September 25, 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am happy to offer this updated version of Reconciled Through Christ: On Reconciliation and Greater Collaboration Between Hispanic American Catholics and African American Catholics as an online resource for evangelization, and as a model for overcoming obstacles that may surface as diverse communities begin working together. Initially issued by the African American and Hispanic Catholic Bishops in 1997, this statement is both a tool and a foundation for initiating, sustaining and invigorating multicultural partnerships in Catholic parishes, educational institutions and organizations.

In 2012 several Hispanic and African American bishops engaged in joint public discussions at a number of national Catholic gatherings about challenges and opportunities for collaboration between our respective communities. Encouraged by the response, we committed ourselves to continue such dialogues. Subsequently, the chairs of the Bishops’ Subcommittees on African American Affairs and Hispanic Affairs agreed to re-issue an updated version of our earlier collaborative statement. At this time, we feel it timely and necessary to reiterate and amplify our message, encouraging its application also to other Catholic communities.

It happens that many of our toughest ministerial challenges appear unexpectedly in our daily interactions with others. Despite the best of intentions, quite often we find ourselves at cross-roads in our relations with others. At the same time, though, our faith bids us see in these interactions graced occasions, invitations from the Lord to see and live beyond the initial challenge, toward the realization of a deeper grace of collaboration and appreciation. The witness of the Church to Jesus is in our perseverance in building a more profound communion between persons and communities.

Within this increasingly diverse nation and Church we are challenged to love one another, not only as individuals, but as members of multiple communities. In our experience, the most effective way to “love one another as Christ loved us” is to step outside comfort zones when necessary, and enter into respectful and loving relationships with others, discovering new opportunities to communicate and work together as equal members of the Body of Christ.

Ultimately, we value the gift of our diversity and of our unity in faith, while acknowledging that we are stronger proponents in the evangelizing mission of the Church when we appreciate and acknowledge the gifts of others, and when we work together for the good of all. It is my hope that this resource will bring us closer to Our Lord’s profound prayer, that we may be one with our God and with one another.

Sincerely,

Bishop Daniel Flores
Bishop of Brownsville
Chairman