Preface

1. We, the bishops of the United States, have heard the voices of Hispanic leaders—both lay and clergy. We especially affirm those pastoral efforts of Hispanic ministry that promote the general objective and the specific dimensions of the 1987 National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry ("National Pastoral Plan" or "Pastoral Plan"). This pastoral statement, *Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry*, is addressed to all Catholics, but particularly to pastoral leaders involved in ministry among Hispanics. This pastoral statement provides basic pastoral principles, priorities, and suggested actions to develop efforts in Hispanic ministry while strengthening the unity of the Church in the United States. To ensure continuity in ministry among Hispanics, *Encuentro and Mission* serves as an addendum to the National Pastoral Plan and is meant to be a new pastoral framework to assist dioceses, parishes, and Catholic organizations and institutions in their response to the Hispanic presence. As such, *Encuentro and Mission* is a pastoral framework to help further develop ministry among Hispanics.

2. The titles chosen for sections of this pastoral statement are inspired by Pope John Paul II's pastoral letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, in which the Holy Father echoes Jesus' invitation to the apostles to "put out into the deep" for a catch—"Duc in altum." These words ring out for us today, inviting us to remember the past of Hispanic ministry with gratitude, to live the present challenges and opportunities with enthusiasm, and to look forward to the future of Hispanic ministry with confidence. These words have also been echoed by those in Hispanic ministry leadership as they read the signs of the times, seize the opportunity for action, and expand the vision of Hispanic ministry in order to respond to the Hispanic presence in a culturally diverse context.

3. The basic pastoral principles and priorities and the suggested actions included in this pastoral statement are framed for Hispanic ministry. However, they can also serve as a tool for all communities and ministries seeking to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented to the Church in the United States by the diversity of cultures in our faith communities.

Introduction

4. In February 2001, the U.S. Catholic bishops' Committee on Hispanic Affairs convened a national symposium with the leadership of Hispanic ministry in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The purpose of the symposium was to assess and develop Hispanic ministry efforts further while strengthening the unity of the Body of Christ in our increasingly culturally diverse communities. Keenly aware of the pastoral nuances and challenges facing the Church, the bishops' committee asked the leadership to review existing pastoral priorities based on the values and principles of the 1987 National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry, *Encuentro 2000: Many Faces in God's House,* the pastoral challenges of *Ecclesia in America,* the *New Evangelization,* and recent demographic data on the Hispanic presence in the United States.

5. The National Symposium to Refocus Hispanic Ministry included the participation of sixty representatives from national and regional Catholic Hispanic organizations and representatives from the USCCB's Department of...
Migration and Refugee Services; the Catholic Campaign for Human Development; the Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women, and Youth; and the Secretariat for Evangelization.

6. This pastoral statement, *Encuentro and Mission*, is our response to the voices of the leadership of Hispanic ministry about the Hispanic presence at the beginning of the new millennium. Hispanic Catholics are a blessing from God and a prophetic presence that has transformed many dioceses and parishes into more welcoming, vibrant, and evangelizing faith communities. We bishops see Hispanic ministry as an integral part of the life and mission of the Church.

**Growth of Hispanic Ministry**

7. Hispanic ministry has experienced tremendous growth in the United States since the mid-1980s. This growth has taken place during the experience of three national Encuentros, the development of the Pastoral Plan, an increase in the number of Hispanic Catholic organizations, and a growing pastoral effort in dioceses and parishes to welcome and serve Hispanic Catholics. Our response to the Hispanic presence, coupled with the prophetic voices and actions of Hispanic Catholics throughout the country, has brought Hispanic ministry to a crossroads at the beginning of a new century. Today, Hispanic ministry faces two central questions. First, what model of leadership will Hispanic Catholics offer as they continue to become a strong presence within the Catholic Church in the United States? And second, how will this model strengthen the unity of the body of Christ in increasingly culturally diverse communities?

**A Response to Culturally Diverse Communities**

8. As a response to the challenges of serving culturally diverse communities, and especially the Hispanic community, we convened a national intercultural gathering during the Jubilee Year. The Committee on Hispanic Affairs and Hispanic Catholics served as the hosts and lead agents of Encuentro 2000: *Many Faces in God's House*, which took place in Los Angeles, California, in July 2000. Encuentro 2000 marked the first time that the Church in the United States gathered to recognize, affirm, and celebrate the cultural and racial diversity of its members. With the participation of more than five thousand leaders representing the many faces of the Church—from 150 dioceses and 157 different ethnic groups and nationalities—Encuentro 2000 inspired and challenged Catholics in the United States to embrace a Catholic vision for the third millennium in which all are welcomed to the Father's table.

**A New Phase for Hispanic Ministry**

9. We are aware that the implementation of the values and principles of Encuentro 2000 is a long-term process, one of building unity and solidarity among all Catholics. The Hispanic presence reminds the Church that people of different nationalities bring with them beautiful and useful gifts that are usually embraced by the broader community. We are called to "welcome the stranger among us" and to build more welcoming, evangelizing, and missionary faith communities.

10. For Hispanic ministry, a new phase should include further development in three fundamental areas: (1) ministry structures and network, (2) relationship building and collaboration, and (3) active participation. Structures and ministry networks that have effectively served the ministry should be strengthened, such as diocesan and regional offices and pastoral institutes. Hispanic ministry should build closer relationships and collaboration with ethnic, racial, and ministerial groups and organizations. In addition, ministry efforts should foster the active participation of Hispanic Catholics in the social mission of the Church.

**Remembering the Past with Gratitude**

**Historical Memory of Hispanic Ministry**

11. Hispanic ministry leaders have generated a *memoria histórica* (historical memory) and a unique identity since the first establishment of a national office for Hispanic ministry in 1945. Some aspects of this identity are expressed in the themes of the Encuentros: *Pueblo de Dios en Marcha*/People of God on the Journey, *Voces Proféticas*/Prophetic Voices, *Muchos Rostros en la Casa de Dios*/Many Faces in God's House. We have recorded the unique history of Hispanic Catholics in the United States in our publications of the proceedings of the I, II, and III National Encuentros, as well as in many other publications.
12. Because Hispanics are a blessing to the entire Church in the United States, and because Hispanic ministry is integral to its mission, appreciating and embracing the contributions this community has made are important. Hispanic Catholics have developed a vision of ministry inspired by the social and ecclesiological context of the Second Vatican Council in the United States and in Latin America. This vision is articulated in the Pastoral Plan as a model of Church that seeks to strengthen communion and participation with a strong emphasis on evangelization, social justice, and the integral education of the faithful. All leaders in the Church are called to bring Hispanics and all other Catholics to a deeper love of Jesus Christ, of the Catholic faith, and of Mary, the mother of God. In addition, the Pastoral Plan calls for the assessment of needs, the establishment of priorities, and the development of strategies to respond to needs and aspirations of Hispanics in the United States. The vision of the National Pastoral Plan and its continued implementation has helped to promote a ministry that goes beyond Hispanics. This understanding is articulated in the Encuentro 2000 parish guide Many Faces in God’s House, with its Catholic vision for the new millennium. Many Faces in God’s House seeks to strengthen the unity of the Body of Christ while honoring and celebrating the cultural diversity of the Church.

13. Over the years, Hispanic ministry leaders have identified values and principles that have guided the development of Hispanic ministry and its historical memory. Several of these values and principles are discussed here.

1. Common Faith, Culture, and Language

14. Hispanics have emerged from the blending of different races and cultures, which has resulted in a new people. Even though Hispanics find their ancestors in many different countries, most share a common faith and language, as well as a culture rooted in the Catholic faith. These elements, which give a common identity to Latin American and Caribbean people, are even more important for Hispanics in the United States as they struggle to define their own identity in a culturally diverse context and under pressure to assimilate. The commitment of Hispanics to become active participants and to offer their unique contributions in the life of the Church and society—versus being assimilated—has been a key value and principle for Hispanics in ministry.

2. A Culture Born Catholic

15. Since the first Spanish missionaries brought the Catholic faith to the new continent, many of the gospel values and church traditions became inculturated into the cultures of the Latin American people. These values include a profound faith in God, a strong sense of solidarity, an authentic Marian devotion, and a rich popular religiosity. Hispanics have a profound respect for the human person and value relationships over tasks or possessions. Personal relationships are at the heart of a spirituality of encuentro and the need to develop strong family, community, and parish ties. Hispanics understand culture as an integral part of the human person that should be respected and honored. Hispanics have a profound ecclesial vocation that leads them to work hard at belonging to the Church in a more meaningful way. This has been the case in the process of the National Encuentros, Convocation ’95, and other important events that we have convened and that have been affirmed by the Holy See. This ecclesial vocation has raised the level of awareness of the Hispanic presence—the presence of a population that will continue to have an impact on the life of the Church for years to come. The desire to promote collaboration with ministries of other ethnic communities has strengthened the ecclesial identity of Hispanic Catholics. Most importantly, this desire has defined Hispanic ministry as integral to the mission of the Church and as key to its future.

3. A Profound Ecclesial Vocation

16. Hispanics have a profound ecclesial vocation that leads them to work hard at belonging to the Church in a more meaningful way. This has been the case in the process of the National Encuentros, Convocation ’95, and other important events that we have convened and that have been affirmed by the Holy See. This ecclesial vocation has raised the level of awareness of the Hispanic presence—the presence of a population that will continue to have an impact on the life of the Church for years to come. The desire to promote collaboration with ministries of other ethnic communities has strengthened the ecclesial identity of Hispanic Catholics. Most importantly, this desire has defined Hispanic ministry as integral to the mission of the Church and as key to its future.

4. A Prophetic Model of Church

17. Hispanic ministry leaders, with the full approval of the U.S. bishops, have articulated a model of Church that is deeply rooted in the reality of Hispanic peoples. As such, this model of Church seeks to respond to the needs and aspirations of the poor, the undocumented, the migrant workers, the incarcerated, and the most vulnerable, particularly women and children. This prophetic model calls for a strong commitment to social justice, for advocacy and action in favor of new immigrant families and young people, and for the empowerment of Hispanics and all Catholics to enter into the full life of the Church and society.
5. Leadership Understood as Discipleship

18. Since the I National Encuentro (1972), Hispanic Catholics have understood leadership as discipleship, and pastoral ministry as seguimiento (accompaniment). This model of leadership in ministry, which is based on Jesus’ call to follow him, has two dimensions. The first is the encounter with Christ, which leads to conversion and to a personal relationship with the Lord. This relationship with Christ generates a mística and a spirituality that permeate every aspect of the faithful’s life-journey as members of the Church. The second element of seguimiento is the commitment to follow Jesus by continuing his mission to be leaven for the reign of God in the world.

6. A Pastoral de Conjunto (Communion in Mission)

19. The principle of pastoral de conjunto (communion in mission) has been key to incorporating Hispanic ministry in dioceses and parishes.¹¹

20. Pastoral de conjunto has led to the promotion of diocesan offices for Hispanic ministry and the increase in the number of parishes serving Hispanics. To date, over 75 percent of the dioceses have an office for Hispanic ministry, and almost four thousand parishes provide pastoral services to Hispanics in the Spanish language.¹² In addition, pastoral de conjunto has helped to encourage development and growth in the number of Hispanic Catholic organizations and apostolic movements. The principle of pastoral de conjunto can serve the broader Church by modeling and promoting collaborative ministry as an effective vehicle for carrying out the mission of the Church. Regional offices for Hispanic ministry and national Catholic organizations and apostolic movements have been effective promoters of this principle as they work with the local church.

7. A Process of Consultation

21. Since the I National Encuentro (1972), Hispanics have used a methodology of pastoral discernment that focuses on the needs and aspirations of the faithful, judges that reality in light of the Scriptures and Tradition, and moves into transforming action. This methodology, known as SEE—JUDGE—ACT—CELEBRATE—EVALUATE, has generated critical thinking and a strong commitment on the part of the leadership to the mission of the Church. This methodology has also led to strategies and pastoral actions that are relevant, timely, and effective. The components of celebration and evaluation have been very helpful in renewing and redirecting the efforts of Hispanic ministry over the years. This methodology has been applied in the context of a consultation process that promotes participation and works under the assumption that how we do things is as important as what we do.

Living the Present with Enthusiasm

The Pastoral Vision of the National Pastoral Plan

22. The 1987 National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry has been a beacon for dioceses and parishes serving Hispanic Catholics in the United States. The Pastoral Plan offers an evangelizing ecclesial model and pastoral principles that have strengthened the ministry since its approval in 1987. The vision that the Pastoral Plan offers, as articulated in its general objective,¹³ resulted from the consultative and pastoral theological reflection processes of the national Encuentros of 1972, 1977, and 1985.

23. The vision, values, and pastoral priorities established in the Pastoral Plan are still relevant today. However, the “signs of the times” call for refocusing our efforts in ministry. One sign is the ever-growing Hispanic presence in the United States. Another is the unprecedented leadership role that Hispanic Catholics will play in building the future of the Church. A third sign is the Church’s concern with the growing number of Hispanics who are joining other Christian denominations or religious traditions. A critical fourth sign is the emergence of new leadership in need of training and formation on the values and principles of the National Pastoral Plan and of Encuentro 2000.

24. Encuentro and Mission revisits our pastoral dimensions that have been developed and implemented since 1987. In this renewed framework, we offer new perspectives and challenge pastoral leaders to appreciate the efforts of the past while responding to the ministry efforts of a new generation of lay and ordained leaders.
Response to the Call for a New Evangelization

25. Pope John Paul II, in emphasizing the urgent need for humanity to listen to Jesus Christ's message of hope, has called for a New Evangelization. This renewed commitment to evangelization was already present in each of the priorities of the I Encuentro (1977), and it was included as one of the four specific dimensions in the Pastoral Plan (the other three being pastoral de conjunto, missionary option, and formation).

26. Evangelization is the fundamental mission of the Church. It is also an ongoing process of encountering Christ, a process that Hispanic Catholics have taken to heart in their pastoral planning. This process generates a mística (mystical theology) and a spirituality that lead to conversion, communion, and solidarity, touching every dimension of Christian life and transforming every human situation. As we have said in our national plan for evangelization, Go and Make Disciples, "The fruit of evangelization is changed lives and a changed world—holiness and justice, spirituality and peace."14.

27. In order to reach out more effectively to inactive Hispanic Catholics and the unchurched, we recommend that the New Evangelization, with its emphasis on spirituality and mística, be integral to all the specific dimensions of the Pastoral Plan. That is, the New Evangelization must now become an integral part of pastoral de conjunto, missionary option, and formation. This is of particular importance as Hispanics continue to be lured away to fundamentalist groups.

28. A new fourth pastoral dimension for Hispanic ministry is that of liturgy and prayer life, a dimension of Christian life that was witnessed in the first Christian communities (Acts 2:42-47). Liturgy and prayer life were included in the National Pastoral Plan under spirituality and mística, but with this renewed framework they become a distinct dimension that is also infused with the New Evangelization.

A Call to Build and Nurture Community

29. Just as the New Evangelization, with its emphasis on encountering the living Jesus Christ, suffuses each specific dimension for Hispanic ministry, so does the building of the reign of God, with its emphasis on communion and solidarity. Every action taken in the life of the faith community should nurture and strengthen the fraternal bonds between all its members. Whether through a formation program, an advocacy strategy, a liturgical celebration, or a whole pastoral plan, fraternal human relationships and a truly Christian experience of community should be strengthened within each cultural group and across all cultures.

Specific Dimensions for a Comprehensive Hispanic Ministry

1. The New Evangelization and Formation

"They devoted themselves to the teachings of the apostles. . . ." (Acts 2:42)

30. An evangelizing catechesis and a solid formation are more necessary today than ever. Such formation is about the acquisition of wisdom, understood as truth in love:

Wisdom is communicated, transmitted, shared. It requires an interpersonal relationship with those who possess it. That is why wisdom is related to the experience of community, of a common culture, of being a people. The wisdom at the heart of the formation for which the Pastoral Plan calls is the wisdom of the Church.15

31. This formation also includes the acquisition of communication skills, organizational and leadership skills, and a greater sense of responsibility to and desire to participate in the life of the Church and society. The Pastoral Plan describes this dimension as the transition "from good will to skills." It calls for leadership development and catechetical formation within a cultural context and for theological-pastoral reflections on the grassroots level. It also calls for seminars and study sessions with pastoral specialists in the areas of liturgy, catechesis, theology, and evangelization. Research is recommended in the social, economic, cultural, religious, and psychological aspects of family, popular religiosity, and issues involving youth, women, and the poor and marginalized.

2. The New Evangelization and Missionary Option

"Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles." (Acts 2:43)
32. This dimension of the Pastoral Plan calls people to move from being merely recipients of the Good News to being committed witnesses of it to those who need to experience its life-giving power. We reaffirm the emphasis of the 1987 Pastoral Plan on reaching out to those who have not encountered the living Jesus Christ in their lives. "The story of the Samaritan woman also shows the need to evangelize by reaching out to the poor, the 'outsiders,' and those who are victims of discrimination and injustice." The mission of the Church to those who suffer—particularly young people, women, and families—requires both works of mercy and a committed struggle against all forms of injustice. The Pastoral Plan calls for the promotion of opportunities for the poor and the marginalized to participate in political, social, economic, and religious processes. It also calls for a pastoral and social response to the needs of families suffering from many difficulties, including abuses, divorce and separation, abortion, domestic violence, alcoholism and drug abuse, isolation, legal residence issues and rights, and the lack of educational opportunities. The plan calls for coordination and collaboration. It recommends using regional and diocesan encuentros as a vehicle for helping leaders become aware of the broader community's needs for community building, pastoral planning, and solidarity in action among all the baptized.

3. **The New Evangelization and Pastoral de Conjunto (Communion in Mission)**

"All who believed were together and had all things in common. . . ." (Acts 2:44)

33. "*Pastoral de conjunto*" refers to the reality of the Church as communion. At its most fundamental level, this communion is the expression of God's desire that all may be one. "Since that communion is a communion of love. . . . every single member is 'responsible' for the well-being of others. This promotion for the well-being of all, this concern and care for their 'holiness,' is the basis of *pastoral de conjunto.*" In his apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Pope John Paul II says that we must "make the Church *the home and the school of communion*" (no. 43). The Pastoral Plan describes communion in mission as movement "from fragmentation to coordination." It calls for collaborative efforts and the distribution of resources among ministries and groups. To develop a *pastoral de conjunto* requires the close collaboration in ministry among all ethnic and cultural groups. This dimension calls all to recognize each other's unique vocation while living out their common responsibility for the Church.

4. **The New Evangelization and Liturgy and Prayer Life**

"Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God. . . ." (Acts 2:46)

34. The liturgy and prayer life of the Church are privileged opportunities for the faithful to experience a true spirit of community—hence the importance of achieving full participation in the celebration of the sacraments by all those who form the assembly. So that the liturgy may be the summit and source of Christian life, the celebration of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, must foster a feeling of being "at home." All are invited to share ways of prayer that reflect their different cultural values and traditions and welcome their talents. The Pastoral Plan seeks to promote liturgical celebrations that are inculturated in the reality of the community that celebrates them, while bringing the many faces of God's house into a greater communion. This pastoral dimension is strongly implied but not directly included as such in the 1987 Pastoral Plan.

**Pastoral Priorities in Hispanic Ministry**

35. Hispanic ministry has empowered millions of Hispanic Catholics to become active participants in the life of the Church and society. This success has been made possible due to a consultative process by which challenges have been identified and priorities established.

36. Ministry in the twenty-first century requires a commitment to welcome and foster the cultural identity of the many faces of the Church while building a profoundly Catholic and culturally diverse identity through an ongoing process of inculturation. The following basic pastoral responses are based on principles that have proven very useful in developing Hispanic ministry over the last thirty years of a national pastoral effort. We bishops are confident that they will continue to help the Church respond to the Hispanic presence.

1. **Articulate a Clear Vision of Ministry Based on Unity in Diversity**

37. As full members of the Body of Christ, Hispanic Catholics have an understanding of their role in the mission of the Church that serves to empower the ministerial leadership to be aware of the Church's culturally diverse dimension and to work toward building the one body of Christ while honoring cultural differences. This principle of unity and diversity involves a commitment that affirms and fosters cultural identity for all groups while promoting the transformation of cultures by gospel values.
38. Unity in diversity stems from the spiritual discipline of inclusion rooted in the Gospel. Inclusion calls all Christians to open themselves up in such a way that they risk being changed by whoever is the stranger, the foreigner, in our lives. Through inclusion, the newcomer tries to participate fully in U.S. life by loving it and learning the language and the laws; but the native culture is also maintained, along with the native tongue and values. This process of gospel inclusion adds to the U.S. culture the specific richness of other cultures while guiding all Catholics beyond a shared tolerance of one another towards greater acceptance and respect.

2. Foster a Spirituality of Communion in Mission

39. The fostering of a spirituality of pastoral de conjunto (communion in mission) needs to be a strong value and principle for pastoral planning and action for all Catholics. This model of ministry helps to increase the level of inclusion and of mutual collaboration among all Catholics in dioceses, parishes, and national organizations. Pastoral de conjunto helps to build more vibrant faith communities by making them more welcoming, evangelizing, missionary, and committed to solidarity with the disenfranchised. Forming leaders who are motivated to serve within a culturally diverse Church is an essential component for a fruitful pastoral de conjunto.

3. Promote Small Ecclesial Communities and Apostolic Movements

40. The Pastoral Plan recommends many projects and programs to respond to the Hispanic presence in the Church, such as small ecclesial communities and apostolic movements that are parish-based. These are effective for promoting evangelization, leadership formation, and vocations to priestly and consecrated life.

41. Among Hispanics, small ecclesial communities have been and continue to be a valuable expression of the evangelization efforts of the Church. “These small ecclesial communities promote experiences of faith and conversion as well as concern for each person and an evangelization process of prayer, reflection, action, and celebration.” They are a prophetic challenge for the renewal of our Church and the humanization of our society and can serve to stem the loss of Hispanic Catholics to other faith traditions.

42. In Encuentro and Mission, we bishops affirm these small communities, along with vibrant apostolic movements, as an effective response that brings families together within cultural and faith contexts that affirm and support family life, the language and culture of the community, and parish involvement. In 1995, in Communion and Mission, the Committee on Hispanic Affairs said,

> When solidly rooted in Scripture, church tradition, and Hispanic religiosity, small church communities constitute a new moment in the Church's self-understanding, epitomizing the celebration and proclamation of the Church. These gatherings of the People of God are integrally linked to the parish, and through it, to the diocesan and universal Church.

43. The Pastoral Plan calls for trained mobile teams to go into the community to visit families and to invite them to become closer to the life of the Church, especially those families who feel distant and marginalized. The development of small church communities and apostolic movements as a pastoral response is only one example of the richness and the dynamic character of the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry.

4. Plan With the People, Not For the People

44. It is of paramount importance that we continue the participatory and consultative process that has been the trademark of the national Encuentros. The process has traditionally been based on grassroots consultation, convened by us and conducted in collaboration with clergy, religious, and lay people. In the Encuentro process, pastoral planning and ministry are conducted with the people, not for the people. Today there exists a strong need to utilize such a process, for it is an effective tool for responding to the pastoral challenges found in parishes throughout the country. We bishops call for a renewed commitment to promote the vision and process of the Pastoral Plan and to implement its prophetic general objective and specific pastoral dimensions.

5. Promote and Support Vocations to the Priesthood, Diaconate, and Consecrated Life

45. The promotion of vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and consecrated life must be integral to the efforts of Hispanic ministry. As the number of parishes providing pastoral services to Hispanic Catholics continues to grow, the availability of ordained ministers to provide for the sacramental and spiritual life of the parish is imperative. The growth in the number of ordained and consecrated ministers, particularly within the Hispanic community, is dependent on a proactive effort involving the diocesan offices for vocations, religious communities, the parish community, and Catholic families. However, we must state clearly and loudly that efforts in the area of vocations
must include a clearly understood sensitivity to cultures being served, to the culture of those men preparing for the priesthood or the diaconate, and to the culture of women and men entering or living a consecrated life.

6. **Form Lay Leaders as Bridge-Builders for Today's Culturally Diverse Church**

46. Today's culturally diverse Church needs leaders who are deeply rooted in a personal relationship with Christ. Some essential qualities include an openness to embracing people from different cultures, a flexibility for working and journeying with them, and an understanding of the broader Church. Also required is a commitment to serve all Catholics. Leaders need to be excellent listeners and have great sensitivity to and interest in people’s lives, needs, aspirations, and ideas. They need to believe in and be models of service, with a profound commitment to solidarity with the most vulnerable. In short, leaders need to be **gente-puente** (bridge-builders)—pioneers in opening doors to self and to others.

7. **Develop Relevant Stewardship Models**

47. Hispanic Catholics have always responded with great generosity to the efforts of the Church to reach out to other Hispanics. Millions of Hispanics share their time and talents week after week in thousands of faith communities throughout the country. This contribution takes the form of countless hours of dedicated volunteer service in catechesis, liturgy and prayer, community services, and many other ministries. Even though many Hispanics find themselves affected by poverty, they also share their treasure through creative and culturally relevant fund raisers, in-kind professional services, and individual contributions. However, a significant number of Hispanic Catholics do not yet respond to the needs of the Church and its mission in proportion to what they possess.

48. Stewardship among Hispanics does not happen in a vacuum. In our pastoral letter on stewardship, we said, “How to affirm racial, cultural, and ethnic minorities, how to overcome poverty and oppression . . . remain vexing questions, as well as opportunities.” Experiences in Hispanic ministry have shown that stewardship is the result of a process of discipleship that moves through the stages of inviting, welcoming, building relationships, building a sense of belonging, sharing decision making, taking ownership, and finally arriving at stewardship. As Hispanics become better established in U.S. society, they will share more of their time, talent, and treasure with the faith communities that journey with them on the path from newcomers to stewards.

8. **Strengthen Diocesan, Parish, and Regional Structures**

49. The Church must ensure that dioceses and parishes are equipped with appropriate resources to serve the ever-growing Hispanic population. In addition, there exists a need to affirm and strengthen regional structures and pastoral institutes that assist dioceses in their pastoral efforts and in the formation and leadership development of Hispanic lay leaders. At the national level, greater collaboration with national organizations is also necessary to ensure a stronger tie and a closer relationship with the bishops' Committee for Hispanic Affairs and the Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs and with other offices of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

9. **Commit to Social Justice**

50. A commitment to social justice is one of the pillars of Hispanic ministry. This commitment should involve ongoing formation on Catholic social teaching and collaboration on advocacy and public policy issues. Issues of immigration, education, human rights, border concerns, voter registration, and dialogue with labor union leaders are all issues relevant to the Hispanic community. Lay leaders should be formed and trained to participate in these arenas, for they have an impact on not only their community but also the entire Church. The renewed sense of solidarity called for in *Ecclesia in America* can serve to strengthen the civic responsibility of Hispanics and all Catholics in all aspects of human life.

10. **Promote Intercultural Dialogue and Collaboration**

51. The general objective of the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry calls for a Church incarnated in the reality of Hispanic Catholics while being open to the diversity of cultures. The values and principles of Encuentro 2000 stem from this affirmation and take it one step further—that is, to recognize that the face of the Church is changing and that all are called to foster a vision that welcomes the many faces of the Church to the table where decisions are made. Relentlessly promoting intercultural dialogue and a better understanding of the universality of the Church can accomplish these ends.

11. **Give the Church a Voice in Spanish**
According to population figures in the 2000 World Almanac, the Hispanic population in the United States is the fifth largest in the world, after Mexico, Spain, Argentina, and Colombia. This population has led to an extensive use of the Spanish language by corporations and the media in the United States. In the Church, care should be taken that pastoral letters and statements, as well as other church documents and resources, are sent to parishes in Spanish. Catholic newspapers, as well as radio and television programs hosted by the Church, should include news stories in Spanish and features on Hispanic Catholic life.

Looking Forward to the Future with Confidence

As a responsibility of the entire Church, the Hispanic presence calls for the strongest pastoral response from every diocese and parish where Hispanic Catholics live. This most important ministry also calls for an equally strong pastoral response on the part of all Catholic institutions and organizations, particularly those involved in education, social services, and advocacy.

The following suggested actions are based on recommendations generated by the more than sixty representatives from national and regional organizations who participated in the National Symposium to Refocus Hispanic Ministry for the New Century, which took place in spring 2001. The recommendations were reviewed by our Committee on Hispanic Affairs and are organized under the four specific dimensions of this pastoral statement, Encuentro and Mission:

- The New Evangelization and formation
- The New Evangelization and missionary option
- The New Evangelization and pastoral de conjunto
- The New Evangelization and liturgy and prayer life

The New Evangelization and Formation

1. Commit to the academic and professional development of Hispanics.
   a. Develop and support programs designed to help Hispanic lay people attain degrees for church ministry. This includes identifying financial resources for ministers' professional development in collaboration with colleges, universities, and other programs committed to the higher education of Hispanic Catholics in ministry.
   b. Support the hiring of a diocesan coordinator and of DREs able to train and support Hispanic catechists and the people they serve in catechetical programs and new evangelizing efforts in the parishes. These programs and efforts should emphasize education in the faith, especially through Catholic education during all school years.
   c. Include Hispanics and other ethnic communities in the planning and implementation of catechetical, evangelization, and ministry development programs, celebrations, and other diocesan and parish activities. Active participation in certification programs and ongoing education are of particular importance.

2. Foster an integral leadership formation model.
   a. Strengthen and develop formation programs for ordained, religious, and lay ecclesial ministers that include the particularity of each group. Offices for Hispanic ministry should collaborate with schools, colleges, and universities, as well as with seminaries. Formation of all ministers is an extended process in which Hispanics are ministers of the entire Church, not only of Hispanics.
   b. Include the perspective of women and young people in formation programs by using a methodology of social analysis that focuses on their reality, experiences, and contributions.
   c. Incorporate Hispanic ministry, culture, and language into programs in offices of evangelization, religious education, and formation, as well as in seminaries. Seminarians must learn Spanish and become familiar with Hispanic culture. Also, provide clergy and religious with opportunities to learn Spanish and to gain an understanding of the customs, cultures, and histories of Latin America. This is no longer an option—it is a need.
55.3. Establish solid and accessible faith formation programs.

a. Develop—in collaboration between offices for Hispanic ministry, departments of evangelization and religious education, and other departments—catechetical, pastoral, and theological formation programs designed for Hispanics.

b. Form ministers able to serve in a culturally diverse context. The formation of all ministers, including Hispanic deacons, should affirm cultural and ministerial identity. Leadership skills, social analysis, community organizing, and pastoral planning should also be included. A Spanish-track program, one of equal quality with the English track, is encouraged.

c. Develop guidelines for culturally diverse formation programs that include the vision, values, and principles of the Pastoral Plan for Hispanic ministry, of the renewed pastoral framework given in Encuentro and Mission, and of other documents.23

55.4. Make the formation of young Hispanics, especially young adult Hispanics, an urgent priority.

a. Support young Hispanics on their educational attainment efforts, catechetical formation, and human and leadership development. Promoting the involvement of Hispanics in school boards, education commissions, and parent organizations can be a key component of this effort.

b. Parish leaders must collaborate with public school officials, teachers, and especially parents to help improve the educational attainment level of Hispanic young people, the majority of whom attend public schools. Dioceses and parishes should take steps to help increase Catholic school accessibility and attendance by Hispanic children, possibly through scholarships and other incentives.

c. Encourage religious congregations to renew their historic commitment to Catholic education in communities that are poor and immigrant, especially in the Hispanic community.

d. Promote the inclusion of different ethnic and cultural perspectives in the curricula of elementary, middle, and high schools. Involvement of Hispanic professionals as mentors and the hiring of more Hispanic teachers can be particularly effective in this effort.

The New Evangelization and Missionary Option

56.1. Renew the Church’s commitment to reach out to inactive Catholics.

a. Develop strategies to strengthen Hispanic families in their personal relationships with Jesus Christ by implementing the strategies and actions outlined in Go and Make Disciples. Small ecclesial communities, apostolic movements, and specific programs on the New Evangelization are effective in reaching out to inactive Catholics and the unchurched.

b. Encourage and engage Hispanic professionals in active participation in the life of the Church. This should be done through a personal invitation to celebrate, dialogue about, and discern the leadership role of Hispanics in the Church.

c. Open doors for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and collaboration with Hispanics from other Christian traditions. Special attention should be given to families whose members belong to different faith traditions.

56.2. Develop ministry models that serve young people, women, and families.

a. Develop youth and young adult ministry models that effectively reach both U.S.-born and newly arrived Hispanics who live in culturally diverse parishes and dioceses. A collaborative effort between the offices for Hispanic ministry and youth ministry is key to carrying out this action.

b. Involve Hispanic young people and families in the plans and programs of diocesan offices for youth and family ministry. Involvement is measured by the level of participation of Hispanics and other ethnic
c. Promote the leadership and spiritual development of women and their inclusion in key positions of ministry with an equal-pay policy. This may also include developing a process to invite and consult with Hispanic lay women who exercise a natural leadership in the Church and who need assistance and support for their development.

d. Promote the family as domestic church, and develop programs for family catechesis, spiritual direction, and human development. Special attention should be given to Hispanic families affected by divorce, single parenting, domestic violence, and isolation of the elderly and people with disabilities.

56.3. Promote active participation in civic life and advocacy efforts.

a. Strengthen the commitment and promote the active participation of Hispanic Catholics in the areas of social justice—including pro-life concerns—civic responsibility, and working for the common good in their parishes and communities. The diocesan office for Hispanic ministry, in collaboration with the state Catholic conference, should promote legislation that supports educational opportunities for young people at risk and programs to reach new immigrants.

b. Intensify advocacy efforts on behalf of new immigrants, poor families, disadvantaged young people, and those suffering from discrimination and abuse by working more closely with advocacy groups and the state Catholic conferences. Special attention should be given to undocumented immigrants affected by family separation, fear of deportation, discrimination, and violence.

c. Involve Hispanics and other professionals in the life of the Church, and create opportunities for them to contribute their talent, time, and treasure. This effort requires identifying Hispanic professionals and creating opportunities for dialogue and collaboration. In addition, it should affirm the contribution of Hispanic women to Church and society and further promote their formation, leadership development, and placement in decision-making positions.

56.4. Intensify social ministry.

a. Strengthen the safety net for all people, especially women and children suffering from domestic violence, sexual abuse, abortion, chemical dependency, gang activity, and alcoholism. This effort should include consideration of working with local authorities and organizations to establish centers with interpreters for family services that provide counseling and support to Hispanic families, women, and young people.

b. Develop ministries with the incarcerated and their families, including programs that mentor those recently released from jail and reentering society.

c. Promote dialogue with Hispanics from other Christian denominations, and encourage collaboration on common issues that affect the lives of Hispanic families.

The New Evangelization and Pastoral de Conjunto (Communion in Mission)

57.1. Develop a common vision and mission for Hispanic ministry.

a. Promote the understanding that Hispanic Catholics are full members of the Body of Christ and are a blessing to the entire Church, and that Hispanic ministry is integral to its mission. This understanding empowers the ministerial leadership to provide regular opportunities for the faithful to come together to have a personal encounter with the living Jesus Christ. All Catholics should be given the opportunity to commit and contribute to the mission of Christ while honoring cultural differences.

b. Engage diocesan and parish leadership in a pastoral planning process based on the vision and mission articulated in the Pastoral Plan. This process is most effective when convened by the bishop and supported by the pastors and diocesan and parish leaders.
c. Establish formal channels of communication between the bishop and the diocesan director for Hispanic ministry, and create opportunities for ongoing dialogue with pastors and other parish leaders.

57.2. Strengthen the structures for Hispanic ministry.

a. Establish, in each diocese, an office for Hispanic ministry to coordinate pastoral efforts based on the Pastoral Plan and this renewed framework, *Encuentro and Mission*. The office should serve as a resource to parishes and other ministries. Parishes with a Hispanic population within their boundaries should find ways to serve Hispanic Catholics.

b. Strengthen Hispanic ministry structures such as diocesan, parish, and regional ministry offices and centers for pastoral formation. This effort should include adequate resources and support for implementation of programs and projects.

c. Promote and support small ecclesial communities and apostolic movements, especially those serving young people, women, and families, with New Evangelization efforts.

57.3. Develop a strategy for *pastoral de conjunto*.

a. Establish channels of communication between the different departments, offices, and agencies within diocesan and parish structures. This is particularly important during the planning process since the work of the office for Hispanic ministry often includes multiple ministry areas, such as youth, family, religious education, catechesis, liturgy, and advocacy.

b. Build relationships with leadership in all ministries to achieve a common vision and pastoral planning process. Such relationships should lead to common projects and programs that build the unity of the Church and gather Catholics from different ethnic and cultural groups.

c. Create a place for Hispanics and other ethnic and cultural communities at the table where decisions are made. This involves decisions that affect the Church as a whole, not only a particular community or ministry. The bishop’s cabinet, diocesan and parish councils, financial committees, Catholic universities and theological institutes, commissions, and advisory groups are some examples where broader participation is needed.

57.4. Foster the development of Hispanic ministry leaders.

a. Develop Hispanic leaders able to minister in the context of a culturally diverse and pluralistic society while strengthening their Hispanic cultural and ministerial identity. This requires that the Church honor, embrace, and bridge the cultural, racial, and linguistic differences.

b. Promote the involvement of Hispanic church professionals as leaders and experts in different ministries and disciplines, not only in Hispanic ministry issues. This is particularly important in planning diocesan events such as catechetical conferences, youth conventions, ministerial days, and formation programs.

c. In collaboration with the office for social concerns and the state Catholic conferences, offices for Hispanic ministry should educate Hispanic Catholics about public policy issues and processes as well as basic community organizing skills. The diocesan office for Hispanic ministry should promote political legislative action on issues affecting Hispanics and other Catholics, such as immigration, human rights, and education.

The New Evangelization and Liturgy and Prayer Life

58.1. Increase participation in the liturgical life of the Church.

a. Multiply the number of parishes equipped to celebrate the liturgy in Spanish, particularly the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist. This effort should include the formation of committees for the liturgy in Spanish that closely collaborate with the pastor and parish staff.
b. Deepen the experience of welcoming and communion in the liturgy in dioceses and parishes. Foster liturgical and religious expressions including the careful selection of music, the creation of environment and art, and a sensitivity to the precise use of languages. This involves making ritual books and other liturgical resources readily available in Spanish.

c. Affirm and support Hispanic Catholics seeking the sacraments, particularly when their situation requires special attention. Provide timely information and preparation classes in Spanish to the faithful about the requirements for receiving the sacraments. A welcoming attitude and personal attention are essential.

58.2. Make God's saving grace more visible in the lives of the faithful.

a. Identify important cultural events and moments in the life of the local community for which liturgical celebrations would be most relevant.

b. Develop or continue emphasis on evangelization and the use of Catholic devotions in liturgical formation programs for all Catholic ministers, particularly Hispanics.

c. Provide Eucharistic liturgies or prayer services in times of difficulty and during civic events that affect the life of Catholics, particularly Hispanics.

58.3. Intensify the formation of liturgical ministers.

a. Develop and provide—through collaboration between the diocesan offices for worship and for Hispanic ministry—training to ordained and other liturgical ministers in Spanish, particularly in the areas of preaching and selection of liturgical music.

b. Provide opportunities for formation and immersion experiences that serve to foster better understanding of popular religiosity among different Hispanic Catholic communities and their inclusion in liturgical celebrations and traditional fiestas.

c. Place greater emphasis on the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults among Hispanics in order to respond to the growing number of Protestant-raised Hispanics seeking admission into the Catholic Church.

58.4. Create opportunities for all the faithful to celebrate together (popular piety).

a. Provide opportunities that promote a spiritual understanding of the liturgy as a culturally diverse celebration of the faith community that is a common and dynamic spiritual encounter, a mistica, with God in the search for unity in our diversity.

b. Develop guidelines and models for culturally diverse liturgies. This should involve the participation of Hispanics and members of other ethnic groups in the planning and implementation stages of liturgical celebrations. The use of cultural gestures and symbols during these celebrations is strongly recommended, as well as the promotion of different forms of personal, familial, and small community prayer in everyday life.

c. Encourage diocesan and parish leaders to ensure that diocesan liturgies are inclusive of the cultures and languages present in the diocese. The liturgies of the Encuentro 2000 national event offer an excellent model for culturally diverse liturgies.

d. Incorporate popular faith expressions—such as devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints—into liturgical celebrations. Use the preparation and organization times before country patron saints’ celebrations and other popular religiosity practices as opportunities to evangelize and to provide ongoing spiritual formation and leadership development.

Pastoral Application

59. Ministry among Hispanics requires an openness to pastoral and social realities that challenge the Church to respond with new ardor, methods, and expressions in ministry. For this reason, collaboration and communion in
mission are critical for an effective ministry. It is not possible for one ministry, or one minister, to do everything that is required. Guidelines for ministering among Hispanics may be helpful in responding to pastoral and social needs, but they must come from the local church. While each parish is different, common elements can be effective in an implementation process.

Mission

60. Hispanic ministry is the Church’s response to the Hispanic presence. This ministry must be seen as an integral part of the life and mission of the Church in this country. We must be relentless in seeking ways to promote and facilitate the full incorporation of Hispanic Catholics into the life of the Church and its mission. It entails a collaborative effort with the entire community and honors their history, their faith traditions, and the contributions Hispanic Catholics have made in service to the Church and society.

Vision

61. The National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry provides a general objective and four pastoral dimensions that guide the ministry and serve as the basis for pastoral planning for parishes, dioceses, and Catholic organizations. The general objective calls the faithful to live and promote the unity of the body of Christ and its mission through faith communities and Catholic organizations. This call is defined through the following pastoral priorities:

a. Welcome all the baptized and build community.
b. Reach out to the baptized who may not be involved in the life of the Church and those who do not know Christ.
c. Affirm and promote the cultural identity of Hispanics and of all the faithful.
d. Celebrate and express the faith in a spirit of communion and participation.
e. Promote and be an example of justice through a spirit of solidarity with the most vulnerable.
f. Invite and provide formation to Hispanic leaders through an evangelizing catechesis that prepares them to teach and serve the Hispanic and other Catholic communities.
g. Build faith communities in which all cultures are constantly transformed by gospel values in order to be leaven for the reign of God in society.

62. Perhaps the best summary for this pastoral statement lies in words that are often attributed to Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, who was assassinated on March 24, 1980, while celebrating Mass. These words, which are widely used in pastoral circles in the United States, are a profound prophetic message that should serve all in ministry:

It helps now and then, to step back and take the long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection, no pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the Church’s mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capacity.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

Appendix

Challenges Faced in Hispanic Ministry
63. Challenges were identified by the leadership participating in the 2001 National Symposium to Refocus Hispanic Ministry as being common realities affecting the development of Hispanic ministry in all regions of the country.25

1. Proselytism of Hispanic Catholics

64. While data are generally lacking about the number of Hispanics who have left the Church, current data suggest that a significant number of Hispanics join other Christian denominations and religious traditions every year. This challenge includes a growing number of Hispanic families who are experiencing diversification of commitments to other religious traditions besides Catholicism. Today, Hispanics have family members who belong to fundamentalist groups or who have espoused mainline traditions. Another perspective on this particular concern notes that studies have not yet been conducted on what "leaving the Church" really means. Because of their mobility, Hispanics find themselves in new environments that are totally different from what they know, love, and understand. New arrivals have to adapt to a new language, to different institutions, and to new support systems. The structure of the parish and the style of worship are usually very different from what they experienced in their native country. Adapting and determining where one belongs takes time. In many parishes throughout the country, Hispanics find familiarity and a welcoming atmosphere. However, that is not always possible where Hispanic clergy and personnel are not available. A transforming hospitality, then, becomes extremely important in welcoming the stranger among us, which includes providing opportunities for Catholic formation and spiritual nourishment.

65. The Committee on Hispanic Affairs’s 1999 report Hispanic Ministry at the Turn of the New Millennium identified several factors that make Hispanics feel unwelcomed in the Catholic Church. These make them more open to experiencing and choosing other faith traditions. Among these factors are excessive administrative tasks and rules in Catholic parishes, which often override a spontaneous, personal, and warm reception. For example, some Hispanics complain about having to fill out complicated forms and produce evidence of being registered, such as showing contribution envelopes, before they can receive the sacraments. In contrast, evangelical churches conduct home visits, provide powerful preaching that skillfully links Scripture with everyday life, and foster a notion of Church as extended family that provides Hispanics with a sense of belonging to God’s family.

66. Another factor that can affect the sense of belonging in the Catholic Church is the lack of priests, religious, and lay pastoral ministers to serve the many needs of the Hispanic community. The formation and recognition of a potential leader in the Hispanic community can also be difficult, due to a lack of formal education.

2. The Growth of the Hispanic Population and the Impact of Fewer Priests

67. Priestly vocations among Hispanics are on the rise. Thirteen percent of all U.S. seminarians are Hispanic.26 This growth is overshadowed, however, by the ever-growing number of Hispanic Catholics, estimated to be at least 25 million—constituting nearly 40 percent of all Catholics in the United States. According to the committee's findings in Hispanic Ministry at the Turn of the New Millennium, there is one Hispanic priest for 9,925 Hispanic Catholics in the United States. In contrast, there is one Catholic priest for every 1,230 Catholics in the general Catholic population.27 Even though nearly four thousand parishes are already serving Hispanics, the demand for services in Spanish continues to outpace the response from the Church.28 There is an urgent need to increase the number of parishes that provide for the sacramental, catechetical, spiritual, and social needs of the community. This increase should include more ordained, religious, and lay pastoral ministers serving Hispanic Catholics.29

3. Need for More Continuity in Ministry

68. Participants in the National Symposium to Refocus Hispanic Ministry identified the need to intensify efforts for leadership development, as well as the need for continual training of new leadership in dioceses, parishes, and Catholic organizations in order to give continuity to Hispanic ministry.30 Ministry does not draw its strength from specific programs alone. Rather, it favors an ongoing process of community building and leadership formation nurtured by a common vision. This underscores the importance of hiring Hispanic ministers who are familiar with the collective history of Hispanic ministry and who are committed to its vision as outlined in the Pastoral Plan and Encuentro 2000. The presence of lay ecclesial ministers as parish staff and of Hispanics serving on parish councils is particularly critical when faith communities face the unavoidable challenge of changing pastors and parochial vicars.
4. A Multicultural Model That Promotes a One-Size-Fits-All Approach to Ministry

69. Participants in the symposium spoke with concern about a "multicultural" model that consolidates minorities under one office, which is headed by a coordinator. In the experience of the participants, this model often dilutes the identity and vision of Hispanic ministry and those of other ethnic ministries. It can reduce effectiveness in dioceses, parishes, and Catholic organizations and institutions. The leadership in Hispanic ministry is particularly concerned about the reduction of resources and the limited access to the bishop that can follow the establishment of multicultural offices. Also expressed was concern about the exclusion of Hispanic ministry staff from the decision-making process, particularly in the areas of budgets, plans, and programs specific to Hispanic ministry and its impact in other ministerial areas and in the mission of the Church as a whole. We bishops are mindful of the cultural diversity of the Church and of the need for effective ministry models. However, the size and long-standing presence of the Hispanic population call for an assertive response by the Church to the challenge of ministering among Hispanic Catholics.

5. Need for Diversity of Ministry Models Serving Youth and Young Adults

70. Presentations during the symposium highlighted the need to develop alternative models for ministry with Hispanic young people. Census 2000 shows that out of 35.3 million Hispanics living in the United States, approximately 12.5 million are younger than eighteen years of age. The majority of young people in this age group do not participate in Catholic youth programs or attend Catholic schools. The traditional model of parish youth ministry does not, for the most part, reach Hispanic young people because of economic, linguistic, cultural, age, and educational differences. At the same time, there is resistance to accepting, affirming, and supporting emerging models that attempt to fill the void by reaching out to Hispanic young people, particularly new immigrants. Generally speaking, the majority of parish youth ministry programs serve a population that is mostly European white, mainstream, middle-class, and English-speaking. Many live in the suburbs, are more likely to attend Catholic high school, and are college-bound; the parents of many are registered in the parish. On the other hand, Hispanic youth groups serve youth and young adults from working- and middle-class families who live in the inner city. They tend to have a low educational attainment level, to have limited access to Catholic schools, and to not be college-bound. They conduct their meetings in Spanish or bilingually, and they foster cultural identity as an integral part of membership in a Hispanic youth group. U.S.-born Hispanic teenagers are the largest segment of Hispanic young people—and the least served. This group does not naturally gravitate to either of these models. It is of vital importance to develop ministerial models that respond to the specific needs and aspirations of U.S.-born Hispanic youth.

6. Need for More Consistent Ministry Models

71. Research commissioned by the Committee on Hispanic Affairs shows that diocesan offices for Hispanic ministry are not consistent in their structure or do not have equitable access to resources. The offices are often housed under different departments or pastoral services. Participants at the symposium expressed concern that Hispanic ministry is often perceived as a specialized ministry separate from the mission of the diocese or the parish. Such ambiguity makes it difficult to adequately fund a comprehensive Hispanic ministry effort and impedes its relation to other ministries.

7. Pastoral Planning in Isolation

72. A survey of bishops and diocesan directors for Hispanic ministry showed that even though the Pastoral Plan has existed since 1987, few ministers outside Hispanic ministry know about the plan, or they rarely conduct pastoral planning in collaboration with Hispanic ministry. The leadership in Hispanic ministry is concerned that such lack of awareness fosters the perception that Hispanics are the exclusive responsibility of the office for Hispanic ministry. Inconsistent pastoral planning in Hispanic ministry, isolation, and a tendency to view Hispanic ministry as a parallel structure has limited collaboration with other ministries and Catholic groups in the past.

8. Complexity of Hispanic Population

73. In most regions of the country, Hispanic ministry has focused its energy on serving new immigrant Hispanics facing language barriers, poverty, low educational attainment, isolation, discrimination, and limited catechetical formation. This focus has led, at times, to tensions between new immigrants and U.S.-born Hispanics. The recent influx of new immigrants from Mexico and Central America into areas traditionally populated by Puerto Ricans, Cubans, or Mexican Americans is presenting new challenges to Hispanic ministry in dioceses throughout the country. Adding to this complexity are other ethnic groups with comparatively small migrations, such as Latinos of African descent who have long suffered racial prejudice, as well as indigenous peoples from rural regions of Mexico and other countries who may possess a low level of Spanish literacy. Training in language—
particularly in speaking the language of the heart in dialogue with men and women—culture, and social
structures are a necessity for foreign-born priests and other pastoral ministers. 38

9. Limited Access to Leadership Positions

74. Participants at the symposium shared that church leadership is often reluctant to establish relationships and
develop closer collaboration with and across cultures and ministries. In general, Hispanic theologians, educators,
and ecclesial ministers are considered knowledgeable only in Hispanic ministry and are kept from positions of
leadership such as chancellor, department director, school principal, pastor, and seminary rector. Some
reluctance on the part of Hispanic leaders also prevents their applying for positions or addressing groups not
connected with Hispanic ministry. 39

10. Limited Resources and Low Educational Attainment

75. Participants at the symposium identified the lack of adequate economic resources and training programs that
respond to the leadership needs of the community; in addition, programs that provide intercultural
communication skills are urgently needed. Hispanics, particularly young people, have a low educational
attainment compared with other groups and may suffer from poor self-esteem. This situation leads Hispanics to
settle for certificates instead of degrees. 40 We bishops are encouraged to know that nearly 25 percent of all
students enrolled in lay formation programs in the United States are Hispanic. 41 However, the Church is
challenged by seeing that the number of Hispanics enrolled in degree programs is quite low, particularly in
theology and related fields. The limitation of resources dedicated to the education of Latinos has a direct impact
on the number of Hispanics who have the necessary credentials to hold leadership-level positions.

The document Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry was developed by
the Committee on Hispanic Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). It was
approved by the full body of U.S. Catholic bishops at its November 2002 General Meeting and has been
authorized for publication by the undersigned.

Msgr. William P. Fay
General Secretary, USCCB

Notes


2 The National Celebration of Jubilee 2000, Encuentro 2000: Many Faces in God's House, in Los Angeles, Calif., July 6-9, 2000, was hosted by
Hispanic Catholics and focused on hospitality and strengthening the unity of the Church in a cultural context.


5 The term “Hispanic” was used during the 1970 Census and was adopted by the church leadership of the time to help define a people with a common
identity, vision, and mission. It has been integral to the memoria histórica of Hispanic ministry since 1970 and continues to be integral to the pastoral
efforts of the entire Church today. In recent years, the term "Latino" has become widely used by church and community leaders, particularly in urban areas. It is a self-identifying term that has emerged from the community and is embraced by the Church. Even though this population is labeled "Hispanic," however, it is essential for understanding and for effective working relationships to recognize that the people come from different countries and come with special identities. The binding forces are the faith tradition, language, and values.

6 U.S. Catholic Bishops, Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs, Message from the Director, En Marcha (Summer 2000): 2.


8 Our other publications reflecting the history of U.S. Hispanic Catholics include the following: The Bishops Speak with the Virgin: The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment; the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry; Communion and Mission: A Guide for Bishops and Pastoral Leaders on Small Church Communities; The Hispanic Presence in the New Evangelization in the United States; Reconciled Through Christ: On Reconciliation and Greater Collaboration Between Hispanic American Catholics and African American Catholics; and Encuentro 2000: Many Faces in God's House. The documents of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM) produced after its gatherings in Medellín, Puebla, and Santo Domingo are also an important part of the memoria histórica of Hispanic ministry, as is the wealth of publications produced by various ministries related to the ecclesial experience, theology, and pastoral practices within the Church.


11 The term "pastoral de conjunto" has been used since the 1987 Pastoral Plan to refer to the idea of communion in mission. Leaven for the Kingdom of God, no. 3.2, explains further: "Since that communion [of God] is a communion of love, every member . . . finds his or her identity in a relation of love with the others. . . . This promotion of the well-being of all, this concern and care for their 'holiness,' is the basis of the pastoral de conjunto. When we speak of the pastoral de conjunto, therefore, . . . we are speaking of the very nature of the Church's mission" (U.S. Catholic Bishops, Committee on Hispanic Affairs, Leaven for the Kingdom of God [Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1990]).

12 U.S. Catholic Bishops, Committee on Hispanic Affairs, Hispanic Ministry at the Turn of the New Millennium (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1999), 17, 41.

13 It is a model of Church that is evangelizing, communal, and missionary. This model is to be a ministry that is incarnated, or rooted, in the reality of the Hispanic people and is open to the diversity of cultures. This model of Church must promote justice by its example and be committed to developing leadership through integral education. Such an educational process touches on the different dimensions of the human person: spiritual life, intellectual development, affective maturity, and the acquisition of human virtues. All these elements combined are essential for the Church to be leaven for the reign of God in society.


15 Leaven for the Kingdom of God, no. 6.3.

16 Leaven for the Kingdom of God, no. 5.1.

17 Leaven for the Kingdom of God, no. 3.2.

18 See Leaven for the Kingdom of God, no. 3.4.


20 National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry, no. 38. See also nos. 38-40.


23 Documents such as Encuentro 2000: Many faces in God's house, Go and Make Disciples, Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, and Brothers and Sisters to Us are especially recommended.

24 Cf. Bishop Arthur N. Tafoya, opening remarks, National Symposium to Refocus Hispanic Ministry, in U.S. Catholic Bishops, Committee on Hispanic Affairs, Proceedings of the National Symposium to Refocus Hispanic Ministry (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002): "All leaders and ministers in the Church are called to accept responsibility and share talents and resources to respond to the many pastoral challenges the Church faces every day. But unless this is done in the name of the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—and with the intention of building the kingdom of God, what is done in ministry will not last. All ministries have one fundamental responsibility: to be leaven for the kingdom of God."


26 U.S. Catholic Bishops, Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry et al., The Study of the Impact of Fewer Priests on the Pastoral Ministry (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000), 31. While 13 percent is a promising number, it must be pointed out that most of these are foreign-born.

27 Hispanic Ministry at the Turn of the New Millennium, 5.

28 Hispanic Ministry at the Turn of the New Millennium, 40.

29 Hispanic Ministry at the Turn of the New Millennium, 5.
30 Proceedings of the National Symposium, 39.
31 Proceedings of the National Symposium, 38.
32 U.S. Census Bureau, NP-D1-A Projections of the Population by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States, 1999-2100 Middle Series, Internal Release Date: November 2, 2000.
33 Proceedings of the National Symposium, 38, 52-53.
34 Hispanic Ministry at the Turn of the New Millennium, 16.
35 Proceedings of the National Symposium, 37.
36 Hispanic Ministry at the Turn of the New Millennium, 17.
37 Proceedings of the National Symposium, 37.
38 Proceedings of the National Symposium, 38.
39 Proceedings of the National Symposium, 38.
40 Proceedings of the National Symposium, 38.