

Diocese of Norwich

Program Description

- Under the leadership of Hispanic Ministry and an Inter-departmental delegation of diocesan directors, Norwich is developing educational materials, and offering training sessions for priests, deacons, parish staff, lay ministers and diocesan personnel (beginning with 5 pilot parishes with significant multilingual/ multicultural populations) on multicultural awareness.
- The training program consists of a 3-day seminar on race/culture for leaders in the five parishes, which will help them examine their own cultural prejudices and develop personal and institutional action plans. The training will be followed by monthly sharing groups that are multicultural and Gospel-based and by “life immersion experiences” that expose the participants to cultural communities.
- Technical assistance on multicultural issues will be offered to the parishes participating in the pilot program. At the end of the year, a second seminar will be offered for the purpose of closing and evaluation. A closing celebration will accompany the seminar.
- The diocese is also running a program to recruit leaders from among the various ethnic communities in the diocese and will offer them special training to enhance their capacity as leaders within their respective parishes.

Outcomes:

- Sr. Mary Jude Lazarus, Director of Hispanic Ministry for the diocese, reports that as a result of their ethnic leadership training program, already “more than 50 new ethnic leaders have been trained in parishes across the diocese. A survey of the ethnic leadership shows that 80% report that their communities feel more ‘directly involved in the life of the Church’ as a result of seeing more of their ethnic leaders involved in leadership within the parishes.”
- Coupled with their outreach to ethnic leadership, the diocese is focused on promoting “personal transformation” and “an increased sensitivity and awareness” amongst its existing parish and diocesan leadership “which leads to visible and concrete expressions of welcome for the newly arrived and ethnically/ culturally diverse groups in the diocese.” Towards this end, bishop invited over 40 diocesan and parish leaders to accompany him at an intensive three-day “Race and Culture Seminar”. Upon conclusion of the program, one of the participants commented “Before the seminar, if someone had told me I was prejudice and I discriminate, I would have said ‘no way.’ Now I know that I do and so I am part of the problem.” Another participant remarked, “Since the seminar, the idea of social sin has been more real for me.” Overall, the program has galvanized leadership to want to learn and do even more in the way of multicultural issues.
- According to Sr. Mary Jude “parishes have been requesting follow-up presentations on multicultural issues; others have been developing bilingual parish bulletins and ordering more bilingual miselettes and hymnals. The participants in the first seminar have also requested a follow-up seminar that would help them develop an even greater sensitivity and awareness.”