

WELCOME!

PASTORAL RESPONSE TO HISPANIC MIGRANTS.

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The Center for Migration Studies is an educational, non profit institute founded in New York in 1964, directed by Scalabrinian Missionaries, to encourage, and facilitate the study of sociological, demographic, historical, legislative and pastoral aspects of human migration movements, and ethnic group relations.

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of migration is as old as the very history of humanity. Since before the written record, the human experience has witnessed the steady flow of individuals and groups who have felt the need, for whatever reason, to abandon their homeland and seek new ground. Motivated by either pure adventure or by the hope of finding a better environment, we can safely say that all nations are the outgrowth of different migration movements and civilizations. Various economic, political, social, religious and cultural factors embody this phenomenon of migration in its causes and consequences.

Today humanity faces a cultural and religious pluralism unheard of in the previous century. Technological progress in the field of mass communication and media has led the world to experience a unique openness towards other cultural and religious traditions no longer considered foreign as people come together and even intermingle.

*"In the course of these last decades, humanity has more and more taken on the features of a large village, where distances have become shorter and the network of communications more compact. The development of modern means of transportation makes it easier for people to move from one country to another, from one continent to another. Among the consequences of this significant social phenomenon is the presence of about two hundred and fifty million immigrants spread all over the different parts of the world."*¹

The wide spread phenomenon of migration is another leading cause of cultural and religious pluralism.

With peoples of different cultures, values and models of life knocking at our doors, the life and the pastoral structure of the majority of the parishes in North America have changed dramatically the last thirty years.

From national and mono-cultural faith communities we now witness multi-cultural and territorial parishes giving pastoral attention to specific ethnic groups. Consequently, to build an authentically Catholic Church, each faith community is called to integrate into it the specific and unique reality of the groups that compose it.

The parish represents the space in which a true pedagogy of meeting with people of various religious convictions and cultures can be realized.

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In its various expressions, the parish community can become a training ground of hospitality, a place where an exchange of experiences and gifts takes place."²

In one of his recent papers on migration, Robert Schreiter, a well known sociologist, reflects on one aspect of today's migration phenomenon that makes it unique and more challenging. He writes

*"The nature of new immigration groups in the multicultural mix is of somewhat different character that was the case in the earlier waves of migration in another way. Ease of travel allows immigrants to maintain contact with their home-lands –unless, of course, they are political refugees. Whereas earlier immigrant groups usually say goodbye to their countries of origin forever when they came to the United States, that is frequently now no longer the case. That means that immigrants are less likely to assimilate as quickly into the dominant culture in the United States because they maintain contact. It is not uncommon for Mexican migrants, for example, to send their children back to Mexico during the summer vacation in order to get to know relatives and the customs of that country – and even to keep up the language."*³

The response of the Church to this current immigration has been both enlightening and challenging. The waves of migrants and refugees have filtered into the social and religious structures of faith communities in such an overwhelming way as to leave many leaders puzzled and wondering how to respond. These modern migrations form a massive movement of people never witnessed before. In the last decades this phenomenon - comprising over two hundred million human beings - has become an integral part of our modern society, impacting its social, cultural, political, economic, and religious structures.

In the last document on Migration, (*Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi - The Love of Christ towards Migrants*) issued by the Holy See, the reality of world migration is addressed with urgent emphasis, "The love of Christ towards migrants urges us to look afresh at their problems, which are to be met today all over the world. In fact nearly all countries are now faced with the eruption of the migration phenomenon in one aspect or another; it affects their social, economic, political and religious life and is becoming more and more a permanent structural phenomenon."⁴

In the opening address of a recent statement issued by the Catholic Bishops of the United States (*Welcoming the Stranger Among Us - Unity in Diversity*,

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USCC), all pastoral leaders are invited to reflect on migration issues in the light of Christ's message and to respond accordingly:

*"The presence of so many people of so many different cultures and religions in so many different parts of the United States has challenged us as a Church to a profound conversion so that we can become truly a sacrament of unity...We are challenged to get beyond ethnic communities living side by side within our own parishes without any connection with each other...The call to communion goes out to all members of the Church - bishops, priests, deacons, religious, lay leaders, and parishioners to prepare themselves to receive the newcomers with a genuine spirit of welcome."*⁵

The pastoral attention to the world of migration should be a constant and active concern of the Church to continue its mission of salvation. Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, bishop of the diocese of Piacenza (Italy) and founder of the Missionaries of Saint Charles (Scalabrinians) for the pastoral and social care of migrants, believed that the expansion of the Church will depend more on human mobility than on the Mission ad Gentes. In his ecclesial perspective as a bishop he often compared missionary work in the frontiers of Asia and Africa, where the Church has always invested funds and dedicated personnel for the propagation of the message of the Gospel, with the extreme need of equally conserving the faith of the millions of Catholics dispersed in the vast regions of the New World.

In light of this world wide migration and the ongoing invitation of Church leaders, it is the intention of this work to specifically assist English speaking clergy and pastoral workers in their daily effort to respond effectively in their pastoral service to the Spanish speaking migrants and refugees whose presence is so evident in North America.

Drawing from my years of pastoral experience in the service of Mexican migrant groups, I embark on this project fully aware of its complexity. It is not my intention to be a self-appointed spokesman for Hispanics. I am also aware of the broad diversity of experiences contained within the Hispanic communities. While sharing the same language, the same traits and struggles, they differ in their history and many cultural nuances.

My efforts and suggestions will be primarily based on Church documents and publications by theologians and other leaders involved in the Hispanic apostolate. Therefore, I attempt to provide a selective compendium of important tenets of the topic, eliminating the need of a broad reading within the discipline.

The sections of the work will address these sub-topics:

- Understanding culture and dialogue between cultures.

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- Migration and the Bible Tradition.
- Basic documents of the Church on migration.
- Faith and Primary religiosity.
- Popular Religiosity and Celebrations.
- Typical Hispanic Celebrations.
- Expressions and a Way of living in Hispanic culture.
- Challenging components in Mexican American culture.
- Pastoral suggestions for community's building and liturgical celebrations.

N.B.: In this presentation the words Hispanic, Latino, and Mexican American will alternate according to chosen quotations. However, particular attention will be given to Mexican American immigrants.

Introduction Notes

1 – Migration and Inter-Religious Dialogue. Pope J. Paul II message for the 88th World Day of Migration, 2002. # 1

Humanity has become a large village where different cultures and religions are called to live shoulder to shoulder. In every community, dialogue and mutual tolerance are required among those who profess the religion of majority and those who belong to minorities, often made up of immigrants. A successful dialogue is paramount to focus on the centrality of the human person. The parish ambience could become a space in which the meeting of people of various religious convictions and cultures can be realized. Welcome and mutual openness, sustained by personal faith witness, allow people to know each other and discover that the various religious traditions do contain precious seeds of truth and goodness.

2 – Ibidem; # 3

3 – Ministry For a Multicultural Church, Schreiter, R. Origins, May 20, 1999, Vol. 29, ppff.

The author, a theology and sociology professor at CTU in Chicago, develops his presentation in four sections; 1) a sketch of current situation of migration in the United States; how it is both similar and different from our past experiences as a Church dealing with many cultures at the same time; 2) the presentation of a few of the major cultural dynamics that are at work in a setting where many cultures come together in a single location; 3) suggestions and goals for quality ministry in a multicultural church: a simple reduction of tension and friction among the groups is not sufficient; 4) a proposal of policy changes needed to become a truly multicultural church.

4 – Erga migrantes Caritas Christi (The Love of Christ Towards Migrants) , published May 14, 2004, by the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers. Vatican Press. # 1.

The purpose of this instruction is to respond to the new spiritual and pastoral needs of migrants and to make migration more and more an instrument of dialogue and proclamation of the Christian message. The document observes that in migrants the Church has always contemplated the image of Christ who said, “I was a stranger and you made Me welcome” (Matthew 25:35) Subtitles worth reading: evangelization, inculturation, pluralism, solidarity, liturgy, popular piety, laity involvement, parish involvement.

5 – Welcoming the Strangers among us – Unity in Diversity. United States Catholic Bishop Conference, Inc. Washington D.C., 2000, Page 2.

After a summary description of the present migration in the United States, the document continues with an earnest invitation to receive all new comers with a genuine spirit of welcome. The U.S. church has always been an immigrant church. A true conversion based on remembering our heritage, and on the removal of competition for resources, cultural fears and institutional obstacles, will lead to a celebration of the presence of migrants from different cultures as a gift to the Church. The invitation to conversion is facilitated by the practical examples of welcoming centers and parishes in different areas of the United States. New evangelization is needed for a successful unity in diversity.

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Understanding Culture and Dialogue Between Cultures

In essence the content of this section addresses reflections on basic components of culture and how all cultures need to enter into dialogue to assure a peaceful future for humanity.

Basic components of culture:

The complexity of various elements that constitute a culture makes any clear definition difficult. We are dealing with human experiences and values and each human being is an enigma.

“Culture is quite a pervasive and sometimes nebulous concept. Almost every culture is both a source of creativity and a means of imprisonment. Its symbols provide us the lens and categories through which we characteristically experience human behaviour and expectations.”¹

Culture, distinctly assimilated and lived by each individual, is a phenomenon that characterizes nations and communities with an implicit unique world view. Culture is the way of life of a community seen in its totality.

Experiences have been stored and preserved in language, customs, traditions and myths. Thus, culture exemplifies the cumulative and shared experiences of a community, which are transmitted from one generation to another.

Reflection on culture in its modern sense is rather recent in Church teachings. *Gaudium et Spes*, -Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World -devotes a long section to culture (paragraphs 53-62). Commenting on the Church’s reflection on the topic, Robert Schreiter offers the following observations.

“There are two important teachings that are relevant to our discussion. The first is the right of every person to culture itself. Since culture, although a human product is so essential to our very humanity, to take away a person’s culture is to damage a person grievously. It is a denial of an important aspect of

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who we are. The second teaching has to do with the right to development in culture. Culture becomes an important vehicle for development of the person at all levels, including the spiritual. It is precisely this positive valuing of culture that provides the theological basis for any reflection on many cultures in the Church.”²

Dialogue between cultures:

No individual is completely free from the cultural influence that is constitutive of his or her personality. Human beings are conditioned by continuous relationships that shape their identity. *“People are marked by the culture whose very air they breathe through the family and the social groups around them, through education and the varied influences of their environment, through the very relationship which they have with the place in which they live.”³*

We live in a pluralistic world. The world has been called a global village, where plurality is woven into the very fabric of our human family. There is a plurality of world views, cultures, religion and ways of organization in a society. Today, close proximity and contacts among cultures, religions and diverse forms of spirituality are a pervasive phenomenon. Thus inter-cultural and inter-religious identity is becoming part of the contours of many nations in the world and plurality is being acknowledged as a constitutive aspect of our world.

This world wide phenomenon affects the relationship among nations with conflicting consequences. It is not fully understood and causes stressful reactions. Our experience of plurality and diversity is also becoming painfully and increasingly ambivalent and ambiguous. On the one hand, diversity becomes enrichment; on the other, it is often perceived as an obstacle by some, leading to intolerance and suppression especially of the minority and the weak. Understanding of and living with difference and plurality is a major struggle in many societies.

In order to understand cultures with their basic and varied components, it is essential to accept the challenge of comparing them with ours. Migration exposes us to this challenge. Culture is always marked by stable and enduring elements, as well as by changing and contingent features: it is a living system. Contacts with other cultures often bring new challenges which necessitate adaptation to new situations.

Today all cultures are affected by modern global trends and the enormous technological innovations. The ability of cultures to adapt to change differs.

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Some cultures tend to stress the need for stability in order to preserve their cultural identity in the fast changing world of today. Others adjust their institutions fast to fit into the process of change.

A serene and objective encounter with other cultures requires the awareness of our own culture and the appreciation of its historic and social make up. At the same time this encounter will make us mindful of the limitations of each culture and safeguard us from conceited isolation. “Love for one’s country is thus a ‘value to be fostered’, without narrow-mindedness but with love for the whole human family and with an effort to avoid those pathological manifestations which occur when the sense of belonging turns into self-exaltation, the rejection of diversity, and forms of nationalism, racism and xenophobia.”⁴

A deeper reflection favoured by such encounter will disclose components familiar in all cultures, a providential factor that facilitates mutual acceptance and enrichment.

“Moreover, when cultures are carefully and rigorously studied, they very often reveal beneath their outward variations significant common elements. This can also be seen in the historical sequence of cultures and civilizations. The Church, looking to Christ, who reveals man to himself, and drawing upon her experience of two thousand years of history, is convinced that ‘beneath all that changes, there is much that is unchanging.’ This continuity is based upon the essential and universal character of God’s plan for humanity.”

“Cultural diversity should therefore be understood within the broader horizon of the unity of the human race...

In fact, only an overall vision of both the elements of unity and the elements of diversity makes it possible to understand and interpret the full truth of every human culture.”⁵

Inspired by a Christian perspective, the encounter should become an enriching, welcoming dialogue. Furthermore, the dialogue should unfold a communion, which has its source in Christian revelation and finds its model in the Triune God. Individuals come to maturity through receptive openness to others and through generous self-giving to them; so too do cultures. Created by people and at the service of people, they have to be perfected through dialogue and communion, on the basis of the original and fundamental unity of the human fami-

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ly as it came from the hands of God, who 'made from one stock every nation of humankind. (Acts 17:26).

Dialogue and communion become even more demanding and challenging when migrants become our neighbour. The hardships they are facing could blur their distinctive cultural traits that are a vital support to their endeavours of integrating in the new country.

*"A style and culture of dialogue are especially important when it comes to the complex question of migration, which is an important social phenomenon of our time. The movement of large numbers of people from one part of the planet to another is often a terrible odyssey for those involved, and it brings with it the intermingling of traditions and customs, with notable repercussions both on the countries from which people come and on those in which they settle. How migrants are welcomed by receiving countries and how well they become integrated in their new environment is also an indication of how much effective dialogue there is between the various cultures."*⁶

Blessed Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini, named "Father to The Migrants" by Pope John Paul II, invests the socio-economic and political vision of migration with the values and convictions that come from faith and pastoral concerns.

**Migration, with the eyes of faith, is a providential phenomenon.
It interprets history, not from the perspective of dominant economy,
but that of the wisdom of God.**

*"The children of poverty and labour, who in human and sociological terms seem to be a mass of exploited peoples and failure, are in fact the builders of a new society and are the special place and instrument for the building up of the kingdom, the union of Christian peoples."*⁷

He is convinced that the goal of pastoral attention should be "to bring together the dispersed children of God into one family" and thus the perfect communion and participation in the local church, that would see itself enriched with a new life and new forms of Christian piety.

We could regard the cultures of others as an unwanted nuisance and even a threat to our peaceful everyday concerns. The effort of blending with them, motivated by faith and trust in human goodness, will result in unexpected growth and enrichment.

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1 – Pastoral Strategies for Multicultural Parishes. Coleman J. Origins, January 10, 2002, Vol. 31: No 30

First the author expands in a broader spectrum the three major points that Fr. Schreiter proposes for a successful multicultural integration: recognition of the other, respect for cultural differences, and healthy interaction between cultures. Further on, quoting theologians, sociology experts, and philosophers – among others Young I. (Justice and the Politics of Difference), Taylor C. (The politics of Recognition), Guizeta R. (The Multicultural Church), Deck A. (Perspectives: Hispanic Ministry) – the author reflects on the pastoral letter of the United States Catholic Bishop Conference "Welcoming Strangers Among us – Unity in Diversity" and proposes pastoral strategies for a multi-cultural parish and diocese, including common liturgies, shared space, leadership training, and inter-cultural communication.

2 – Ministry for a Multicultural Church, Schreiter R.

The author, a theology and sociology professor at CTU in Chicago, develops his presentation in four sections: a) a sketch of the current situation of migration in the United States; how it is both similar and different from our past experiences as a Church dealing with many cultures at the same time; 2) the presentation of a few of the major cultural dynamics that are at work in a setting where many cultures come together in a single location; 3) suggestions and goals for quality ministry in a multicultural church (a simple reduction of tension and friction among the groups is not sufficient; 4) a proposal of needed policy changes needed to become a truly multicultural church.

3 – Dialogue Between Cultures for a Civilization of Love and Peace, Pope J. Paul II message for World Day of Peace, 2001.

After brief reflection on culture, its constitutive elements, its impact on human development and the common in all cultures, the message urges dialogue between them. Further more it reminds humanity of the many values pursued by all cultures: solidarity, peace, life, and education. The Pope pleads for forgiveness and reconciliation among nations and closes with a warm appeal to young people. Their international gathering in Rome in 2000 is viewed as a significant model of an effective dialogue.

4 – Ibidem, # 6

5 - Ibidem, # 7.

6 – Ibidem, # 12.

7 – Bishop J. B. Scalabrini : A living Voice, pp.389-392.

This volume is an anthology of the collected writings of Bishop Scalabrini (7,000 pages gathered into 14 thick volumes), an Italian bishop of the nineteenth century, beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1997 as "Father to the Migrants". In the five sections we come to know a man who was all for God; a man who earnestly worked and sacrificed himself for the Church; a man who poured himself out for his fellow human beings because he was gifted with a rich humanity; a man who consecrated himself to the migrants because he made their cause his own.

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Migration and the Bible Tradition

The Chosen people are enjoined to respect laws on behalf of sojourners. The God of Israel is a journeying God who accompanies his people towards the Promised Land. The Savior chooses an itinerant life.

The mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God continues to mystify us who have embraced His message of justice and peace. Christ's decision to participate in our human nature as a Jew holds significant relevance for all those who are involved in pastoral service in multicultural setting.

Due to its geographical position, the Jewish tradition was a blend of various cultural components from nations surrounding Palestine, particularly in Northern Galilee. As Jewish culture evolved in ancient Palestine it was later subjected to many foreign influences. The history of the Hebrew Nation unfolds not within one civilization but within six. Hence, biblical ideas have been influenced by many cultural sources. Traces of Egyptian, Persian, Babylonian, Indian and other foreign civilizations are found in Judaism, particularly in Hebrew myths and legends which, side by side with the law, were developed and handed down from generation to generation. Writers of Biblical texts put their own stamp on material borrowed from other cultures in order that it might yield profound insights into the nature of God and man.

The call of welcoming migrants is based on the rich heritage of Scripture. The Patriarchs themselves were nomads. Settled by the hand of God in the time of Abraham, they soon migrated to Egypt, where they suffered oppression and were delivered once again by God's hand. From this experience comes a profound appreciation for the plight of the migrants, underlined by the words of Scripture, "You shall not oppress an alien: you well know how it feels to be an alien, since you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt." (Ex 23:9)

"You shall treat the stranger who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you, have the same love for him as for yourselves; for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt." (Dt. 16:9-12).

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The encounter of Abraham with the three angels at Manre in Hebron (Gen. 18) exemplifies welcoming at its best. The faith filled hospitality of the aged patriarch is rewarded and blessed with the promise of a son, Isaac, to his wife Sarah. Fr. Maurizio Pettenà C.S. offers an insightful commentary.

"It is hot, Abraham is resting, probably it is noontime, and all details seem to suggest that the last thing Abraham wants is to be disturbed. At that inconvenient hour, Abraham is visited by foreigners!...The foreigner, like the Lord, does not foretell his arrival...Abraham lifts up his eyes and sees three men in front of him. He sees them standing and runs towards them. Lifting up his eyes and searching the horizon allows Abraham to see beyond his fear and to see not three hostile men, but three men to welcome with sacred hospitality...Abraham does not know who the foreigners are, their intentions nor their destination. He does not know that they are the Lord. The pilgrim-foreigners ask for nothing. They stand at the entrance of the tent. They are in need of rest and refreshment, but do not ask for anything. The pilgrims at Manre are the paradigm of any foreigner, who does not know how and for what to ask!...Abraham invites his wife to prepare a meal for them and invites them into the privacy of his dwelling the intimacy of his home, to share what he has. All this time the foreigners are not saying anything. They simply partake of his hospitality. To interpret the silence of the foreigners is part of the great responsibility of a faith which intends to prioritize, not simply as an arbitrary option, the commandment of hospitality and welcome. In welcoming and giving hospitality to the foreigners, Abraham allows himself to see far, in fact, to see the Lord!"¹

While ancient Jewish law might seem severe and unbending, it nevertheless included explicit provisions for the most vulnerable groups within the community, namely the sojourners, orphans and the widows. These were the people who had no adult male Israelite protector. Therefore, by law, they became the special concern of the entire community. The sojourners who lived with the Jews enjoyed certain privileges. They were included in the covenant community and the celebrations that surrounded it: "At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithes of your produce for that year and deposit them in community stores, that the Levite who has no share in the heritage with you, and also the alien, the orphan and the widow who belong to your community, may come and eat their fill: so that the Lord, your God, may bless you in all that you undertake." (Dt. 14: 28-29).

Besides their experience of freedom from slavery, the Chosen People are called to imitate God who does not have any partiality. In honour of their deliverance Israel was enjoined to show justice towards all, "For the Lord, your

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God, is the God of gods, the Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who has no favourites, accepts no bribe; who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and befriends the alien, feeding and clothing him. So you too must befriend the alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt.” (Dt. 10:17-19.)

By their very existence, migrants offer us a new understanding of God as the Lord who follows His people in all their experiences, a God who is not bound by time and space. Biblical texts often present life as a journey, a model of life remarkably appropriate for migrants searching for the Promised Land. God chooses to adopt the same definition for Himself as He uniquely identifies with this journeying people and their way of living, a very different way of being God.

“The itinerant experience of the migrant offers a dynamic image of God, an image that we do not encounter in the Bible by accident. Indeed, the God of Israel is an itinerant God, a wandering God, a God not restricted to a temple, a mountain, or a river like the gods adored in the ancient Orient. Following the events of the Exodus we can state that the God of Israel is not a sedentary and static God, rather a God who frees his people from the slavery of Egypt, guiding and accompanying it towards the Promised Land. When king David plans to build a temple, God responds that He does not need a temple because the tent, this mobile home, is the place chosen as a dwelling among His people. During the journey in the desert God abides in the meeting tent: He is there present and available to his people and to Moses. This image of the tent is so important that we find it forty times in the book of Exodus and forty four in Leviticus.”²

The experience of the migrants is a constant invitation of self surrender to the mystery that reveals a God who lives and acts beyond our wildest imagination; a God who manifests Himself in unexpected places, at the fringes of our society or in no man’s land, and in the unfamiliar stranger and the migrant.

“The migrant, leaving behind geographical and cultural boundaries, and embracing new ones, opens to us a novel vision of God’s mystery: a God who speaks many languages with different profiles, a God of the past, the present and the future. Migration rules out the temptation of controlling God, of making Him according to our own image, of caging Him up in our theologies, our philosophies, our political, economic, and cultural theories.”³

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The experience of freedom from slavery engraves in the mind and heart of the Chosen People a deep and life encompassing reality of total dependence upon a God who reveals himself as faithful and provident. *“In any case, the Bible views the exodus as a definitive revelation: portraying God as a liberator who hears the cries of the poor; portraying Israel as people who began as landless migrants dependent only on God and for whom the land was a gift not a birthright - an origin the Scriptures do not want Israel to forget.”⁴*

Such a deep and life encompassing experience separates Israel from all the other nations where they may find themselves. It constitutes their unique religious and social identity proudly kept by a collective memory and the revealed Word. *“Yet, strangely, even though rooted deeply in the Hellenistic cultures of Asia Minor or Greece or Egypt or Syria, the Jewish people of the Diaspora still felt the tug of going home and still prayed and longed to return to Jerusalem - a deep unsettling desire stoked by pilgrimage and religious literature that portrayed Zion as the center of the world and as the ultimate meeting place with God.”⁵*

Jesus realizes and fulfills the covenant’s experiences of the Chosen People. God’s unique presence with our forefathers in the faith incarnated in our Saviour,

“The tradition of the God of the tent continues in the New Testament as well. ...in the well known prologue of John’s gospel, verse 14, we read: ‘The Word became flesh and dwelled among us, affirming the Incarnation of God in Christ. It is interesting to note that the Greek word normally translated with the verb ‘dwelled’ is ‘eskenose’ derived from the word ‘skene’ that means ‘tent’...In other words this verse stresses that Jesus, continuing the tradition of the God of Israel, pitches his tent among us, choosing again this transient presence with a wandering humanity, firmly leading it towards the reign of God.”⁶

The gospel narratives present Christ familiar with the experience of being uprooted. The Incarnation itself is the most powerful proof of such experience.

In his letter to the Philippians Paul writes, “Christ did not regard equality with God something to be grasped: rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness.” (Chapter 2: 6-7).

“The gospels present Christ as a man of his people, son and descendent of Israelites. On the other hand, the gospels do not hide a ‘migrant’ dimension sel-

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dom taken into consideration. We find this dimension in the genealogy of Jesus (Mat. 1:1-17) with the presence of foreign women Tamar and Ruth. Together with two women sinners they are surprisingly included in the list of Jesus' male ancestors. In Matthew's gospel we meet Jesus as a refugee, forced to leave the fury of King Herod. Christ also reveals himself as a stranger when, back from Egypt with Mary and Joseph, he lives in the region of Galilee, known as the Galilee of the pagans. In this region Gentiles and Jews lived together forming a mixed race despised as impure by the law abiding Jews of Jerusalem."⁷

The public life of our saviour was an itinerant life, spent on the move, going through towns and villages: "The foxes have their dens and the birds of the air their nests: but the Son of Man does not have a place where to lay his head." (Mt 8:20) Like many migrants He does not encounter a place He could call his own.

This style of life, freely chosen, reflects and epitomizes the experience of the Chosen people. "Matthew portrays Jesus and his family as recapitulating the migrant experience of Israel. Jesus begins his earthly journey as a migrant and a displaced person - Jesus who in the same gospel would radically identify with the least, and makes hospitality to the stranger a criterion of Judgement (Mt 25:35)."⁸

Many are the episodes in the gospels portraying Christ's involvement with, and appreciation of non Jewish individuals:

*"Reflecting on the faith of the migrants almost automatically we refer to the faith of some characters of the gospel: the Roman centurion, the Canaanite woman, the Samaritan leper, and the good Samaritan. All of them are strangers, not Jews, and excel with their boundless faith, their gratitude, their example of service and love for their neighbour. Through these personages the evangelists critique the behaviour of the very apostles who frequently fail in their faith and compassion."*⁹

During the last supper Christ prayed to the Father for unity among all nations and has entrusted us with the realization of such universal plan of salvation as His lasting testament. The beginning of this realization was made evident on the day of Pentecost when people of many nations gathered to hear the Good News from the apostles empowered by the Holy Spirit,

"Foreigners are also a visible sign and an effective reminder of that universality which is a constituent element of the Catholic Church.

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A vision of Isaiah announced this: "In the days to come the mountain of the temple of Yahweh shall tower above all mountains...All the nations will stream to it" (Is 2:2). In the gospel our Lord Himself prophesied that "people from east and west, from north and south, will come to take their places at the feast in the Kingdom of God" (Lk 13:29), and the Apocalypse sees "a huge number...from every nation, race, tribe and language (Ap 7:9)." *"The Church is now toiling on its way to this final goal; today's migration can remind us of this 'huge number' and be seen as a call and prefiguration of the final meeting of all humanity with God and in God."*¹⁰

The invitation to live as pilgrims and foreigners on a journey towards the true home is frequently offered in the parables. It is found in many letters of Paul and the two written by Peter to the first Christian communities: an invitation rising from the experience of our ancestors in the faith. *"The theme of the Christian as a pilgrim grows out of the Covenant experience, whereby we live in a posture of promise and fulfillment, with our eyes set upon a future which God holds for us. In this view even the most settled in their day-to-day existence will remain a people on the move. Within such a framework, we should be able to appreciate and situate the experience of those who are on the move, either voluntarily or involuntarily, in our world today."*¹¹

Because of the liturgical use of Aramaic and with the spreading of the Good News among the Gentiles, the first Christian communities experienced the challenge of celebrating in different languages in the synagogues.

*"The use of Aramaic as a liturgical language alongside Hebrew was matter of pastoral necessity in order for those who gathered to understand what was read. The same pastoral necessity would eventually promote the liturgical use of Greek, as Greek-speaking synagogues were established in Jerusalem to accommodate Hellenized Jews born in the Diaspora, who came to the holy city on pilgrimage or who chose to end their days in the land of their ancestors."*¹²

Scripture, particularly the accounts of the Acts and the letters of Paul, does not give us any clue of communal worship among Jews and Gentiles. Nevertheless, the use of some Hebrew and Aramaic words in Hellenist celebrations lead us to believe that some contacts were kept as an expression of the common faith. *"This is one possible explanation why expressions that probably originated in the Aramaic Christian worship were maintained in the Greek speaking assemblies and endure to this day. Words like the Hebrew 'Hosanna' (Yahweh, save!), the Aramaic 'Maranatha' (Come, Lord!), and the Hebrew 'Amen' (So be it) were adopted by Greek speaking Christians and received into other languages as part of a common Christian heritage of liturgical acclamations."*¹³

As disciples of Christ we are challenged to follow His footsteps: He leads us

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as pilgrim and wayfarer. To follow Christ means to walk behind Him and be in transit in the world because “there is no eternal city for us in this life” (Heb 13:14). The believer is always a ‘pároikos’, a temporary resident, a guest wherever he may be. This means that for Christians it is not that important where they live geographically, while a sense of hospitality is natural to them. The apostles insist on this point (Rm 12:13; Heb 13:2-3 Jn 5)

In the early Church, hospitality was the Christians’ response to the needs of itinerant missionaries, of religious leaders in exile or on a journey, and of poor members of various communities.”¹⁴

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1 – Migration in the Bible- the Commandment of Hospitality. Pettenà, M. C.S.

The publication is part of a Resource Guide for Migrant Ministry in Asia, an Exodus Series under the care of the Scalabrinian missionaries in the Philippines. Over and above the attention to specific pastoral response to migration in Asia, the series offers insight on more general topics: theology of Migration, the teaching of the Church, the role of the laity, the challenge of religious diversity, the human rights of migrants, counseling migrants. The author’s contribution to the series helps the reader reflect on the biblical meaning and significance of foreigners and their acceptance in both the Old and New Testaments. Final theological reflections contribute to a better understanding of the Christological and charismatic reasons for hospitality, with the patriarch Abraham as a typical example. The whole series is an excellent tool for workshops on migration. The author offers some outlines for a successful one.

2 –Migration, Religious Experience and Globalization, Campese G., C.S., & Ciallella P., C.S.

This work is a collection of conferences and workshops presented during the First Conference on Migration and Theology held in Tijuana, Mexico, in January 2002. There were two main objectives: 1) to promote theological reflection on the social issues and concrete experience of migration, 2) to facilitate interdisciplinary approach to the phenomenon of migration, in particular to develop a theology that takes into consideration the multiple dimension of the complex and controversial issues of migration today. The themes worth mentioning are: Migration and Social Doctrine of the Church, Human Rights of Migrants and their pastoral challenge, the Experience of Migration in the United States, Ruth (the migrant who saved the people), contribution of migration to theological reflection.

3 –Beloved Aliens and Exiles – New Testament Perspectives on Migration, Senior D. , p2.

The author - a Passionist Father and Rector of Catholic Theological Union of Chicago - introduces his presentation by emphasizing that the wandering of the patriarchs, the exodus, the exiles, the dispersion and the return, all became embedded in the consciousness of the people of Israel. Then he reflects on Jesus who takes flesh and becomes embodied in the human journey, is born on the road, is forced to fly into Egypt, and chooses the itinerant life in his public ministry. This experience of Jesus is recapitulated and relived in the experience of the early Christian communities. They were not strangers to the experience of dislocation caused by persecution and tension among Jewish radicals and the followers of the “Way.” With inspiring theological reflection on the Gospels, the Acts and the writings of Paul and Peter, the author sees the experience of Jesus and the early communities leading towards seeking a true land, welcoming the stranger, the poor and the oppressed. The encounter with those forced to migrate is a strong reminder of the reality of national boundaries and the obligation of justice transcending bloodlines and nationality.

4 – Ibidem

5 – Migration, Religious Experience and Globalization. P. 189

6 – Ibidem. P. 190

7 – Beloved Aliens and Exiles, Senior D. p.4

8 – Migration, religious Experience and Globalization, p. 191.

9 – Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi (The Love of Christ Toward Migrants), # 17

10 – Migration, Religious Experience and Globalization, p. 176

11 – Liturgy in a Multicultural Community, Francis, M., pp 25-26

This essay addresses both the theoretical and pastoral issues involved in liturgical ministry to a multicultural faith community. It deals with the question of culture, its relationship to the Christian faith and the ritualization in the liturgy. It takes a close look at the role that culture played in the first Christian communities. The author briefly sketches how culture continued to influence the self-identity of the Church and its worship both the late patristic period and the last century in the United States. The work concludes by examining some of the challenges and possibilities of liturgical celebrations in a multicultural parish today.

12 – Ibidem, p. 35.

13 – Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi, # 16.

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The Documents of the Church

In the documents of the Church, particularly the most recent *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, appear a gradual awareness and response to the complex phenomenon of migration.

In recent years the pastoral response of the Church to migration has become congruent with the historical development of the phenomenon. Since the documentation is so extensive, we will concentrate on the most recent statements which effectively reflect the signs of the times.

In the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII (1891) the entire Christian community is made aware of the massive movement of people caused by social and economic problems. However, the document does not develop nor present any specific pastoral response.

The Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia* issued by Pope Pius XII (August 1952) is regarded as the fundamental document on migration of recent times. To its analysis of migration movement, more evident in its complexity and internationalization, the document adds theological reflections, together with specific and practical invitation to governments and religious authorities to formulate an effective response.

The decree *Christus Dominus*, by Pope Paul VII (1965) (on the pastoral office of Bishops in the Church), addresses the attention they should give towards the members of their diocese in need of specific pastoral care, migrants in particular. *“Special concern should be shown for those members of the faithful who, on account of their way of life are not adequately cared for by the ordinary pastoral ministry of the parochial clergy or are entirely deprived of it. These include the many migrants, exiles and refugees, sailors and airmen, itinerants and others of this kind.”*#18

The same special concern is emphasized in the apostolic letter *Ecclesiae Sanctae* by Pope Paul VI (1966) with a strong invitation to institute various national organizations. - *“In view of the great number of migrants and travellers in our times, episcopal conferences are asked to entrust all that concerns their care and spiritual guidance to a priest delegated for this purpose or to a special commission.”*#9

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The pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, on the Church in the Modern World of Vatican Council II, conveys the solidarity of the Church with the entire human family. The document considers the changes that challenge humanity in the social order, and in attitudes. The Church is aware of the great economic and social differences that plague immigrants, particularly those differences which affect their religious convictions and behaviour. For this reason the Church presents her comments and practical proposals with the care of a true mother.

“Justice and equity also demand that the livelihood of individuals and their families should not become insecure and precarious through a kind of mobility which is a necessary feature of developing economies. All kinds of discrimination in wages and working conditions should be avoided in regard to workers who come from other countries and contribute their work to the economic development of a people or a region. Furthermore, no one, especially public authority, should treat them simply as mere tools of production, but as persons. They should facilitate them to have their families with them and to obtain decent housing conditions, and they should endeavour to integrate them into the social life of the country or area to which they have come.”#66

In his apostolic letter *On the care of migrants* (1969) Pope Paul VI restates the concerns expressed by the Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council towards all migrants and makes them his own: *“...this Apostolic See should offer to the bishops and the episcopal conferences the opportunity of carrying out better assistance to the groups of migrants, who are not only entrusted, like other faithful, to their pastoral ministry but who, owing to the special circumstances in which they live, also demand particular care, precisely in keeping with their needs.”* (Introduction, p. 2).

Many and varied are the Church's documents during the following years: messages of the Holy Father on the occasion of Migration Day, statements by Episcopal Conferences, particularly at Puebla and Medellin. In all of them appear the following concerns: the right to emigrate or not to emigrate; the right of the host nations to legitimately limit the influx of newcomers using justified and compassionate legislation; the respect of different cultures; the right to fair employment and a humanitarian attention to the undocumented. National Conferences of Bishops, dioceses and parishes are invited to be aware of these issues and address them with effective pastoral plans.

In an historic and unprecedented document for the Catholic Church in North America, *Strangers No longer: Together on the Journey of Hope* (2003), the United States and Mexican Catholic bishops came together to speak with one voice on the topic of migration, an issue of great importance to both countries. They

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highlight its moral dimensions and offer solutions. Among the pastoral recommendations directed internally to the Church and the way she responds to the spiritual and social well-being of the migrant, the bishops stress the importance of making pastoral service (such as sacramental preparation), more available, greater collaboration to increase the social service network, the exchanges of well trained religious and diocesan clergy from both countries, and a more effective dialogue between bishops and pastoral workers along the border.

Recently we have been gifted by another document by the Holy See, thirty five years after the publication of *On the care of migrants* by Pope Paul VI. The instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi (The Love of Christ towards the migrants)*, issued by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerants (2004), aims at giving a pastoral up-to-date response to the presence of the uprooted in our midst. It reminds us that

the phenomenon of migration is an integral component of the history of salvation, a sign of the times and of God's presence in the history of humankind for the building of a universal communion.

We have already quoted some passages from this document in the section of Migration and Bible Tradition. It will be useful to consider some others offered as theological reflection.

The effort of reaching unity is the fundamental characteristic for a credible Church, called to be a beacon of hope in our world divided by wars and nationalism, where differences are viewed as threats and not as opportunities for enrichment and growth:

“The Church, sacrament of unity, overcomes ideological or racial barriers and divisions, and proclaims to all people and all cultures the need to strive for the truth in the perspective of correctly facing differences by dialogue and mutual acceptance. Different cultural identities are thus opened to a universal way of understanding, not abandoning their own positive elements but putting them at the service of the whole humanity.”#34

The response of the local church should not be limited only to acts of social assistance and the promotion of justice through legislation. Rather it should be a response motivated by a respect for the dignity of every migrant.

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“To this end it is important that communities do not think that they have completed their duty to migrants simply by performing acts of fraternal assistance or even by supporting legislation aimed at giving them their due place in society while respecting their identity as foreigners. Christians must in fact promote an authentic culture of welcome capable of accepting the truly human values of the immigrants over and above any difficulties caused by living together with persons who are different.”#39

Attention to the migrants in faith communities needs to be enriched by discovering and appreciating the positive components of their culture and their ways of living the Christian experience. *“Pastoral work among migrants thus becomes a service of the Church for the faithful whose language or culture is different from those of the host country, while at the same time it ensures that*

the foreign communities make their own contribution to the construction of a Church that must be a sign and instrument of unity with the prospect of a renewed humanity.”#89

The faith-inspired response to the newcomers should include long range and all encompassing programs over and above any response directed towards their immediate needs. “But also important are acts of welcome in their full sense, which aim at the integration and self-sufficiency of the immigrant. Let us remember in particular the commitment undertaken for family unification, education of children, housing, work, associations, promotion of civil rights and migrants' various ways of participation in their host society.”#43

Pastoral attention to the newcomers is an integral part of a new evangelization: a challenge so needed in today's individualistic society. *“In religious instruction and catechesis suitable means must be found to create in the Christian conscience a sense of welcome, especially for the poorest and outcasts as migrants often are. This welcome is fully based on love for Christ, in the certainty that good done out of love of God to one's neighbour, especially the most needy, is done to Him.”#41*

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1 – Strangers no Longer-Together on the Journey of Hope, A Pastoral letter Concerning Migration from the Bishop Conferences of Mexico and the United States.

With this bilingual pastoral letter the bishops of both countries pledge common initiatives to promote solidarity. They recognize the phenomenon of migration as a sign of the times that calls for creative ways of new evangelization. They earnestly appeal to government leaders and law makers of both countries to recognize and protect the rights of immigrants, while supporting the creation of needed conditions for worthy living in their homeland. They shared reflections and comment on the common history of migration and shared faith, the Catholic social teaching, and the pastoral and public policy's challenges and responses. The document concludes with a useful list of definitions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Faith And Primary Religiosity

The religious experience of the Latinos is characterized by sensibility to Divine Presence that is at the very heart of celebrations and fundamental issues of human living.

Over and above the well organized religious expressions and celebrations necessary in a parish community, it is paramount to underline faith as a life giving prerequisite to all celebrations. We could call this faith a “primary religiosity.”

“When we speak of primary religiosity we refer to that kind of belief and sensibility to ‘what is beyond’. This sensibility is transmitted down through history from fathers to children in a way that is, as it were, spontaneous and natural... This primary religiousness reveals itself as well in a ritualism and symbolism which lie just under the surface of every liturgical expression of worship toward the divine, whether religious, expiatory, contemplative, festive or charismatic.”¹

This “primary religiosity” animates the experiences of the Hispanics and it does so at the level which is almost always unconscious. It is not only at the heart of sacred celebrations but also supports a meaningful outlook on the fundamental issues of human life: the origins and development of life cycles, the mystery of life and death and what comes after death.

This primary religiosity should not be mistakenly identified with the false and irreverent cult of God called superstition. Superstition implies a turning towards powers and impersonal magic forces. With its magic procedure, superstition simply contradicts the attitude of faith, that gift from God which supports and nourishes a complete abandonment to His provident designs. Apart from individual cases, present in all cultures, superstition is not frequent in the Hispanic world. Mexican migrants feel a deep guilt if they turn to such practices in desperate instances. Superstition in all its various expressions is more frequent among those who come from small villages with limited religious instruction.

Hispanics include their present history among the fundamental issues of human life. Their primary religiosity or foundational faith motivates those religious traditions which the majority of them celebrate voluntarily and transmit from generation to generation.

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“The foundational faith expressions of a people are ritual, symbolic response to their history and contemporary situation. These expressions embody the deepest identity of the people, their collective souls. They are the people’s means of encountering God who accompanies them during times of mourning and joy, tears and laughter, rejection and welcome, hope and despair, death and life.”²

Consequently, the faith of the Hispanics, particularly Mexicans, is based on the personal rather than on the cognitive experience of God. The grounding and founding character of *experiencia* can not be underestimated in the Hispanic world.

Faith and life are inseparable. It is our constant effort as religious leaders to implement this personal experience of God in our faithful. For Hispanics all this is natural, probably also because they lacked a structured catechetical formation. Faith is not primarily a belief in truths which have been revealed to us by the Lord through Holy Scripture and Tradition. Rather, it is the way we come to the knowledge of God as God, our creator and saviour. ‘Aman’ is the Hebrew word for faith and always indicates a personal relationship. Thus, our acceptance of something as true is really the acceptance of the person who proposes it for belief.

We could even say that Hispanics experience a personal intimacy with God who, as we will see, guides providentially all facets of their life. *“Personal intimacy with God is another constant in the Mexican-American’s faith. It takes expression in a variety of ways. Many of the ordinary sayings of daily life are a sign of it: Si Dios quiere (If God wills); Hagase la Voluntad de Dios (God’s will be done); Que Dios te ayude (May God help you); Adios (Leave it to God); El hombre propone y Dios dispone (Man proposes, God disposes).”³*

The faith of the Mexican migrant is experienced, like that of the chosen people, in a corporate context. The faith of each person is inserted into the faith of the community. It is the Church which believes, and each individual in it.

The individuals believes and so the Church believes through them. The believer does not stand alone: he/she is a member of the living community that experiences a communal expression of faith.

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The expression of faith of each community embraces the most significant events of one’s life. Hispanics generally do not experience significant events such as birth, coming of age, sickness, and death as happenings that touch only the individuals directly involved. These moments are lived out intensely in the context of the family, just as the joyful events, such as Baptism and First Communion. They bring family together, so the sickness or death of one member of the immediate or extended family affects all its members.

The faith of the Mexican migrants, in particular, is similar to that of the Israelites. In general Mexicans have a sparse involvement in political life, although the most populous cities have seen a gradual active participation the last twenty years. The fate of the chosen people was left in the hands of their leaders. Their destiny was led by a powerful and faithful God, who would deliver Judah from political crisis. Like the Israelites, the Hispanics also integrate into their community of faith the living experience of discovering the presence of a faithful God in all their struggles.

Sinfulness is also a reality that Hispanics acknowledge with sincerity and humility. Theirs is not a fate-filled attitude, as if their freedom as children of God could ever be an unreachable dream. The love and mercy of a faithful God gives hope and salvation. *“Human limitations and human weakness are accepted with the knowledge that if man falls, God is merciful...This concept is not necessarily licentious, as some people might think. A sincere effort is made to live the ideal, yet when one falls, one knows that God is merciful.”⁴*

As we will reflect later on, Hispanics express their faith in religious celebrations that accompany many conflicting experiences of their life. All of them, happy or sad, are meaningful and worth living and celebrating because they are an intrinsic part of their existence, and existence is a gift of God.

“For them (Hispanics), life is basically a gift. Because it is from the Creator, it is a mystery. It is to be lived to the fullest because it is a gift from Him who gives life and who is God. Life is gradually unfolding. The people accept the totality of life, both joy and suffering, for to live is to know conflict and to experience the tension of being pulled in different directions by many forces. Yet these tensions are good, reflecting a fundamental acceptance by the Latino-American mind. Life is a gift from God, and from this belief everything else follows and develops.”

The Hispanic people are profoundly religious in the sense of living out a personal relationship with their God who is the source of life and to whom they return.”⁵

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Finally, in the pastoral effort of integrating Hispanic migrants in the parish community, it is critical to recognize their faith and culture. Only by faith the migrants are helped to recognize the values of both themselves and their families. And by faith they are motivated to reach out to other people, and to appreciate the ethnic differences.

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1 – The Second way-Hispanic Ministry and the Evangelization of Cultures, Figueroa Deck Allan, P.56.

This work revolves around two core elements of Hispanic Ministry: 1) the need to recognize in a positive way the religious expressions and ethos of the mestizo Hispanics, 2) the need to strive for the conversion of core values of the Western world. While citing some of the efforts currently going on, the author clearly points the way to the challenging task still ahead of us: the building of a Church of the Americas. From an analysis of very particular and well defined local situation, the author arrives at what is probably the most universal challenge of today's world: the evangelization of the materialistic-individualistic cultures of the Western world, questioned by the presence of Hispanic migrants.

2 – Mestizo Worship – a Pastoral approach to liturgical Ministry, Elizondo V. & Motovina T., P. 3.

The book examines Mexican American foundational faith expressions – particularly the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe – as a sacred encounter with the God who accompanies the people in their historical and contemporary experiences. While mostly applicable to ministry with Mexican American and other Latino migrants, the work offers helpful insights also to everyone who celebrates the sacred in communities with worship-traditions different from their own. These communities provide a graced opportunity for liturgists and other pastoral agents to encounter Christ in the faith expressions of the people they serve.

3 – Ibidem, p. 13.

4 – Christianity and Culture, Elizondo, V. P. 165

God's plan of salvation for humanity unfolds gradually and mysteriously with the passage of time. The confluence of civilizations, in which one culture encounters another, is part of this plan. The humanism of the people of Latin America – in which the center of life is the person living in community where profound unity exists between life and religion – was inherited from both their European and their indigenous forefathers. Latino contemporary religious practices briefly explained – Our Lady of Guadalupe, Las Posadas, Nochebuena, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, pilgrimages - are privileged and effective opportunities for evangelization and catechesis.

5 – Ibidem, P. 158. V. P.165

CHAPTER FIVE

Popular Religiosity and Celebrations

- 1) The integral worship consists in the blending of official forms of worship and popular religiosity. Symbols and gestures involve the whole human being.
- 2) Popular piety of Mexican American is a blending of ancestral culture and Christian pre-tridentine message rich of symbols and rite.

It is my deep conviction that the Hispanic presence may enrich every faith community with most of their popular religiosity, piety, and celebrations.

This section is divided into two parts. First I will briefly present some reflections about popular celebrations and popular religiosity for a better understanding. Then we will consider how piety and popular celebrations are interpreted and lived by the Hispanics in their specific culture.

Popular Religiosity

Popular religiosity or piety could be defined as a set of spiritual attitudes and cultic expressions which are variously connected with the liturgy. It is a concrete form of genuine religion, even if its expressions could at times be judged lacking in sound doctrine and ecclesiastic discipline.

Most liturgists agree that the integral worship of the Church consists of both the official and the popular forms of prayer. In fact the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy teaches that *“spiritual life is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy.”*#12

“Popular devotions of the Christian people, provided they conform to the laws and the norms of the Church, are to be highly recommended.”#13

The official form of worship, especially when no attempt has been made to inculturate it, could become cold and distant. Liturgists who write about

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popular religiosity and piety are unanimous in affirming the need of a reciprocal relationship between liturgy and popular celebrations. *“We should encourage a mutual and enriching exchange between the liturgy and popular devotion, so that the yearning expressed in prayer and charism, which is present in our country today, may be channelled with clarity and prudence. On the other hand, popular religiosity, with its wealth of symbols and expressions, can share its creative dynamism with the liturgy.”*#37

Popular religiosity or piety could be classified under four categories:

- a) devotions to Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints in the form of pilgrimages, patronal feasts, processions, popular devotions, novenas,
- b) the rites related to the liturgical year,
- c) traditional practices in conjunction with the celebration of the sacraments,
- d) institutions and religious objects connected with various forms of popular piety.

Popular piety, with its celebrations, encompasses a harmonious fusing of the complex human and spiritual components of every individual. This fusion is achieved through intuition, symbols, inter-relationships, emblems and movements. Our Catholic celebrations are rich with symbols and gestures that inspire the heart, nourish the imagination and involve the whole person in the experience of a divine presence. We need to see, to touch, to smell. We could call these celebrations an anthropomorphic experience. Popular piety is rich with such experiences. In fact, all language about God must be necessarily anthropomorphic, inasmuch as it must be human language.

Furthermore, the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God has consecrated all human celebrations. Beyond the general reason for anthropomorphic language, there is a specifically Christian reason for an enthusiastic use of it: our central confession that God's supreme self disclosure has come to us in a human being, Jesus of Nazareth.

All forms of celebrations, although different in their cultural expressions, are nevertheless a manifestation of an instinctive Christian insight, characteristic of all faith-filled communities. We acknowledge the presence of the Spirit leading both the leadership and the faithful people in the Church.

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*"If the infallible, 'faithful' intuitions of the Christian people can be expressed only through culturally given means, then it is possible and very likely that different Christian communities can communicate the same intuition through different cultural means. It is in this context, and as a consequence of what we have been discussing, that popular Catholicism is an authentic expression of fundamental, infallible intuitions of Christianity. Popular Catholicism is indeed a bearer of the sensus fidelium."*¹

The participation and the integration of migrants in a parish community must be a pastoral concern for all its leaders. A well thought out and decorously celebrated popular religiosity is a powerful and effective means in reaching such integration.

Popular piety, too, deserves particular attention as it is characteristic of many migrant communities. Besides recognizing that *"when it is well oriented, above all by a pedagogy of evangelization, it is rich in values (EN 48), we must also bear in mind that for many migrants it is a fundamental link with their Church of origin and with their ways of understanding and living the faith. Here it is a question of putting into action an in-depth work of evangelization and of enabling the local Catholic community to know and appreciate certain forms of devotion of migrants and thus to understand them. From this union of spirit a more participated liturgy can also develop, one that is better integrated and spiritually richer."*²

Popular Piety of Mexican American

Popular religion is present in the Latino world. It is one of the few core elements shared by all Latino cultural groups. Variations do exist, depending on the unique cultural history of each community, but some basic structures and symbols are commonly shared.

The hesitancy in accepting Hispanics in the community of faith and even the doubt about the orthodoxy of their religious behaviour can be abated by the knowledge of their history and a better understanding of their multi-faceted culture.

The Spanish effort of evangelizing the aboriginal peoples was facilitated by the well grounded, natural experience they had of their gods and goddesses, giving meaning to their everyday life. The faith of Mexican migrants is the harmony between their ancestral culture and the Christian message. The indigenous peoples before the time of Christianity lived an elemental sense of the sacred.

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Life for the indigenous peoples was essentially religious. The remarkable achievement of Spanish evangelization was the transfer of this sense of the sacred to Catholic beliefs and Catholic symbols. With the conquest, the religious quality became Christian.

The standard norms for measuring the religious commitment of Catholics in post-tridentine Catholicism - attendance at Sunday Mass, frequent reception of Holy Communion, and involvement in the life of the parish - were not exactly relevant to the majority of Mexican Catholics for most of their history, especially among those living in rural areas.

The way natives were evangelized by the Spanish missionaries shaped both their belief and their celebrations. First of all it is paramount to notice that the religion brought to the Americas was not Roman Catholicism, but Western Christianity: *"it was not the Church of anti-Protestant polemics but the religion that had sustained the seven centuries of the Spanish 'Reconquista'. This Christianity, therefore, was medieval and pre-Tridentine, and it was planted in the Americas approximately two generations before Trent's opening session."*³

Most of the Spaniards who came to the Americas were people from the villages. Even the missionaries, though trained in theology, evangelized the newly conquered lands not because of their theological expertise rather because of their ability to communicate with common folk.

*"Spaniards communicated their faith through symbols and rite, through devotions and liturgical practices... The teaching of the gospel did not usually occur through the spoken, magisterial word, but through the symbolic, 'performative' word."*⁴

Performative word or story telling will impress in the mind of the faithful basic religious and moral truths and help remember. Let us also keep in mind the medieval fascination with saints, shrines, relics, images, and miracles.

Clearly the Mexican American religious traditions were shaped by their indigenous heritage as well as by the influence of Spanish and later American Catholicism. Because of these multiple influences, some who minister to Mexican Americans could wonder how these religious traditions are really Catholic. The following reflections will assist the leaders in the communities of

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faith in their effort of facilitating and organizing the popular celebrations our Mexican migrants offer.

Signs, expressed through senses, movements and imagination are necessary means for the communication that makes the person who he/she is. Nevertheless they are not enough for being deeply in touch with one's personal existence and the One who providentially leads it.

*"Communication reaches beyond gestures bodily contact, or intellect to enter into the world of 'symbols' and 'rituals.' For the Latin-American people ritual becomes a profound means of expression, for symbols communicate those aspects of human reality which are beyond the power of ordinary words. Man enters into a greater reality that goes beyond words to express what they cannot express. This is the whole dimension of the 'infinite' part of life."*⁵

Hispanics do not discard the celebration of the Eucharist nor the other sacraments. Churches witness a large participation on Sunday and long lines of penitents await their turn for Reconciliation. Yet what is foreign in their culture is the idea of a structured parish as we come to accept it in our Catholic practice. Though seeking the sacraments as a natural expression of faith, many Hispanics would not make the hard and fast distinction between the Church's liturgy and the popular devotions - for them both are prayer. We must remember, though, that it was popular religious practice that sustained the Christian faith of generations in Latin America - in large part without the direct involvement of the officially sanctioned ministers of the Church.

Mexican migrants love to celebrate as a people, a trait characteristic of the Israelites as evidenced in Numbers and Leviticus. In such celebrations one experiences both a sense of selfhood and of belonging. In the description of the various ways of celebrating sacrifices and remembrance offerings the Israelites are invited to participate as assembly. They celebrate with pride and gratitude for being a nation chosen by the God of the Patriarchs. In their assemblies they renew as a people their commitment to living the Covenant.

After speaking about the importance of Mary and the saints in the cultural context of Hispanic spirituality, the Bishops of United States describe popular religion as the place where spirituality is incarnated, a home of living relationships, a family, a community.

For this reason Mexican American popular Catholicism has its principal focus in the home, the family, and in the neighbourhood rather than in the geographical parish.

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Within this cultural setting it is not surprising that many religious expressions and celebrations were entrusted to the women, particularly grandmothers, for a continuation in the community. In our days of widespread feminism this aspect may inspire a correct understanding of the dignity and specific role of women in the Church. *"Religion and religious customs were largely handed on from one generation to another by the women of the household. It is the women who pray and function in many ways as the 'domestic priests' of Hispanic culture. It is they who intercede for the family in their prayers at the altarcito in the home; it is they who often lead the family in prayers."*⁶

Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, declared "Apostle of Catechism" by Pope John Paul II, was convinced that faith is transmitted mostly through parents, particularly mothers, and is maintained inseparably joined with the mother tongue, especially in the poor person who was not able to obtain a formal education. *"A very apt element in the preservation of faith is exactly the preservation of the language of origin. This is not the place to investigate what may be its mysterious reason, but*

*daily experience tells us that as long as an individual, a family, or a whole community preserves its own language, it will not likely lose its own faith."*⁷

Most of the Hispanic popular celebrations are lived within the context of the solemnities that enrich the Christian liturgy. It is an experience that closely impacts the imagination and the senses in every day living. *"The great feasts of the Church not only commemorate for the Mexican Americans the wonders of God's love and mercy; no, they bring the great events of Christ's life and of his saints to the very door of their hearts. In their vivid imagination Christ, lying in the cold manger of Bethlehem, and hanging bruised and bleeding on the Cross, is present before them: they see Him; they bear Him; they touch Him; they speak to Him."*⁸

*"These popular religious practices thus suggest a profoundly sacramental world-view that rejects any clear separation between the symbolic and the real, or between the 'sign' and the 'signified;' what the symbol represents is in fact experienced as 'truly' present in and through that symbol. The dramatic re-enactment of the Vias Crucis, for instance, makes really present, here and now, the real Via Crucis, the real Jesus Christ. In and through the dramatic action, He enters into a real relationship with us, and we with Him."*⁹

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To some extent what has been said of the Mexicans can be said also of other Hispanic immigrants, with some minor differences. Popular celebrations need to be approached with patience and wisdom: this is true for any ethnic group. This effort in the power of the Spirit will facilitate the evangelization that is at the heart of every community of faith, shaping into Christianity even culture itself. Nevertheless, as Catholics in a multicultural parish environment, we are called to cherish all popular faith expressions as a precious gift to the Church. *“On this point, the Hispanic Church has much to contribute to the entire community of believers. The popular expressions of faith are the most beloved treasure of the people. They are also concrete manifestations of the Church’s tradition as it has been interiorized in the heart of the faithful by the Spirit. These expressions begin to accomplish the goal of evangelization as the transformation not only of human hearts and the various strata of society, but even culture itself.”*¹⁰

Chapter Five Notes

1 – Tradition and Popular Religion, Espin, p. 68.

The author insists on the legitimacy of popular religion as a vehicle for the *sensus fidelium* and, as a consequence, as a valid and necessary area of theological reflection. Popular religion and the *sensus fidelium*, with their limitations, are expressions of popular Catholicism. The author effectively reminds the reader on the long history of popular Catholicism as bearer of an old tradition. Its roots are planted in the medieval type of Christianity that preceded the Council of Trent and the Reformation. It is too complex in its genesis, contents, and social roles within the sacred worldview and histories of the Amerindian, African, and mestizo peoples of Mesoamerica and the Antilles. It has defied all efforts to destroy it, and has shown extraordinary adaptability. It conveys a prophetic hope that the present is not the last word in Church’s history.

2 – Erga Migrants Caritas Christi, # 46.

3 – Tradition and Popular Religion, p. 117.

4 – Ibidem, p. 119.

5 – Christianity and Culture, Elizondo, V. P. 167.

6 – Primero Dios-Hispanic Liturgical Resources, Francis, M & Perez Rodriguez, p.11.

This work offers resources to all who minister liturgically within the Hispanic community. More than simply a source of information for integrating popular religious practices within the liturgy, the book promotes an attitude of dialogue between and respect for the “official liturgy” and the rites of the people. This book is the result of a dialogue between mainstream United States Catholic culture and Hispanic culture as it is lived in North America. It arises from the conviction that effective liturgical ministry within the Hispanic community must take into account the traditional way in which Hispanics have approached liturgy and prayer through the practices of popular religion.

7 – A Living Voice, Scalabrini J.B., p. 413

8 – Mestizo Worship – A Pastoral Approach to Liturgical Ministry, Elizondo, V. & Matovina, T. , p. 71.

This book examines Mexican American foundational expressions of faith, particularly Our Lady of Guadalupe, as a sacred encounter with the God who accompanies the people in their historical and contemporary experience. While immediately applicable to ministry with Mexican Americans and other Latinos, this volume also offers helpful insights for anyone who celebrates the sacred in communities with worship traditions different from their own. Such communities provide a graced opportunity for liturgists to encounter Christ in the faith expressions of the people they serve.

9 – Parish Ministry in a Hispanic Community, Dahm, C., p. 124.

This work provides a picture of the parish community of St. Pious V in Chicago not unlike increasing number of others. It describes immigrants arrived most recently and, consequently, less influenced by American culture. Although a study of a predominantly Mexican migrant parish, the work addresses parishes with Mexican migrants as a minority. It reflects the challenges of their history, their religious and cultural strengths. This work, that relates experiences from the literature about Hispanic ministry, is more about ministry than about Hispanic theology on Mexican popular religiosity.

10 – Mestizo Worship, p. 75.

CHAPTER SIX

Typical Hispanic Celebrations

Having presented a brief description of the nature of popular faith expressions found in the Church in general and their important value in the Hispanic culture, we will now examine a detailed description of some typical Hispanic popular celebrations, particularly among Mexican Americans.

Our Lady of Guadalupe.

I vividly remember participating in a Lenten retreat organized by the Spanish community of a suburban parish in Chicago in March of 1996. Among the various sketches the organizers presented the parable of the Prodigal Son. When the younger son decides to leave home his mother also begs him not to abandon his elderly father. When finally the young lad returns home he is embraced by the mother, who makes him wear a colourful sweater prepared for him during his pain-filled absence. She was certain her son would return.

Mexican Migrants have a natural sense of the *femininity* of God. This intuition is both expressed and nourished by the devotion of Our Lady of Guadalupe particularly within the family's ties. It is possible to refer to God as tender, compassionate, accepting, supportive and forgiving. It is possible and necessary to experience God as protector, committed to the liberation and holiness of his people.

At the outset let us remember that such devotion has received an official recognition by the Church. Our Lady of Guadalupe is venerated as the "Queen of the Americas."

Even after centuries of history, our origins still shape our world views and influence us in choosing values today. We could call them the DNA of our culture. This is particularly true when origins have been fashioned by deep, life encompassing religious customs.

**For today's Hispanics, Our Lady of Guadalupe is a vital link
between their Indian religious past and the Christian way of life.**

She is the medium through whom the Mexican people see the importance of

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God's presence of their Atzeza background and at the same time they are able to appreciate the new Christian revelation that builds upon this same ancestry.

The apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe was, in the words of Virgilio Elizondo "a stroke of genius on the part of God who works through natural causes." It was a powerful uplift to the evangelizing work of the Franciscan missionaries. Our Lady became the true missionary, harmonizing Christian truths and Indian Atzeza's beliefs, as we can observe from the details of her image.

*"She appeared on the site of the Virgin mother goddess, Tonantzin; this was already a pilgrimage site of the Indians to the mother goddess of the god of new life. The Virgin appeared as a young mestiza who was greater than the god of the Indians. She was greater than the sun god because she hid the sun god and around her the sun's rays appeared. She was greater than the moon god because she stood upon the moon and yet she herself was not a god or a goddess because she had her head down in a position of humility. Greater than their gods, she was not a god. She was in an Indian position of pointing to another who is to come; she was not 'the' one. She wore a maternity sash (in Spanish, *está en cinta*), a little black band that indicated that she was a mother. This young maiden, a mestiza and mother, was a beautiful combination of the Spanish and the 'Indigena;' greater than all their gods, she pointed to what was to come."*¹

The intimate relationship with her son, Jesus, endows her with divine wisdom, mercy and power for the Mexican believer. She reveals to them the feminine face of God, as described by the Latin American bishops: "Having firmly and lucidly decided to evangelize in depth, to go to the very roots of our people and their culture, the Church turns to Mary...with her we are dealing with a feminine presence that creates the family atmosphere, receptivity, love and respect for life; a sacramental presence of the maternal features of God; and a reality so deeply human and holy that it evokes from believers supplications rooted in tenderness, suffering and hope."²

As we have already mentioned, women are at the very heart of religious experience in the Hispanic culture, of which the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe has a privileged place. This specific role gives them a position of control in a world frequently dominated by machismo.

**Latino Catholicism has a 'matriarchal core',
in that Latino women consistently exercised autonomous
authority in the devotional life of their people.**

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Focusing more specifically on the contemporary Mexican American women, their participation in the of devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe is a source of empowerment.

The Posadas

Three years ago I had the opportunity to participate in a Posada at Purepero, a small town in the Mexican state of Michoacan, during the novena before Christmas. I felt welcomed among the men, women and children as we walked through the narrow streets. We were following two residents dressed as Mary and Joseph, and a donkey. The distinguished pair would stop at various houses and sing a popular tune, begging to be welcomed, so that Mary could have a place to give birth to her Child. They are turned down many times till they finally reach the parish church and are welcomed in with joyful singing and applause. The same enactment is faithfully celebrated in most parishes having a large Hispanic community.

The “posada” literally means “inn.” The celebration includes “walking” with the hope of finding asylum and welcome. The shepherds, rejected by society, walked at night to find the light. Mary and Joseph walked to Bethlehem to find first rejection and finally a place for the birth of the Saviour.

Such a deeply felt celebration proclaims a significant message: the welcoming of the stranger in our midst should be motivated by living Christian assumptions: *“The rite centered on two experiences that bring out key themes of the gospel proclamation: the ‘rejection’ of the poor, nameless couple from the ‘inferior’ region of Galilee, and the ‘joy’ that comes to those who open the door of their home and heart to shelter and welcome these rejected ones because they recognize them for what they truly are, God’s chosen people.”*³

These central experiences are to be repeated in the public life of Jesus. He comes from the unknown town of Nazareth in the despised region of Galilee. He experiences both the pain and the rejection by those who judge themselves superior and the joy of being accepted and welcomed by his own.

The “posada” is the religious re-enactment of the experience off so many Hispanic migrants today. They are on pilgrimage toward a better life for themselves and their families.

But, like Joseph and Mary, they do not give up. They follow the star. The “posada” is a living symbol of a living faith. The “posada” is an invaluable

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tradition that provides catechetical formation in children and reflects important Mexican cultural values: hospitality, deep faith, and family

Via Crucis

The Via Crucis (Stations of the Cross) is an expression of a religious devotion cherished and celebrated for many centuries. Its redeeming and cleansing power has nourished the spiritual growth of the faithful.

*“One of the most traditional and popular devotions in the Christian world is the Stations of the Cross. Ancient tradition tells us that after Jesus’ Ascension, Mary was the first to retrace the steps of her son’s passion and death. The church has never required dogmatic assent to this belief; but every generation of Christians, driven by some instinct of faith, has tried to retrace the steps of Jesus to Calvary, discovering that He continues to journey with us in our own passion and way of the cross. In Him our own Calvary takes on new meaning.”*⁴

In many churches and homes throughout the Hispanic world the entire passion of Jesus is expressed through numerous and well-known sculptures and paintings of the flagellation, the crowning with thorns, the deposition from the cross and burial. Though many of these statues and paintings may have true artistic value in themselves, the religious value is usually conveyed not by the artistic worth, but by the work’s ability to elicit feelings of solidarity and compassion with the suffering Christ.

In the celebration of the Via Crucis, Hispanics relive the compassion of the crucified God that is always expected from his followers. When confronted with Scripture and Tradition, this popular celebration can claim to witness to Revelation and, therefore, to communicate the faith-full intuition of the *sensus fidelium*. Latino popular Catholicism looks to Jesus as the suffering human through whom God may be definitively sensed. The victimized Jesus is the vehicle through which God reaches and touches humankind, and through which humankind may somehow reach and touch God. In Jesus, our people sense that God really is caring, supportive, and in solidarity with their suffering and pain.

In their struggle to integrate into a new culture, a new way of thinking and living, Hispanics need to be comforted and consoled by a vivid presentation of a suffering Christ, who realistically shares with them the same experience.

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With the presentation of Jesus' passion and death in a very dramatic and realistic way, the Mexican people identify, relate and associate with Him. The inevitability of Jesus' suffering and death is a proof of his love and it has a purpose, it is not a fate. So is the experience of Mexican migrants; *"The suffering Christ is important to Hispanics because He is the sign that God suffers with us. An emaciated Christ is the sign that God is with those who hunger. A flagellated Christ is the sign that God is with those who must bear the stripes of an unjust society. Blood and suffering have long been the lot of the impoverished masses in Latin America."*⁵

The dramatic accent on the sufferings of Jesus could convey the suspicion that the good news of Jesus' resurrection and His living presence in the Church is foreign to the Hispanic devotion. Nothing is farther from the truth. Indeed their emphasis in Holy Week is on Good Friday rather than on Easter; on the Cross and not the empty tomb. However, any familiarity with the Latino religious universe would show that the people pray to and deal with Jesus as a living person. Clearly, for the people, Jesus of Nazareth is alive today. He is the divine Christ, and that makes his innocent suffering all the more dramatic. In His passion and death He is in solidarity with all throughout history who have also innocently suffered at the hands of evildoers. It seems that Latino faith intuitively senses the humanity of Jesus. It senses his resurrection as an intuition that He is alive now.

As its words suggest, the Via Crucis has sensual, collective and spiritual dimensions, but it does not separate those dimensions from the concrete realities of life.

Many who participate to this live presentation of the supreme proof of God's infinite love testify to the profound impact they experience. We are reliving that moment, which is actually happening now.

The representation of Simon of Cyrene helping Jesus carry His cross has particular significance for young migrants, seeking comfort in their struggle to integrate in the welcoming country. *"Moreover, in Simon we see that our burden is not useless because we are helping Jesus. We know that what appears absurd to the world is actually salvific to us. United with the cross of Jesus, our present suffering will be a part of the salvation of our people in the Americas. That gives us courage, strength, and dignity to keep moving toward the new life we are seeking and that we know we shall attain with God's help."*⁶

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Many women also testify that the Via Crucis gives them strength, knowing that Mary and her contemporaries also felt helpless and could not stop Christ's pain. The Via Crucis is something lived in the barrio. The Virgin Mary cried for her Son and now the mothers cry for their sons who use drugs and are in gangs. It is real."

In the brief presentation of faith lived and celebrated by Hispanics, we come to understand that the individual has meaning and value only because he relates to the community. Self worth and life strictly depend upon this relationship. The celebration of the Via Crucis keeps alive the presence of Christ who nourishes the life giving community.

*"...if a loved one is left to die alone or is forgotten, he or she truly dies. If Christ is left to die alone, as a mere individual, his life is truly taken from Him; without the living relationships that have made Him who he is, he is dead. Indeed, this is precisely what the apostles do when they abandon him; they themselves become silent accomplices in Jesus' assassination. And this is why the Mexican American must accompany Jesus on the way to Calvary; this act of accompaniment is the most fundamental affirmation of our belief in the reality and truth of Christ's life."*⁷

El Día de los Muertos (The day of the deceased)

Some years ago a very poor section at the outskirts of Guadalajara was entrusted to the pastoral care of the Scalabrinian community. I remember one morning a well known member of the barrio died after a short illness. His body was laid out in the living room of his house surrounded by candles and flowers. The visitation of women dressed in black continued all day. Later in the afternoon all the children of the local school lined up, each with a flower in hand and processed in front of the deceased and his family, devoutly dropping flowers at his feet. The faith-filled, prayerful and serene resignation shown by all impressed me profoundly. Death is a fact of life, not a dreadful experience. *"The final great feast of the liturgical year for the Spanish speaking is the feast of All Souls. Death is a very solemn moment: it is the supreme moment of life. The people believe that life here is but one of the stages in the totality of existence. When life on this earth is finished, personal relationships do not end; they continue unto eternity. The people express by their lives a deep appreciation of the Communion of Saints."*⁸

The way Hispanics observe this event could cause suspicion and even rejection. The joyful and colourful celebration, the presentation of skulls in var-

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ious shapes and forms, the sharing of foods, all seems rather bizarre and even pagan. Hopefully the following reflections will help bring understanding and appreciation for this event.

First of all, it is critical to understand how Hispanics perceive death within their human experience, a concept rather foreign to our individualistic thinking. Mexican American popular celebrations thus reflect an understanding of death not as the opposite of life but an intrinsic part of it. The enemy of life is not death but “individual life.” The opposite of life is not death but life in isolation from loving relationships, for it is precisely those relationships that give birth to the individual self and continue to give life to the person.

Consequently, the celebration of “El Dia de los Muertos” spontaneously brings forth a deeply felt need to keep alive the memory of the deceased and their presence within the community.

Traditions such as the “Día de los Muertos” are essentials for inviting the past into the present and affirming the continuing participation of ancestors in our every day life.

“It is important to remind ourselves that for the Mexican American personal life is always, by definition, inter-personal life. Since the person is always, by definition, a person-in-relationship, ‘life’ is always life in common. To affirm life is to affirm communion. Conversely, ‘death’ is, by definition, the abrogation of relationship, or the destruction of community. Thus, although an individual may die physically, he or she may really remain alive insofar as the relationships that define him or her remain in force. Indeed, in Mexican American culture, the life of the autonomous, ‘self-made’ individual is not life at all, but a form of death.”⁹

The celebration of the Día de los Muertos is characterized by the display and eating of various foods. It could give the impression of a meaningless pagan ritual. Instead, in the community’s spirit that keeps the deceased alive food takes an important and meaningful role.

“Human festivity and solidarity are naturally associated with foods. They serve as a way of bringing about ‘communion’ in its most basic meaning. From the Latin cum munire (cum=with, munire = to strengthen), the word communion suggests that eating together is a way of nourishing not only the body but

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also one’s human identity as a familiar member within a particular culture. For this reason tradition is crucial. Eating certain food at certain times of the year helps join those at table to each other and to their culture. It also reaffirms a bond with ancestors, both those long dead and the recently deceased, who once prepared the same holiday dishes. The link to these ancestors through food is sacred. It naturally gives rise to memories and stories of holidays past and of people who made them so special.”¹⁰

In our hedonistic society, where beauty and youth are the ideal, the celebration of the “Día de los muertos” brings about a much needed counter-cultural message. It sends a powerful reminder of our human frailty in a colourful and festive way. In particular the icon of the skeleton represents one’s own mortality and creates an inevitable intimacy with death, an intimacy that could be approachable and even lovable.

As a ritual that honours and interacts with the dead in a familiar and joyful way, the tradition challenges a society that silences the dead shortly after a funeral.

Western culture encloses death within gated cemeteries devoid of colour and merry-making. As Fr. Greg Bauman points out.

“In Anglo culture an altar for the dead seems bizarre, because we divorce ourselves from the fact we die. We try to put it off in the corner and only face it when we have to. The Latin culture is not afraid of death. When you age you do not have to be ashamed. The ‘Día de los Muertos’ does not replicate patterns of exclusion. With its colour, humour, and friendly spirit, the rite invites all people to approach death and the “other” without fear. The silence of death and the pain of exclusion are challenged in the festivity of this public ritual of mourning.”¹¹

In Mexico and in Latin America the dead are not embalmed but interred within twenty-four hours of death. The family of the deceased has little time to gather for prayer and expression of condolences. Consequently, the grieving process continues after burial through a novena of prayers, usually in the home of the deceased. The family lays out a small altar with the picture of the deceased amid candles, flowers, and some personal effects. Friends gather in prayer, usually the Rosary, giving the mourning family the support of their faith.

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Quinceañeras

Mexicans celebrate in a very special way the fifteenth birthday of young girls, called “quinceañeras.” The origins of such a celebration is still very much debated. In general it is identified as both the religious and social celebration of a young girl’s rite of transition to maturity, common in many cultures.

The celebration and its meaning have changed during the years among the Mexican immigrants. It is seen as an opportunity for reasserting the young girls’ Mexican identity, their maturity as women, to identify them as favored children of God, having Our Lady of Guadalupe as their model and ideal.

Together with the whole community of relatives and young friends, the young woman renews her baptismal vows, consecrates herself to Jesus and his mother, and commits herself to serve the community. Many are the gifts offered by the “padrinos”, and blessed by the presiding priest, such as a Bible, rosary, prayer book, ring, necklace, bracelet, and earrings. At the end of the celebration the young lady offers prayers and a bouquet of flowers at the altar of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The celebration offers a great opportunity for evangelization since many young people participate in it chosen by the young lady, an opportunity to guide them towards service, to involve them in different ministries in the church, to nourish greater self esteem and reaffirm the commitment embraced with Confirmation.

Sacramentals

To complete the description of the most important popular celebrations, I will add a summary of other devotions and religious practices common among Hispanics.

Ash Wednesday

The beginning of Lent sees throngs of Hispanics devoutly receiving ashes. Their huge numbers necessitate a rigidly regulated schedule to accommodate everyone, adults and children. For them, it is a ceremony as significant as the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Via Crucis. Besides the obvious connotation of this rite with the spirit of penance that characterizes the Lenten Season, Hispanics receive ashes for other reasons, namely their unique ancestral connection with the earth, symbolized by the ashes. “On Ash

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Wednesday Mexican Americans renew their cultic communion with mother earth. For them the earth has always been sacred and they retain a fundamental identity with it. The earth supports and regenerates life; it ‘is’ life. Living things - plants, animals, humans - come from the earth and fade back into it when they die. And the earth brings forth new life.”¹²

The self-identity of Hispanics is not so much grounded in possessions and riches, but rather on the parcel of earth they share, a source of wholeness and individuality. “*Their portion of the world’s surface is their fundamental rooting in life, their core identity. Their ancestors came from it and returned to it. It has given them life, nourishment, shelter, clothing, a way of life, physical and psychological characteristics, the elements of their religious expression. They live in gratitude, love, and communion with mother earth. It is God’s great gift to them and the best image they know of God’s creativity.*”¹³ In addition to identity and wholeness,

**the rite of Ashes for Hispanics symbolizes their daily struggles
in search of recognized dignity and opportunities.
Suffering, mortality and even death have useful meaning,
and so can be celebrated with a joyful hope.**

The Presentation of a Child

Mexicans have a beautiful tradition of presenting their babies in church, a practice based on an ancient Jewish tradition that Mary fulfilled by presenting herself and her Son in the temple. Within weeks and even days of birth, with pride and gratitude parents bring their babies to church wrapped in blankets, even in the dead of winter. By presenting their babies, Mexicans ask God’s blessing on them, and officially announce the birth of their children to the whole community. This is an optimal occasion for planning the future baptism.

“The presentation can be a natural occasion for parents to announce the birth of a child to the parish community. Especially with the birth of the first child, this moment can also help mark the beginning of the pre-baptismal formation of the parents. The ritual proposes that what follows here emphasizes the newborn infant and incorporates the marking with the cross and the anointing of the infant with the oil of catechumens. The rite appropriately and ideally takes place on a Sunday with the community present and is celebrated after the proclamation of the gospel and the homily.”¹⁴

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For older children, particularly girls, a celebration rite takes place with the whole community on the third birthday, to commemorate the presentation of the child Mary in the temple, according to Marian tradition. Before the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, holding a lighted candle, parents and “madrinas” offer their children with the solemn promise of bringing them up as worthy devotees of the Virgin, Queen of the Americas.

Holy Water

While residing in a small parish in King City, California, on Saturday evenings I used to bless over fifteen gallons of water in a large barrel placed at the foyer of the church. After three masses the barrel was empty. Some parents were even bathing their little ones in holy water.

In Mexico, where water is not always plentiful, people appreciate this gift of nature. As a sacramental they use it plentifully to bless their homes and their children. Mexican even drink it convinced that it has curative effects. In entering the church they do not just wet the tips of their fingers; they douse themselves with water, not only on their foreheads but also on the backs of their necks. They cover themselves and their loved ones more fully with God’s blessings.

Such devout, frequent use of holy water could give the impression of popular wide spread superstition. While acknowledging some obvious abuses, we need to understand the true motivation behind this behaviour. Holy water is a vivid reminder of baptism. Hispanics celebrate this sacrament with solemnity and great devotion. Holy water reminds them of that day when families were united in celebration, when new ties were sealed with “padrinos” and “madrinas.” These ties are renewed at every religious celebration and with them the celebration of the sacrament of baptism is revisited with each blessing by holy water.

The blessing with holy water is characterized by a unique way of performing the sign of the cross. With the thumb and index fingers dipped in holy water and fashioned as a cross Hispanics first touch the forehead, lips and heart and then make the customary sign of the cross. Holy water makes mind, lips and heart pure and holy: the whole person experiences total purification and spiritual renewal.

Basic Christian Communities

Because many Mexican Americans attend Sunday liturgies with hundreds of people they do not know, it is difficult for them to experience

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Church as community. To address this situation some large parishes organize small communities dispersed within their boundaries. These communities both strengthen interpersonal relationships among participants as well as a sense of community within the larger parish.

Basic Christian communities (Comunidades de Base) are a spiritually vital experience in the life of most Hispanics. Such a movement is supported by many bishops as a valid means of evangelization. The late Pope John Paul II gave his clear support: “*So that all parishes may be truly communities of Christians, local ecclesial authorities ought to foster the small basic or so-called ‘living communities,’ where the faithful can communicate the Word of God and express it in service and love to one another. These communities are true expressions of ecclesial communities and centers of evangelization, in communion with their pastors.*”¹⁵

In these small gatherings of neighbouring families, participants read and reflect on the Scripture, pray together, seek to support a community united in Christ, and plan to be of service to their neighbourhood. It is a much needed source of spiritual nourishment in the environment of today’s massive urban parishes. The prayerful experience follows a well defined methodology.

*“The Bible is integrated into a reflective methodology called ‘see, judge, act’ ...Participants ‘see’ by identifying significant conditions in their world, often presented as an event or story from their daily lives. Discussions during this stage tend to be lively, for people have a lot to share about their lives. To ‘judge’ or decide, involves bringing the wisdom of the Sacred Scriptures to bear on the event or situation just described. God’s Word provides the criteria according to which one’s world is evaluated and decisions for action are taken. To ‘act’ consists in participants committing to a concrete action, however small, in order to put into practice the wisdom gathered from reflection on their experiences in the light of faith. At the next meeting, participants evaluate their action and its impact. The starting point for this kind of reflection is the people’s experience of life, emanating from questions or concerns raised by them; it does not begin with the Bible or doctrine.”*¹⁶

In basic Christian communities Hispanics gather to share God’s Word as a gift to the whole community, particularly to the unschooled, the poor and even the children. Even when we prayerfully read Scripture in private, God is addressing all of us as a community of faith. The Bible is the book of the community, an expression of its faith experience, and meant for building it. It has an important place in the liturgy and in catechesis. The Scriptures, as given to the Church, are the communal treasure of the entire body of

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believers. All the members of the Church have a role in the interpretation of Scripture. Even those who, in their powerlessness and lack of human resources find themselves forced to put their trust in God alone and his justice, have a capacity for hearing and interpreting the Word of God which should be taken into account by the whole Church.

**While reflecting on the Bible together,
Hispanics are aware that they are not faced with a dead text,
for the text that they address, addresses them in return.**

Their aim is not so much a deeper scholarly interpretation, but rather how to apply the chosen sacred text to their everyday living.

A personal clarification will further help us understand this experience better. *“Above all, however, we must learn to read Scripture in the vocative. The purpose of our study of Scripture is not so much to interpret it as to allow it to interpret us and our situation. The final purpose of such interpretation is not to understand the Bible better. It is rather to understand ourselves better in the light of the Word of God, and to discover what obedience requires of us.”*¹⁷

The prayerful reading of the Bible is enhanced by the sharing of personal experiences. The testimony revealing how the God of Scripture touches everyday living becomes a powerful incentive for living the message that is prayerfully shared. The Sunday homily in itself is not an adequate tool for giving testimony, limited as it is to priests and deacons. Women, professionals, workers, immigrants, and youth are the ones most suited to give testimony that will move their peers to conversion.

Chapter Six Notes

- 1 – *Christianity and Culture*, Elizondo, V., p. 183
- 2 – *Parish Ministry in a Hispanic Community*, Dahn, C., p. 287.
- 3 – *Mestizo Worship*, Elizondo, V. & Matovina, M., p. 11.
- 4 – *Way of the Cross – The Passion of Christ in the Americas*, Elizondo, V. Editor, p. XII
This publication is part of a series that presents insightful and inspirational works drawing on the experience of Christians in Latino traditions. It explores topics such as the roots of a Mexican American understanding of God’s presence in the life of the people, the perduring influence of the Guadalupe event, the spirituality of immigrants, the role of popular religion in teaching and living the faith.
- 5 – *Mañana – Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*, Gonzalez, J. p. 148.
This work is very challenging with its theological and historical content. As a Protestant historian of the Church and its theology, the author stresses the significance of the presence of Hispanics in the United States as a minority that contributes to the gradual development of the Christian message in North America. The author compares the present development to the one experienced by the Church during the Protestant reformation. He identifies himself with the Hispanic minority and proposes new insights on the mystery of the Trinity, the goodness of creation, the gift of the human person, the meaning of evolution, the gift of Christ as a source of new life. He sees the Church as “mañana” people, whose pilgrimage is no uncertain wondering because it is guided by the Spirit.
- 6 – *Way of the Cross – The Passion of Christ in the Americas*, Elizondo, V., pp. 62-63
- 7 – *Horizons of the Sacred – Mexican Traditions in U.S. Catholicism*, Matovina, T. & Estrella G. R., p. 131
This work addresses in particular the religious traditions of Mexican Americans in the United States. It is supported by the expertise of eminent scholars in the fields of sociology and religion and by the pastoral experience in a multi-ethnic community in San Antonio, Texas. Various essays make clear the Mexican Americans’ contributions, including the vibrant worship and treasured expressions of faith. Mexican Americans and other Hispanics exemplify values that uplift Church and society: respect for the dignity of each person, profound love for life, deep sense of community, appreciation of life as a precious gift from God, and pervasive and authentic devotion to Mary. In its uniqueness the volume complements previous investigations of Mexican American religious traditions by not only describing them but also by probing more deeply into the symbolic world-view that underlines them.
- 8 – *Christianity and Culture*, Elizondo, V., p. 189.
- 9 – *Horizons of the Sacred – Mexican Traditions in U.S. Catholicism*, Matovina, T. & Estrella, G.R. p. 130.
- 10 – *La Natividad Hispana at Home and at the Church*, Arias, M., Francis, M., Perez-Rodriguez, A. p. 47.
Definitely this is not a theoretical work, although grounded on solid liturgical principles. It is the work of creative ministers who know their people well and have a passion for the Hispanic religious heritage. It presents fictional stories based on people and situations from the authors’ pastoral experience. The work provides practical insights for creating new liturgical expressions in multicultural parishes that truly include everyone. Each detailed presentation of before and after Christmas celebrations is concluded with a section of “Questions for Reflections” to facilitate the sharing of the meaning of the celebrations and their impact to the family and parish life.
- 11 – *Horizons of the Sacred – Mexican Traditions in U.S. Catholicism*, Matovina T. & Estrella G.R., p. 87.
- 12 – *Mestizo Worship – A Pastoral approach to Liturgical Ministry*, Elizondo, V. & Matovina, T., p. 6.
- 13 – *Ibidem*, p. 6.
- 14 – *Primero Dios – Hispanic Liturgical Resources*, Francis M. & Perez-Rodriguez A. p. 24.
- 15 – *Parish Ministry in a Hispanic Community*, Dahn, C., p. 87.
- 16 – *Ibidem*, p. 92.
- 17 – *Mañana – Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*, Gonzalez V. p. 86.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Faith Expressions and a Way of Living

The deep faith that characterizes the life of Hispanics within the frame of their familial surroundings and the community at large, is manifested and nourished by attitudes that regulate their relationship with God and other human beings. These faith-filled attitudes are expressed with sentences rich in biblical content. A brief presentation of some of them will clarify this for us.

Si Dios Quiere (If God wills)

It is an expression constantly repeated every time a future project or encounter is planned. Our personal destiny, that of our families, that of the whole world rests upon the Providence of God. We organize our lives, our relationships and our objectives: they will come to fulfillment only with the blessings of the Overseer who is motivated by infinite wisdom and love towards His creatures.

Consequently, Hispanics have a critical approach to the theory of evolution as it is valued in the individualistic society of today. They question the idea of evolution that supports self-sufficiency and denies a continuous dependence upon God. *“One should not suppose that God was creator only in the beginning and has now relinquished that role in favour of that of Sustainer. Creation subsists, even now, because God has called it and continues calling it out of nothingness into being.”*¹

Furthermore, Hispanics question the theory of evolution that advances the survival of the strongest with the gradual elimination of the powerless. Based on such premises this theory is clearly anti-Christian.

“The problem with the theory of evolution, at least in its popular version, is that it asserts that the ultimate rule of creation is the survival of the fittest. This is indeed anti-biblical. The ultimate rule of creation is the victory of love.”

Nowhere is this more clearly shown than in the resurrection of Christ, destroyed as unfit by the fittest empire of his time and yet risen again from the

*dead. To claim that the ultimate rule of the universe is the survival of the fittest is to assert that the process whereby the powerful and the successful oppress and destroy the powerless is part of the evolutionary process by which a better world is created.”*²

Resignarse a la Voluntad de Dios (To humbly accept God’s Will)

My time spent as a missionary priest in a very impoverished section at the outskirts of Guadalajara, Mexico, was blessed with powerful moments, while sharing the everyday events of those humble people. I vividly remember the celebration of the funeral of a young man, member of the choir that was bringing joyful and enthusiastic sounds in the shack that served as a chapel. At the beginning of the celebration the mother embraced the wooden casket and out loud questioned the will of God. Later on, at the offertory time, she prayed for strength to accept. At Communion time, bent with tears over the casket, she was heard mumbling repeatedly, *“Hágase tu voluntad”* (“Thy will be done”).

The way Hispanics react to misfortunes and adversities of any kind could give the impression of fatalistic acceptance to those who have a limited and superficial contact with their everyday experiences. Normally it is not so. *“A literal but incomplete translation renders the phrase ‘to resign oneself to the will of God,’ implying a passivity that does not exist in the Spanish culture.”*

The sense of ‘resignarse’ is to place oneself into God’s hands, to abandon oneself to God’s will.

*The last cry of Jesus on the cross, ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit,’ more accurately represents the meaning of ‘resignarse’: a conscious surrender to God’s plan.”*³

Mi Casa Es Tu Casa (My home is your home)

This expression speaks of hospitality. This virtue, religiously observed in the Old Testament and joyfully lived by the first communities of believers, has been frequently emphasized by the Church. Nobody is a foreigner in the heart of the Church: each person is a member of each Christian household. In his message for the World Day of Migration of 1995, Pope John Paul II reiterated: *“Nobody is a*

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foreigner in the Church, and the Church is a foreigner to no one." Since the very beginning the Church experienced both journeying and home: journeying for spreading the Good News and home for welcoming and celebrating Christ's message.

The expression "mi casa es tu casa" has become very popular: it speaks of warm welcome. Tourists, back from their vacation, enthusiastically praise this attitude. No matter the time of day, guests, friends or foreigners, are always welcomed. What little food there is, is prepared and shared gratefully. Sleeping quarters are reserved for guests, while, at times, the family sleeps on the floor.

Truly, the whole family feels blessed by the visit and you, as a guest, have to hide your embarrassment to compliment their unexpected generosity.

A guest automatically enters into the realm of the family and the whole community. Any guest becomes a cherished part of the social and religious gatherings. "*Convivencia*' means 'sharing life' among family and friends and is used to speak about gatherings that emphasize interpersonal sharing. Food and drink in the context of a 'convivencia' is always readily available and for this reason has a Eucharistic overtone."⁴

"Mi casa es tu casa" reflects the gratuitous love of God, who is always welcoming. Also, the sharing of house and goods by the Hispanics reflects the biblical experience of the Chosen people. We are stewards of God's blessings and are invited to share with those who are entitled to have it. For Mexican Americans this is natural.

Not to be accepted and taken in is a traumatic experience for Hispanics, who are basically welcoming people. They understand and share the painful experience of the Saviour who "*came among his own and they did not receive Him.*" (John 1:12).

Mañana (Tomorrow)

To say the least, this word is irritating to all those who deal with Hispanics in organizing any activity. It is hard for them to be punctual, to keep appointments. Guests are left wondering when all will start when invited by a Hispanic family for dinner or celebration. It seems like the Hispanic day is longer than the ordinary twenty four hours: so people can relax and space all activities with ease.

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Obviously it is paramount to help Hispanics integrate into the welcoming community by being punctual and by conforming to the framework of activities offered in the community. Some reflections will facilitate a patient approach in achieving this objective.

For Hispanics each experience is sacred, to be fully lived in all ramifications within the family and the community. Therefore it must be savoured in its entirety without any concern about time.

Other activities will be considered and honoured afterwards. "Kairos time", as hallowed opportunity, takes over "Kronos time", controlled by watch and strict schedule.

Hispanics are open to a continuous presence of God, who makes each experience a gift filled with surprises that are revealed through sharing with the family or the community. It is a continuation of the same providential and faithful presence of the God of Israel, who invited the chosen people to trust his initiative. "*Then there are those who capture the mañana vision of Scripture. The world will not always be as it is. It will not even be an outgrowth of what it is. God, who created the world in the first place, is about to do a new thing, a thing as great and as surprising as the first act of creation. God is already doing this new thing, and we can join it by the power of the Spirit. Mañana is here. True mañana is not yet today, but today can be lived out as the glory and the promise of mañana, thanks to the power of the Spirit.*"⁵

The relaxed behaviour of the Hispanics in attending activities without the rigid and stressful click of minutes and hours has also an eschatological component. We are gradually building God's kingdom until it reaches fulfillment according to a divine plan. "*For Hispanics the church is a pilgrim people, but a people whose pilgrimage is not uncertain wandering. It is a pilgrimage to a mañana made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, made present by the Spirit, and made certain by the power and promise of none other than God Almighty.*"⁶

The following two paragraphs, taken from the recent Vatican documents "Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi" underline the spirit that should motivate the reflections and the suggestions presented so far.

"Pastoral work among migrants thus becomes a service of the Church for the faithful whose language or culture are different from those of the host

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country, while at the same time it ensures that the foreign communities make their own contribution to the construction of a Church that must be a sign and instrument of unity with the prospect of a renewed humanity”#89

“The Church, sacrament of unity, overcomes ideological or racial barriers and division and proclaims to all people and all cultures the need to strive for the truth in the perspective of correctly facing differences by dialogue and mutual acceptance. Different cultural identities are thus to open up to a universal way of understanding, not abandoning their own positive elements, but putting them at the service of the whole humanity. While this logic engages every particular Church, it highlights and reveals that unity in diversity that is contemplated in the Trinity, which, for its part, refers the communion of all to the fullness of the personal life of each one.”#34

Chapter Seven Notes

- 1 – *Mañana – Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*, p. 122.
- 2 – *Ibidem*, p. 123.
- 3 – *Primeros Dios – Hispanic Liturgical Resource*, p. 125.
- 4 – *Ibidem*, p. 68.
- 5 – *Mañana – Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*, p. 164.
- 6 – *Ibidem*, p. 166.

APPENDIX I

Challenging Components in Hispanic Culture

An effective pastoral response to the presence of Hispanic migrants needs to address some aspects of their culture which can make integration and evangelization particularly demanding. These aspects are rather evident and usually have a negative connotation that could hinder a welcoming pastoral response. A summary clarification is needed.

First I will address some aspects of culture that concern the relationship of Mexican American immigrants with the local church. Then I will present as objectively as possible some cultural features that characterize their family and social life.

Aspects of Culture and the Local Church.

The immense vitality of the Church in the United States has depended largely on the strength of parish life. Indeed, the parish is the heart of American Catholicism. The tradition of Latin America has not been the same due largely to the fact that in Latin America Catholicism is not a minority religion. In the United States it has been the parish that traditionally held together, educated, and sustained the Catholic identity in a non-Catholic environment. Not having this particular concern, Latin Americans are generally less attached to the parish structure.

The majority of these migrants come from small towns where the parish community is the center of religious celebrations and various social events and where they feel welcomed. Their faith, hardly challenged by non Catholic movements, was supported by a warm, familiar ambience, where they felt important and appreciated. However in the United States Hispanic migrants are under pressure of various Protestant denominations.

Small Protestant communities, normally very active in their propaganda efforts, offer such an ambience in a family like environment with which Hispanics easily identify. Having only a basic catechetical knowledge, they do not grasp the doctrinal and religious differences that divide Catholics from all other denominations. Once warmly accepted into these small communities these differences do not mean that much. Their first doubtful and hesitant wonder is gradually replaced by enthusiastic membership that frequently causes division between members of the same family.

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Many, after having participated for a time in these churches, return to the Catholic Church. They find the Protestant communities religiously alienating, failing to recognize the important role of the saints, particularly of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

A parish community that shows a warm and faith-filled concern toward Hispanic migrants is the only effective counter response to this regrettable situation.

Before making any effort in spreading the Gospel's message to non Christians, our pastoral strategies should focus on keeping and evangelizing our Catholic membership.

Participation in a Mexican urban parish is usually not based on the territory of one's residence. On Sundays, people attend different churches, depending on the feast day or their interest in shopping at a distant market, eating at a particular restaurant, or visiting relatives. Consequently, many Mexican immigrants do not identify with a particular parish, even those designed for their specific pastoral care. As baptized Catholics they belong to every Catholic church.

Because of their low-paying jobs and unstable employment, Mexicans are frequently reluctant to pledge a specific amount of money for the future. It seems that more frequent efforts at fund raising may bring greater benefits than the occasional requests for larger amounts. Mexicans are more willing and able to donate smaller amounts more frequently through raffles, the selling of food, and periodic dances. Besides, all these activities support a community spirit dear to them.

Pastors in American parishes are puzzled and frustrated by the poor participation of Mexican immigrants, particularly men, to the reception of the Eucharist. Until recently, especially in small towns, many clergy in Mexico have stressed the unworthiness of the faithful to receive communion without always first confessing their sins.

Mexicans and Latinos in general are not greatly concerned about the length of sermons. They are more concerned about the quality of the Sunday's message. They are willing to listen for fifteen and even twenty minutes to homilies that offer them instruction, inspiration, and encouragement. All Mexicans are very tolerant and even appreciate preachers who speak Spanish as a second language.

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Mexicans love “fire and brimstone” sermons: the tougher the preacher the more they like it. They respect priests who scold them for their sinfulness as long as they, at the same time, help them appreciate the many ways God has favoured them.

Mexicans have a strong tradition of choosing a married couple as godparents for their children. A good percentage of these couples are not in good standing (unmarried couples living together or just married civilly). Many Mexican immigrant couples are not married sacramentally, either because they are waiting for the right time to celebrate their marriage with a big feast or because of their immigration status. Consequently, Mexican immigrants look for priests who show understanding, who baptize their child, and start a process of evangelization of parents and godparents.

How can a parish priest involve hundreds of Mexican immigrants in the Sunday liturgical celebration and make them experience it as their own? Many are the ways dear to them: the presenting of babies, the passing of the crucifix and the Lectionary from family to family, the joining of hands during the Lord’s Prayer, the welcoming of visitors, the gathering of children around the altar, the invitation to decorate the church’s environment, the participation in parish’s activities.

For Mexicans there is no dichotomy between the sacred and secular. God is present in our world in many ways.

Being a physical people, Mexicans can reach out and touch God through many sacramentals: water, candles, medals, rosaries, icons and statues, processions and meals.

Ritual celebrations (presentation of new born babies, baptisms, quinceañeras, blessing of homes and religious articles) assure God’s loving presence. All these expressions reflect a profound inner faith, producing a devotionism, sometimes quite emotional, that can be confused with superstition, and excessive sentimentality if not understood correctly.

Mexicans tend to celebrate the moment. They thank God daily for another day of life and relationship with family and relatives. This stress on the present could give the impression that they lack ambition for personal progress. Their concern for the moment is also motivated for most of them by economic struggles that force them to concentrate on surviving day to day.

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Cultural Aspects of Family and Social Life.

“Machismo” is a deeply rooted and destructive element in Hispanic culture, particularly among Mexicans. It claims that God made men superior to women, so that they can and should dominate them. This belief deeply permeates the relationship between husbands and wives, showing men’s desire to control over their spouses. Whether women work outside the home or not, they are responsible for shopping, child care, cooking, cleaning, washing. They are expected to prepare and serve meals whenever men want them.

Women find it hard to confront or even break this pattern of abuse. Most of them have little self-confidence; they cannot imagine themselves surviving economically or emotionally without their husbands. They fear the children will be upset and even deny them if they leave their fathers. They feel they have no one to turn to: their own parents and siblings expect them to accept.

First and second generation Mexican American women reject any abuse of “machismo” as an evil cultural trend. Also, many first generation Mexican American men are more sensitive to the plague of male domination and more prone to share domestic responsibilities with their partners and support them in seeking employment, outside the home, or to pursue advanced education and career.

As we have already indicated, family life is a fundamental value in the life of Hispanics. All religious and socially important events are celebrated and have relevance in a family environment where family ties are supported and valued. Nonetheless, because of machismo, religious and social celebrations frequently see the family divided. Men take care of decorations and then gather in a place apart, drinking their cerveza and tequila, waiting for their turn to be served first. Women are busy preparing meals, serving and cleaning. Children are everywhere, but cannot associate with the men.

Machismo strongly prevails in Hispanic culture within this framework of family and community living. Exposure to Western values of individualism and equal sex opportunity has not as yet eradicated this stronghold of male dominance that characterizes the Hispanic heritage.

Machismo has concomitantly a positive and negative impact. It protects and controls the unity of the family, where the male is accepted and respected as a responsible provider.

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On the other hand it gives the male complete freedom from moral choices that infringe upon faithfulness in marriage. Only men enjoy the opportunity of advanced education to pursue job opportunities. Women are expected to devote themselves to household chores, to care for the little ones, with limited primary education and without the freedom of social life.

The macho sense of responsibility as providers impels husbands and young male adults to face any type of sacrifices for the economic welfare of their families. The “Casa del Migrante” under the care of Scalabrinian missionaries in Tijuana, Mexico, temporarily assists young migrants who try to re-enter in the United States all over again after being repeatedly caught and sent back.

Machismo can cause traumatic consequences when men finally reach the destination in a new country. The humiliation and hardships they encounter bring about severe shock to their pride. From the privileged position in their home these migrants now endure rejection. They are not in charge anymore and do not enjoy freedom of movement and decision making. Nonetheless, their machismo, put to the test, becomes the driving force for facing any type of ordeals in order to fulfill the cultural task of providing for their dear ones at home.

Alcohol abuse is very common. Most Mexican men arrive alone, leaving their families behind until they are financially ready to bring them along. During years of separation these lonely men find relaxation in local taverns. Some of them are already alcohol addicted: in their small ranchos the hanging around the “cantina” was the only form of diversion.

In reality women are the heart and soul of Hispanic homes with their charms and submissive dedication. Their child-bearing keeps the men closer to home with more fidelity. Machismo becomes mellower with the innocence and the joy of children, whom fathers love with tenderness and pride.

Wives know how to challenge the macho behaviour of their men and to attract them to a better lifestyle. I remember a specific case when I was pastor of a Mexican parish at the South side of Chicago. A parishioner, mother of six children and pregnant, kept asking for my prayers for the conversion of her husband. Frequently drunk, he was mistreating and abusing all in the family. Inspired by prayer, she challenged him to be present at the birth of the seventh child. As a proud macho, he accepted her unusual request. Deeply touched by the suffering of a difficult delivery and by the first crying of the new born he changed into a new man. In church, kneeling before his family and the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, he swore not to touch alcohol any more: a promise that he kept faithfully.

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Hispanic families experience disarray when confronted by Western culture with its varied Christian denominations, freedom of religion and the values of individualism and materialism.

Women may see the opportunity of more freedom and assertiveness, a sense of liberation from male control. They become aware of the negative components of the native culture when confronted with the new. They identify these negative components with their Catholic upbringing and are tempted to question their faith as a whole.

The importance of community in the personal and family life of Hispanics presents another challenge in the pastoral efforts of evangelization. Many Hispanics are married only civilly, mostly for the following reasons. In Mexico, Central and South America the religious celebration of marriage is preceded by a civil union. The religious vows are delayed because of the difficulty in having the “padrinos” who were asked to participate but migrated before the date set for the wedding; and a promise is a promise for Hispanics.

Economic reasons and the reality of migration may delay the date for the religious ceremony. It takes time for Hispanics to settle down in a new country. Their economic situation improves most of the time: nevertheless there are not enough resources for a wedding celebration with the participation of the community to give it value and meaning. The years go by and the desire for a religious ceremony fades. This unique situation, including un-baptized children, needs to be addressed with patience and understanding, accompanied by the frequent invitation to validate these marriages in a simple, private way. A catechesis of the sacraments will facilitate this pastoral effort.

Mexicans tend to be indirect in their communication and hesitant to share their ideas and feelings because of low self-esteem as a “mestizo” people.

The historical discrimination of both the Catholic Church and conquering nations has helped create a sense of unworthiness. They hesitate to speak their mind, and apologize for not doing better. They are also cautious and avoid confrontation for fear of causing conflict and division.

Many are the complaints of pastors trying to organize catechetical

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programs, liturgical events and other activities. Usually Hispanics respond enthusiastically to the invitation to participate, agreeing about the time and place for such gatherings. However, it is frustrating when only a few show up. A chain phone call will reveal that those who did not participate had good reason. Why, then, did they not tell it up front? A subtle inferiority complex and exaggerated respect for civil and religious authority impede any assertive response.

Such behaviour is foreign to our Western world, but very integral to the Hispanic culture. It must be addressed with a clear presentation of place, time and agenda for each meeting, with a direct and personal invitation to each individual, eliciting positive or negative responses as an expression of respect for all participants.

These realities found in the Hispanic culture may very well challenge the leadership style in a Catholic parish. What is needed is a welcoming community that understands and respects this culture while at the same time offering positive standards and ideals within the context of Catholic beliefs and practices.

Mexican immigrant families encounter particular difficulties because of cultural differences between parents and children. Parents trying to preserve religious and social expressions of their native culture clash frequently with their children, particularly teenagers, who want to identify with the culture of the welcoming country. Unresolved issues of communication, authority, discipline, and shared responsibility frequently end up in serious family conflicts and subsequent teenage delinquency.

The parents' limited English and inadequate understanding of the culture of the new country give them a disadvantage over their children. Frequently children interpret new customs for their parents. Traditional roles are reversed, assigning to children a power over their parents. And so, children feel superior and more knowledgeable than their parents, who remain deeply attached to the ways of the past. Parental authority is gradually eroded.

Sadly, many Mexican migrant parents do not take part in their children's education. They believe they should not interfere with the role of the teacher whom they respect almost like the doctors and the priests. Many of them have difficulty in understanding the school's regulations and requirements. Their limited English hampers communication with the teachers and school staff. Having little schooling themselves they do not value the education of their children, particularly their daughters.

Particular pastoral attention should be given to young people. They need to

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understand and appreciate the values of their parents' culture, to discern and assimilate the helpful manners and customs of the new environment. The whole community of faith, especially youngsters of the same age, should facilitate a growth of responsible assertiveness in young Hispanics.

APPENDIX II

Pastoral Suggestions for Community Building and Liturgical Celebrations

At the outset, I will present some reflections on fundamental principles needed before proposing some practical suggestions to promote integration. To facilitate these reflections, I will quote some passages from an article of Fr. John Coleman, SJ, "Pastoral Strategies for Multicultural Parishes" that appeared in "Origins, January 10, 2002 - Vol. 31: # 30."

Reflections:

"Including the cultural signs, symbols, music and languages of immigrants and other ethnic communities into our worship services is one of the most profound ways that we can welcome diverse people into the Church. Although it is still important and necessary for newcomers and ethnic communities to have opportunities to worship primarily in their own native languages, increased opportunities for "multicultural liturgies and prayers services" should be encouraged as these kinds of celebrations increase multicultural understanding and promote unity in our parishes."

"Integration cannot be rushed. Patience is necessary for the fragility, at times, of the immigrant group in finding its own voice and space."

"Most migrants want to assimilate substantively into the societies they have entered, and they certainly want to be accepted as full members. But they frequently want to do this at their own pace and in their own way, and in the process they reserve the right to alter the society even as they assimilate into it. Instead of one-way assimilation, they want to co-determine the future of the society they have entered."

"When migrants come to a new society, in point of fact, the ethnic cultures they nurture soon become different in many ways from the ones they left. They seek a mode of life consonant with their identities but know that, in the end, it will be distinct from the cultural tradition they left. Yet they also, legitimately, seek something distinct from full assimilation."

"...humanity is realized not in each individual human being but rather in communion with all humans, in and through their viable cultures. The image used is that of a chorus. The ultimate richness comes when all the different voices

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come together. It is something they create in the space between them. The theology behind all this finds its sources in certain Christian doctrines, e.g. the Trinity and the communion of saints."

"Even when language is lost, unique cultural templates remain from the original culture about authority, kinship, hospitality, gender relations, how the world is seen as hospitable or friendly, attitudes toward economics and politics."

"If the empowering of lay ministry leadership is important for the whole Catholic Church, a fortiori it is essential for the training and empowering of immigrant lay ministry leadership. In immigrant communities, which lack ethnic priests for the group, the lay leader may need more sway and authority than is usually given to non pastors."

"At some point the various leaders of a multicultural parish must learn to intermingle, plan and communicate (parish council). This can be difficult, at times, since there are very different leadership styles and communication patterns among different ethnic groups. In some cases a shared retreat or the use of outside facilitator may help the groups to learn to discern and decide together."

Establishing a Parish Welcoming Committee.

The immigrants suffer cultural shock trying to adjust to a whole new system. Pastors and leaders, who wish to serve whoever enters the community, may lack the experience or models to reach out to the newcomers. A welcoming committee becomes their right hand. It can be a very effective way to enhance a sense of community.

- From their interaction and participation with the "welcoming committee," priest and staff learn about the cultural background and circumstances of arrival of the newcomers; they learn names, introduce people to one another. Lastly, they gain important knowledge about the changing demographics of their parish and thus are more capable integrating and serving the needs of all their parishioners.

- With the guidance of the welcoming committee it would be useful to prepare a "welcoming packet" for newly arrived persons. The packet should include information about the parish (sacramental preparation, parish

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events, mass schedule, etc.), and community and social services (immigration services, medical emergency, information on public transportation, etc.).

- The committee could be instrumental in hosting welcoming events on a regular basis, such as introducing new comers to the worshipping community at Sunday masses that could be followed by coffee and refreshments after the Eucharist. "International Dinners" and "Food Festivals" present the newcomers the opportunity to showcase both their talents and their culture.

- The welcoming committee will facilitate the finding of "partner" families for the newly arrived parishioners. These families will help orient the newcomers to parish life and help ease their transition to a new culture, particularly if they are from the same ethnic background.

- The organization of service activities and charitable drives to benefit newcomers will be enhanced by the efforts of the committee. Parishioners could contribute with household items, and by tutoring programs and job fairs.

Multicultural Celebrations.

The following are suggestions for preparing multicultural liturgies and prayer services. They are proposed by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

- A good multicultural celebration cannot be planned overnight, or in two weeks. It is a slow process that allows each ethnic group to share its ideas and be involved in the development and implementation of the idea. No ethnic group should dominate the planning process. Each ethnic group should feel important and valued.

- It is important to remind ethnic groups, as often as needed, that a multicultural celebration is not a competition among them. Rather, it is an invitation for each one to share their stories, gifts and cultures with one another so that together they can discover God's action in them.

**Attempts should be made to have common liturgies,
but not too often, maybe four to six times a year.**

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Further, care must be taken not to rob the immigrants of their most precious liturgies, such as those celebrated at Christmas and Holy Week. These liturgies have the most resonance with immigrant cultures.

- Celebrate multicultural liturgies as frequently as needed according to the size, resources, and proportion of cultural groups in conjunction with feast days and special times in the Church's liturgical year, i.e. Epiphany, Holy Thursday, Pentecost, the parish Feast Day, etc.

- Evaluate and understand the parish setting when planning the liturgy. Know from which cultural group parishioners come; reflect on their assimilation to the welcoming community (length of time in the country: are they already bilingual?); consult with their leaders and include them in planning (liturgy committee); choose commentators or deacons from the cultural groups who can assist the priest who may not be fluent in all languages of the parish. Attention must be given in not oversimplifying the differences between minority groups and categorically lumping them together (Central America's nations all speak Spanish, but their history and religious devotions are quite different).

- Help parishioners attend to how God is manifesting His presence in a multicultural context, modeling an attitude of listening, patience and sacrifice. It is the task of the pastoral team to bring people together and help them focus on what will be gained in celebrating with other cultural groups in the parish.

- Sometimes the parish can allow one group to host the entire parish liturgy, using its ordinary linguistic and cultural forms of worship. Since hospitality is a common Christian virtue, it should not just be Euro-Americans who welcome the stranger in their midst.

Guidelines for Multilingual Masses.

Recently, the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions in the United States issued a document called "Guidelines for Multicultural Masses. It was developed in collaboration with the Instituto de Liturgia Hispana. It had clearly in mind the large Spanish-speaking population of the United States.

Here is a summary:

- Ideally, the presider should be familiar with different languages, at least familiar enough to read them correctly.
- Songs such as the opening song might come from the various cultures

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and languages represented in the assembly. Another possibility is that alternative verses be sung in different languages.

- For antiphonal music, the verses might be sung in two or more languages, while the antiphon is sung in one language.
- Eucharistic acclamations should reflect an integral musical style and may include a blend of the diverse languages of those assembled.
- A bilingual or even trilingual commentator may be helpful. Their contribution should be kept to a minimum, however, for example before or during the liturgy of the word, and following the prayer after communion. This way the flow of the liturgy is not seriously interrupted.
- Introductory greetings: the Guidelines state somehow vaguely that “the choice of introductory greetings...can elicit an awareness of the cultural diversity” of the assembly.
- Opening prayer: It is suggested that the invitation to pray be given in two or more languages, but that the text itself be said in one language.
- First and second readings: The FDLC suggests that one reading be proclaimed in the language of the majority and another be in a second language. However, a brief commentary may be offered in other languages before each proclamation.
- Gospel: It should be proclaimed in the majority language. However, portions of the gospel upon which the homily will be based, could also be announced in the other languages spoken by those assembled.
- Homily: This too should be preached in the majority language, with a short summary given in other languages, giving the preacher an opportunity to offer a different slant to the reflection that could include cultural elements.
- General intercessions: A variety of languages may be used. However, for the sake of smoothness, the conclusion of each intercession should be in same language throughout.
- Eucharistic prayer: The FDLC suggests that different languages could be used for the different sections of this prayer: Thanksgiving, Acclamation, Epiclesis, Institution Narrative, Anamnesis, Offering, Intercessions, Final Doxology.
- Lord’s Prayer: Each person may speak this prayer in his or her language.

Appendix II

- Blessing: Different languages may be used for each part of the blessing.

Allow me to offer a long section of Mark Francis’ publication “Liturgy in a Multicultural Community.” It is helpful to remember that integration, with its pastoral implications, has been a challenge for the Church since its very beginning.

“Finally, we must not overlook the model of Peter as the leader of the early Church and the ‘Bridge-builder’ par excellence between the Hellenists and the Hebrews. To him we owe the unity amid diversity that characterized the first Christian community. As mediator between both sides, he was not so rooted in his own religious and cultural traditions that he impeded the movement of the Spirit. As it is common with people who try to minister to two often opposing cultural groups, he experienced criticism by both sides which must have severely strained his patience.

Though we have no specific evidence of it, Peter most probably had to learn Greek in order to minister to the growing segment of his flock. Because he could communicate in another language, he was not only capable of transcending his own cultural biases, but further able to lead the church in a new direction: toward a Gentile world that was considered unclean and hostile to Judaism.

This points to the necessity of those who minister to a multicultural community to learn (at least imperfectly) the language of their people. It is only through an acquaintance with these languages, both in and outside of worship, that the pastoral agent will be able to bring members of the parish together.” (p. 36).

Appendix II

Conclusion

The comments, the reflections and the suggestions gathered in this short presentation are simply an organized effort to help English speaking priests and parish leaders in their challenging pastoral endeavor on behalf of Spanish speaking immigrants, Mexicans in particular. Hopefully this essay will motivate the reading of some of the publications presented in the bibliography.

To pursue the way of dialogue among different cultures it is necessary to let the Holy Spirit guide us. On the day of Pentecost, it was the Spirit of truth who completed the divine design of the unity of humankind in the diversity of cultures and races. On hearing the apostles, the numerous pilgrims gathered together in Jerusalem exclaimed with wonder: *"Each of us hears them speaking in his own tongue about the marvels God has accomplished"* (Acts 2:11) Since that day, the Church continues to carry out her mission, proclaiming the "marvels" that God continues to accomplish among those who belong to different races, nations, and cultures."

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Books:

Arbuckle, Gerald, S.M., Earthing the Gospel – An International Handbook for the Pastoral Worker, New York: Orbis Books, 1990.

This work leads to a thorough understanding of cultures, the fostering of inculturation in a parish community, the role of migrants in the process, the need of a spirituality for "re-founding the church".

Arias M., Francis M., Perez-Rodriguez A., La Navidad Hispana at Home and at Church, Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2000.

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This volume reviews the different technical terms describing the relationship between liturgy and culture before proceeding to discuss the reality of sacramentals, popular religiosity, and liturgical catechesis. Although the three topics are disparate, they share the same basic concern of multi-culturalism. To be relevant, sacramentals and catechesis need to be inculturated. To relate to the religious experience of a large segment of the Church, liturgy must interact with popular religiosity. Throughout the book much stress is given to the question of method exercised in inculturation.

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DeLuna, Anita, MCDP, Faith Formation and Popular Religion – Lessons From a Tejano Experience, New York: Rowan & Little Field Publishers, Inc., 2002.

The work offers an interweaving of anecdotes from the author's own experience of faith formation and vast pastoral ministry. After a vital and lively conversation between catechesis, spirituality, and the theology of beauty, the book draws on the work of noted Hispanic theologians to succinctly and clearly outline the very elements of Mexican American spirituality: emphasis on the providence of God, centrality of Mary and Jesus, persistence of hope amidst suffering. The conclusion provides inspiration and insights for Mexican American and Church leaders to develop catechetical materials that serve the needs of today's faith community, stressing the necessity of visual images to motivate religious imagination.

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Espin, Orlando, The Faith of the People – Theological Reflections On Popular Catholicism, New York: Orbis Books, 1997.

The author first elaborates on tradition, popular religion, and popular Catholicism in general, before dealing more specifically with popular Catholicism among Latinos. He strongly supports the legitimacy of popular religion as a vehicle for the “sensus fidelium”, the faith-full intuition of the Christian people, moved by the Spirit, that senses, adheres to, interprets the Word of God, and it is a valid partner with the Church’s magisterium in the ongoing process of deepening the understanding of Revelation. Popular Catholicism is viewed as a complex reality in its genesis and history, and examined in its extraordinary adaptability. In the last section the author deals at length with the history of popular Catholicism among Latinos. He describes it as bearer of an old tradition, whose roots are planted in the medieval type of Christianity that preceded Trent and the Reformation.

Figuroa, Deck, Allan, SJ, The Second Way – Hispanic Ministry and The Evangelization of Cultures, New York: Paulist Press, 1989.

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The book, supported by social sciences, addresses the challenge the Catholic Church faces in responding by a variety of ways to life and culture throughout the world. How is the Church going to bring the life and teaching of Jesus to people who think in ways very different from those of the Western World, with different religious beliefs and practices. The work is geared toward intelligent and concerned religious person preparing for a ministry to people of different language, culture and background. It is not a theological treatise nor a pastoral handbook, or a how-to resource. It is rather designed to provide insights to help ordinary Christians appreciate the opportunity of increasing faith contact with the cultures of the modern world.

Francis, Mark & Perez-Rodriguez, Primero Dios-Hispanic Liturgical Resources, Chicago, IL.: Liturgy Training Publications, 1997.

Mark & Rodríguez, Liturgy in a Multicultural Community, Colleagueville, MN.: The Liturgical Press, 1991.

Gonzalez, Justo L., Mañana- Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective, Nashville, TN.: Abington Press, 1990.

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Groody, Daniel, Border of Death, Valley of Life – An Immigrant Journey of Heart and Spirit, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002.

The work is a powerful, first hand account of the author’s religious ministry that reaches out to console, heal, and build the lives of the poor, desperate Mexican immigrants who come to United States in search of better life. The author deals with migration officials, “coyote” smugglers, migrants in detention centers and working in the fields. The picture that emerges starkly contrasts with the negative stereotypes about Mexican immigrants. He discovers and presents to the reader insights into God, family, values, suffering, faith, and hope that offer a treasure of spiritual knowledge helpful to everyone, even those who are materially comfortable but spiritually empty.

Gutierrez, Gustavo, We Drink From Our Own Wells – The Spiritual Journey of A People, New York: Orbis Books, 1984.

After the presentation of spirituality within the context of a well understood liberation theology, the author articulates the Christ-encounter as experienced by the poor of Latin America in their struggle of affirming their human dignity. As in all true spirituality, this spirituality of liberation theology is deeply rooted in the lived experience of God’s presence in history. To drink from your own well is to live in the spirit of Jesus in the concrete historical reality. God is seen as the God who enters into human history to dispel the forces of injustice and to call forth the healing forces of brotherhood.

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—"Stranger No Longer-Together On The Journey of Hope", United States Conference of Catholic Bishops & Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, Bilingual. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C., 2003.

—"Bilingual Liturgies" Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, The National Bulletin On Liturgy, Vol. 26, No.133, Summer, 1993.

This document presents detailed suggestions for bilingual and multilingual Eucharistic celebrations that assure both the unity of the congregation and the welcoming of each minority group. Based on the "Guidelines of Multicultural Masses" issued by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions in the United States and Francis Mark's book "Liturgy in a Multicultural Community", the publication presents practical suggestions for the use of two or more languages in a single liturgical celebration, namely: non verbal elements (gestures, vesture, posture), verbal elements (different parts of the liturgy of the Word and the Eucharist), and musical elements. On most Sundays, parishes should have different Eucharistic celebrations for individual cultural and

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linguistic groups. Truly bilingual and multilingual liturgies should be exceptional; five or six times a year at the most. (Pentecost, Migration Sunday, parish anniversary, first communion..). For a meaningful celebration the whole parish must first live in a multicultural spirit. Pastors and parish leaders need to familiarize with diverse languages.

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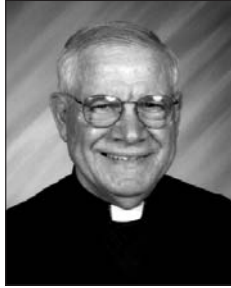
Pastoral Spanish, Published by "Audio Forum", 96 Broad Street, Guilford, Connecticut, 06437

This is a set of tapes for learning the Spanish language and as aid to the celebration of the Eucharist, the Sacraments, and para-liturgies in Spanish.

Davis, K. & Perez L. Editors, Preaching the Teaching: Hispanics, Homiletics, and Catholic Social Justice Doctrine, University of Scranton Press, 2006.

The editors have written a homiletic guide that addresses an important need for Hispanic congregations and their pastors. They challenge them to become "multi-cultural" and aware of the conditions of their parishioners' lives, the beauty of diversity of Hispanic cultures as well as the systemic struggles they face. The book takes a creative approach to incorporating ideas for homilies that cover some of the critical problems that are part of Hispanic lives.

About the Author



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The Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles, Scalabrinians, founded by Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini in 1887, is a community of religious priests, brothers and sisters present in 30 countries, with the specific charism of serving migrants and refugees.