By Beth Griffin

LOOKING BACK

The Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions provides extraordinarily effective support for pastoral programs in 79 dioceses around the country where Catholics are few and the Church is isolated or under-resourced. It is the contemporary successor to the American Board of Catholic Missions, which was established in 1924. This work, prior to the establishment of the Catholic Home Missions Appeal, was funded through a percentage of the World Mission Sunday collection.

Home missions are those Roman Catholic dioceses and Eastern Catholic eparchies in the United States, its territories, and former territories that struggle to provide basic pastoral services to Catholics without outside help. These services include Mass and the sacraments, evangelization, religious education, and ministry training for priests, deacons, religious sisters, and laypeople. Today, more than 40% of U.S. dioceses are considered mission dioceses.

Although each diocese and eparchy has its own specific challenges, many mission dioceses share certain characteristics:

- Catholics make up a small percentage of the population.
- Difficult terrain, extreme weather, or great distances isolate parishes.
- Priests, deacons, and skilled pastoral workers are in short supply.
- Poverty, unemployment, and low wages are widespread.
- There are few or no Catholic institutions, such as religious houses, colleges, schools, hospitals, or retreat centers.
- Traditionally-defined minority groups are heavily represented in the Catholic population.
- The population exhibits unfamiliarity with, lack of interest in, or outright hostility toward Catholicism.

Catholic Home Missions is the program of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) that advocates for the needs of mission dioceses and administrators and monitors grant funding. It also collaborates with other USCCB offices, outside organizations like the Black and Indian Missions Office, and with national funding organizations, including...continued on page 2
FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is my pleasure to introduce myself to you and to present this new issue of Neighbors. I am Bishop Shawn McKnight, the fourth bishop of Jefferson City, Missouri, since February 2018 and the new chairman of the Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions. Each year the subcommittee, with the assistance of USCCB staff, reviews and evaluates grant applications and makes funding decisions. I am honored to share with you stories of how Catholic Home Missions is supporting the New Evangelization throughout the 79 mission dioceses in the United States.

In this month’s issue, we look back at the history of the work supported by the Catholic Home Missions Appeal over the past 20 years. You will also see how funding from Catholic Home Missions is addressing the pastoral needs of our Hispanic brothers and sisters in rural northern Missouri today—primarily through Adelante, a program that helps Hispanic Catholics in my Diocese of Jefferson City. With a growing Hispanic population on the one hand, and few Spanish-speaking priests on the other, the Diocese of Jefferson City faces a challenge that many dioceses throughout the country confront: namely, how can we more fully address the spiritual and material needs of our Hispanic neighbors? Through a broad range of activities—from evangelization to leadership development, from retreats to youth programs—Adelante is helping Hispanic immigrants in the Diocese of Jefferson City to integrate more fully into the life of the diocese, and the program is also forming future leaders who can pass on the faith and minister to their children.

Your support is making a positive difference in Jefferson City and other mission dioceses across the country. Thank you for your contributions and prayers for my success as your new chairman.

Sincerely yours in Christ, I am

Most Reverend W. Shawn McKnight
Bishop of Jefferson City

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the Catholic Church Extension Society. In recent years, Catholic Home Missions has made annual distributions of approximately $9.5 million to mission dioceses.1

“This is an effort by the generous Catholic public to try to help dioceses that otherwise would not be able to provide basic pastoral ministry to the faithful,” Catholic Home Missions director Richard Coll says. “It’s also a great way to demonstrate two core values of Catholic Social Teaching: solidarity, meaning we’re all in this together, and subsidiarity, where we provide support so each diocesan bishop can minister in the way that is most appropriate for his people.”

Richard says, in his frequent visits to mission dioceses, he has been moved by the genuine gratitude expressed by bishops, diocesan staff, and parishioners for the support of fellow Catholics across the country. “I feel blessed to be a small part of the process that provides funds for needs such as gasoline to help a priest reach his people for Mass in a rural mission, or the salary of a youth minister in an underserved area,” he says.

FEATURE

“God multiplies what we get, and we are able to do more than we think we can,” Enrique Castro says.

Enrique directs the Office of Hispanic and Intercultural Ministries of the Diocese of Jefferson City in northern Missouri. He is also the founding director of Adelante: Caminando Unidos En Fe (Forward United in Faith)—an ambitious diocesan program to integrate Hispanics as full members of their parish communities.

“Adelante” means more than going forward. It’s more profound.
It’s about moving forward, but with hope and trust in God,” Enrique says.

Jefferson City is a rural diocese where the population is distributed across more than 22,000 square miles. Fewer than 9% is Catholic. Hispanics from Mexico and Central and South America make up a large and growing segment of parishioners in 15 of the diocese’s 110 parishes and missions. Jefferson City receives funding from Catholic Home Missions and uses it exclusively for comprehensive pastoral outreach to Hispanics.

Ministry to Hispanics in the diocese is challenged by a paucity of Spanish-speaking priests, aggressive recruiting by evangelical Protestant denominations, and the instability of the Hispanic population. But this ministry is blessed and energized by dynamic

lay participants who are animated by their faith.

Enrique describes a 2011 watershed moment in the diocesan Hispanic ministry program. “We were talking with parish lay representatives who were discouraged by the level of support they felt from the diocese. There was a sense of hopelessness in the room, but we prayed and decided we needed to trust God and work together instead of in isolation,” he explains.

“God’s providence brought us together,” Enrique says. Adelante encompasses faith and evangelization, family ministry, outreach, development of leadership, and support. “We recognize the unique and diverse gifts that Hispanic immigrants bring and share, but we also recognize their needs, especially of the new and young generations in our midst,” he says. “Adelante responds to the challenges and honors the hope that the Hispanic community represents for the local Church.”

Among many recent efforts, Adelante has provided formation for parish liturgical ministers and implemented train-the-trainer programs for liturgical, presacramental, and quinceañera preparation programs. It coordinated diocesan participation in the Fifth National Encuentro Process for Hispanic/Latino Ministry, and it trained and certified six couples to teach Natural Family Planning in Spanish in the diocese. Adelante also has organized retreats, worship, and social events for youth, adults, and families.

Enrique says Adelante gives special focus to engaging youth, because the Hispanic population of the diocese is very young, meaning that future vocations will come from the youth.

“Evangelization and the development of leaders are common aspects of everything we do,” Enrique says. “We try to help people encounter Christ and develop their faith. Once they have that encounter, they are in love with Christ, and they come forward as leaders. It’s like the disciples who were certain of their relationship with a living person.

“When you are certain of the presence of God in your life, there’s a 180-degree change in everything. There’s commitment and conversion. When you facilitate a space for an encounter with Christ and others, the vision of the future of a parish or group changes,” Enrique says.

“I can tell you our pastoral ministry with and for the Hispanic community in the diocese would not be possible without Catholic Home Missions. God continues to be in this ministry,” he says.

Enrique may be the best advertisement for Adelante. He came to the United States from Mexico in 2000 to study music as a scholarship student at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock. During his final classical guitar recital as an undergraduate, he sensed a void and asked God how he might make a greater impact than as a musician. He went on to study at St. Meinrad Seminary in Indiana but discerned in 2011 that he was not called to the priesthood. Fast forward to 2018, when Jefferson City’s Bishop W. Shawn McKnight, STD, asked this now happily married father of two small children to consider the permanent diaconate. Enrique is one of 18 men preparing for ordination to the permanent diaconate in 2019. For the first time, half of the men are Hispanic, and they have received support from Adelante.

“I feel blessed because I have felt God’s call in my life very clearly,” Enrique says. “I see my job as both a job and a ministry. I’m trying to do the best I can to make a difference and help future generations in our diocese.”

The Diocese of Jefferson City includes 38 counties whose communities are connected primarily with two-lane roads.

• The diocese includes 95 parishes and 15 missions. Two-thirds of the parishes are small and rural, with a modest income. Twenty-two parishes have fewer than 50 families.

• Although Catholics represent almost 9% of the population served by the diocese, most Catholics live in several geographic pockets, so their presence represents only 1% of some counties.

• The diocese is served by 60 active diocesan priests, 4 active religious priests, 14 international priests, 70 permanent deacons, and 31 women religious.

• Half of the parishes have a resident priest. Three parishes are administered by permanent deacons, and two are served by women religious. One county has no Catholic parish.

• Jesuit missionaries and waves of German, Italian, and Irish immigration established a well-organized system of rural parishes in the early and mid-19th century.

• The Diocese of Jefferson City was established in 1956 from territory that was previously part of the Archdiocese of St. Louis and the former Dioceses of Kansas City and St. Joseph.

A Mexican folk dance group from St. Patrick Church, Sedalia, provides entertainment at the reception for the Annual Multicultural Celebration at St. Joseph’s Cathedral.
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www.usccb.org/home-missions

READ ABOUT HOW the Diocese of Jefferson City’s ministries to Hispanic Catholics fulfill Catholic Home Missions’s longtime goal of supporting the faith of underserved communities across the country.

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