholars Program per se connects the university with the local community in various ways. While acknowledging the growth of the Hispanic community in the Catholic Church, especially young Hispanics, it recognizes that there are needs that prevent these young women and men from advancing college education in a Catholic university. Not only the program connects Hispanic students and families to the university, but also it nurtures relationships between the university and the Hispanic communities as students teach catechesis in local parishes with Hispanic ministry. The program is closely associated with the Catholic Studies program. Students must major or minor in Catholic studies, thus making important connections to their faith. The combination of solid academic formation, leadership training, engagement of the Catholic tradition and service in the community point to a well-integrated effort.

2) Leadership Interns. This two-year initiative is open to Hispanic and non-Hispanic juniors and seniors. It provides an opportunity to form morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely and work skillfully to advance the common good. Students enrolled in different academic programs engage in various service opportunities, are paired with Catholic leaders in the areas of business, politics, education, law and the Church. The program has five building blocks: faith, character, vocation, gifts and skills. Students have the opportunity to visit some national or international projects that gives them a sense of how Catholic leaders are making a difference in society.

Signs of Innovation

These are some exciting innovation signs associated with the Latino Scholars Program:

- *Intentional connection to parishes with Hispanic ministry.* The program fosters a continuous relationship with these communities that goes beyond recruitment: the communities send Hispanic students to the university and remain invested in their formation. When students return to parishes to teach catechesis, the bonds are strengthened and families are further involved.
- *Catholic Studies and Leadership formation.* The program does not separate faith and theological formation from professional training. The program forms leaders with Catholic heart and character.
- *Verso L'alto.* An effort in parishes to accompany Hispanic high school students discern pathways to college.



Strengths

- 1. Four-year college education.** Investment in four-year college education to give young Hispanics a better professional grounding to build their future. The program provides support that affirms Hispanic students culturally and religiously to ensure success.
- 2. Connection to Catholic Studies program.** The heart of the program is its Catholic identity. Students must intentionally engage their faith intellectually and religiously as they become leaders well-grounded in their faith tradition.
- 3. Sense of community.** Hispanic students join an academic community that welcomes them as Hispanics. In this community they meet future friends and colleagues with whom they will journey in friendship and collaboration.
- 4. Catholic, value-based leadership formation.** The program recognizes the gifts and potential of Hispanic students and prepares them to exercise leadership at various levels in light of Catholic values.
- 5. Service in Hispanic faith communities.** Hispanic students remain connected to Hispanic faith communities (i.e., parishes) from which many come. They teach catechesis. By being present in these communities as leader, they serve as role models for other young Hispanics.

Ministry en Lo Cotidiano, Dominican University

Address: 7900 West Division Street, River Forest, IL 60305

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Website: <https://www.dom.edu/campus-life/university-ministry/get-involved/ministry-en-lo-cotidiano>

Dominican University is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). In 2019, thirty-two Catholic colleges and universities in the U.S. were eligible to receive such a designation based on enrollment. The classification is granted by the U.S. Department of Education to higher education institutions that qualify for student-loan programs and serve an undergraduate student population that is at least 25 percent Hispanic. Dominican University was federally designated as an HIS in 2011 as it embraced major demographic changes in the city of Chicago where Catholicism is presently being redefined and sustained by the Hispanic presence. The university is rooted in the values embodied by the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters. Ministry en lo Cotidiano “is a leadership development and faith formation program for undergraduate students interested in experiencing faith-based service in [Hispanic] communities in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. The purpose of [the program] is to develop leaders for the future of the Church and [Hispanic] communities.”

Ministerial Vision

Ministry en lo Cotidiano advances the mission of Dominican University as a Catholic institution serving in an urban context with a fast-growing Hispanic population. About 90% of the university's students come from households located within an hour from the main campus; approximately 60% are commuters. Ministry en lo Cotidiano is practically an opportunity for Hispanic students to serve in their own neighborhoods. Students are placed in settings with a strong Hispanic presence to develop leadership and ministerial skills through service. They work with partner organizations that know the community well and are positioned to provide mentorship. Ministry en Lo Cotidiano relies upon the premise that faith-based service builds community. Students experience life in Hispanic communities while contributing to their growth through faith-based service. The program prepares the students to engage in theological reflection grounded in Hispanic cultural and religious traditions.

Key Anthropological Presuppositions

Ministry en lo Cotidiano is committed to affirming the presence as well as the cultural and religious experience of young Hispanic students at Dominican University. The program understands the importance of community among Hispanics and seeks to create spaces for students to remain connected to experiences with which they are familiar. The students find themselves contributing as leaders to communities they know and care about. These are their communities. Ministry en lo Cotidiano empowers young Hispanic students to be attentive to the lived reality of the people in the communities they serve. The term “cotidiano” itself evokes the everyday: students are mentored to be attentive to the daily motions and routines that constitute life of Hispanic communities, and to find God in them. Culture plays an important role in the design of the program at all levels: language, practices, devotions, art, etc. The theological reflection the students advance is guided by categories familiar to the Hispanic heart: fiesta, accompaniment, justicia.



Collaborations

Ministry en Lo Cotidiano benefits from its relationship with regular university structures, particularly the support of the Office of Ministry & Mission and access to the faculty in the Theology Department. Students can advance the experience for academic credit. In order to place the students in the communities, the program engages in partnerships with local organizations that provide mentorship and help cultivate leadership skills. These organizations are diverse in terms of the work that they do for the community, thus providing Hispanic students with a rich array of options to learn: schools, parishes, community centers, community organizing groups, social service centers, etc. When students are assigned to the community via these organizations, they are paired with a supervisor. Perhaps the most important collaboration is the one with the actual communities the students serve as they immerse themselves in the everyday reality of Hispanic people, accompanying immigrants, doing community organizing, tutoring, increasing food security, and advancing faith development initiatives, among others.

Signature Activities Empowering Young Hispanic Catholics to Participate in the Mission

1) Theological Reflection is at the heart of the Ministry en Lo Cotidiano experience. Hispanic students involved in the program engage in regular critical conversations analyzing their own lives and their experience with the communities where they are serving or plan to serve. They do this drawing from various resources from the Catholic theological tradition, particularly Hispanic theological models of reflection that privilege the everyday lived reality of Hispanic people as a starting point. Each week students engage in service for about nine hours and spend one hour in theological reflection. The inbuilt model of theological reflection allows students to think critically as Hispanics about how faith informs their service, thus affirming their cultural and religious identity.



2) Non-Employment Fellowship. Ministry en Lo Cotidiano acknowledges that the time and effort Hispanic students engaged in the program are valuable. The program provides a significant non-employment compensation each semester of service, which contributes to supporting the financial needs of the students, many of them the first in their families to attend college. Compensating the students serves also as an opportunity to creating a pattern of valuing their work and engaging partners in investing in these students. The students receive professional development formation at various levels that helps them with important skills for the time when they complete their studies and join the job market.

Signs of Innovation

Ministry en Lo Cotidiano's creative vision builds upon the larger creative efforts of Dominican University as it continues to grow as a Hispanic Serving Institution:

- *A hub for Hispanic students, faculty and research.* The number of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States that explicitly identify themselves as Hispanic Serving Institutions is rather small. Dominican University leads as a center of reflection as well as curricular and program experimentation grounded in the best of the Hispanic experience.
- *Theological reflection that draws and affirms the Hispanic Catholic experience.* Students in the program use methods, categories and themes grounded in the best of the Hispanic Catholic theological tradition. The Hispanic religious and cultural experience is a starting point.
- *Partnership with Hispanic organizations and communities.* The program fosters strong connections with Hispanic sites, thus avoiding the temptation to isolate Hispanic students from their roots. Young Hispanics thrive in serving their own communities and the communities benefit from the wisdom of their own young people.

Strengths

- 1. Proven Mentors.** Ministry en Lo Cotidiano benefits from the experience and commitment of professors and administrators at Dominican University as well as recognized Hispanic leaders in the community where the students serve.
- 2. Theologically Grounded.** The program is grounded in a theological vision that seeks to empower Hispanic students to serve in Hispanic communities and organizations while drawing inspiration from various expressions of the Hispanic Catholic religious experience.
- 3. Leadership Development.** Students in Ministry en Lo Cotidiano are part of a holistic experience that prepares them to succeed academically while developing important skills to be leaders in their communities.
- 4. Commitment to Social Justice.** Ministry en Lo Cotidiano is ultimately an exercise of empowerment for students, the communities they serve, the church and society at large. Students learn about the needs of the community and work for transformation to build the common good.
- 5. Connections with the neighborhood and beyond.** Ministry en Lo Cotidiano models the type of local engagement that Catholic colleges and universities often promote.

Newman Ministry

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The college experience offers young people many opportunities to expand their horizons and explore new worlds. What they learn in the classroom is as important as what they learn beyond. Although there are more than 250 Catholic colleges and universities, the majority of college-age Catholics enrolled in higher education programs are not being educated in these institutions. This is truer of Hispanic Catholics enrolled in college education. Only a small fraction attends Catholic institutions of higher education (about 115,000 of 3.4 million in 2020). Many are the first in their families to go to college. The college experience can be isolating and often confusing without the appropriate guidance. Once away from families and faith communities, most college students stop practicing their faith.

Newman Ministry was established in 2009 to strengthen the Catholic campus ministry experience. At the time it was known as the Newman Connection. Matt Zerrusen and his father Bill Zerrusen drew their inspiration from the work done at the St. John's Catholic Newman Center at the University of Illinois. Newman Ministry connects young Catholics with campus ministry experiences and also helps mediate faith-based housing arrangements for Catholic students. The process starts in high school, connecting young students to campus ministry initiatives in their chosen university or college. Nearly half a million high school students have been connected to campus ministry programs nationwide.



Ministerial Vision

Newman Ministry thrives in the ministry of accompaniment. It connects Catholic high school students to campus ministry programs to ensure that they meet fellow Catholics and learn about spaces where they can practice and celebrate their faith. These spaces could be chapels on campus or local parishes dedicated to accompany college students. Newman Ministry builds strong communities of faith in the higher educational environment that nurture the religious experience of young Catholics while providing support networks to answer emerging questions or challenges with a Catholic perspective. The ministry supports and enhances the work of campus ministers by developing resources to work with Catholic students and facilitating opportunities for leadership formation.

Key Anthropological Presuppositions

At the heart of Newman Ministry's commitment to connecting young Catholics to campus ministry programs in colleges and universities there is the conviction that faith plays an important matter in the formation of college-age students. The intellectual and communal formation Catholic students receive in higher education programs should not be devoid of the opportunity to grow in faith through prayer, critical reflection and worship. Campus ministry is the ideal space for this to happen. Strengthening campus ministry and making the appropriate connections becomes an intentional and practical way to participate in the overall formation process. Many young Catholics find themselves alone or disoriented regarding their religious identity in the college world. Secularization is often presented as the alternative of choice for college students, especially in institutions that are not faith-based. Newman ministry creates the conditions for young Catholics to thrive in their faith during their college years.

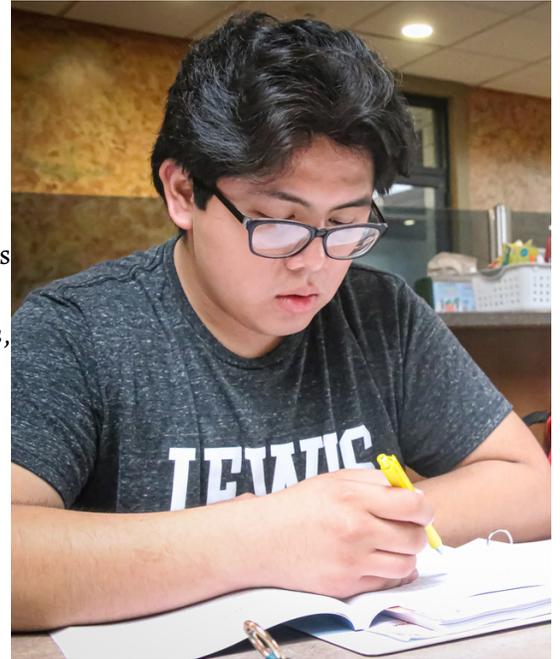
Collaborations

Newman Ministry would not exist without collaborations and a strong commitment to networking. The statistics speak for themselves. Newman ministry is endorsed by more than 100 Catholic arch/dioceses; works in partnership with more than 650 Catholic high-schools; reaches out to more 2,000 Catholic parishes; collaborates with campus ministry initiatives in more than 800 college campuses nationwide.

The ministry works in close collaboration with diocesan clergy, university chaplains and campus ministers, members of religious orders and congregations, and college and university administrators, among others. The Newman Connect App helps students to connect to campus ministry and its resources as well as their peers. Newman Ministry also fosters collaboration among Catholic students. It does it by supporting faith-based communities where Catholic students live and activities associated with these communities and offices of campus ministry.

A closer look at a community associated with Newman Ministry serving Hispanic Catholics

Newman Ministry leaders recommended looking closely at the experience of a community serving Hispanic students on the campus in a non-Catholic, non-religious institution. The Latino Agrupación de Jóvenes at University of Pennsylvania is supported by a Catholic priest who meets periodically with students who are U.S. Hispanic, Latin American and Caribbean. The priest offers the opportunity to celebrate the sacraments and engage in spiritual direction. The group uses and adapts different types of resources for their weekly meetings, including resources produced by Newman Ministry. Students participate in retreats, theological discussions, formative meetings, conversations about difficult experiences and social events that foster a strong sense of community. Participants take turns leading the group's meetings. Once a year, participants are invited to consider participating in a three-day leadership retreat. Commitment to the group is not an overbearing experience since all students have multiple responsibilities on campus. Yet, the young Catholic students appreciate having a home where their faith and Catholic identity are valued.



Signs of Innovation

The following signs of innovation associated with the work of Newman Ministry are worth mentioning:

- *Early connection to campus ministry.* In the process of application to college, families and students busy themselves with many details about academics, housing, and finances. How young Catholic students will live and nurture their faith in college may not rise to the level of priority. Newman Ministry facilitates a connection to campus ministry for Catholic high school students which proves to be defining in terms retention of religious identity and networking with communities of shared values.
- *Newman Connect App.* This is an easily downloadable application that Catholic students can use to connect and engage with campus ministry leaders and other Catholic students. The app also provides Catholic content.
- *Support of small campus faith communities.* Newman Ministry promotes the connection of Catholic students to vibrant faith communities on campus and beyond. These communities are often supported by resources developed by the ministry.

Strengths

1. **Diocesan leaders trust.** Newman Ministry enjoys the support and the trust of more than half of all Catholic arch/dioceses in the country, thus securing important relationships and support to advance its mission.
2. **Large network of Catholic high schools and parishes.** More than half of all Catholic secondary education schools and more than 2,000 parishes in the United States work in close collaboration with Newman Ministry.
3. **Distinctive approach to supporting Catholic campus ministry.** By connecting tens of thousands of young Catholic students to campus ministry offices and programs nationwide, Newman Ministry makes possible that these efforts on campus have a steady flow of students ready to be involved.
4. **Effective App.** The Newman Connect App is well developed, easy to use and it responds to a very important need. The information accessible through the app is timely and relevant.
5. **Bridge Organization.** Newman Ministry is a bridge organization and exists to make connections. Resources to support campus ministry and formation initiatives are all oriented to strengthen those connections in service of young Catholics.

Southwest Pastoral Institute (SEPI)

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<https://sepi.us/>



The Southeast Pastoral Institute (SEPI) is the regional organization, supported by the Catholic bishops of the United States, coordinating and supporting Hispanic ministry in 30 dioceses in the Southeast (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee). SEPI began under the auspices of the Piarist fathers, whose commitment to education made SEPI a hub for evangelization and faith formation of young Catholics. It was established in 1979 under the leadership of Fr. Mario Vizcaíno, SchP, in response to the recommendations from the Second Encuentro Nacional Hispano de Pastoral (1978), particularly to meet educational needs of Hispanic Catholics. SEPI is inspired by a model of Church sustained by three pillars: Evangelization, Formation and Communion. The organization facilitates the full participation of Hispanic Catholics, many of them young, in the mission of the Church and society as authentic missionary disciples.

Ministerial Vision

SEPI is fully committed to advancing the Church's evangelizing mission in the Southeast of the United States in close collaboration with the dioceses and parishes of this geographical region. It provides evangelization services and programs to these communities, focusing on formation and leadership empowerment initiatives for Hispanic lay ministers and young adults. SEPI's bridge-building efforts are key to support offices for Hispanic Ministry and other ministerial offices in the dioceses it serves. It does so by raising awareness, providing training, and supporting efforts that place the fast-growing Hispanic population at the center of the Church's pastoral concerns. SEPI works closely with Hispanic young Catholic people and offices of ministry with young Catholics.

In its commitment to working with Hispanic young people, SEPI offers services, programs, and resources that aim at transforming the lives of this population in the Church and to foster community among parishes as well as diocesan structures. SEPI is committed to fostering evangelization efforts that affirm the growing cultural diversity that defines U.S. Catholicism in a spirit of synodal dialogue and *pastoral de conjunto*. SEPI's programs seek to form a new generation of Hispanic pastoral leaders, with a particular focus on those working in *Pastoral juvenil*.

Key Anthropological Presuppositions

SEPI is explicitly committed to serving Hispanic Catholics in light of their cultures, languages and traditions. SEPI is located at a geographical crossroads that constantly sees the arrival of new immigrants while witnessing the dynamics associated with intergenerational Hispanic family life. SEPI accompanies young people as they constantly negotiate cultural and social identities. For some, accompaniment translates into support and welcoming. For others, accompaniment focuses on guidance to integrate into the larger culture as well as support to understand ways of being church diverse contexts. For SEPI leaders, every encounter with a young person is an encounter with possibilities. SEPI exists to empower young Hispanic Catholics, regardless of their origins, to flourish in church and in society as witnesses of the resurrection.



Collaborations

The most notable collaboration SEPI has as a ministerial organization is the de facto association with 30 dioceses in the Southeast along with their diocesan offices, parishes, schools and organizations. Hispanic ministry in this region has a clear and well-defined voice in SEPI, thus creating regular opportunities for collaboration. SEPI partners with other programs of leadership formation (e.g., University of Notre Dame's CAMINO), creating opportunities to expand its own curricular offers. A most exciting collaboration exists with Barry University through which SEPI offers a Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry for Hispanics, entirely in Spanish.

Signature Programs Carrying the Mission at the Service of Young Hispanic Catholics

1) ***Pascua Juvenil*** is a process of formation of youth leaders inspired by reflection on Christ's Paschal Mystery. Every year a team of young Hispanic Catholics and leaders identifies a theme that guides the process and writes a multi-chapter book in English and Spanish to be used during Lent in preparation for Easter. The theme often reflects a contemporary conversation or an idea of interest to young Hispanics. The process of writing the sessions happens in a collaborative for several months. Participants in *Pascua Juvenil* receive the book usually a week or two before Ash Wednesday. The resources is distributed to all the dioceses partnering with SEPI inviting into a transformative process of reflection and leadership formation. SEPI has conducted *Pascua Juvenil* since 1980.

2) ***Young Latino Summer Leadership Institute*** is a program of formation that prepares immigrant and U.S.-born young Hispanic Catholics in the Southeast to be faithful missionary disciples and effective leaders to serve church and society, living their vocations to the fullest. This bilingual, two-level program is held during consecutive summers, one week per summer. The program prepares young Hispanics to exercise leadership in their local communities.

Signs of Innovation

SEPI is the Hispanic ministry organizational backbone in the Southeast of the United States. Its programs creatively introduce young Hispanic Catholics to faith-based leadership:

- *Writing core resources with young Hispanics.* SEPI has developed a system to invite young Hispanics to engage in the visioning and writing of a book that has major impact in how thousands of young people reflect about Easter every year.
- *Multigenerational outreach.* To engage young Hispanics from various generations, SEPI's programming is bilingual. Initiatives are adapted regularly to serve the needs of immigrant young people and those of young Hispanics born in the United States who long to learn and practice their faith as Hispanics.
- *Partnerships to develop pathways toward leadership.* SEPI facilitates access to key leadership, faith and theological formation programs that strengthen and expand its offerings. In doing so, leaders can expand the outreach without repeating efforts that have proven successful in other contexts.

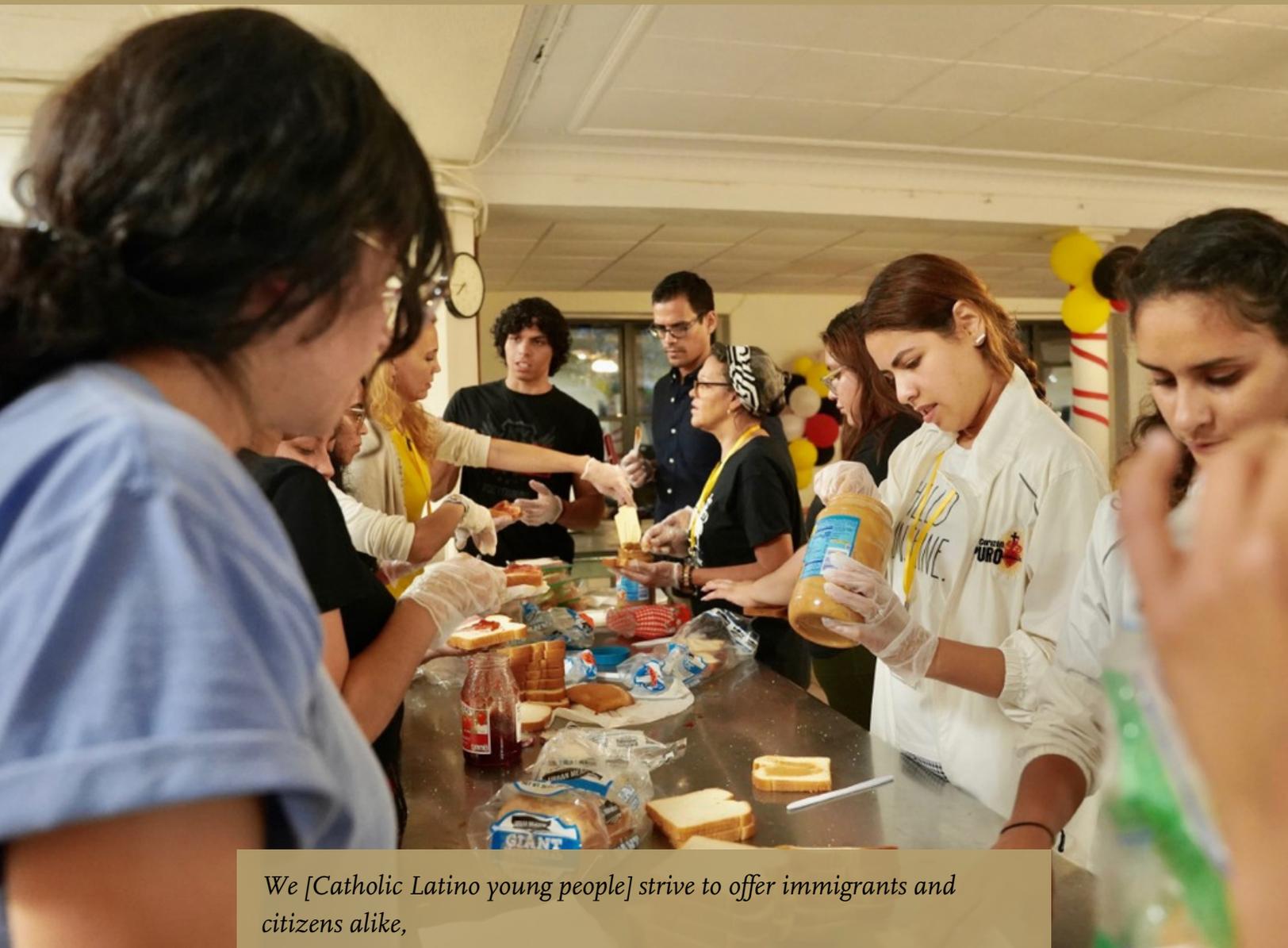
Strengths

1. **Community building:** SEPI has facilitated the formation of more than 600 Hispanic Catholic small ecclesial communities. It also bridges the work of offices of Hispanic ministry and other diocesan offices in a spirit of communion.
2. **For youth, by youth:** *Pascua Juvenil* is an initiative that empowers young people to be leaders, thinkers and writers of resources that will be used by other young people to grow in their faith.
3. **Regional impact and support:** The close association with 30 dioceses in the Southeast gives SEPI ready access to diocesan offices, parish communities, schools and Catholic organizations that can learn from its work and resources as well as expand its reach. The support of the bishops in Episcopal regions V and XIV places SEPI in the position of a trusted partner.
4. **Academic preparation of Hispanic lay leadership:** SEPI's programming has established clear pathways of faith formation that go from leadership training to work in *Pastoral Juvenil* groups and others forms of grassroots ministry to a Master-level program of theological formation at the Master in partnership with Barry University.
5. **The SEPI Book Service** is one of the largest sources of materials for pastoral life and formation in Spanish at the service of Hispanic Catholics in the Southeast and other parts of the country. It distributes more than 14,000 units a year.



Section II:

Pillars of Success in Ministry with Young Hispanic Catholics



We [Catholic Latino young people] strive to offer immigrants and citizens alike, the ever new and joyous truth of the Gospel, highlighting gospel values, and making an effort to reach those who need the Good News the most, who do not know God, or who have strayed from the way of Jesus.

—“Mission Statement of Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry,” paragraph 2, National Encuentro for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry, 2006.

The 10 Pillars of Success

The Ten Pillars of Success proposed in this report, drawing from data collected as part of the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth*, emerge from close analysis of the data, narratives and materials supporting programmatic initiatives in all twelve organizations involved in the study. Two questions guide the analysis. One, “What defines the mission of [the organization]?” Two, “What are the keys to success for [the organization] in its outreach to Hispanic youth?”

Both questions are crucial to understanding what ministry with young Hispanic Catholics needs to be at this time in history in the United States. A number of key categories have emerged as interpretive lenses for the work of the ministerial organizations in this study and the level of success they have in working with young Hispanic Catholics. The categories draw significantly from larger Catholic ministerial conversations, the Church's rich theological reflection and current conversations about ministry with young Hispanics. These categories are intimately linked to the diversely rich sociocultural and religious worldviews that define the U.S. Hispanic Catholic experience. Often, they are articulated in Spanish, revealing the strong influence of this language in the shaping of the Hispanic Catholic imagination.

It is with great confidence that this report presents these categories as the Ten Pillars of Success for ministry with Hispanic young Catholics. It is likely that pastoral efforts sustained by these pillars or a combination of them, ideally as many as possible, with the goal of better serving young Hispanic Catholics, will experience a positive response. Three general observations as we reflect about these pillars.

One, “success” in this context is not to be reduced to mere measurability of quantifiable outcomes. Neither the term points to a cause-effect dynamic that guarantees predictable results. Success here is to be understood from a pastoral theological perspective. To succeed in this case is to enter in relationship with young Hispanic Catholics through experiences of pastoral accompaniment that lead them on the pathway to human flourishing through a joyful encounter with God, through Jesus Christ, while affirming who they are as young, Catholic, Hispanic and members of church and society.

Two, a close look at the Ten Pillars of Success reveals that they evoke the most intimate desires and needs of our existence as human beings and as people of faith. These organizations have paid attention to those desires and needs. Intentionally or unintentionally, their narratives, convictions and programming capture what Christians have been doing well for two millennia as they form communities grounded in the Kerygma and accompany young people in become Christian disciples.

Three, while the Ten Pillars of Success are articulated here through the experience of ministerial service to young Hispanic Catholics, they can perfectly be applied to ministry with any other body of young Catholics, of course with the appropriate cultural and social considerations. Hence the potential of the organizations in this study to renew ministry with young Catholics at all levels.

Ten Pillars of Success



The Ten Pillars of Success in the Life

Pillar/Organization	Community/ <i>Comunidad</i>	Sense of Belonging/ <i>Pertenencia</i>	Attention to vulnerability/ <i>Atentos a la vulnerabilidad</i>	Family/ <i>Familia</i>
El Centro Católico Carismático (The Bronx, NY)	Spirit-guided family	A space for Hispanics, immigrants and U.S.- born	Immigrants and children of immigrants	Supporting stronger families
Centro San Juan Diego (Diocese of El Paso, TX)	A second home	Be your young self; encounter others and God	Children of immigrants	Parents matter
Corazón Puro (The Bronx, NY)	Missionary disciples	Strengthening relationships	Young adult Hispanics in urban settings, many living in adverse conditions	Healthy families, healthy sexuality
Cristo Rey Jesuit High School (Chicago, IL)	A place we build together	Our school	Low-income Hispanic families, immigrants	Intentional parental involvement
Damascus (Centerburg, OH)	We come together	Our camp	Adolescent spiritual transitions	Parents as companions
Fuerza Transformadora (Diocese of Little Rock, AR)	Community of support	Together in brokenness	Young adults struggling with addictions	Second chance for marriages and families
Instituto Fe y Vida, Inc. (Romeoville, IL)	Witnesses	We are church	Young Hispanics	Fostering family values through curriculum
Iskali (Chicago, IL)	Small ecclesial communities	Discerning personal and spiritual identity together	Second-generation Hispanics negotiating cultural and religious identity	Stronger faith, stronger families
Latino Scholars Program (University of St. Thomas, MN)	Engaged scholars	Part of a larger whole	Hispanic students seeking to succeed in college	Many Hispanics first in their families attending college
Ministry in Lo Cotidiano (Dominican University, IL)	Reflective practitioners	Part of a growingly diverse city	Serving Hispanics where Hispanics are	Many Hispanics first in their families attending college
Newman Ministry (Teutopolis, IL)	Network	Providing a safe haven in college	Hispanic college students who may feel isolated	Small communities as extended family and support network
Southeast Pastoral Institute (Miami, FL)	Easter-Driven leaders	Emerging church	Young Hispanics discerning place in church and society	Stronger faith, stronger families

of the Twelve Organizations in the Study

Leadership/ <i>Liderazgo</i>	Culture matters/ <i>La cultura importa</i>	Empowerment/ <i>Potenciamiento</i>	Catholic identity/ <i>Identidad católica</i>	Faith formation/ <i>Formación en la fe</i>	Missionary Drive/ <i>Impulso misionero</i>
Identify and foster spiritual charisms	Spiritual accompaniment and formation according to language needs	Healthy relationships	Life in the Spirit	Retreats and intense formation programs	Fostering witness in everyday life
Aesthetic creativity to articulate faith and life	Bilingualism, biculturalism	Cultivating self-esteem	Within diocesan structure	Religious education; Faith alive through the arts	Young disciples
Forming missionaries	All Hispanics are welcome	Forging stronger relationships with others and God	Spirituality that empowers witnesses	Retreats and intense formation programs	Forming local, national, and international missionaries
Hispanic leaders	Bilingualism, biculturalism	Skills-based, college-prep education	Hispanic Catholicism	Religion classes	Ambassadors
Leaders for Christ	Camps that affirm the Hispanic Catholic experience	Awaken, Empower and Equip	Living out the Baptismal identity to the fullest	Meet Jesus Christ and his Church	Witness what you have experienced
Wounded healers	Immigrants	Healing and recovery; cultivating self-esteem	Prayer and trust in God	Spiritual reflection	Healers and companions
Young Hispanics as bridge builders	Curriculum mainly in Spanish and focus on questions Hispanic youth ask	Skills for ecclesial leadership	Commitment to Pastoral Juvenil Hispana	Intense faith and leadership formation programs	Young Hispanics reaching out to young Hispanics
Young Hispanics as intergenerational bridge builders	U.S. born Hispanics with strong cultural ties to immigrant parents	Skill for success in life	Catholic spirituality	Retreats and intense formation programs	Young Hispanics reaching out to young Hispanics
Growth in Catholic understanding of leadership	Connection to the Hispanic community	Affirmation of the young Hispanic selves and their potential	Catholic informed and engaged professionals	Inbuilt theological formation	Disciples and professionals
Modeling leadership	Bilingualism, biculturalism	Socially conscious college education	Faith in action; Dominican charism	Forming reflective thinkers	Informed and communally engaged leaders
Faithful professionals, strong leaders	Healthy integration into the larger culture	Integration of faith and academic formation	Spiritual support during college years	Campus ministry experience	Fostering witness in everyday life
Pastoral leadership	Bilingualism, biculturalism	Engaged faith	Explicitly at the service of dioceses and parishes in the region	Retreats and intense formation programs	Young Hispanics reaching out to young Hispanics

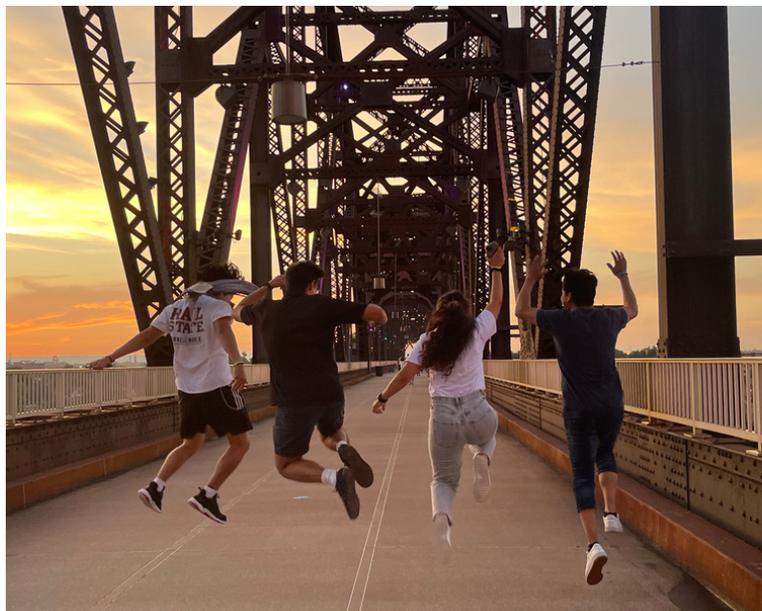
Pillar 1: Community/Comunidad

A deep-seated sense of community is at the heart of the Hispanic Catholic imagination. Culturally, Hispanics share an organic anthropology with clear roots in the Indigenous, Afro-Caribbean, and Iberian worldviews that have mixed in the continent for more than five centuries. Religiously, Catholicism has played a major role shaping the U.S. Hispanic, Latin American and Caribbean shared understanding of what it means to be in relationship with one another. The community is more than the sum of individuals who choose to belong to a particular group out of personal interest. The community is the place where the self is born and where we are constituted.

We are the community; the community is us. We are the Church, the Church is us. We discover who we are in the community: “For U.S. Hispanics, there is no such thing as an isolated individual who is not intrinsically defined by his or her relationship to others”¹. The communal self-understanding serves young Hispanic Catholics as assurance that they are not alone, especially when facing adversities in a society that does not always embrace them or fails to understand their multifaceted experience. For many young Hispanics, U.S.-born and immigrant “who have experienced significant discrimination themselves, or have seen their family members experience it,” the community is a safe space.² When young Hispanic Catholics know themselves as community, they experience the radical, liberating and boundary-crossing power of accompaniment (*acompañamiento*).³



Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *Christus Vivit* strongly emphasizes the role of community in ministry with young people. Many young people in the Church feel isolated because they lack an appropriate space they can call home or community. Even when our faith communities take for granted that they are spaces that provide a sense of home, many young people do not feel welcomed or embraced: “We need to make all our institutions better equipped to be more welcoming to young people, since so many have a real sense of being orphaned”⁴ To form community is about establishing connections: “to create a ‘home’ is to create ‘a family.’ It is to learn to feel connected to others by more than merely utilitarian and practical bonds, to be united in such a way as to feel that our life is a bit more human.”⁵ Ultimately, says the Pope, any effort and program “of youth ministry should clearly incorporate various means and resources that can help young people grow in fraternity, to live as brothers and sisters, to help one another, to build community, to be of service to others, to be close to the poor.”⁶



All organizations in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* defined their efforts as an exercise of helping young Hispanic Catholics to experience community. They did it in at least three ways. One, the organization itself is a community that welcomes and accompanies young people on their journey as they discern their faith in the here and now of their historical existence, e.g., a second home, a family. Two, the organization empowers young Hispanic Catholics with the vision and skills to form intentional communities, e.g., family, parish, small ecclesial community, school, neighborhood. Three, the organization sees itself as a custodian of cultural, religious and social values that are essential to defining the Hispanic Catholic experience, and thus mentors young people into a better appreciation of those values.



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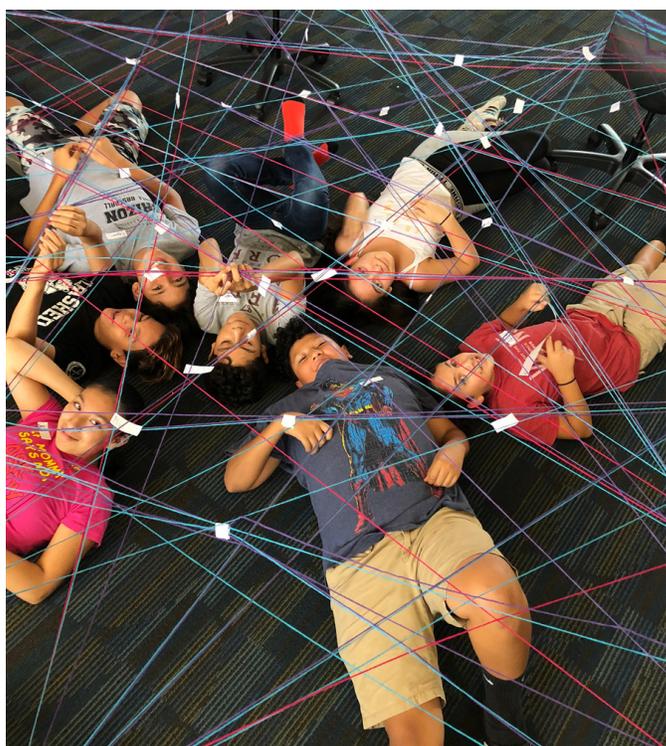
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Pillar 2: Sense of Belonging/Pertenencia

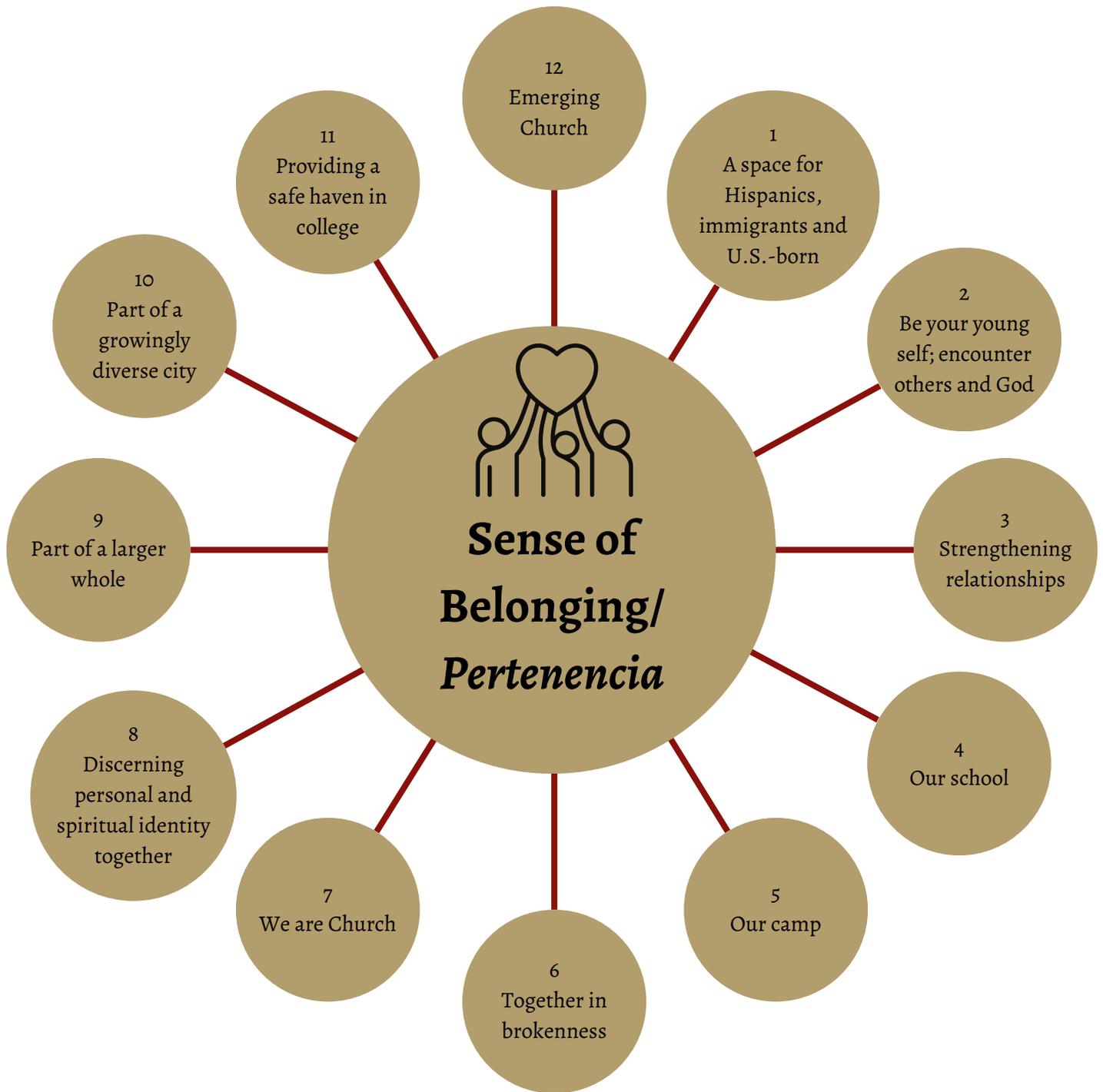
Life between 14 and 39 is full of transitions that often leave young people misplaced and constant feeling of being outrooted. Young Hispanics, like all other young persons, are constantly negotiating questions about who they are along with questions about where they belong. Being a young Hispanic person in the United States furthermore involves negotiating these questions while contending with other overarching considerations. Among these is the liminal existence of millions of young Hispanics, especially those U.S. born and raised, as they learn the ways of the immigrant adults who are raising them and the ways of the predominant society that seeks to assimilate them into particular sets of cultural and religious values: “It is worth noting that Latino youth, through the complexity of migration, inhabit a transnational reality in their relationships, consciousness, and cultural identity. This means that Latina/o youth continue to be connected to Latin America—via family members, media, music, entertainment, and consumption patterns—while at the same time engaging Latina/o culture and the broader dominant culture in the US.”¹



Millions of young Hispanics are affected by daily socioeconomic struggles as they aim at surviving amidst adverse circumstances marked by prejudices, the prevalence of poverty, and lack of opportunities. Millions of young Hispanics grew up as Catholic and stopped self-identifying as such—most before the age of 24—as they drifted away from a faith tradition that struggles to demonstrate in meaningful ways that they are important.² For those who stay, not one-size-fits-all approach to ministry meets their spiritual and pastoral needs. Most young Hispanic Catholics fall within the category of “identity seekers,” which demands versatile approaches forms of accompaniment: “The vast majority of Hispanic identity seekers do not feel at home in either the mainstream youth and young adult ministries or [*Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*], so they simply opt out. These ‘culturally squeezed’ young people are among the most likely to lose their Catholic faith and identity in adulthood.”³



Organizations in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* have done their best to listen to the voices of young Hispanic Catholics who said, “We aspire to be part of the society in the United States, without losing our identity and cultural roots.”⁴ They clearly present themselves as hubs and spaces that provide a sense of belonging. Because they have invested in leaders who understand the needs and struggles of young Hispanic Catholics and programs that connect with their experiences, these organizations are able to create environments where young Hispanics can speak about their questions, general and particular. Young Hispanics know that they belong because they see themselves reflected in those spaces, the environment, the leadership, and even the language, including Spanglish: “Spanglish as a form of code switching is recognized as a life-giving identity marker connected to the struggle to belong as in-between people... bilingual and Spanglish usage represents a form of resiliency.”⁵ For these organizations, being Hispanic is not an accident but a calling to create spaces where everyone, including parents—immigrants and U.S. born—, feels that they truly belong.



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Pillar 3: Attention to Vulnerability/Atentos a la vulnerabilidad

God comes to the encounter of humanity in history, particularly through Jesus Christ, as a God who loves, redeems, heals, affirms and lifts us up. God takes our human brokenness and limitations seriously. Young Hispanic Catholics experience vulnerability in many ways in their families, the Church and the larger society: “Through no fault of their own, many of today’s young Hispanics navigate an overabundance of harmful situations influencing their daily lives. Here we are reminded of the profound effects of social dynamics such as institutional racism and poverty, which disproportionately cause detriment to the lives of people of color.”¹

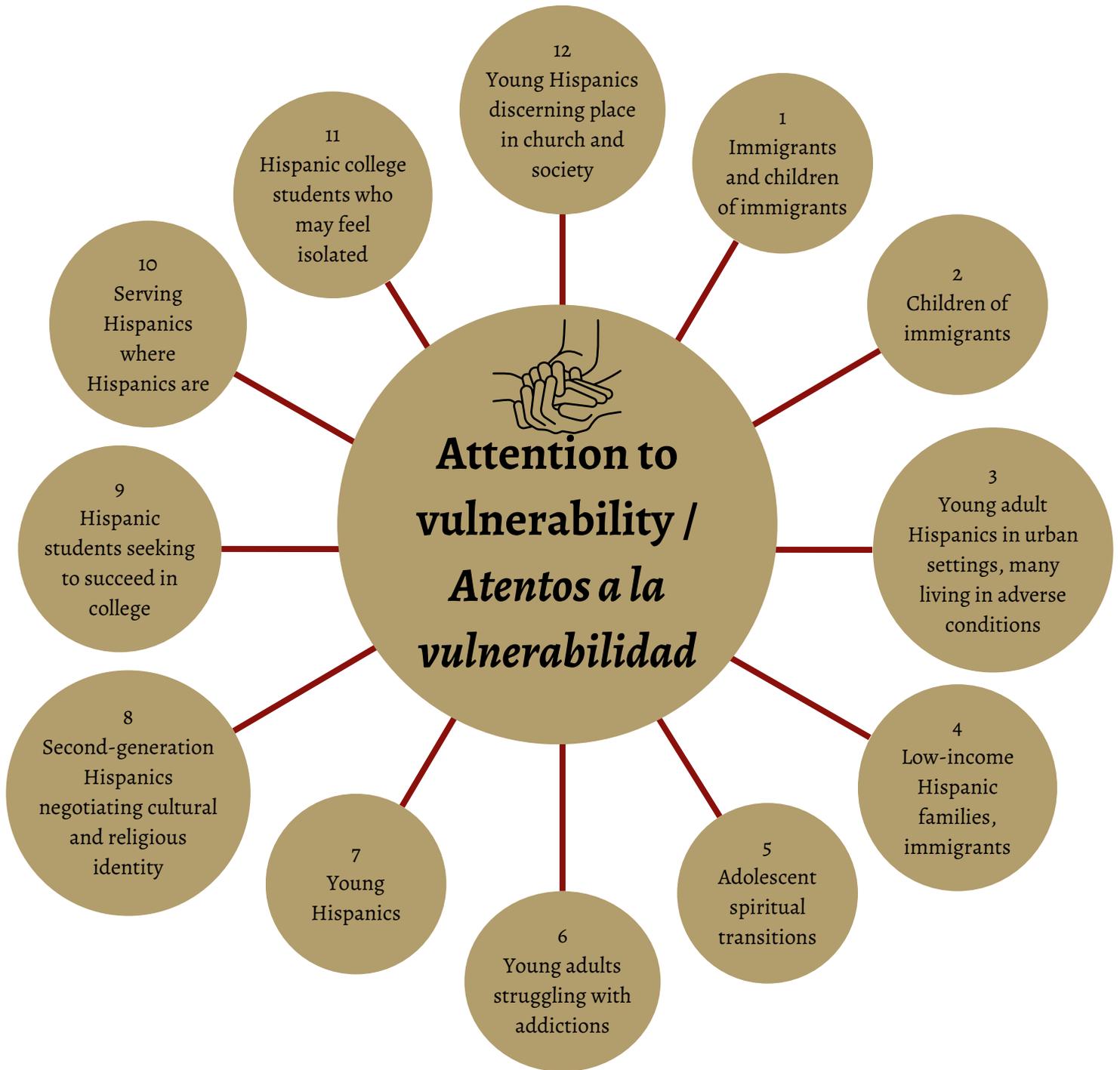
Ministry with young Hispanic Catholics must begin with a recognition of the effects of structural sin in our society, which continues to impose significant burdens upon the shoulders of young Hispanics: “For many [young Hispanics,] especially those who live in the existential peripheries of our society, time is not perceived as a *kairos* but as a difficult *Kronos*.”²

Besides commonly known biases such as racism, classism and cultural discrimination, the lives of millions of young Hispanics are affected by the harsh conditions of poverty within which they and their families live. Most young Hispanic young people live in poverty or very close to the poverty line; the majority attend underperforming, hyper-segregated and poorly resourced public schools; many are growing up in neighborhoods with high levels of at-risk behavior. Young Hispanics tend to be overrepresented among those holding low-paying jobs, the imprisoned population in the U.S., and gang membership. The pain and struggle of countless young Hispanics remains invisible since many of our communities do not know of their existence or simply fail to embrace young people who are alternatively documented (e.g., DREAMers), LGBTQ, disabled, separated from their parents because of deportations, young workers who had to leave school to support their families, etc. These vulnerabilities exacerbate other dynamics associated with identity negotiation and the struggle to belong in church and in society.

This pillar of pastoral activity with young Hispanic Catholics calls for a ministry of care that does not take for granted the pain and suffering of a community that experiences much struggle in our society. When one young Hispanic Catholic person hurts, the entire Hispanic community hurts. So does the Church. Not all Hispanic young people are equally affected by the realities named above, yet we all share in the struggle of our sisters and brothers who do. Our Church needs many more specialized ministries that serve these vulnerable populations. We need that all forms of ministry be inclusive of young Hispanic women and men in conditions of vulnerability.



In making a commitment to serve young Hispanic Catholics, Organizations in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* have accepted the responsibility to acknowledge the existence of persons living in conditions of vulnerability—including the reasons leading to such conditions—and do something. Most of them do this by accompanying young Hispanic Catholics, usually children or grandchildren of immigrants, as they navigate complex social, cultural and religious realities associated with living in the United States. The majority of these organizations advance their ministries in urban settings. Organizations like Fuerza Transformadora, serving explicitly young Hispanics struggling with additions, and Centro San Juan Diego, working with children at the U.S.-Mexico border, model preferential options for specific populations of Hispanic Catholics in at-risk situations.



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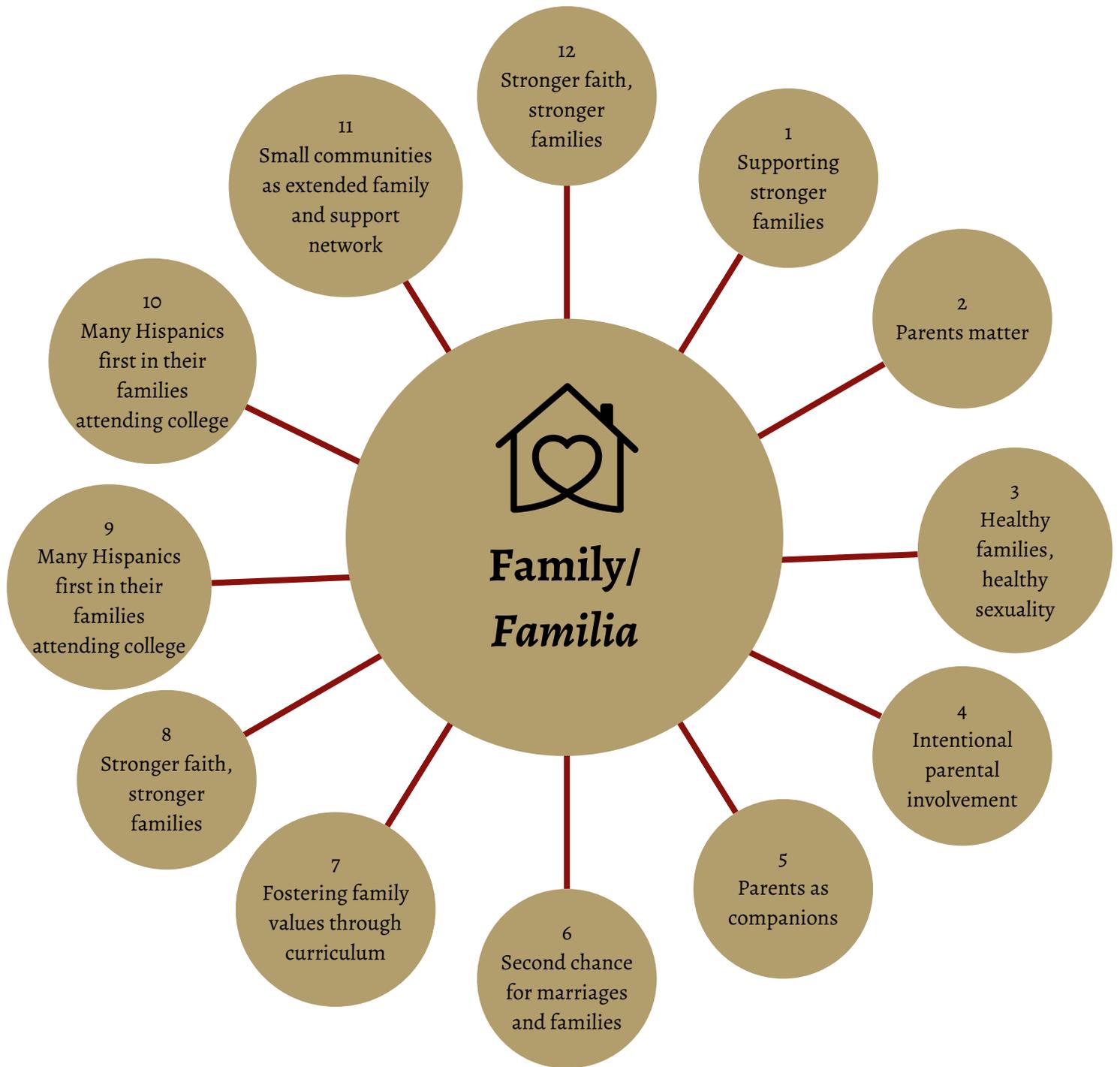
Pillar 4: Family/Familia

Family plays a central role in the lives of young Hispanic Catholics. In general, Hispanics in the United States have a strong sense of family life, grounded in the communal self-understanding—or organic anthropology (see Pillar 1)—that shapes Hispanic cultures: “This organic anthropology is reflected, moreover, in the very definition of family.”¹ The family is the first and most immediate community where the young person matures and learns what it means to be human “with others.” It is in the family that the young Hispanic person learns to be in relationship with other young people and adults, and experiences accompaniment: “To be among family is to be accompanied by others; and... to be accompanied by others is to be a person.”² This same sentiment is confirmed by Pope Francis in *Christus Vivit*: “The family should be the first place of accompaniment.”³ A loss of family for a young Hispanic person, or anything that amounts to disconnection from one’s family, has serious ramifications not only for ministry, but also for life. Hence the sense of urgency that Hispanic families usually place in staying together, worshipping together, and remaining involved in the lives of their children, even into the young adult years.



Although references to the family point immediately to blood relationships, the Hispanic understanding of family life tends to be more expansive and inclusive. Non-blood relatives, near and far, are perceived as close family. Thus, it is not surprising that Hispanics remain closely linked to relatives and friends in Latin America and the Caribbean, even after decades or generations of being in the United States. Friends are welcomed into the family through *compadrazgo* (i.e., godparenting). *Paisanos* (i.e., people from the same town, region or country) are family. Ancestors, teachers and mentors are family. Hispanics in the United States, despite our many differences and self-understandings, are a family. For young Hispanic Catholics, the concept of family often transcends time, space, context, class, origin, ideology and religious boundaries. In the young Hispanic Catholic imagination, the limits between actual relationships and the metaphoric understanding of the term are blurred when using the term family.

In 2006, Hispanic young Catholics, gathered at the First National Encuentro of *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*, asserted with confidence: “We want to celebrate and recognize the Hispanic tradition and include families in our religious experiences, so that they may also have an encounter with the Church.”⁴ In this sense, young Hispanics see themselves as evangelizers to their own families. Furthermore, young Hispanics committed at that meeting to “include our families in the planning and development of our activities.”⁵ The Organizations in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* clearly understand the importance of family among young Hispanic Catholics and the sense of family with which they relate with one another and others who share in their experience. In their outreach to young Hispanic Catholics, they engage parents and relatives treating them as key partners, have programming that aims at promoting healthy family life, and form communities inspired by language that evokes family relationships.



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. El Centro Católico Carismático (The Bronx, NY) 2. Centro San Juan Diego (El Paso, TX) 3. Corazón Puro (The Bronx, NY) 4. Cristo Rey Jesuit High School (Chicago, IL) 5. Damascus (Centerburg, OH) 6. Fuerza Transformadora (Diocese of Little Rock) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Instituto Fe y Vida, Inc. (Romeoville, IL) 8. Iskali (Chicago, IL) 9. Latino Scholars Program, University of St. Thomas (St. Paul, MN) 10. Ministry in Lo Cotidiano, Dominican University (Chicago, IL) 11. Newman Ministry (Teutopolis, IL) 12. Southeast Pastoral Institute (Miami, FL) |
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Pillar 5: Leadership/Liderazgo

The fast growth of the Hispanic presence in the Catholic Church in the United States means that, now and in the near future, a significant number of Hispanics should step up to serve as leaders in Church and society. Young Hispanic Catholics will constitute a major force among the next generation of U.S. professionals in different fields. They will likely be the backbone of U.S. Catholic ecclesial leadership in the rest of the twenty-first century. Many young Hispanic Catholics are natural leaders and already serve as such in churches, schools, organizations and neighborhoods. Most, however, do not have the academic or professional credentials to bring their vision and energy to a higher level and expand their impact as leaders. Creating pathways from grassroots leadership to decision-making leadership in structures and organizations, in church and society, must be an imperative for Catholic ministry with this population. Providing access to quality education may hold the key to achieve this goal.

Ministry with young Hispanic Catholics is an excellent opportunity to cultivate leadership skills. Ministry groups where young Hispanics can exercise leadership in parishes, organizations and schools are a good starting point. For instance, faith communities can start with basic leadership opportunities such as “including [young Hispanics] in pastoral councils and parish decision-making.”¹ Creating spaces for young Hispanics to exercise leadership must be a priority for ecclesial structures and organizations: “Only four in 10 parishes with Hispanic ministry have formal programs to minister specifically to Hispanic youth.”² What is preventing the numbers from being 10 in 10? It has been observed that faith communities that engage young Hispanics and create spaces for their leadership tend to be among the most vibrant.³ All the organizations in this study can name young Hispanics who one day participated in their programs or initiatives, learned important leadership skills and were affirmed through mentorship, and today serve as leaders within their ranks.



One of the strongest requests from those participating in the V Encuentro for Hispanic/Latino Ministry (2018) was to invest in leadership formation of young Hispanic Catholics: “If the young people are to exercise leadership effectively, they must also receive practical training and pastoral formation for their roles.”⁴ Young Hispanic Catholics possess important skills honed in light of their experience as *gente puente* (bridge people) navigating cultures, languages, traditions ways of life, and holding the tension between centers and peripheries: “Hispanic youth also represent a valuable resource in and of themselves: they straddle the line between multiple cultures and, as such, can become powerful voices for a theology en conjunto.”⁵



The Organizations in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* are committed to giving young Hispanic Catholics the necessary mentorship to be leaders in church and society. They seem to share a common understanding about faith-based leadership as relational: Young Hispanics are being formed to be leaders in relationship with God through Jesus Christ, with others, particularly fellow Hispanics, and the world / created order. All organizations in the study explicitly see leadership potential in young Hispanic Catholics. Leadership here is not understood necessarily in corporate terms but as living up to one’s full potential and being instrumental in helping others to do likewise. Even when many young Hispanic people experience brokenness and hardship, they lead from their woundedness, modeling leadership that cultivates a culture of mutual collaboration and solidarity with others like them.



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Pillar 6: Culture Matters/La cultura importa

Culture is the matrix within which our lives unfold as human beings in the here and now of our historical existence. We make sense of our immediate reality, our relationships, our faith and of our world as people shaped by particular cultural worldviews.¹ No human being may credibly claim to live outside a particular cultural worldview. We all see life through at least one particular cultural lens and have the ability to cross cultural boundaries to learn from other cultural perspectives. All cultures have their values and limitations.

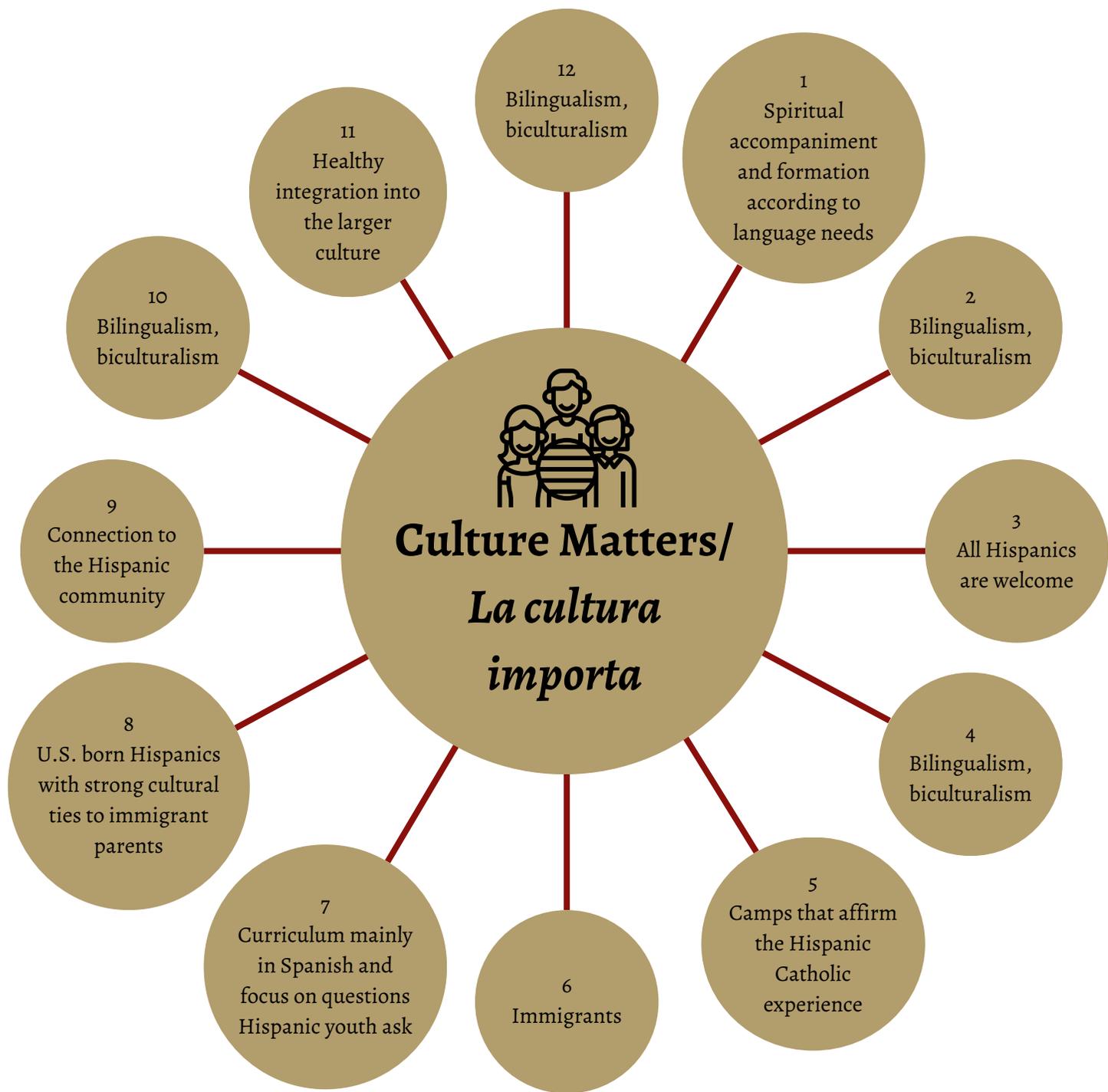
Our society has many cultures that together—in dialogue and in tension—constitute the complex U.S. cultural experience. Young Hispanic Catholics are an essential part of that experience. While the terms Hispanic and Latino, alongside others, point to some commonalities (e.g., connection to the Iberian world, use of the Spanish language, historical connections), it is more accurate to speak of Hispanic cultures. As Hispanics, as Catholics and as citizens of the United States, as it's the case of most, young Hispanic Catholics are highly influenced by the U.S. cultural matrix and enrich it with their own diversity, questions and contributions.

U.S. Catholicism has historically been shaped and reshaped by many cultural experiences. In the past, many Catholic pastoral and educational efforts privileged assimilation into the larger culture, particularly when serving the young. Today's U.S. Catholics, perhaps more culturally diverse than ever before, and living in different circumstances than in the recent past, have made an option for integration. While most young Hispanic Catholics are English-speaking, understand the larger U.S. cultural milieu, and participate as active citizens of their country, most also speak Spanish or Spanglish, are deeply imbued in Hispanic cultural realities, with some familiarity about life in Latin America and the Caribbean, and understand the limits of citizenship in a society that does not always welcomes them as Hispanic. Young Hispanic Catholics' cultural worldview is both/and.



Ministry with young Hispanic Catholics demands close attention to the complex, multifaceted and fascinating cultural experience of this population. Merely accommodating or translating ministerial models that worked with different populations at other moments has proven to be largely ineffective. The delegates to the V Encuentro observed that “New approaches may be required to effectively engage [young Hispanics/Latinos as well as the 1.5, 2nd, and 3rd+ generations] in the life of the Church and in the processes of Hispanic/Latino ministry.”² The organizations in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* have embraced some good practices in this regard. Paying attention to language could be a good entry point into defining the type of ministry needed today. For some bilingual programming may be the best way to go; for others it is doing work mainly in English with an intentional Hispanic perspective—Hispanic flavor! For some it will be serving young Hispanics who feel more comfortable articulating their faith in Spanish because this is the language they grew up speaking or because they recently migrated; for others it will be using Spanglish, “a unique way of communicating for young bilingual Hispanics.”³ Not one approach is better than the other. However, we need all. Pastoral leaders must decide which they are better prepared to offer.

The organizations in the study have invested in developing culturally relevant resources to engage young Hispanic Catholics by honoring not only language, but also symbols, artistic expressions, stories, expressions of popular Catholicism, ways of learning, ways of interacting with one another and family dynamics, among others. Most importantly, they continue to attract interculturally competent pastoral leaders who understand well young Hispanic Catholics.



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Pillar 7: Empowerment/Potenciamiento



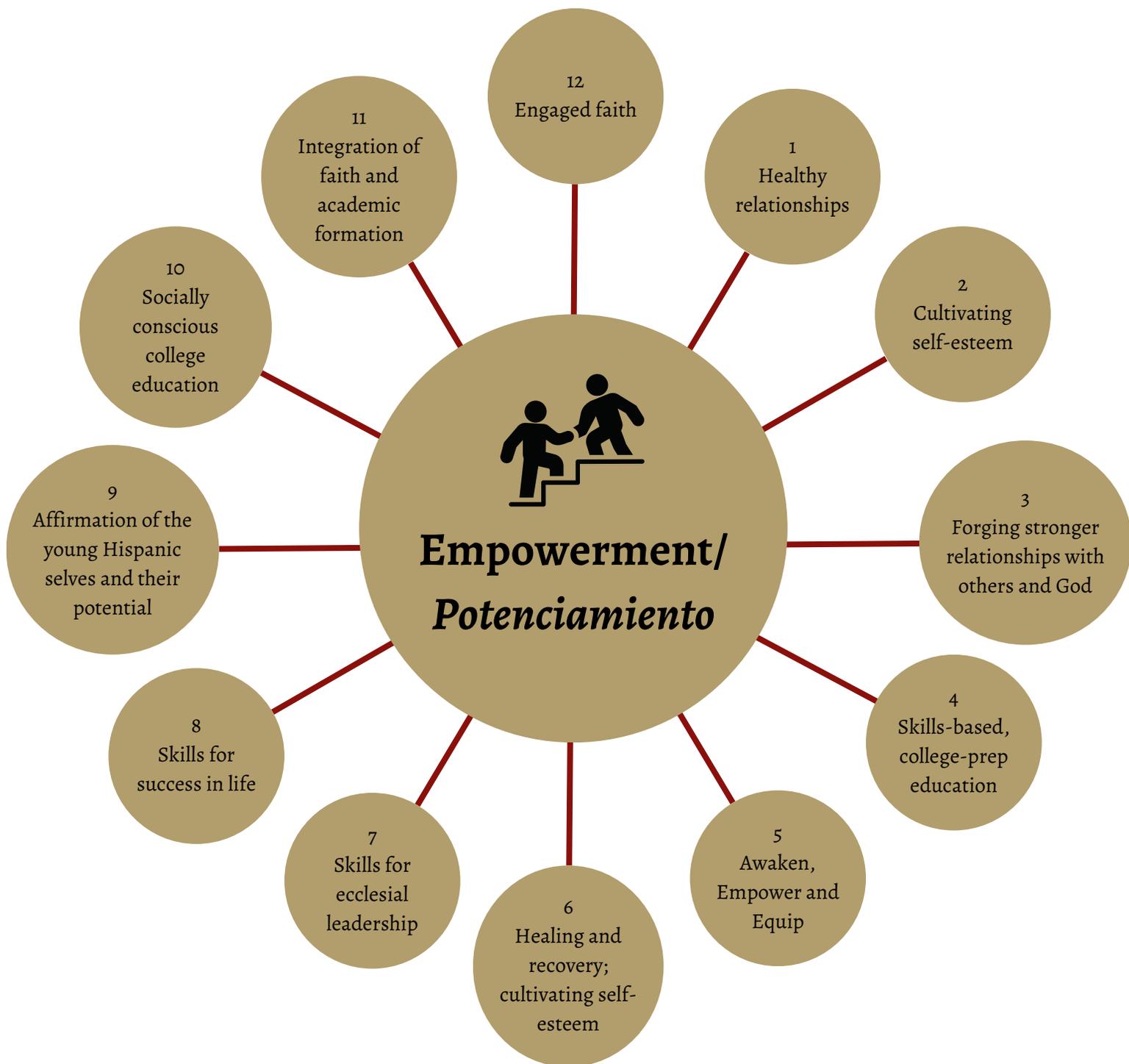
Catholics in general share a positive view of the human person. We know that despite our limitations, brokenness, and the presence of sin in our lives, God loves us infinitely and constantly renews the call to salvation in Jesus Christ; God wants every human person to flourish at their best and to experience the power of God's Reign here and now. A ministry that emerges from this vision is a ministry of accompaniment that aims at lifting each other up in light of our shared dignity as children of God. This vision shapes many Hispanic ministry efforts in the United States, and more particularly ministry with young Hispanic Catholics: "Hispanic/Latino ministry prioritizes the young, families, women, and those in the peripheries—including undocumented immigrants, DREAMers, diverse generations, families with insufficient economic resources for a dignified life or who are suffering in countless ways, as well as the professionals in our midst who sometimes are neglected amid a sea of urgent pastoral needs—always with a focus on justice and human development."¹

Ministry with young Hispanic Catholics must be a ministry of empowerment. Young Hispanic Catholics "are a significant sign of hope for the Church" and we must cultivate them through "affirmation and guidance."² To empower young Hispanics requires entering in relationship with them, understanding the many realities that shape their lives, and seeing their potential as persons and as disciples. This is perhaps the most important step in the process of empowerment with this population: entering in relationship with them. Many instances of ministry in the Catholic Church still fall short from being spaces that invite, welcome, and embrace young Hispanic Catholics. Empowerment begins by acknowledging who they are, their dignity, and the circumstances that shape their lives, especially those that limit their possibilities to flourish: "Ministry with Hispanic youth and young adults must be a ministry that empowers Hispanic families and young people to challenge the anomalies that negatively impact our Catholic children in the larger educational system,"³ and beyond.

Empowerment demands that pastoral agents, educators and mentors develop the ability to imagine a Church and a society in which young Hispanic Catholics do not stay marginalized in the peripheries but can exercise their protagonism as architects of the present and the future of both: "the Latina church—particularly Latina/o youth ministry—plays a key role in the process of leadership formation as Latina/o youth are seen as significant agents within their own communities. This posture of empowering Latina/o young people moves them away from victimization and dehumanization towards a restoration of their dignity and their contribution to the good of the community."⁴

The organizations in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* have made the empowerment of young Hispanics one of their top priorities. They see the potential of this population and are committed to creating the conditions for these young people to grow. Some do this by providing educational opportunities that will lead young Hispanic Catholics to share their many gifts as faith-inspired professionals and leaders in church and society. Others do it by focusing on healing and restorative ministries that address brokenness. For many young Hispanics affected by adverse realities, healing is the starting point to human flourishing. Other organizations empower to live in healthy relationships with others and with God. They all share the conviction that in the process of empowering young Hispanic Catholics they are paving the way to building stronger faith communities and a better society.





The numbers in the graphic correspond to the organizations. The text provides a glimpse of how each pillar becomes manifest in each organization most strongly according to data from the study.

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Pillar 8: Catholic Identity/Identidad católica

Catholic identity is perhaps one of the most discussed categories in the world of ministry. Just as some leaders refer to Catholic identity in narrower terms as a series of particular practices and adherence to a specific set of beliefs; others approach Catholic identity in broader terms, also involving practices and core beliefs, making more emphasis on discipleship and Baptismal identity. Being Catholic implies embracing a distinct way of life that becomes actualized in multiple ways as we journey in life. Young Hispanics seldom see both perspectives, narrow and broad, as antagonistic: “Hispanic young people struggle to incorporate narrow perceptions of Catholic identity ranging between extreme traditionalism and extreme progressivism common in certain adult circles and faith communities.”¹ Rather, they understand that these perspectives seek to address a common concern: How to remain faithful to the best of the Catholic tradition without shortcutting the essential and while avoiding to exclude those whose association with the Catholic tradition—and religion altogether—is more fluid.

Pastoral leaders engaged in various forms of youth and young adult ministry are aware that most young Hispanic Catholics are not actively involved in church life, particularly at the parish, youth group and catechetical levels. Less than 3% of school-age Hispanic Catholics are enrolled in Catholic schools, and a fraction of college-age Hispanic Catholics attend Catholic colleges. Most young adult Hispanic Catholics are not involved in small faith communities. However, Millions of young Hispanics hold onto their Catholic identity. Until recently, most Hispanics self-identified as Catholics. It is safe to assert that most young Hispanics in the United States grew up influenced by some exposure to Catholicism. Still for many Hispanics older than 18, cultural identity (i.e., being Hispanic) and religious identity (i.e., being Catholic) go hand in hand.

In 2006 young Hispanic Catholics gathered at the *National Encuentro for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry* proposed perhaps the best statement articulating how they understand Catholic identity:

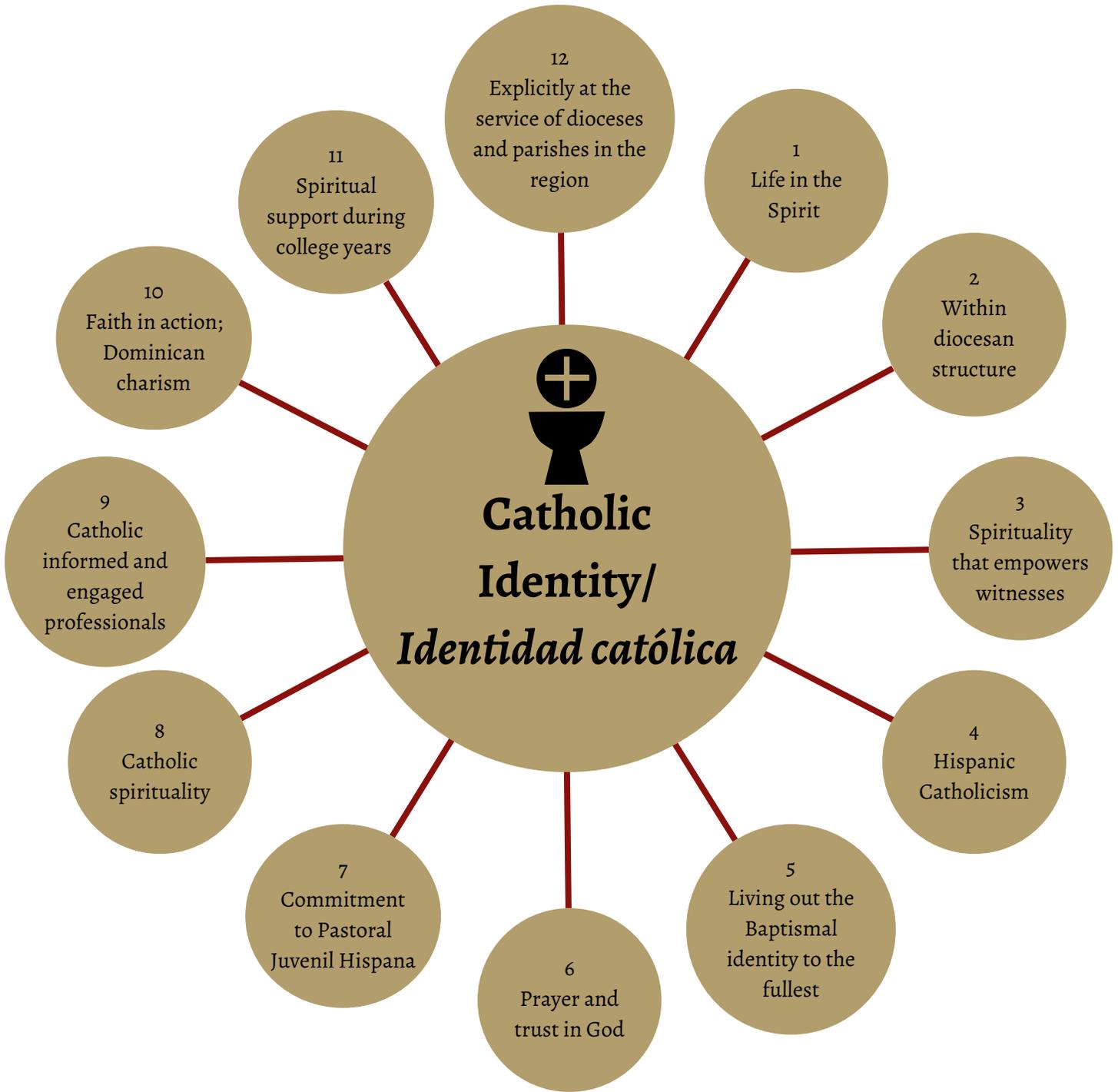
We, the Catholic Latino young people who participate in Hispanic youth and young adult ministry, feel called and committed to the mission of the Church, to wholly form and prepare ourselves through pastoral action, and to lovingly evangelize other young Hispanics according to their own situation and experience.

We strive to offer immigrants and citizens alike, the ever new and joyous truth of the Gospel, highlighting gospel values, and making an effort to reach those who need the Good News the most, who do not know God, or who have strayed from the way of Jesus.

We propose to carry out this mission through the testimony of our lives and our prophetic leadership among our peers, investing our gifts and talents in evangelizing and missionary efforts rooted in the places where they live, work, study, and have fun, always following the example of Jesus, and strengthening ourselves in the Eucharist.²



Ministerial efforts affirming the pillar of Catholic identity must help young Hispanic Catholics to achieve their goals. The organizations in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* are firmly committed to inviting young Hispanic Catholics to embrace, deepen and live their Catholic identity with intentionality. Among the various markers of Catholic identity that emerge in the work of these organizations are the following: strong emphasis on prayer life, engagement of the Scriptures through prayer and study, spiritual accompaniment, invitation to partake of the Church’s rich sacramental life, participation in the Eucharist and the cultivation of a Eucharistic identity, connection to parochial life, faith-based service, and cultivating a life of continuous witness. They also integrate in their ministry a deliberate affirmation of Hispanic Catholic identity as mediated through cultural practices, symbols, narratives and expressions of popular Catholicism. In doing this, young Hispanic Catholics are reassured that they do not need to stop being Hispanic in order to be Catholic in the United States.



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Pillar 9: Faith Formation/Formación en la fe

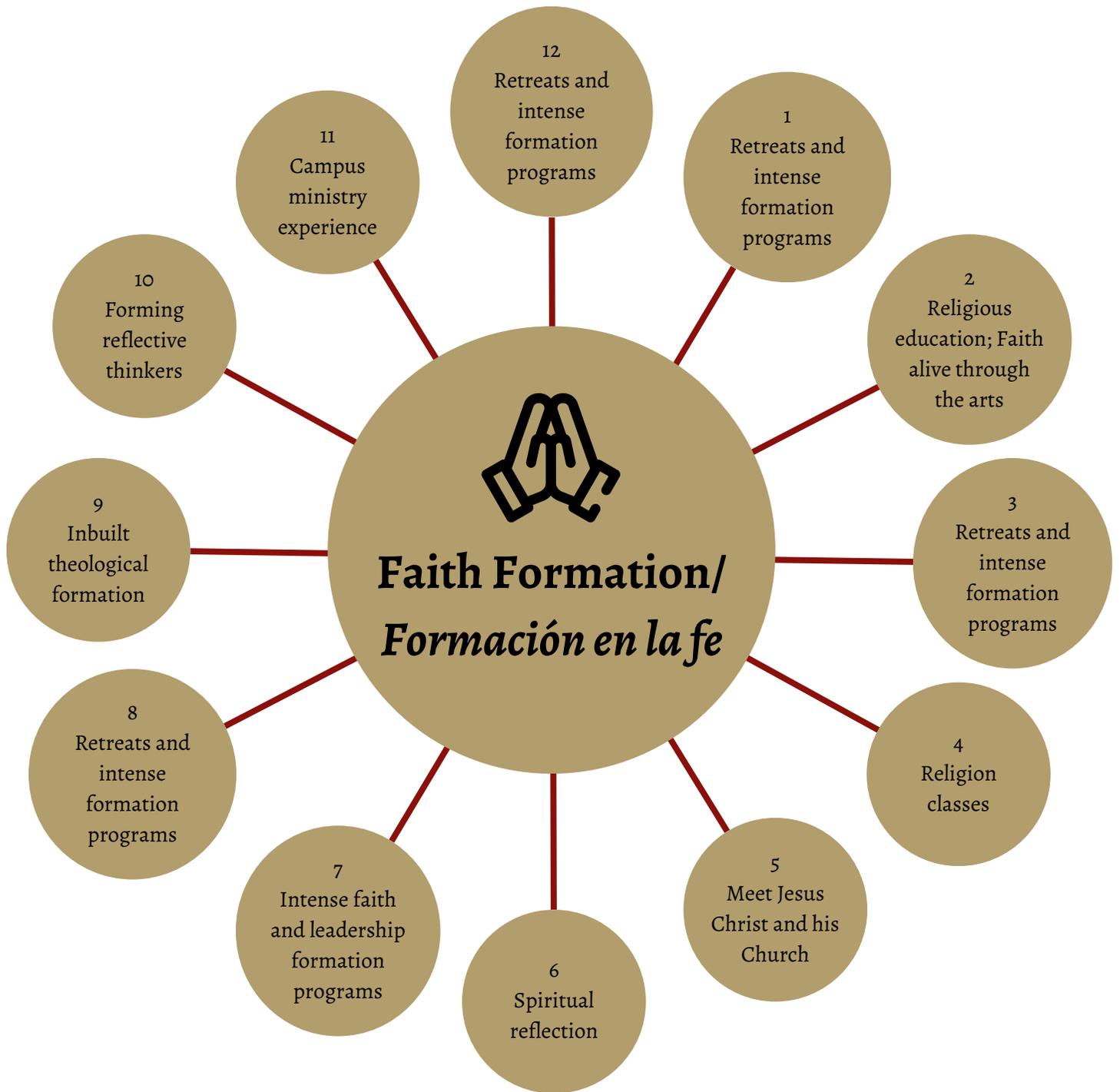
“The Church exists in order to evangelize.”¹ That is, the Church exists to continue the evangelizing mission of Jesus Christ in history. All the Baptized, without exception, are called to participate in that mission. Young Hispanic Catholics want to engage their faith, learn it and make it their own; they want to encounter Jesus Christ in his Gospel and in the rich Tradition of the Catholic Church: “We believe that we can build the Reign of God, without cultural boundaries, bearing witness that God lives among Hispanic young people, nurturing and forming us in our faith, and overcoming the obstacles that we encounter in life. We believe in the teachings of our mother the Church and that we will have a positive impact on it by being aware of our pastoral situation, responding to our needs and aspirations, and creating models of *Pastoral Juvenil* centered in Christ.” With these words from the *National Encuentro for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry* (2006), pastoral leaders were reminded that faith formation must be an integral dimension of the Church’s ministerial efforts with young Hispanic people.

Faith formation as a Pillar of Success in ministry with young Catholics must incorporate at least the following three dynamics. One, it raises awareness about the young person’s Baptismal identity. It delineates the convictions and practices that help the young person to see herself/himself as a disciple of Jesus Christ and to give witness of that experience. Two, it accompanies the young person in the process of entering into the mysteries of faith through Word, sacrament and a renewed sensibility that God is present in all things. As the young person develops a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Christian, falling in love with the person of Christ and the Gospel, there must be a constant invitation to embrace God’s grace in the sacraments, participate in the liturgical and prayer life of the Church, and cultivate a sacramental imagination. Three, it prepares evangelizers to share the Good News. It forms the hearts and minds of young people to become missionary disciples through word and action, building strong communities of faith, starting with their own families.

To honor these dimensions in the pastoral accompaniment of young Hispanic Catholics, we need faith formation experiences grounded in their particular experience as young, Hispanic and Catholic persons living in the United States. That means that faith formation practices, methods and pedagogies must incorporate core aspects of the Hispanic experience, including the various cultures that shape the lives of young Hispanics, the various languages they speak, the many symbols and narratives that embody their religious experience, and the many realities—including lights and shadows—that shape their everyday lives.



Most young Hispanic Catholics are absent from traditional venues of faith formation (e.g., parish catechetical programs, Catholic schools, youth ministry groups). Many catechetical efforts do not seem to find a way to help young Hispanics to connect with the beauty and depth of the Catholic tradition.² The majority of young Hispanics Catholics are digital natives, thus expecting new and more creative ways to receive and share the faith. The organizations in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* have centered faith formation as part of their efforts with young Hispanic Catholics. Faith formation in some is done through the arts. Others form small ecclesial communities, which historically have proven to be an effective way for Hispanic Catholics to be formed in the faith. Some invest in strong experiences that provide a foundation (e.g., three-day retreats, camps, seasonal programs, symposia), trusting that families and faith communities will continue the formation work. Others still rely on more traditional, school-based models of faith formation. The majority have a web and social media presence but their use of these platforms for faith formation is rather timid. Faith formation is definitely an area of growth for ministry with Hispanic youth for these organizations and other Catholics engaged in this ministry in the United States.



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Pillar 10: Missionary Drive/Impulso misionero

All baptized people are called to be missionary disciples: “Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries,” but rather that we are always “missionary disciples.”¹ These words reflect the wisdom of a faith community that continues to grow in its understanding of what it means to be an evangelizing and missionary community in history. If there was ever a time when Catholics assumed that only a few members were to lead the Church’s missionary activity, today, thanks in great part to the Second Vatican Council, we know that everyone and everything must embody a missionary spirit. We all are missionaries. The 1997 General Directory for Catechesis, delineating the tasks of catechesis, spoke of “mission” as one alongside other five tasks. The 2020 Directory for Catechesis made an important correction: all tasks and everything related to catechesis must be done in a “*kerygmatic* and missionary vein.”² Mission is not just one task. It is who we are in everything we do.

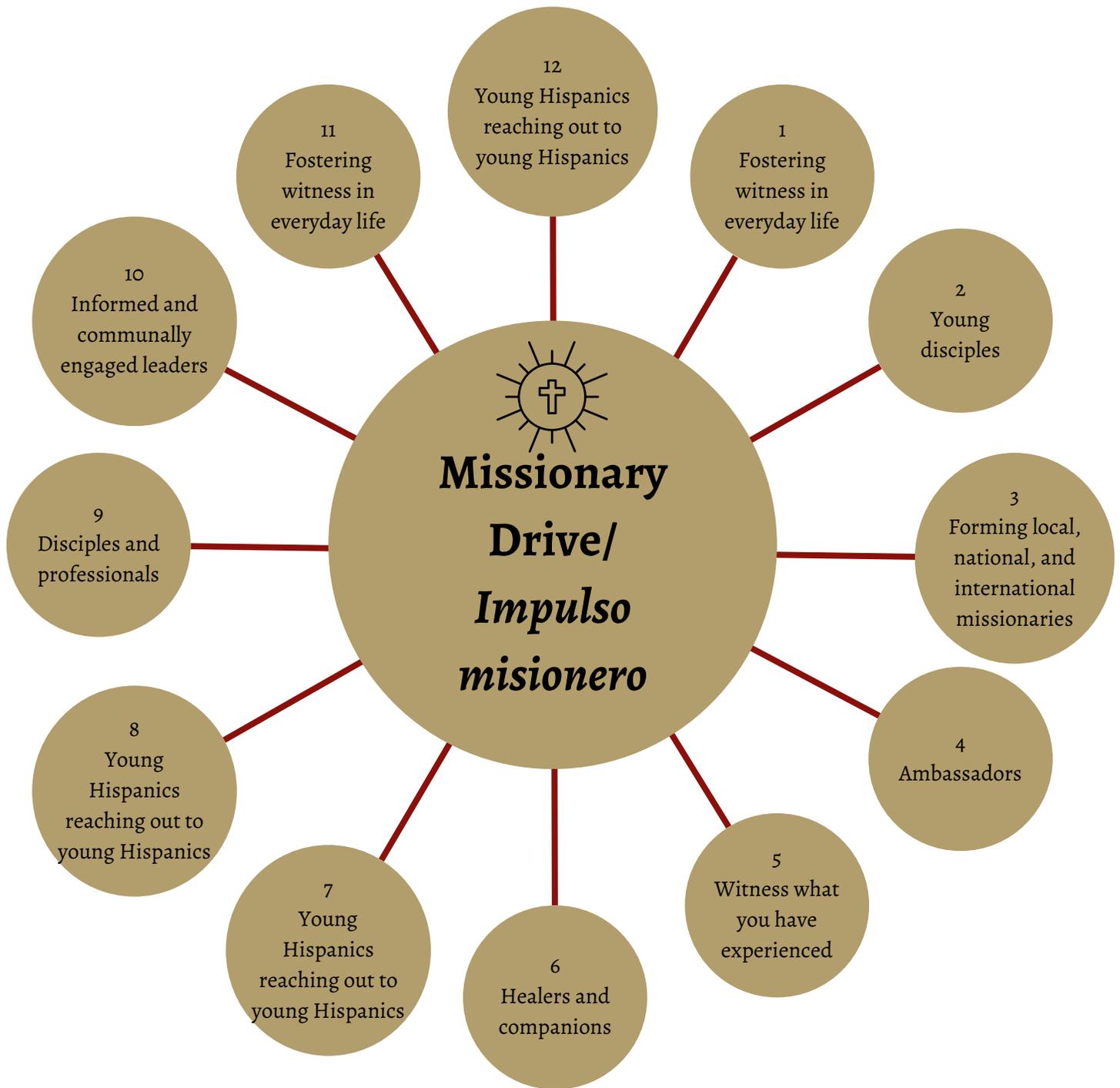
Contemplating missionary drive as a Pillar of Success in ministry with young Hispanic Catholics requires pondering about a number of important ecclesial invitations. One, an invitation to *pastoral conversion*, which in turns calls for *missionary conversion*. It is an invitation to place evangelization at the center the ministerial activity, opening the doors to structural reforms and serving in new spaces: “Bringing the Good News to Hispanic *jóvenes* implies action outside of the church buildings, the parish facilities, and the weekly meetings. It moves us from the pews to the shoes...seeking out the *jóvenes* in their homes, their schools, their workplaces, their neighborhoods, as well as the movie theaters, dancers, labor camps, and wherever else they live and gather.”³



Two, an invitation to develop ministries *en salida*, that is ministries that reflect the character of a faith community that goes forth, challenging the predominance of centralized approaches to ministry; seeking the wounded, the abandoned, and the most vulnerable. It is an invitation to go into geographical, social, ecclesial and existential peripheries where millions of young Hispanics live.

Three, an invitation to make a preferential option for young Hispanic Catholics because of who they are, what they represent for church and society at this particular time, and the need to affirm their dignity and potential. This requires actively seeking young Hispanic Catholics in the places where they are, understanding the particular circumstances that shape their lives, and embracing them in our ministries and faith communities so they can grow as persons and missionary disciples.

The organizations in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* strive to advance their ministries in light of a missionary vision that embodies the above characteristics. Leaders from these organizations regularly use language that evoke being *en salida*, walking the extra mile to reach out to young Hispanic Catholics and serve them where they are. Most are located in urban settings, others in borderland territories. For most of these organizations, the priorities in their budgets and the nature of their main programs clearly reflect a preferential option for Hispanic Catholic youth. Most importantly, they are forming young Hispanics to be missionaries to other young Hispanics. Their ministries form witnesses, disciples, ambassadors, companions, professionals, and missionaries to continue the Church’s evangelizing mission where they live.



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- | | |
|---|---|
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Section III:

Recommendations for Ministry with Young Hispanic Catholics



We [Catholic Latino young people] propose to carry out this mission through the testimony of our lives and our prophetic leadership among our peers, investing our gifts and talents in evangelizing and missionary efforts rooted in the places where they live, work, study, and have fun, always following the example of Jesus, and strengthening ourselves in the Eucharist.

— “Mission Statement of Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry,” paragraph 3, National Encuentro for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry, 2006.

Toward a Theory of Change for Ministry with Young Hispanic Catholics

Ministry as an active expression of the Church's evangelizing mission is ultimately the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individual persons, families, communities and organizations. The Spirit always surprises us. A theory of change in the context of evangelization should not be read as a rigid prescription of anticipated and homogeneous outcomes. Neither should it be used as a cause-effect tool that dismisses the nuances associated with particularity of context and the complexity of our lived experience. The present Theory of Change emerges from a close examination of the organizations that participated in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth*. These organizations are doing something well. Not perfect, yet something effective and transformative that is making a major difference in the lives of the young Hispanic Catholics they serve. The following Theory of Change, confirmed by the experience of the organizations in the study, relies on five moments:



Moment 1: Firm Reading of the Current Reality

Every Catholic organization/institution serving young Catholics must start with the acknowledgment that Hispanic youth/young adults are redefining the U.S. Catholic experience, particularly in terms of demographics: About 60% of Catholics younger than 18 and about half of Catholics younger than 30 are Hispanic. It is our **reality**. It is who we are as a church. Young Hispanics are not a hypothetical population but a flesh-and-blood body of Catholics who are already in our faith communities and organizations/institutions or waiting to be invited into them.

Organizations/institutions serving Catholic youth must then ask an important **question**: Are we serving this population and its spiritual/ministerial needs adequately? The answer to this question compels a **Call to Action**: We must do something. At stake is the present and future of the Catholic experience in the U.S.

Moment 2: Identification of Key of Catholic Organizations Serving Young Hispanics

Every ministerial organization serving Catholic youth has its own methods and commitments to advance their mission. Such commitments vary in light of the population they serve and their needs, availability of resources, and main goals. The organizational DNA of Catholic organizations serving young Hispanics has the following four key elements. One, a **Clear Sense of Mission**, particularly as they define themselves at the service of evangelization and strive to intentionally understand the experience of youth/young adult Hispanics. Two, they have attracted or cultivated **Hispanic and Interculturally Competent Leadership**. While others also share in these competencies to advance the mission, Hispanic leaders provide a personal sense of connection (i.e., Hispanic-to-Hispanic connection) while allowing them to model leadership (i.e., representation). Three, they develop **Adaptable Structures and Resources** that makes them nimble to respond to the specific needs of young Hispanic Catholics in particular contexts without waiting for complex sets of instructions from outside or the availability of large quantities of means. For most of these organizations, the most important capital is human. Four, these organizations remain inspiringly open to making a **Commitment to Innovation and Transformation**. They regularly test models and methods that work in certain contexts, yet find themselves adapting them or developing new ones that are more affirming and more in sync with the experience of young Hispanic Catholics. Some of these organizations operate peripherally in relation to larger ecclesiastical structures and larger organizations dedicated to ministry with young Catholics or sources of funding, yet manage to be creative and effective in the peripheries where they exist.



Moment 3: Ten Pillars of Success Present in in Catholic Ministerial Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth

The following Ten Pillars of Success present in various ways in practically all the organizations that were part of the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* provide the ingredients for ministerial recipes and strategies that honor a commitment to evangelization and to affirming the richness and complexity of the experience of young Hispanic Catholics. These Ten Pillars of Success could be combined in multiple possible ways, with different levels of intensity, depending on efforts and goals, leading to life-giving ways to accompany young Hispanic Catholics:

Ten Pillars of Success



Moment 4: Praxis-Oriented Commitments

The ultimate twofold goal of the Church's ministerial activity is to bring people to a transforming encounter with God through Jesus Christ and to foster human flourishing. The organizations in this study have demonstrated through various means—e.g., retreats, camps, formation programs, leadership symposia, small communities, curricular decisions, etc.—to pursue this twofold goal via three praxis-oriented commitments. One, **Accompaniment** of young Hispanic Catholics—as Hispanics and as Christian disciples—in the here and now of their particular realities. Two, providing solid instances of **Faith Formation** that lead to a better understanding of their identity as Christian disciples, acquiring a deeper understanding of their faith tradition, and preparing them for mission. Three, making an explicit commitment to practices of **Empowerment for Leadership**, strengthening the public voice of young Hispanic Catholics—particularly in a society in which young Hispanics still struggle to be fully affirmed fully and are perceived through persistent prejudices—while cultivating their charisms to be leaders in church and society.



Moment 5: Ministry with Young Hispanics That Is Transforming and Prophetic

Two categories rightfully characterize the fruits of the Catholic organizations serving young Hispanics in this study: Transforming and prophetic. These categories give life to a vision for ministry with Hispanic young people that **Fosters Christian Discipleship**, inviting them to live in deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and to be more engaged in the practice of their faith in their ecclesial communities; **Invests in the Flourishing of Young Hispanics Youth**, remaining attentive to their human and spiritual needs; **Builds Strong Faith Communities**, highlighting the importance of communal belonging, with particular attention to the family and the local community; and **Promotes Faith-Inspired Public Engagement**, forming the heart and minds of young Hispanics to live life projects as Catholics for whom faith and life go hand in hand as they build the Common Good and exercise responsible citizenship.



Theory of Change - Ministry with Young Hispanic Catholics

National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth (2023)

Hosffman Ospino, PhD

Key Characteristics of Organizations Serving Catholic young Hispanics

Reality:
Hispanic youth/young adults are redefining the U.S. Catholic experience:

- About 60% of Catholics younger than 18
- About half of Catholics younger than 30

Question:
Are we serving this population and its spiritual/ministerial needs adequately?

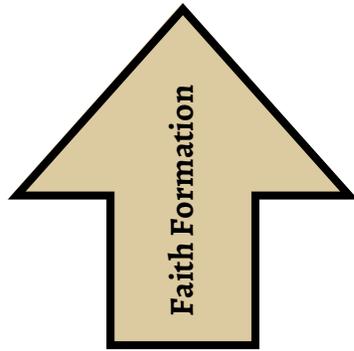
Call to Action:
We must do something. At stake is the present and future of the Catholic experience in the U.S.

Ten Pillars of Success Present in Catholic Ministerial Organizations Serving Young Hispanics

1. Community/*Comunidad*
2. Sense of belonging/*Pertenencia*
3. Attention to vulnerability/*Atentos a la vulnerabilidad*
4. Family/*Familia*
5. Leadership/*Liderazgo*
6. Culture matters/*La cultura importa*
7. Empowerment/*Potenciamiento*
8. Catholic identity/*Identidad católica*
9. Faith formation/*Formación en la fe*
10. Missionary Drive/*Impulso misionero*

Ministry with Young Hispanics that is Transforming and Prophetic

1. Fosters Christian Discipleship
2. Invests in the Flourishing of Young Hispanics
3. Builds Strong Faith Communities
4. Promotes Faith-Inspired Public Engagement



Recommendations for

Curriculum Development

Curriculum normally serves as the vehicle through which ministerial organizations/institutions and educational initiatives communicate their vision. Just as specific texts and manuals can guide our efforts in ministry with young Catholics, we must also pay close attention to the most important curriculum of ministry: the life of the Church, especially a church that is more than half Hispanic among its younger members. What we choose to teach, highlight or affirm in ministry with Hispanic young people (e.g., culture, rituals, stories, symbols) is as important as that which we ignore or refuse (cf. Eisner, 1979).



1. Foster the development of creative catechetical materials, youth ministry and leadership formation to work with young Hispanic Catholics in light of their particular experience and needs. When Hispanic young people use these resources, they should be able to see themselves reflected in the images, art, symbols, stories and traditions that make them who they are as young, Hispanic, American and Catholic, and see their own families and ancestors in their own particularities. We need culturally relevant curriculum that facilitate forms of culturally relevant pedagogy and engagement (cf. Ladson-Billings, 1975; Paris, 2012).
2. Invite Hispanic pastoral leaders, especially those involved in ministry with young Hispanics, educators, theologians and other professionals to be part of teams that develop materials to form young Catholics in the faith.
3. Work in close partnership with Catholic organizations already serving young Hispanics, using their curricular offerings for ministry with young Catholics while supporting their efforts to develop programs and initiatives. Working with these organizations is an excellent opportunity for Catholic publishers that produce materials for religious education, youth ministry and leadership formation to work with interculturally competent leaders who bring much wisdom from their work “on the ground.”
4. Use the Ten Pillars of Success identified in this study as the backbone of fresher and dynamic curriculum offerings for youth and young adult ministry initiatives. Take each of the pillars and develop sessions, meetings, and guided conversations. The Ten Pillars of Success together constitute a powerful curriculum for ministry with young Hispanics and Catholic ministry in general.
5. Study the “lived curriculum” of the organizations in this study, their best practices, commitments and programs, as models of outreach and service to young Hispanics. Some of these models are fully articulated through written materials. Others remain to be captured more systematically in that way.

Recommendations for

Youth Ministry Leadership Formation

The quality of our ministry with young Hispanics, and other young Catholics, will depend significantly on the caliber of the pastoral leaders who accompany this population. Formation for leadership in youth ministry in a church that is increasingly Hispanic should be grounded in the best of the Gospel values, the Church's Tradition and a solid understanding of the reality of young Hispanic Catholics here and now.

1. It is imperative that programs of formation preparing ministers who will work with Catholic youth in the United States develop modules and curriculum that explicitly studies the experience, history and needs of Hispanic youth and young adults.
2. No program of ministerial formation—whether at the diocesan, seminary or higher educational level—preparing pastoral leaders to work with young Hispanics today will have enough credibility without a clear commitment to form interculturally competent ministers, particularly ministerial leaders who understand the realities that shape the lives of young Hispanics.
3. Hire and engage Hispanic pastoral leaders, and others who have demonstrated experience working in ministry with young Hispanic Catholics, as instructors, consultants and researchers in programs of ministerial formation for youth ministry. A good starting point are the many Hispanic leaders who are working in the organizations that were part of this *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth*, either as leaders or volunteers.
4. Explore opportunities to collaborate in a spirit of *pastoral de conjunto** with the organizations that were part of the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* and others that have similar commitments. The needs of young Hispanic Catholics in the United States are many and diverse, and not one organization will be able to address them all effectively. Creative partnerships will expand outreach as well as impact. Larger ministerial organizations can benefit from the wisdom and agility of smaller organizations that have proven experience serving young Hispanic Catholics.
5. Develop a pathway of leadership formation that starts at the parish, ecclesial movement and school level, identifying young Hispanic Catholic leaders who are interested in further ministerial formation. Every diocese, in collaboration with institutions of higher education, institutes and centers of ministerial formation, should develop mechanisms to bring together, form and support these leaders in order for them to receive the credentials (e.g., professional certificates, graduate degrees, ecclesiastical authorization, etc.) that will allow them to have more impact in ministerial structures at all levels.

* **Pastoral de conjunto** refers to the “harmonious coordination of all elements of pastoral ministry, the actions of all the pastoral ministers. It is not only a methodology, but also the expression of the essence and mission of the Church, to be and to create communion, including the promotion of the well-being of all and care for their holiness. It entails the coordination of all structures with a common objective: the Reign of God. Coordination involves communication, shared responsibility, and the ownership of the project on the part of pastoral leaders, which in turn requires the participation of the leaders in the pastoral planning process” (See V Encuentro, p. 227).



Recommendations for Parish and Diocesan Ministry

Catholic parishes still play a major role in the life of many Catholics practicing their faith on a regular basis. These are spaces where people celebrate their faith, receive formation and find community. For millions of young Hispanic Catholics, the parish remains a first stop when seeking pastoral and spiritual accompaniment. Yet, not all parishes have the resources to do this accompaniment well. They need the support of diocesan structures and that of organizations specialized in serving young Hispanics. Most importantly, parishes, dioceses and organizations must develop a culture of mutual collaboration.



1. Learn about the excellent work done by the organizations that were part of the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* and others that have similar commitments. In-service and professional development days in parishes and dioceses would be significantly enriched by studying the efforts, successes and limitations of these organizations.
2. Work in close collaboration with leaders and others formed in organizations serving young Hispanics, especially when these organizations are already present in several dioceses through programming, support or consultation. Many dioceses in the United States still do not have formal programs of ministerial outreach to Hispanic Catholic youth at the diocesan or parish level. Learning how these organizations are forging fresher and more creative ways of doing ministry with young Hispanics has the potential to spark effective initiatives at the local level.
3. Diocesan offices for youth and young adult ministry should identify liaisons to engage in regular dialogue and consultation with organizations serving young Hispanics like the ones that were part of this study. Ideally, in dioceses where Hispanics constitute at least a third of the entire Catholic population younger than 30, hired, full-time Hispanic pastoral leaders should be leading the way. This is an invitation to discuss hiring practices and to what extent such practices focus on identification, formation, retention and promotion of Hispanic pastoral leaders. These liaisons should in turn advise leaders in parishes, ecclesial movements, and schools about ways to collaborate with these organizations.
4. Identify leaders already doing ministry with Catholic youth, or interested in doing so, and send them to training programs in organizations serving young Hispanics such as Instituto Fe y Vida, the Southeast Pastoral Institute, or the Mexican American Catholic College. Whenever possible, send a team of pastoral leaders to visit and observe the ministerial efforts of these organizations on the ground: retreats, formation, national symposia, missionary activities, courses, etc. Learn from them and expand your pastoral team's horizons.
5. Invite organizations serving young Hispanics that have programs specifically designed to be implemented in parishes or small ecclesial communities to pilot some of those programs in your parish or diocese. In particular, Corazón Puro, Instituto Fe y Vida, Iskali, and the Southeast Pastoral Institute, which were part of this national study, have regional and national outreach programs that could benefit local communities while extending their mission.

Recommendations for

Seminary, Religious and Diaconal Formation

The formation of future ordained and vowed religious pastoral leaders remains a priority in the life of the Church. Besides the standard areas of ministerial formation—human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral—, it is imperative that ordained and vowed religious leaders receive the appropriate formation to understand the communities that they will be serving. In the United States of America, since many of these pastoral leaders will make important decisions about ministry with youth and young adults, catechesis, elementary and secondary education, higher education, campus ministry, and spiritual direction of young people, they need to be fully aware of the realities, needs and contributions of young Hispanic Catholics. Many ordained and vowed religious leaders are learning how to work with young Hispanics on a remedial basis because this knowledge was not part of their regular formation. It is time for this to change.



1. Develop courses and formation modules on the realities and experience of young Hispanic Catholics as part of seminary and other forms of ministerial formation. These courses and modules ought to introduce the experience and realities of young Hispanic Catholics as well as an overview of effective models of pastoral outreach toward this population as provided by the organizations in this study.
2. Integrate immersion experiences into programs serving young Hispanic Catholics as part of the formation of seminarians, vowed religious in formation and candidates to the Permanent Diaconate.
3. Promote participation of seminarians, vowed religious in formation and candidates to the Permanent Diaconate in pastoral experiences serving young Hispanic Catholics such as youth ministry programs, national and regional formation programs, campus ministry experiences, weekend retreat experiences, camps, community outreach efforts, and visits to Hispanic-serving educational institutions, among others. Formally assess participation in those experiences and create opportunities to reflect how they connect to other aspects of ministerial formation.
4. Welcome regularly guest speakers and experts on topics related to ministry with young Catholics. The collective wisdom among the leaders from the organizations that participated in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* is a treasure that can enrich any ministerial formation program. So is the experience of young Hispanic Catholics who benefitted from the initiatives of these organizations.
5. While not every seminary, house of formation or university ministry program can have experts in the field of ministry with young Hispanic Catholics, there should be a concerted effort to invest in regional and national centers where these experts are present on a regular basis. These centers have the potential not only to offer training to those in formation for ministry, but also to train faculty and administrators in ministerial formation institutions. The Mexican American Catholic College has served as a model of this collaboration for many decades. Episcopal regions in the country could collaborate to invest in the formation of two or three expert leaders in ministry with young Hispanics who can serve their local dioceses and parishes. Such expert leaders can benefit significantly from partnering with the organizations that participated in this study.

Recommendations for

Assessment of Current Catholic Youth Ministry Efforts

Catholics in the United States have historically succeeded in establishing effective structures, programs, and models of evangelization at the service of young people. Catholic schools, catechetical initiatives, youth ministry programs, youth centers, national and regional ministry organizations, etc., all have served well. Yet, in most of these Hispanic young people are not yet sufficiently represented or appropriately serve. The sense of satisfaction and accomplishment should not become one of complacency. We need to assess how we are doing our work and whether we are serving Hispanic young people well.



1. Diocesan and parish offices of youth and young adult ministry should be regularly assessing their efforts in terms of how they are reaching out and serving young Hispanics: quarterly, semiannually, annually. A simple demographic survey using localized Census data should be a good starting point. How many Hispanic people younger than 35 live in the territory of a parish or a diocese? The next step will be to determine how much the office actively and intentionally reaches out to Hispanic youth and young adults, how many participate in initiatives, whether materials used for ministry reflect the experience and needs of Hispanic leaders, and if the pastoral leaders in charge of this ministry are adequately prepared to work with this population.
2. The Ten Pillars of Success in this study provide a solid baseline for assessment in terms of potential criteria known to be integral to successful ministerial outreach efforts with Hispanic Catholic youth. Youth ministry leaders can develop assessment tools that analyze to what extent any or all of these ten pillars are present at least in the following three dimensions of their service: programming, guiding materials (e.g., handbooks, textbooks) and personnel.
3. Diocesan, parish, school and ecclesial movement ministerial outreach to Hispanic youth and young adults must involve as many pastoral leaders as possible. We need to challenge models of youth and young adult ministry—and Hispanic ministry—that isolate young people, and more specifically Hispanic young people from the larger efforts of an ecclesial unit or organization. A silo approach to ministry with young Hispanics undermines the mission. We need to assess who is involved in efforts of ministerial outreach to Hispanic youth and young adults, and who is not. Strong collaborative initiatives have the potential to create greater impact.
4. Often Catholic organizations serving young Hispanics work outside of parish and diocesan structures, seeking to serve those same structures with agility and some level of organizational independence. Yet, such an approach presents some risks. These organizations may end up working isolated from the same structures they want to serve since collaboration is not always cultivated among ministry offices. This becomes more evident at the time of determining use of available resources (e.g., financial, personnel, access to communities). A culture of assessment will look into these risks and explore ways to increase partnerships and collaborations in order to avoid organizational silos as well as the duplication of efforts.
5. Practically all the organizations in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* have made a commitment to acknowledge and respond to realities that disproportionately make young Hispanics more vulnerable than other populations: poverty, effects of undocumented migration, at risk situations, addictions, racial and cultural biases, etc. Parishes and dioceses must assess regularly if they are serving Hispanics in these circumstances, and how they can partner with organizations serving young Hispanics to do a better job in that regard.

Recommendations for Further Research

Nearly every area of ministerial work and accompaniment of young Hispanic Catholics could benefit from further research. Today's fast-changing and complex world requires that Catholic pastoral leaders, educators, and theologians have the latest possible data to understand the realities that shape the lives of young people. Without research, we run the risk of relying on obsolete resources, models, and inadequate methods of pastoral outreach to young Catholics, particularly Hispanics and other underrepresented groups that are redefining the U.S. Catholic experience. Without research, we put ourselves in the position of missing the questions of our day. The *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* is a contribution to this larger conversation, yet much more research remains to be done. The following areas point to possible research initiatives in the near future:

1. The *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth* focused its attention on a particular set of organizations identified as doing creative and successful work with young Hispanic Catholics. Yet, a natural next step is to look at how ministry with young Hispanic Catholics happens in parishes and dioceses. It is in these contexts where many young people experience the Church's evangelizing care and we still need to learn more about how this is being done in those contexts.
2. Researchers will do well to also look at spaces of great energy regarding ministry with young Hispanics beyond parishes and dioceses. Three such spaces are worth mentioning. One, campus ministry in Catholic educational institutions and in public education settings. Two, apostolic movements that bring together countless young Hispanic Catholics, sustain them and bring them closer to Jesus Christ. Three, faith-based community organizing, which attracts large numbers of young Hispanics interested in social transformation in light of their faith values.
3. Catholic leaders doing ministry with young Hispanic people generally continue to hold an operative understanding of young Hispanics as somewhat monolithic and predictable in terms of values, demographics, religious preferences and cultural values. There is an urgent need for more differentiated research that pays more attention to multiple levels of diversity among Hispanic young Catholics.
4. Considering the vast universe of experiences among young Hispanic Catholics, it is important to foster collaborations among researchers and research institutions studying this important population. Such collaboration requires regular conversations, data sharing, common projects, joint publications, clearer strategies for data dissemination, and identification of areas of research that each institution can advance to avoid repetitive efforts. More collaboration among researchers will translate into better access to data and analysis that ministerial organizations, schools, dioceses and parishes could use to strengthen their work.
5. We as a Church need to cultivate more researchers dedicated to the study of the life and experiences of young Hispanic Catholics. This requires investing more resources in scholarships for doctoral students interested in these topics, mentors capable of forming such researchers, and universities and research institutes with the appropriate resources to facilitate investigative venues in this area.



Present Glimpses into A Possible Better Future

By Hosffman Ospino, PhD

Bob Burg, author of *Endless Referrals* wrote, “All things being equal, people will do business with, and refer business to, those people they know, like, and trust.” The “know, like, trust” principle seems to be a key foundation for every relationship in business and in every other human enterprise, secular or religious. Without it, organizations will not be able to entice people to consider what they offer or even consider why they exist. With it, organizations are well on their way to cultivating lifegiving and fulfilling relationships.

Ministry with Catholic young cannot afford to be the exception to basic and insightful theories like this one. And yet, many of our ministerial organizations often fall short from even meeting well at least one of the three elements of the “know, like, trust” principle, or just approach all three halfway, sometimes mediocly.

Do we really know our Hispanic Catholic youth? Do we authentically connect with these young women, listen to their questions and concerns, understand their centrality in the life of the Church and realize how important they are for the future of our Catholic faith communities? Do we pay attention to them? Have we built a foundation of trust with Hispanic Catholic young women and men? Business strategist Tam Thao Pham defines trust as “the intersection of the past and future.” It’s taking the evidence of the past and extrapolating that into the future, and then applying this information within a context of risk. We are not sure that Catholic thinkers, pastoral leaders and educators working with youth in the United States have. To build community so that we can have a true *pastoral de conjunto*, we can think of four assets that any organization dedicated to serving young Catholics should consider to be known, liked and trusted: collaborative action, listening deeply, an assets-approach mentality and mutual commitment.



What is the difference between knowing about and actually knowing someone? Knowing requires a deep listening that allows for us to understand historical contexts and the nuances of a community. To understand what backgrounds are at the table is to honor cultural and personal boundaries, the complicated histories that have shaped the lives of young Hispanics and their families, the acculturation experiences of these individuals as they negotiate identities and build communities in response to concerns, needs and hopes. Ministry with young Hispanic Catholics demands that we know who young Hispanic Catholics are.

As we listen, we recognize that young Hispanics, so often identified as an at-risk population or having their contexts deemed at-risk just because they differ from whatever is held as status quo, have much to offer our church and our society. An asset-based approach to Catholic ministry with young Hispanics requires that we uncover the unique gifts and power of these young women and men not necessarily to do something for them, but to heal, inspire and encourage.

Most ministerial organizations working with young Catholics, Hispanic and non-Hispanic, insist the part of their mission is to form leaders and foster discipleship. It is tempting for organizations and their leaders to reduce leadership development, in almost manipulative ways, to having young people be “formed” by their message and programming to expand the goals of the organization. In other words, ministry with young Catholics cannot be reduced to perpetuating the organization, its ideas and its products. Ministry with young Catholics must be about journeying with young people, even if that means that they would raise questions or ask to explore pathways a program or an initiative had not considered. Ministry with young Hispanic Catholics needs to be an effort that fluctuates between humility and decisiveness to help young Hispanics to become better selves while learning transferable skills that makes them better human beings and better Christians.



Hispanic young women and men bring invaluable gifts and strengths to church and society. They are contributors to the construction of God's Reign, the Church and better communities. We need Catholic ministerial organizations working with young Hispanics that engage them in a co-learning process where there is a reciprocal transfer of knowledge as well as visions for the present and the future. When we listen to the concerns (e.g., school shootings, climate crisis, social media bullying, racism), that many young Hispanics bring to our groups, churches and organizations, pastoral leaders must admit that many of us have never wrestled with these concerns, in our youth or in our adult life. Therefore, we cannot assume that we know what they are living or how to address it simply because we have done things in a particular way. We must listen, walk and learn with and from young Hispanics. It seems like the most effective models of Catholic ministry with young Hispanics, at least those that touch faith and life in transforming ways, are those that take on communities and persons living in communities rather than those that take on self-preserving causes.

Just as young Hispanic Catholics have many hopes, they also have many needs. Those needs become manifest depending on the geographical, social and cultural locations in which these young women and men live. Ministry with young Hispanic Catholics must be attentive to both: hopes and needs. Any effort to make ministry with this population more relevant must ask two questions. First, we must define what needs to be improved. What viable contribution can our ministerial efforts as a community of faith make to address a particular need that prevents young Hispanic women and men to live full lives? Second, how can our ministries with young Hispanics be true sources of healing and empowerment? As we serve young Hispanics, we must demonstrate to them that their presence and contributions has made a real difference in our lives. We are not and cannot be the same when sincerely encountering young Hispanics. A relational accountability allows all stakeholders to feel challenged. Such tension has the potential to set the stage for future cooperative and creative ministerial efforts.

Catholic ministry *en conjunto* with young Hispanics, when done right, is customizable, encourages exploration, provides consistent access to community, heals as well as serves, shares the work and the power, does not start in the abstract, and does not have an expiration date. Perhaps it is time to imagine ministries with young Hispanics that go beyond prepackaged programs that do a lot for an organization but little for the young people who participate in them; courses that lead to some form of graduation or promotion but rarely touch lives here and now; retreats that provide an intense individual experience but lack follow up that leads to the formation of community. Young Hispanic Catholics desire ministerial outreach grounded in the notion of ongoing accompaniment; ministries that introduce them to the God of Jesus Christ who cares about who they are as embodied human beings living as Hispanics in the United States of America; ministries that treat them as architects, artists, and engineers of the present and the future of Catholicism in this nation. Perhaps this is the kind of ministries needed to stem the exodus of Hispanic Catholic youth from the Church. This is the type of ministry of which we see glimpses in several Catholic ministerial organizations serving young Hispanics, many of them under the leadership and dedication of also Hispanic leaders and many others who have taken the time to understand the Hispanic young experience.

A Closer Look at Catechesis

By Hosffman Ospino, PhD and Christie de la Gándara, PhD

U.S. Catholicism is being rapidly transformed by the fast-growing Hispanic presence. Nearly 45% of all Catholics in the United States self-identify as Hispanic. Moreover, Hispanics make up about 60% of the Catholic population under the age of 18. This is a time of challenge and opportunity for ministerial institutions serving young Catholics.

While most Catholic pastoral leaders would concur that investing in young Hispanics is vital to the life of the Church today and tomorrow, the truth is that most Catholic ministerial organizations at the parish and diocesan levels, and many that function somewhat independently such as schools and pastoral institutes, seem to be doing little to engage young Hispanics. Many young Hispanic Catholics feel disaffected and marginalized. Recent experiences like the Fifth National Encuentro for Hispanic/Latino have served as opportunities for young Hispanics to name the disconnect between their everyday questions, concerns and hopes and how the institution falls short from engaging these credibly. Many Hispanics still self-identify as Catholic but are not involved in ministry. Most concerning is the fact that more than 15 million young Hispanics who chose not to identify any longer as Catholic in recent decades. The number could be higher. Most made their decision around the age of 24 and earlier.

It seems imperative that anyone in the United States engaged in ministry with Catholic youth knows these realities and is attentive to key trends associated with young Hispanic Catholics. Because many efforts associated with ministry to young Catholics are associated with catechesis and faith formation, it is appropriate that we take a close look at some realities and trends in this area when thinking about young Hispanics.



What Kind of Catechesis?

To raise a child as Catholic, families and community members alike must model faith through daily life. This type of catechesis often occurs “without words” and without conceptual articulation of dogmas. It simply happens in *en lo cotidiano* (the everyday): eating, forgiving, celebrating, getting together as a family, sharing stories and traditions, etc. Catholic families need the Church to journey with them and help them perform this witnessing role. Families need a church (e.g., parish, institute, school, organization) that instead of seeing itself in the driver’s seat, understands that its role is to be there as a support or a helpmate.

Once a Catholic family baptizes a child, they start a long journey of nurturing the faith of this young person. This journey usually lasts until the young person is ready to assume responsibility for her/his faith. For most youth, this would occur nearly two decades later. In the meantime, families are the primary reference to a life of faith and the practice of Christian values. For most Catholic families, regular Mass attendance would be the primary connection to a faith community. Yet, the vast majority of Catholics in the United States do not attend Mass on a regular basis. Without the support of a community of faith that shares and celebrates the faith, the initial faith formation of Catholic children and youth falls in the hands of often adequately uncatechized adults. For Hispanic Catholic families, these dynamics are exacerbated by realities associated with immigration, long work hours, low educational levels and a tenuous connection to church life as many Catholic communities still do not seem to understand their spiritual and sociocultural needs.

As Catholic children reach the age of going to school, families must consider the best context for their children to continue to grow in their Catholic identity. In the United States families traditionally have had two main options: enroll their child in a Catholic school and, a more financially viable option, enroll their child in a religious education program in a parish. Less than 3% of school-age Hispanic Catholic children attend Catholic schools. It is estimated that about 80% of those same children and youth are not enrolled in parish religious education programs at all. This creates a major problem for the Catholic Church in this country. Youth ministry initiatives, when existing and available to young Hispanics, serve in many ways as remedial for basic faith formation. In other cases, they are a stopgap between loose affiliation and disaffiliation.



To Be or Not to Be (Catholic)

For millions of young Hispanic Catholics—and young Catholics of any other sociocultural and racial group—in the United States, the most critical question regarding religious identity is to remain in the faith tradition of their families. If they do, they will then need to negotiate which elements of that tradition they want to take with them as they need to grow up in the midst of the in-between experience of being both American and Hispanic.

Many catechetical and faith formation efforts focus on presenting the Church's dogma and theological tenets, yet they fail to show how they become accepted and adopted in the real world by real individuals. Confronted with that reality, young Catholics tend to adopt an all-or-nothing approach to the faith. If they disagree with one or two teachings, they feel that they disagree with the entire tradition, so they cannot in good conscience identify as Catholic any longer. People, and more particularly contemporary youth, discard things that have little or no relevance to their lives. If young Hispanics believe that their faith is not relevant to their lives, their questions, their concerns, and the circumstances that shape their lives, they have little reason to cling to it.

Young Hispanic Catholics have much to say about who they are and how they see themselves in relationship with God and the larger world. Their stories are intimately tied to their narratives of their families and the communities that nurtured them. Their heritage plays a big part in forming and shaping their identity. Are religious educators and those who accompany them in youth ministry experiences listening to those stories? Do we incorporate the narratives of young Hispanic Catholics into what we do as we journey with them? Many young Hispanics who are former Catholics may have become non-religiously affiliated ("nones"). As "nones," they seem to be in a position to start their stories anew. They do not seem to have an obligation to tie their narratives to their family history. In an exercise of individual independence and self-definition, profoundly valued by the predominant U.S. culture, they may be on a journey charting their own course and making their own pathways. We need to ask ourselves, however: Is such a type of detachment from the larger whole and from one's foundational roots possible and ever fully accomplished? Do things have to be this way? What could Catholic organizations serving young Hispanics do to provide credible alternatives?

Religious education, youth ministry and other forms of ministerial outreach to Hispanic Catholic youth—and other young people in our Church—fail when they hinder young Catholics from tailoring an authentic, cohesive narrative of their lives. Separating faith from life has been deadly for the Church. It is so when individuals cut themselves from the large communal whole. It is so, also, when church leaders rely on models of faith formation and pastoral accompaniment that ignore the realities of the people they claim to serve.

Are Our Ministerial Organizations Looking at the Whole Picture?

By Hosffman Ospino, PhD and César “CJ” Baldelomar, PhD Candidate

Six in ten Hispanics in the United States of America are younger than 35. The median age for all Hispanics is 29. Any reflections about young Hispanics (13-35) in this country must undoubtedly take into consideration Generation Z (“Gen Z”) and Millennial youth of all races and ethnicities. Two major concerns seem to be in the minds of our young people that often receive attention by pastoral leaders. One, mental health challenges, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic and the escalating turmoil that characterizes the polarized U.S. political landscape as well as today’s convoluted geopolitics. Two, increasingly scarce opportunities for economic advancement.

Young Hispanics, despite their optimism (according to Pew Research, 77% seem optimistic that hard work leads to social and economic advancement) face particular challenges compared to other youth groups in our society. Catholic ministries geared toward young Hispanics need to grapple with the myriad cultural, social, material, religious, and political realities facing this heterogeneous population.

Essentialism

Hispanics span the racial spectrum and come from or have ancestry based in several societies with their own unique cultures. These factors influence each individual Hispanic person’s experiences and views. Research shows, for instance, that darker-skinned Hispanics experience much higher rates of discrimination and poverty than light-skinned Hispanics.



Not lumping all Hispanics together under an assumed “one-size-fits-all Hispanic identity” ensures respect for different linguistic, cultural, dietary, and religious practices. Although the majority of young Hispanics are U.S. born and are being raised in this society (about 94% of Hispanics 18 and younger are U.S. born), they are regularly influenced by their families, many of them immigrants, and deeply ingrained socio cultural and religious traditions. To this we must add the imposed perceptions of the larger culture regarding what it means to be Hispanic/Latino, a loaded construct that often presupposes social location and nuanced expectations—or lack thereof—to participate in the life of the larger society.

At the same time, young Hispanics are growing up in a culture in which the social, cultural and linguistic experiences of their parents and grandparents are not always their own, or at least are not experienced in the same way. They must define the contours and limitations of what some call the emergence of a pan-Hispanic identity that has the potential to unite around common concerns, yet without blurring differences. Some have suggested a differentiated “community of communities” approach to youth ministry, which proposes segmentation (not segregation) in order to reach young Hispanics in their diversity.

Skepticism of Institutions/Organizations

Pew Research reveals that young Hispanics are less likely to identify with Catholicism, Christianity, or any other religion compared to Hispanics 35 and older. The younger Hispanics are, regardless of whether they were born into Catholic families, the less likely they are to self-identify as Roman Catholic. In general, trends suggest that younger millennials are less likely to identify with organized religion, since they are significantly skeptical of institutions. While many young Hispanics still attend church services and identify as Catholic at higher rates than white youth, skepticism of institutions remains widespread, particularly in reaction to the current extreme political polarization in the U.S. and the impact of the worldwide child sexual abuse by clearly scandal. Catholic ministry for young Hispanics remains organized largely within traditional institutional structures such as parishes, retreat centers and pastoral institutes. It is fair to suggest that such structures are serving the sector of the population that still feels comfortable with institutions, as personal choice or because of the influence of their families, yet the vast majority of young Hispanic Catholics who may still self-identify as such are not involved in such institutions. There seems to be an urgent need for ministries to Hispanic Catholic youth that creatively meet these young women and men where they are while taking seriously their concerns about institutional credibility and how they engage the questions of the day.

Sexuality and Gender

Young Hispanics, like their Gen Z and Millennial counterparts of other races in the U.S. society, are more likely to engage in conversations about sexual and gender diversity than Hispanics 35 and older. Young Hispanics tend to look at non-heterosexual orientation, fluid gender identities and lower marriage and child bearing rates as everyday realities that are part of people's lives in our day, not as taboos.

Young Hispanic Catholics often find themselves seeking to reconcile the variety of perspectives they learn in schools, social media and other venues about human sexuality and relationships with Roman Catholicism's teachings on these crucial topics. These are complex conversations that require spaces for solid dialogue. Unfortunately, many Catholic youth ministry and educational programs address these dynamics in inadequate and exclusionary ways, thus forcing young Hispanics to go somewhere else to discuss them.

Conversations about sexuality and gender are to take place alongside conversations about discipleship in today's world. This requires that facilitators receive adequate training and support from experts in the areas of gender, sexuality, and evangelization.

Law Enforcement and Social Turmoil

According to a 2018 Election Eye Survey, 37% of Hispanic voters mentioned that someone in their families or personal networks had been unfairly stopped or harassed by police or other law enforcement. Another survey from 2018 revealed that 50% of Millennial Hispanics worried that a family member or close friend would be detained or deported by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Hispanics constitute the second largest prison population in the United States. As of 2020, about 42% of Hispanics in federal and state prisons are between the ages of 18 and 34. Anxieties over law enforcement are real for young Hispanics, thus leading to further distrust of institutions.

The same Election Eye Survey also noted that a whopping 83% of Hispanics perceive the rise of violent white supremacist groups as a major threat, and 62% believe that discrimination against Hispanics is more intense since 2016. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to imagine any form of Catholic ministry with young Hispanics that ignores the perceived and actual injustices affecting the Hispanic community as a whole, and young Hispanics in particular.

Mental Health

In general, Gen Z and Millennials have identified mental health as a major concern in their lives. A summer 2021 report from America's Promise Alliance and Research for Action found that, among the high schoolers surveyed during 2020, young Hispanics were the most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and recent bouts of social turmoil related to racial violence and anti-immigrant movements. Hispanic high schoolers were most likely to report feelings of poor or reduced mental health compared to white youth.

The report also noted that stigmatization of mental health among older Hispanics, coupled with lack of access to mental-health care, compounded mental health issues among high-school age Hispanics. Many young Hispanics are affected by their parents' traumatic immigration experience, especially when crossing hostile borders or escaping contexts marked by violence. The rise in mental health concerns tempers narratives and data that present Hispanics as largely hopeful and trusting in the American Dream.



Lack of Financial Assets and Literacy

Poverty levels among Hispanics tend to be among the highest of any group in the nation. Young Hispanics in particular are less likely to invest in stocks, bonds, mutual funds, retirement, etc. Young Hispanics overall have added some student loan debt but made no progress in increasing savings. Only 28% of Hispanics demonstrate high financial literacy. This low level of financial literacy leaves young Hispanics vulnerable to predatory loans and susceptible to applying for too many loans that are legitimate but together may create more debt that they can manage properly at a time in their lives when they are starting families or starting careers.

A high debt-to-income ratio challenges their ability to save short-term and long-term, a dynamic essential to intergenerational asset accumulation. Financial literacy and the cultivation of social capital—the wherewithal to navigate the system—are of utmost significance for young Hispanics and churches should become involved. Catholic ministry with young Hispanics needs to take a holistic approach that empowers young Hispanics to consider and navigate pathways to success in society.

A Few Recommendations

The above dynamics are only a sampling of major issues and questions that confront the wellbeing of young Hispanics in the U.S. There are many others: cultural creation and consumption, nutritional habits, at-risk conditions, etc. These dynamics together reveal an issue seldom discussed—and regrettably avoided—in Catholic ministerial settings, among Hispanics and non-Hispanics: the generational gap at the time of understanding urgent realities and religious experience.

Gen Z and Millennial Hispanics perceive and understand everyday realities vastly different than those Hispanics and others older than 35. While most Gen Z and Millennial Hispanics, most Hispanics older than 35 are foreign-born or 1.5 generation (brought to the U.S. as minors and raised in the country). Many, if not most, pastoral leaders planning, overseeing and even doing ministry with young Hispanics in the United States are older than 35. In many cases, these leaders triple the age of the people they claim to serve. This generational gap has major implications for faith transmission and ministry. Some recommendations for creative ministry:

- We need ministry models that emphasize and leverage the uniqueness of each Hispanic young person. Such models may need to be developed primarily by young Hispanics (younger than 35).
- Catholic ministerial organizations serving young Hispanics should develop differentiated ministry strategies.
- Develop ministerial initiatives that accompany empower Hispanic Catholic youth in light of their questions and realities rather than on the expectations imposed by older pastoral leaders.
- Imagine mentoring programs operating in the background, allowing young people to be the protagonists of their spiritual journeys as well as the architects of their lives here and now.
- Ministry with young Hispanic Catholics must regularly recognize the many differences that exist among the beautiful bricolage or tapestry we call Hispanic youth. We need ministerial assessment mechanisms inbuilt to ensure that our pastoral efforts address diversity.
- Envision models of ministry with young Hispanics that do not isolate this population from the rest of the Catholic community. While having particular spaces to discern, share and celebrate as Hispanics is important, young Hispanics should find ways to enrich the large Catholic body.
- Invest heavily in the training and formation of pastoral leaders, Hispanic and non-Hispanic, to really understand the realities of young Hispanics in the United States. There should be a permanent school developing research-based resources that address the realities mentioned above, and others, while proposing ministerial initiatives, best practices, models and alternatives.



Emerging Insights

Towards a Constructive Conversation



“Young Hispanics are a great treasure for the Church—both protagonists and, at times, high priority recipients of its pastoral care and accompaniment. They have gifts and talents that enrich the Church and are willing to put them at the service of others. Through the V Encuentro process, the Church has listened to their voices and wishes to be a companion and guide as they strive to achieve their personal and spiritual fulfillment: embracing their dreams; sharing successful ministerial practices that form young missionary disciples; accompanying them in their challenges and sufferings; and thus helping prepare them for their role in building a Civilization of Love, the Kingdom of God on earth.”

— V Encuentro, Proceedings and Conclusions, p. 136.

Signs of Vitality and Hope

The following are important signs of vitality and hope associated with the work of the twelve organizations that were part of the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth*. The signs point to the great work these organizations are doing as they serve young Hispanic Catholics and their potential to further energize ministry with youth and young adults in an increasingly Hispanic church.

1. The actual existence of these organizations is perhaps the greatest sign of vitality and hope. The founders—and leaders that sustain them today—read the signs of the times realizing that Catholicism in the United States in the twenty-first century depends largely on how much we invest in young Hispanic Catholics. These organizations respond to a crucial need of our time and prophetically lead the way into fresher expressions of ministry with youth and young adult Catholics.
2. The organizations in this study are driven by a positive understanding of what it means to be Hispanic—culturally, socially, anthropologically and religiously. They stand as countercultural signs in a society in which young Hispanic people are often seen through a deficit lens or the prevalence of pervasive biases. When encountering young Hispanics who struggle, they see possibility, not a problem.
3. Catholic organizations serving young Hispanic Catholics are passionate about evangelization. In this sense, they are profoundly Catholic and operate out of a Catholic vision.
4. The majority of these organizations were founded, and most today are sustained today by Hispanic leaders. Whether these Hispanic leaders have been part of the organizations from the beginning or joined along the way, they bring natural intercultural competencies that have resourcefully shaped the identity, commitments and modus operandi of the organizations.
5. The Ten Pillars of Success identified through this study are key to understanding the effectiveness of ministerial models and programs in these Catholic organizations working with young Hispanics. They are present in the organizations through different combinations and in various levels of intensity. Together they prove to be crucial to work effectively with young Hispanic Catholics.



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|--|--|
| 1. Community/ <i>Comunidad</i> | 6. Culture matters / <i>La cultura importa</i> |
| 2. Sense of belonging / <i>Pertenencia</i> | 7. Empowerment / <i>Potenciamiento</i> |
| 3. Attention to vulnerability / <i>Atentos a la vulnerabilidad</i> | 8. Catholic identity / <i>Identidad católica</i> |
| 4. Family / <i>Familia</i> | 9. Faith formation / <i>Formación en la fe</i> |
| 5. Leadership / <i>Liderazgo</i> | 10. Missionary Drive / <i>Impulso misionero</i> |

6. Organizations dedicated to serving young Hispanic Catholics often manage to advance their work creatively with few resources. In general, they have developed business models that rely significantly on small staffs and large networks of volunteers driven by a sense of mission. Their operations can inspire models of ministry with young Catholics in parishes, pastoral institutes and dioceses.

7. The organizations in this study have adapted traditional outreach efforts to work and sustain young Catholics such as retreats, camps, small communities, education, youth groups, faith formation initiatives, etc. However, they have found a way to insert a “Hispanic flavor” to these initiatives, not necessarily limited to the use of the Spanish language. They offer programming and outreach that is culturally relevant.

8. Though a few of the organizations in the study work directly within the structures of parish or diocesan life, most do not depend on them. Despite this level of structural independence, all organizations operate with a profound sense of ecclesial communion and regularly envision ways to work with parishes, dioceses and schools.

9. A key to the success of the organizations serving young Hispanic Catholics is their extraordinary ability to integrate models of leadership formation that instill in young Hispanics who participate in their programs or experiences a strong desire to join the organization to continue its mission. Many of the current Hispanic leaders in those organizations were one day participants. They now give back to an effort that made a difference in their lives.

10. All organizations in the study, through their various ministerial efforts, have integrated a commitment to forming active citizens grounded in the richness of their faith. These efforts signal an important shift in ministry with Hispanic Catholics at a time when most young Hispanics are U.S. born and U.S. raised: From mainly immigrant integration, which still remains a priority for millions, to the formation of an engaged citizenry that is largely U.S. born American, Hispanic and Catholic.



Areas that Require Attention and Investment

The following areas require attention and further investment in organizations like the ones participating in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth*. These areas call ministerial and educational leaders, supporters and anyone else invested in strengthening resources to accompany young Hispanic Catholics to see the potential of these organizations and their commitments, learn from them and ensure that they continue to exist while permeating other forms of outreach to this population.

1. The energy, creativity and impact of most of the organizations in the study is known within rather small circles of Catholic ministerial life, mainly among Hispanic Catholics. While many other ministerial organizations dedicated to similar ministries make sincere attempts to serve young Hispanic Catholics, they could learn much from the organizations that are provenly succeeding in such efforts. In turn, they could share their own wisdom and potentially some resources.

2. Ministerial formation programs in dioceses, universities and seminaries forming Catholic ministers to work with young Hispanics are not fully familiar with the methods and commitments of organizations like those in the *National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth*. They could benefit from a renewed curriculum that integrates the models these organizations espouse in order to respond to the pastoral needs of the largest sector among young Catholics in the United States.

3. The majority of the organizations in the study manage to operate on significantly limited financial and human resources, and often without the support of more stable church structures, even when they are part of dioceses or Catholic educational institutions. Though one can commend their ability to do so (see *Signs of Vitality and Hope*), lack of investment in these efforts makes them operationally vulnerable and unable to expand efforts.



4. The organizations in the study, each in their own way, have developed curricula that aim at striking a balance between faith formation and spiritual growth and preparation for responsible citizenship. While all thrive regarding the first emphasis, most could strengthen their efforts regarding the second one. The organizations that focus on formal education (i.e., high school, higher education) or are located within Catholic educational structures show evidence of being more intentional in keeping this desired balance.

5. The organizations in the study focus on populations of convenience (i.e., self-selected groups of Hispanic young people; Hispanic students enrolled in academic programs; young Hispanics attracted to a particular spirituality or charismatic/compelling leader), often serving small groups, which lessens their ecclesial and social impact. They need more resources and strategies to expand their outreach, particularly to the vast numbers of young Hispanic Catholics currently not benefiting from any Catholic ministerial and educational efforts.

6. In principle, the organizations in the study have made a strong commitment to serving all young Hispanics, yet their efforts and programming tend to reflect a partial view of the young Hispanic experience: churchgoers, young people growing up in traditional two-parent families, strong parental involvement, presupposed bilingualism, etc. Such partial view tends to blur the vast array of differences and particularities characterizing this diverse and complex population, often dedicating fewer efforts to serve young Hispanics living in at-risk circumstances.

7. Most of the organizations in the study are currently led or are strongly influenced by their founders, with the exception of those situated in formal educational settings. These founders stand out as “charismatic” leaders (i.e., energetic, persuasive, good communicators, highly connected) with strong and creative personalities that draw much energy. While these leaders play a central role defining the vision of these organizations, they also draw much of the attention and make most decisions, thus placing their entire organizations at risk if they unexpectedly cannot lead any longer. Ministerial organizations serving young Hispanic Catholics need to invest more in succession plans, decentralization of decision-making, and the cultivation of new leadership.

8. Most of the organizations in the study, particularly those that are more independent from ecclesial structures like dioceses and parishes in their operations, need to embrace a consistent culture of assessment of their efforts and self-assessment. In doing so, they will be able to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas of growth. Most lack a strategic plan and most do not monitor the long-term impact of their efforts by following up with the young Catholics they once served.

9. Although the organizations in the study were identified by numerous pastoral leaders in the country as leading the way in terms of creative and effective ministry with young Hispanic Catholics, the leaders of these organizations do not seem to be fully aware of what many of their counterparts do or how they could collaborate with each other. Even among these leading institutions there remains a silo mentality common in Catholic ecclesial circles that needs to be addressed by further venues of collaboration and common initiatives.

10. As the organizations in the study advance their mission at the level within which they operate best, they often find themselves competing with each other, and with other Catholic ministerial organizations, for similar pools of philanthropic resources to serve young Hispanic Catholics. While competition for resources is healthy from an organizational perspective, the larger and more structured organizations that have accumulated organizational knowledge and benefit from specialized personnel (e.g., grant writers) tend to seek and receive more of the available resources, thus leaving the smaller ones behind. A culture of collaboration could help address these disparities. In turn, philanthropic organizations and individual donors could be more strategic by creating earmarked pools of funding and by supporting collaborative initiatives that aim at having a wider and stronger impact in ministry with young Hispanic Catholics.



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