Embracing the Multicultural Face of God
Cultural Diversity and Catholic Identity
The document *Embracing the Multicultural Face of God: Cultural Diversity and Catholic Identity* was developed as a resource by the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). It was reviewed by the committee chairman, Bishop Jaime Soto, and has been authorized for publication by the undersigned.

Msgr. David J. Malloy, STD
General Secretary, USCCB


Excerpt from *What We Have Seen and Heard, A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization from the Black Bishops of the United States*. Copyright © 1984, St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati.

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GREETING FROM BISHOP JAIME SOTO

Dear Friends in Christ,

The Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church pursues the goal of making diversity and its implications more recognized and understood among church leaders—clergy, religious, and laity. This is urgently needed given the profound demographic shift that the Church is currently undergoing. Knowledge, attitudes, and skills that effectively foster unity in diversity must be nurtured among our leadership and the faithful in general.

For the Church unity in diversity is a requirement of catholicity, one of the marks of the Church. This is of special importance today because of globalization, migration, and the interdependence of people in our country and throughout the world.

In addition to advancing greater competence in intercultural relations in ministry, our committee seeks to collaborate with the bishops in carrying out their priorities in the areas of faith formation, social justice, the promotion of marriage, and the fostering of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. In all these areas pastoral adaption to the cultural and language needs of the Catholic community is a strategic necessity.

Immigrant youth and the children of immigrants are the hope of the Church now and for decades to come. Youth ministry, religious education, and Catholic schools must be competent and eager to nurture this young Church so that they can zealously assume the mission of Christ.

The Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church is blessed with a dedicated multicultural staff that seeks to model and promote intercultural awareness and skills among the various departments of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The staff also interfaces with scores of ethnic, cultural, and racial communities throughout the country. These include refugees, migrant farm workers, circus workers, seafarers, and travelers who often do not find the pastoral care they need given their particular ways of life. To them the Church extends a caring hand.

There are many faces in God’s house and all are called to the banquet! May our Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of the New Evangelization, gather us tenderly under the mantle of her maternal love.

Respectfully,

Most Reverend Jaime Soto
Bishop of Sacramento
Chairman, Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church

Two hundred years later, the Church in America can rightfully praise the accomplishment of past generations in bringing together widely differing immigrant groups within the unity of the Catholic faith and in a common commitment to the spread of the Gospel. At the same time, conscious of its rich diversity, the Catholic community in this country has come to appreciate ever more fully the importance of each individual and group offering its own particular gifts to the whole. The Church in the United States is now called to look to the future, firmly grounded in the faith passed on by previous generations, and ready to meet new challenges—challenges no less demanding than those faced by your forebears—with the hope born of God’s love, poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5).

SECRETARIAT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE CHURCH (SCDC) MANDATE

The SCDC is given the mandate to assist the bishops in instilling the vision of Encuentro 2000 and Ecclesia in America throughout the Church with the goal of bringing all the culturally and racially diverse communities, including European Americans, into a fuller participation in the faith, life, and evangelizing mission of the Church. Of special importance are the opportunities, challenges, and pastoral implications of promoting diversity awareness within and among the various USCCB committees, USCCB offices, and communities at large by working collaboratively with all the committees of the Conference, with bishops and their dioceses, and with national and regional organizations that serve the needs of the faithful throughout the country. This includes several specialized ministries serving the pastoral needs of those with limited resources, such as recently arrived immigrants, migrant workers, refugees, and travelers.

WHY IS DIVERSITY IMPORTANT?

We live at a time when the encounter of languages, races, and cultures is more intense than ever. Mass media, especially the Internet, travel, immigration, and an increasingly globalized economy are bringing people together more and more. The experience of diversity is therefore more characteristic of our times and brings with it serious challenges and great opportunities. Diversity is a fact, a growing reality, in the United States and in virtually all areas of the globe.

Jesus Christ commanded his followers “to teach all nations.” The Catholic Church, precisely because it is “catholic”—that is, “universal”—has always taken this command seriously. So the Church’s mission to evangelize, or proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to advance the Kingdom of God is centered on the encounter of faith with cultures and on the promotion of justice. This is a process of conversion characterized by dialogue. In this process the Church both gives from its treasure of faith and receives from the distinctive humanity of each and every culture. As Church history indicates, the Church cannot be focused on its mission to evangelize without being more and more an expert in diversity (see Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation On Evangelization in the Modern World [Evangelii Nuntiandi]).

CATHOLIC CULTURAL DIVERSITY NETWORK CONVOCATION

From May 6 to 8, 2010, three hundred leaders from among the major cultural families that make up the Church, including European Americans, gathered at the University of Notre Dame. Among them were twenty-three archbishops and bishops together with Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, along with priests, deacons, religious, and lay leaders from every part of the country. They came to celebrate the Church’s growing diversity as a profound blessing for catholicity. They highlighted the urgent need to foster competence in intercultural communications and relations in the Church today among all leaders, in parishes, dioceses, schools, and Catholic organizations. The bishops provided a compelling vision of a vibrant Catholicism in the United States, built on the foundation of Catholic identity and unity in diversity.
Key Mission Priorities

• Promote the vision for Hispanic/Latino(a) ministry articulated in the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry.
• Promote the implementation of Encuentro and Mission: A New Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry at the national and local level.
• Provide support and technical assistance to dioceses, key national Catholic organizations, and institutions on issues related to the Hispanic/Latino(a) presence and the Encuentro process.
• Collaborate with USCCB committees, secretariats, and offices in the implementation of the five priorities as they relate to Hispanics/Latinos(as) in the area of vocations, marriage and family life, faith formation, life and dignity of the human person, and cultural diversity.
• Develop means to share news and information periodically with the Hispanic ministry network through a newsletter and/or Web site.
• Follow up on the National Encuentro for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry and the National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry.
• Continue ongoing relationship with CELAM, particularly in regard to the implementation of Ecclesia in America and the conclusions of the Fifth Conference of the Latin-American Episcopate and of the Caribbean held in Aparecida, Brazil.

Statistics on Hispanic/Latino(a) Catholics

• Hispanics/Latinos(as) are present in practically every diocese of the United States.
• More than 20% of all Catholic parishes in the United States have Hispanic/Latino(a) ministry.
• More than 80% of all (arch)dioceses have diocesan staff coordinating Hispanic/Latino(a) ministry.
• Hispanics/Latinos(as) compose more than 35% of all Catholics in the United States.
• Hispanics/Latinos(as) have contributed 71% of the growth of the Catholic Church in the United States since 1960.
• More than 50% of all Catholics in the United States under age 25 are of Hispanic/Latino(a) descent.
• To date, 45 Hispanic/Latino bishops have been ordained in the United States, 28 of whom are active. They make up 9% of all Catholic bishops in the United States.
• Over the past few years, 15% of all new priests ordained in the United States have been of Hispanic/Latino(a) descent.
• Hispanics/Latinos(as) constitute 25% of all laypeople engaged in diocesan ministry programs.
• More than two-thirds (68%) of all Hispanics/Latinos(as) in the United States consider themselves to be Roman Catholics.
• The estimated Hispanic/Latino(a) population of the United States as of 2009 is 48.4 million.
• It is projected that Hispanics/Latinos(as) will surpass the 132.8 million mark by the year 2050.

Sources: www.usccb.org/hispanicaffairs; U.S. Census Bureau; the Pew Hispanic Center (April 2010)

“By drawing on its rich history and experience, the Hispanic Community can offer a unique contribution to the dialogue between faith and culture in American society today, and thus open new paths for the spread of the Gospel in the Third Millennium.” We believe this to be the most important contribution of Hispanic Catholics to the New Evangelization in the United States.

Key Mission Priorities

• Facilitate information sharing and collaboration among national Black Catholic organizations, their networks, and others who are interested in best practices of evangelization and programs of inclusion at the diocesan and national levels.
• Encourage and support the training of African American leaders on methods of evangelizing African Americans to the Catholic Church as prescribed by the National Black Catholic Pastoral Plan.
• Create opportunities for engaging diverse ideas.
• Identify and participate in community events that celebrate diversity, e.g., National Day of Prayer for the African American Family and Black Catholic History Month—events that encourage appropriate participation at the national level.

Statistics on African American Catholics

• There are 3 million African American Catholics in the United States.
• Of Roman Catholic parishes in the United States, 798 are considered to be predominantly African American. Most of those continue to be on the East Coast and in the South. Further west of the Mississippi, African American Catholics are more likely to be immersed in multicultural parishes as opposed to predominantly African American parishes.
• At present there are 16 living African American bishops, of whom 10 remain active.
• Currently, six U.S. dioceses are headed by African American bishops.
• There are 250 African American priests in the United States and 75 men of African descent in seminary formation for the priesthood.
• There are about 400 African American religious sisters and 50 religious brothers.
• The Black population in the United States is estimated to be just over 36 million people (13% of the total U.S. population).
• By the year 2050, the Black population is expected to almost double its present size to 62 million, and it will increase its percentage of the population to 16%.

Source: www.uspapalvisit.org/backgrounders/african_american.htm

There is richness in our Black experience that we must share with the entire People of God. These are gifts that are part of an African past. For we have heard with Black ears and we have seen with Black eyes and we have understood with an African heart. We thank God for the gifts of our Catholic faith and we give thanks for the gifts of our Blackness. In all humility we turn to the whole Church that it might share our gifts so that “our joy may be complete.”

What We Have Seen and Heard: A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization from the Black Bishops of the United States (1984), 4
Key Mission Priorities
• Continue to support and collaborate with key national organizations, including the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and the Tekakwitha Conference.
• Continue to identify and/or develop culturally and ethnically specific resources in the areas of catechesis, lay ministry formation, liturgy, evangelization, and the diaconate.
• Continue to collaborate with other USCCB offices, including Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth; Education; Evangelization and Catechesis; Vocations; Liturgy; and Pastoral Practices.

Statistics on Native American Catholics
• More than 340 parishes in the United States serve predominantly Native American congregations.
• Of all (arch)dioceses in the United States, 30% have an office and/or program specifically targeting Native American Catholics.
• Native Americans compose approximately 3.5% of all Catholics in the United States.
• Only 40% of Native Americans live in reservations or trust lands.
• Currently, two (arch)dioceses are headed by bishops of Native American ancestry.
• Most of those ministering to Native American Catholics are members of religious orders; those most likely to be Native American themselves are lay ministers and deacons.
• Approximately 20% of all Native Americans residing in the United States consider themselves Roman Catholics.
• According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 2.9 million people identified themselves as Native Americans or Alaska Natives in the year 2008, an increase of about 400,000 from the year 2000. Of this total, it is estimated that 580,000 are Roman Catholic.
• In addition to the 2.9 million Americans whose primary race is given as Native American or Alaska Native, approximately 1.6 million Americans claim some degree of Native American ancestry. Of this number, it is estimated that approximately 200,000 are Roman Catholics, for a total of approximately 780,000 people claiming some Native American/Alaska Native ancestry who are Catholics in the United States.

Source: USCCB Secretariat of Cultural Diversity, Native American Catholics at the Millennium

I encourage you as native people to preserve and keep alive your cultures, your languages, the values and customs which have served you well in the past and which provide a solid foundation for the future. . . . “Your encounter with the Gospel has not only enriched you; it has enriched the Church. We are well aware that this has not taken place without its difficulties and, occasionally, its blunders. However . . . the Gospel does not destroy what is best in you. On the contrary, it enriches the spiritual qualities and gifts that are distinctive of your cultures. . . .”

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLAND AFFAIRS (SCAPA)

Chairman: Bishop Randolph R. Calvo

Key Mission Priorities

• Assist dioceses in building capacities to welcome and integrate Asian and Pacific Catholics in parish life.

• Increase availability of sacraments, pastoral services, and appropriate religious education materials in the languages and cultural idioms of Asian and Pacific Island communities who cannot sufficiently make use of the common and ordinary pastoral services of local parishes.

• Promote the formation of Asian and Pacific Island Catholic pastoral leaders so they become evangelizers of their families, ethnic communities, and local churches.

• Assist Asian and Pacific Island Catholics in strengthening their faith communities and building communion with each other, with diverse members of the Church, and with their local bishops and pastors through diocesan, regional, and national gatherings.

• Promote the implementation of recommendations in Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith at the local and national level.

Statistics on Asian Pacific Catholics

• In July 2008, an estimated 15.5 million U.S. residents were Asian (about 5% of the total U.S. population); and an estimated 1.1 million people were Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders (0.4% of the total population).

• In 2008, Chinese Americans (3.62 million) were the largest Asian group, followed by Filipinos (3.09 million), Asian Indians (2.73 million), Vietnamese (1.73 million), Koreans (1.61 million), and Japanese (1.3 million).

• The largest Pacific Islander groups are the Native Hawaiians, Guamanians, Samoans, and Tongans.

• California had the largest Asian as well as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander populations in 2008.

• Hawaii is the nation’s only majority-Asian state. Asians made up the highest proportion of the total population (54%) in 2008; and more than 50% of the Catholic population is of Asian and Pacific origins.

• Except for the Filipinos, the majority of Asian people in the United States are followers of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.

• Of the new priests from the ordination class of 2009, 11% were of Asian origins even though the percentage of Asian Catholics in the United States is only 4-5%.

• The 10 dioceses with the highest number of Asians, according to the 2000 Census, are Los Angeles, Honolulu, Brooklyn, San Jose, Oakland, San Francisco, Orange, Seattle, New York, and Chicago.

• Asian Catholics also include members of the Eastern Catholic Churches of the Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, and Maronite traditions.

• To date, only five bishops of Asian and Pacific origins have been ordained; four remain active.


By being authentically Christian and truly Asian in the footsteps of Christ, they [Asians and Pacific Islanders] have brought to us a more profound understanding of what it means to be truly Catholic. They have taught the Church in the United States the meaning of harmony; the necessity of dialogue with their cultures, with other religions, and with the poor; a renewed sense of family loyalty; the unity between diverse cultures and diverse Catholic church communities, and the closeness of all God’s creation.

Key Mission Priorities

- Provide direction and serve as the lead agent for the bishops’ pastoral priorities.
- Collaborate with a network of national advisors from the various ethnic communities and people on the move.
- Encourage an appropriate welcome for the migrants, refugees, and travelers, and link them to the ecclesial life of local parishes.
- Promote catechesis and liturgies in native languages, and increase availability of pastoral care, sacraments, and liturgical and religious education materials that are culturally appropriate.
- Assist with leadership development, family support systems, and youth empowerment programs to support the various ethnic and people-on-the-move ministries.
- Aid in the pastoral care outreach of migrants, refugees, and travelers by encouraging cultural expressions of faith and by building support and solidarity among the communities through diocesan, regional, and national gatherings.

PCMRT Statistics

Airport Chaplaincy in Collaboration with the National Conference of Catholic Airport Chaplains (NCCAC)
- 58 Catholic airport chaplains and pastoral team
- In 28 (arch)dioceses

Apostleship of the Sea in Collaboration with the Apostleship of the Sea–USA (AOSUSA)
- 79 chaplains and pastoral team
- In 49 (arch)dioceses
- Cruise ship priest program—541 priests

Migrant Farm Workers in Collaboration with the Catholic Migrant Farmworkers Network (CMFN)
- 127 diocesan contacts—mostly Hispanic ministry directors and leaders of migrant and rural groups

Circus and Traveling Show Ministries in Collaboration with the Circus and Traveling Show Ministries Organization
- 27 chaplains and pastoral team

The Church of the twenty-first century will be, as it has always been, a Church of many cultures, languages, and traditions, yet simultaneously one, as God is one—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—unity in diversity.

USCCB, Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity (2000), 56
PCMRT is also responsible for collaborating with race car drivers; horse racing workers; bull riders; Gypsies; Irish Travelers; truckers/truck stop ministry; and tourism, including the national parks, tourist centers, and workers in the tourism industry.

Various Cultural/Ethnic Communities

- 19 African communities: Burundians, Cameroonians, Congolese, Cape Verdeans, Equatorials, Eritreans and Ethiopians (Ge’ez rite), Ghanaians, Guineans, Ivoirians, Kenyans, Liberians, Nigerians, Rwandans, Sierra Leonese, Sudanese, Tanzanians, Ugandans, Zaireans, Zambians
- 9 Caribbean communities: Belizeans, Dominicans, Grenadians, Guyanans, Haitians, Jamaicans, Santa Lucians, Trinidadians, and Tobagonians
- 12 European communities: Croatians, Czech, French, Irish, Italians, Lithuanians, Polish, Portuguese, Hungarians, Slovak, Slovenians, Ukrainians
- Mayans
- Brazilians

Sources: USCCB Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees, African and Caribbean Catholics in the United States and Ethnic Apostolate Annual Report 2006

PCMRT provides support and technical assistance and collaborates with the following Catholic organizations:

- African Women Religious Conference (AWRC)
- African Catholic Clergy Association (ACCA)
- National Association of African Catholics in the United States (NAACUS)—www.naacus.org
- Igbo Catholic Community USA (ICCUSA)—www.iccusaweb.org

Immigrant communities give ample witness to what it is to be Church—in their desire to worship as a people, in their faith, in their solidarity with one another and with the weakest among them, in their devotion and their faithfulness to the Church of their ancestors. For the Church in the United States to walk in solidarity with newcomers to our country is to live out our catholicity as a Church.

THE REORGANIZATION OF THE USCCB: STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PRIORITIES

In 2008 the USCCB underwent a reorganization mandated by the bishops in order to further the Conference’s mission to evangelize in a more strategic way. In the past, much good work was being done by the committees and departments of the Conference, but this activity was sometimes pursued without clear priorities and timelines that would allow the bishops to better evaluate the outcomes. As a result, in their 2007 annual meeting the bishops agreed to pursue five priorities over the next three to five years. The Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church (SCDC) consolidated the Secretariats of Hispanic Affairs and of African American Affairs. Asian and Pacific Affairs and the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers—previously under Migration and Refugee Services as the Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees—were included in the new Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church.

FIVE PRIORITY GOALS OF THE USCCB, 2008-2011

1. Strengthening marriage
2. Faith formation and sacramental practice
3. Promotion of vocations to priesthood and consecrated life
4. Life and dignity of the human person
5. Recognition of cultural diversity with a special emphasis on Hispanic ministry in the spirit of Encuentro 2000

In the process of developing initiatives and programs in response to the five priorities, the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church with its five subcommittees will stress the need for dialogue among the various cultural communities themselves and with the other offices of the Conference. This is crucial since an effective evangelization and sound pastoral responses require knowledge of the cultures and of the pastoral and social realities of these diverse communities in the larger context of the United States.

Ministry in the twenty-first century calls for a two-fold commitment to unity in diversity: to welcome and foster the specific cultural identity of each of the many faces in the Church, while building a profoundly Catholic identity that strengthens the unity of the one body of Christ. This understanding of ministry is highlighted in various pastoral statements of the bishops of the United States, including Encuentro and Mission, marking the beginning of the twenty-first century.

STAFF FOR THE SECRETARIAT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE CHURCH

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: SR. MYRNA TORDILLO, BEVERLY CARROLL, MELISA RIVERA, MARGARET MARZEC, ALEJANDRO AGUILERA-TITUS, FR. ALLAN DECK, BETTY CARTER, MARY ELLEN DAVEY, SR. JOANNA OKEREKE, LEONOR CASTRO, AND CECILE MOTUS.

FR. ALLAN FIGUEROA DECK, SJ, DIRECTOR

FR. ALLAN FIGUEROA DECK, SJ, was named the first Executive Director of the Office for Cultural Diversity in the Church at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in January 2008.