



One Church Many Cultures

THE GOOD NEWS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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“Responding even more deeply to the call of Christ to proclaim the Gospel and form Missionary Disciples, the Committees and Staff of the USCCB, submitting to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, will prioritize the work of the Conference to help equip bishops, clergy, religious, and the laity in evangelizing those who are religiously unaffiliated or disaffiliated from the Church, with special focus on young adults and the youth.”

—United States Conference
of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
2025-2028 Mission Directive



The USCCB Mission Directive and the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church: Missionary Disciples Journeying Together

By Maria del Mar Muñoz-Visoso, MTS

For longer than a year and a half, the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church has fully focused on the intersection between the USCCB's 2025-2028 Mission Directive and its own committee mandate, which was established by the US bishops in 2008 and was slightly updated and affirmed in early 2025.

The USCCB's Mission Directive—the Conference's overall goal for the current four-year planning process—reads as follows: “Responding even more deeply to the call of Christ to proclaim the Gospel and form Missionary Disciples, the Committees and Staff of the USCCB, submitting to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, will prioritize the work of the Conference to help equip bishops, clergy, religious, and the laity in evangelizing those who are religiously unaffiliated or disaffiliated from the Church, with special focus on youth and young adults.”

The mandate of the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church states: “In a spirit of missionary discipleship and synodality, the standing committee assists the bishops, both collectively and individually, by working collaboratively with all the committees of the Conference and with bishops and their dioceses to bring Catholics from various culturally diverse communities into a fuller participation in the faith, life, and evangelizing mission of the Church. The committee especially works to promote an awareness of cultural diversity within all the committees and offices of the USCCB. This mandate includes the following areas of responsibility: Pastoral care of African American Catholics, Asian and Pacific Island Catholics, Hispanic/Latino Catholics, Native American Catholics, and Catholic migrants, refugees, and people on the move.”

After some dialogue and discernment, the committee determined that it is uniquely positioned to advance the mission directive among the populations under its pastoral care. It is imperative for us to

continue promoting intercultural dialogue and encounter within the Church and in society, as well as intercultural competence in ministry at all levels.

To this end, and by popular demand, the committee has recently published the *Journeying Together Handbook: A Manual for Intercultural Encounter*. We hope that dioceses, parishes, schools, religious communities, and national organizations will find inspiration in this process—which was led by young adults in dialogue with the bishops and ministry leaders—and will be able to use it and adapt it for their needs. A companion resource, the *Journeying Together Proceedings* document, has also been completed. To the original learnings from the intracultural and intercultural dialogue sessions, the finalized proceedings add the visioning and planning that emerged from *Alive in Christ*, the national Journeying Together event. Both resources are posted now and available on the committee's website.

The Journeying Together process for intercultural encounter motivated young adults and ministry leaders in many communities, movements, and national organizations to emphasize a renewed and urgent focus on youth and young adults, including attention to young couples and families.

In recent years the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church has also taken decisive steps toward fulfilling the USCCB's Mission Directive through several other processes of synodal consultation and discernment between the bishops and the various cultural families under their pastoral care. Implementing the documents and pastoral responses emanating from those processes (e.g., *Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response to Asian and Pacific Islanders*; *Missionary Disciples Going Forth with Joy: National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry*; *Keeping Christ's Sacred Promise*:

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Celebrating Our Rich Mosaic of Faith

By Most Rev. Robert Brennan



Nearly one hundred years ago, in October 1927, my grandfather, Patrick Hynes, arrived on the shores of New York after leaving his family behind in County Sligo, Ireland. I imagine it was a difficult journey, because he did not return to visit his homeland for more than 30 years. He found work and in 1935 married my grandmother, Mary Katherine Blaney, the daughter of immigrants from Belfast.

I recently had the opportunity to address the County Sligo Social and Benevolent Association of New York and to reflect on my grandfather's journey and his life in New York.

As I think about it, my grandfather did not come to the United States to make his life better or easier. In fact, life was a bit less certain and more difficult in many ways. Don't get me wrong: He did well working as a trainman in the New York City Transit System. He came not to make his life better but to marry, raise a family, and give opportunities to my mother, her brother and sister, and my generation.

My grandfather's sister never married, but she served as a bridge for the family, connecting us across the ocean and helping the family that remained back at home. Isn't that the story for so many of our families? Many of our parents, grandparents, or more distant ancestors came motivated by hope, pursuing the raising of families and the providing of opportunities. They did their best with what they had, without knowing what the future held.

We aren't perfect, but we do the best we can to live our lives for God and for others: to stand in solidarity, to encourage and support. While we do so, we build up our cities, our communities, and our nation here in the United States. Indeed, we love our country.

It is because of this love of country that we are distressed by political ideologies on both sides of the proverbial aisle, along with the divisive rhetoric surrounding immigration. Coupled with the growing devaluation of human life in this country in these last

50 years, we witness a dehumanization of people who are different and who promote political ideologies different from our own.

We know that as Americans we can do better. We have a rich heritage of solving problems and overcoming divisions. We can have law and order that respects the dignity of every human person and at the same time welcomes the newcomers and refugees. We can treat newcomers and refugees humanely, not as political capital, without causing chaos. We pray for our nation, the land here that we love, and the values it stands for.

On a more positive note, the coming Feast of Pentecost celebrates the rich mosaic of the People of God, the Church. We witness to our faith and encourage one another in that same faith. True, we come from many different backgrounds, but we are united in the one faith. Pope Leo XIV reminds us of the words of St. Augustine: In the one Christ, we are one!

Bishop Brennan is the Bishop of Brooklyn and chairman of the USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church.



Bishop Robert Brennan participating in St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 17, 2026. Photo: John Quaglione.

Telling the Whole Story



By Ansel Augustine, DMin

The Catholic Church proclaims itself universal—catholic in the truest sense of the word. Yet universality is not merely about geography; it is about visibility. It is about whose stories are told, whose faith is recognized, and whose witness is lifted up as part of the living tradition. Telling the story of Black Catholics is not optional cultural appreciation. It is essential to the integrity of the Church, and it is urgent for a society and a generation searching for belonging.

This is why the USCCB’s Mission Directive—especially the part that states that the USCCB “will prioritize . . . evangelizing those who are religiously unaffiliated or disaffiliated from the Church, with special focus on young adults and the youth”—is essential to connecting with the community.

From the earliest days of Christianity, Africa has been central to the faith. The Church gave us saints such as Augustine of Hippo and Monica, whose witness still shapes Catholic theology and spirituality. In the American story, figures like Servant of God Thea Bowman, St. Katharine Drexel, and Venerable Augustus Tolton reveal a Church sustained by Black faith even amid racism and exclusion.

Too often, however, these stories remain footnotes rather than foundations. When Black Catholic narratives are absent from classrooms and parish life, the message—intended or not—is that Black faith is peripheral. For young people already questioning institutions, that silence reinforces disaffiliation. Many youth and young adults leave not because they reject Christ but because they struggle to see themselves reflected in the Church’s story.

Representation is not tokenism; it is theological truth. The Body of Christ is incomplete when any part is ignored. When young people hear about Black Catholics who worshiped in segregated pews yet never abandoned their faith, they encounter a Church that survives suffering and transforms injustice. That witness is compelling and credible. This why the

Subcommittee on African American Affairs has been coordinating young adult listening sessions around the country with the purpose of hearing from this demographic about how the Church can serve them better.

For disaffiliated youth, authenticity matters. They want a Church that acknowledges history—both sin and sanctity. Telling the story of Black Catholics forces the Church to confront racism while celebrating prophetic perseverance. It shows that Catholicism can hold lament and hope at the same time. In a world shaped by racial injustice and cultural fragmentation, Black Catholic history becomes a bridge between gospel proclamation and lived experience. Two of the subcommittee’s projects are the restructuring of the Josephite Pastoral Center, which includes updating relevant Black Catholic resources, and the upcoming Catholic TV series on the Saintry Six, the Black Catholics with open canonization causes coming from US dioceses.

If the Church desires to reach young adults, especially those on the margins, it must tell the whole story—not as an annual celebration, but as a constant proclamation. When young people see themselves in the communion of saints, they begin to believe they belong there.

And belonging is often the first step back home.

Ansel Augustine is an assistant director in the USCCB’s Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church.



iCatholic Media (DBA The Catholic TV Network).

A Mission Lived Between Law and Hope

By Fr. Etido Jerome, SSJ



St. Augustine High School in New Orleans, situated between Law and Hope Street, was founded by St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart, popularly known as the Josephite Fathers and Brothers. The school was founded in 1951 through the Youth Progress Program of the Archdiocese of New Orleans at the direction of Archbishop Joseph Francis Rummel to meet the educational needs of the time.

Archbishop Rummel had floated the idea of founding three high schools in New Orleans: two for whites and one for Blacks. The novel idea was exciting for the Josephites, who at the time were already providing lay leadership in the Black community. Josephite priests and brothers were already operating successful elementary and secondary schools in their parishes. These successes led Fr. Edward V. Casserly, the superior general of the Josephites, to write to Archbishop Rummel offering to establish and operate a high school for Black boys in the city of New Orleans.

Hence, on March 23, 1950, the first Catholic high school for “colored boys” was announced. In the following year, on Sunday, August 26, 1951, St. Augustine High School was formally dedicated under the patronage of St. Augustine of Hippo—interestingly, only two days before the saint's feast. St. Augustine of Hippo, the Doctor of Grace from North Africa, serves as the inspiration behind the mission and vision of the school. The school is rooted in the Augustinian traditions with its motto: *Gratia Est Vita* (Grace Is Life).

Today, in an era when Black men are vilified with a misconstrued sense of masculinity, it is important to uplift and empower Black men with the Josephite and Augustinian formula. This formula acknowledges education as a product of grace, where one is perfected even in weakness. For us within the “St. Aug” family, masculinity is holistic. This view entails forming the whole person and physically and morally rooting him in the image of God. St. Augustine High School is

successful because of its emphasis on personal dignity, which arises from humanity as created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ. Within the walls of the high school, virtue is nurtured, and true fraternal charity is built with utmost loyalty to God and to one another.

The priority of offering Catholic education for minorities and those on the margins serves as a moral example for the Catholic Church. The Josephites, with devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, led from the heart by attempting to make right the imbalances of the world in founding this school. Catholic education for Black males is a necessity, especially for those in inner cities who have little or no access to resources. St. Augustine High School is an exemplar for the Catholic Church in that it demonstrates the rich diversity that exists in the Catholic faith. The faith, vibrancy, commitment, and dedication of the young men to God, the Church, and the community are impressive.

This brand of education can serve as an opportunity for the Church to reevangelize inner cities and create access to those most in need. St. Augustine High School and the Josephites have taken on this exceptional mission to evangelize Black people. They offer Black males a chance to embrace God and pursue knowledge within their own cultural identity.

Conclusively, students at St. Augustine serve God by serving one another in the mission of Jesus Christ. By embracing grace, we seek to discover what ought to be done to create a better world, to put into action the fruit of our discovery, and to continue to rise as sons to serve God with true devotion and be loyal forever.

Josephite Father Etido Jerome, SSJ, has a licentiate in sacred theology from the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC. He is the chief religious officer at St. Augustine High School in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Facing Our Dragons Together: Courage, Culture, and the Path of Renewal

By Clarissa Ann Martinez



When I first visited the Holy Land, I encountered an image that stayed with me: a mounted figure who I assumed was St. Michael—until I noticed the dragon beneath his horse. It was St. George, beloved by local Christians as a protector of households in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, much like St. Benedict or St. Joseph are venerated in other locations. What intrigued me was how this Western image of a dragon slayer meets a very different Asian understanding of dragons as symbols of wisdom, strength, and blessing. These are even celebrated in the dragon dance tradition, where sweeping movements are believed to drive away harm and usher in protection and good fortune. That contrast came alive again through my 7-year-old son, who treasures a plush toy of “the knight saint and dragon slayer,” seeing in St. George a hero of courage and goodness. His childlike faith reminds me that every culture teaches us how to face the dragons of life with hope.

That same spirit of renewal has been present in the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs (SCAPA) regional consultations that began in February 2026 and continue through June 2026 and beyond. These gatherings function as a kind of synodal summit experience, where bishops, clergy, diocesan leaders, and national Asian and Pacific Islander (API) Catholic leaders come together in the embodied hope of journeying with one another—reflecting, listening, and discerning a path forward as a synodal community. Grounded in the SCAPA Framework for Integration and aligned with *Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response To Our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters*, the consultations are part of SCAPA’s ongoing effort to accompany API communities with greater attentiveness, shared responsibility, and a deeper commitment to walking together.

Across these gatherings, a clear message emerged: API Catholics bring profound gifts to the Church—deep faith, growing in unity, courage, patience, and a

resilience shaped by migration and sacrifice. Formed within religiously diverse environments, they also carry a natural capacity for engaging others in respectful dialogue without losing their identity. Their witness offers the Church a hopeful model for walking together in a pluralistic society with clarity and charity.

As this shared journey has deepened, consultation participants have reflected on the familiar process of rice threshing: how the grain must be gently separated from the husk before it can nourish a community. This careful work is done with patience and sacred respect for the harvest. In that same spirit, participants named places where we may be invited to let go of what no longer serves our mission: fear of speaking up, hesitation to trust the Spirit’s movement, judgment, pride, mistrust of youth, generational divides, lingering power structures, and the belief that there is “no space at the table.” The biblical story of the feeding of the 5,000 surfaced as a reminder that Jesus begins not with what we lack but with what we are willing to offer.

Within this broader movement, two directions resonated with SCAPA’s mission directives:

- **Walking Together Through Culture, Family, and Intergenerational Healing:** This direction highlights the value of culturally rooted listening circles, mental health-aware pastoral care, and family centered practices.
- **Collaborative Leadership and Intercultural Partnership:** This directive emphasizes strengthening regional networks, cultivating leadership formation, and creating mentorship pathways that uplift API voices. Throughout these conversations, leaders reflected on how the Church might more fully support API Catholics through the six SCAPA integration dimensions: spiritual, cultural, apostolic, pastoral, advocacy, and stewardship.

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Mission with Migrants, Refugees, and People on the Move



By Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ

Reflecting on the USCCB’s Mission Directive and responding to Christ’s call to proclaim the Gospel and form missionary disciples, the Subcommittee on the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers (PCMRT) works directly with various ministries and apostolates of migrants, refugees, and people on the move.

To fulfill PCMRT’s mandate, we encourage and support communities in the work of evangelization and inspire them to embrace the Catholic faith:

- Promote, strengthen, provide, and support pastoral ministries to PCMRT communities nationwide.
- Focus on the various evangelization needs of the ministries.
- Create projects, expand networks, and provide opportunities that help deepen leadership capabilities.

PCMRT’s mandate reflects Christ’s command, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them. . . and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20). The essence of the PCMRT mission is to invite others to know and follow Christ.

PCMRT demonstrates the importance of journeying together in mission by ensuring that outreach, priorities, and actions align with the USCCB’s Mission Directive and goals. Through activities aligned with the directive, PCMRT invites groups to participate in the mission of Jesus by discovering and loving the one who is “the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). As St. Paul affirms, “The love of Christ impels us” (2 Cor 5:14).

By focusing on the Church’s mission of evangelization, PCMRT fosters the spirit of missionary discipleship: reaching out to, accompanying, and supporting communities and people on the peripheries. We contribute to the evangelizing mission of the Church by building their senses of community and



The Most Reverend Frank Schuster, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Seattle, aboard the *Vela* at Seattle’s Pier 86 on December 23, 2025. Bishop Schuster celebrated Mass and offered reflections for the crew, who also received Christmas gifts of sweatshirts and ditty bags. Photo: Rich Shively, Director, Seattle Seafarers Center.

sharing the many gifts and rich presence of these communities with the local church, diocese, and wider United States.

According to Pope Leo, “With the light and the strength of the Holy Spirit, let us build a Church founded on God’s love, a sign of unity, a missionary Church that opens its arms to the world, proclaims the word, allows itself to be made ‘restless’ by history, and becomes a leaven of harmony for humanity” ([Homily, Mass for the Beginning of the Pontificate](#), May 18, 2025).

We call on all the People of God to journey with us in this special mission. To journey with young people and with those who have left the faith. To promote evangelization, vocation, and ministry leaders. To encourage and inspire the various communities to be witnesses to the Gospel. To advocate and support dioceses in their work with the vulnerable population. Together, let us focus on the preferential option for the poor and the marginalized and use our gifts to enrich those in need.

Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ, is an assistant director in the USCCB’s Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church.

Hispanic/Latino Affairs’ Five Priorities for 2026



By Alejandro Aguilera-Titus, DMin

The Subcommittee on Hispanic/Latino Affairs is aligning its priorities with the USCCB’s 2025-2028 Mission Directive by strengthening a shared national commitment to missionary discipleship rooted in communion, formed by way of accompaniment, and expressed through five concrete pastoral actions. In a moment when Hispanic/Latino Catholics continue to shape the life of the Church in the United States, the subcommittee’s priorities reflect a clear and practical response to the directive’s call to evangelize and form leaders.

First, Hispanic/Latino Affairs will offer pastoral formation to leaders, with an emphasis on youth and young adult ministry, by preparing the next generation to joyfully proclaim the Gospel with hope. Collaborating with the USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth, the subcommittee will offer workshops on [*Listen, Teach, Send: A National Pastoral Framework for Ministries with Youth and Young Adults*](#). Workshops will highlight the principles and priorities of the framework while incorporating pastoral insights from the USCCB’s [*Journeying Together*](#) process. and pastoral insights from the USCCB’s [*Journeying Together*](#) process.

Second, Hispanic/Latino Affairs will focus on pastoral formation and action in a culturally diverse Church by offering ongoing pastoral planning courses in English and Spanish, in partnership with the [*National Catholic Association of Diocesan Directors for Hispanic Ministry*](#), as well as providing intercultural competency formation for diocesan and parish leaders. This work helps move the Church’s different communities beyond coexistence toward genuine collaboration. When leaders learn to listen, engage in pastoral planning, and minister across cultures, the Church becomes more capable of evangelizing as communities celebrate unity in diversity.

Third, the subcommittee will foster evangelization and a sense of mission via a Guadalupean approach that speaks to the heart of the Americas: North, Central,

and South. Formation opportunities for diocesan and parish leaders of all cultures to learn about the message and methodology of Our Lady of Guadalupe will equip them to celebrate the 500th anniversary jubilee of the Guadalupean event. Ongoing international collaboration continues with the [*Pontifical Commission for Latin America*](#), the [*Mexican Episcopal Conference*](#), and the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Conference (CELAM) on the [*Novena Guadalupeana Intercontinental*](#). Some of the initiatives of this novena include missionary activity with parishes, the celebration of *Semanas Guadalupeanas* (Guadalupean Weeks), and the initiative *Una Tilma, Un Corazón*, which offers concrete pathways to revitalize parish life.

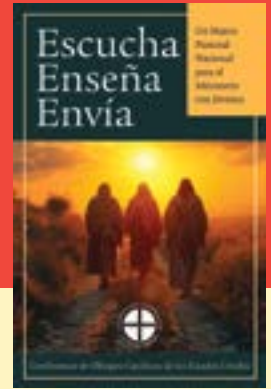
Fourth, we will carry out the pastoral accompaniment of immigrants and their families through ongoing collaboration with initiatives like [*You Are Not Alone*](#), which offers solidarity and support to Hispanic/Latino immigrant families and other immigrant communities. This work helps families to persevere in faith and strengthens their resilience and hope amid uncertainty.

Fifth, Hispanic/Latino Affairs is committed to conducting workshops on Catholic social teaching, immigration, and advocacy as a way to organize hope through collaboration and communion in mission. In addition, we support and actively engage in the work of the Justice for Immigrants campaign and other initiatives advocating for comprehensive immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship.

These five pastoral areas, called forth in [*Missionary Disciples Going Forth with Joy: National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry*](#), help us translate the USCCB Mission Directive into real pastoral pathways through formation that is culturally grounded, evangelization that is joyfully missionary, and accompaniment that defends human dignity for all.

Alejandro Aguilera-Titus is an assistant director in the USCCB’s Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church.

Cinco Prioridades del Subcomité de Asuntos Hispanos/Latinos para el 2026



Por Alejandro Aguilera-Titus, DMin

El Subcomité de Asuntos Hispanos/Latinos alinea sus prioridades con la Directriz para la Misión de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos (USCCB por sus siglas en inglés) en 2026 fortaleciendo un compromiso compartido con el discipulado misionero enraizado en la comunión y el acompañamiento con formación expresado a través de cinco acciones pastorales concretas. En un momento en el que los católicos hispanos/latinos continúan moldeando la vida de la Iglesia en los Estados Unidos, las prioridades del Subcomité reflejan una clara, así como práctica respuesta al llamado de la Misión Directiva a evangelizar y a formar líderes.

Primero, el Subcomité de Asuntos Hispanos/Latinos ofrecerá formación pastoral a líderes con un énfasis en el ministerio a la juventud y a los jóvenes adultos al preparar a la siguiente generación de líderes para proclamar gozosamente el Evangelio con esperanza. Colaborando con el Comité para Laicado, Matrimonio, Vida Familiar y Juventud el Subcomité ofrecerá talleres sobre *Escucha, Enseña, Envía: Un Marco Pastoral Nacional para el Ministerio con Jóvenes*. Los talleres enfatizarán los principios y prioridades del marco, incorporando el Plan Pastoral de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos (USCCB, por sus siglas en inglés). *Discípulos Misioneros en Salida con Alegría: Plan Pastoral Nacional Para el Ministerio Hispano/Latino* y las reflexiones pastorales del proceso de *Journeying Together* (Caminando Juntos) de la USCCB.

Segundo, el subcomité se enfocará en la formación y en la acción pastoral en una Iglesia culturalmente diversa a través de cursos continuos de planeación pastoral ofrecidos en inglés y en español en colaboración con la *Asociación Nacional de Directores Diocesanos Católicos del Ministerio Hispano*, así como de formación en capacidades interculturales para líderes diocesanos y parroquiales. Esto ayuda a llevar a los distintos grupos en la Iglesia más allá de la

coexistencia, hacia una genuina colaboración. Cuando los líderes aprenden a escuchar y a involucrarse con la planeación pastoral y con el ministerio intercultural, la Iglesia se torna más capaz de evangelizar, al tiempo que las comunidades celebran la unidad en la diversidad, bajo una identidad católica común.

Tercero, la evangelización y la misión serán expresados a través de un enfoque guadalupano que habla al corazón de las Américas, del Norte, Central y del Sur. Distintas oportunidades de formación para líderes diocesanos y parroquiales de todas las culturas en el mensaje y metodología de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe equiparán a los líderes de todas las culturas como preparación para celebrar el 500° aniversario del evento guadalupano. Se mantiene una continua y regular colaboración internacional con la [Pontificia Comisión para América Latina](#), con la [Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano](#) y con el Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano y Caribeño ([CELAM](#)) sobre la [Novena Intercontinental Guadalupeana](#). Algunas de las iniciativas de esta novena incluyen actividades misioneras para las parroquias y la celebración de las Semanas Guadalupeanas, así como también la iniciativa Una Tilma, Un Corazón, la cual ofrecerá caminos concretos hacia la revitalización de la vida parroquial.

Cuarto, el acompañamiento pastoral a los inmigrantes y a sus familias será llevado a cabo a través de una continua colaboración con iniciativas como [You Are Not Alone \(No estás solo\)](#), que ofrecen acompañamiento y apoyo a familias de inmigrantes hispanos/latinos y a otras comunidades de inmigrantes. Este acompañamiento ayuda a las familias a perseverar en su fe y fortalece su resiliencia y esperanza en medio de la incertidumbre.

Quinto, por medio de promoción y defensa, formación y misión en justicia social, el Subcomité está comprometido con la oferta de talleres sobre la

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Language of the Heart, Language of the Soul: Incorporating Native Languages in Catechesis

By Rev. David Bailey

“I will pray with the spirit, but I will also pray with the mind. I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will also sing praise with the mind” (1 Cor 14:15).

Years ago, I provided coverage for a parish whose pastor had died a short time before. I had to cover as many Masses as possible while also tending to responsibilities in my own parish. As this was a bilingual parish, I often had to combine English and Spanish to cater to both segments of the congregation. In a meeting to discuss the Christmas Mass schedule, I explained that I had another parish to cover and therefore could only celebrate one Mass for the Christmas Vigil at my home parish. So the Vigil Mass would have to be bilingual. Regarding the English parts of the Mass, I said to one of the Spanish speakers, “It’s okay if there are some who don’t understand those parts, because *verdad es verdad*, even if you don’t understand what’s being said.”

She said very calmly, “Yes, the truth is the truth, but the language of the heart is the language of understanding. The language of the heart is the language of the soul.” I was blown away. I’d just learned a very valuable lesson that I have not forgotten.

Two current goals of the USCCB Subcommittee on Native American Affairs involve incorporating Native culture and languages into evangelization. How we accomplish this incorporation is the million-dollar question, but we all agree that it is very important.

In partnership with the Tekakwitha Conference, I recently published an interview with a Native man committed to tribal language preservation. He said that his tribe today has fewer than 300 fluent speakers left. Some estimate that one Indigenous language dies every two weeks.

Sadly, this issue reminds us of an unpleasant truth: the fact that boarding schools did almost irreparable damage to Native languages. However, we can take

“Language is a vital part of who we are. From culture to culture, language is fundamentally linked to identity.”

consolation in the knowledge that many Catholic schools in Native communities, including schools in the American Indian Catholic Schools Network, teach tribal languages in their classrooms. The Church wholeheartedly supports this instruction, which is why we are working to establish guidelines for how we can integrate and promote Native language and culture in a way that complements the Sacred Liturgy.

Language is a vital part of who we are. From culture to culture, language is fundamentally linked to identity. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to support Indigenous Catholics in preserving their languages so they can truly make the faith their own by praying, singing, and passing down knowledge to their children while speaking the language of their ancestors. This support is essential for them to express the love they have for God in the language of their heart. As I learned years ago, “The language of the heart is the language of understanding.” It is the language of the soul.

Fr. David Bailey is an assistant director in the USCCB’s Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church.

International Conference on Catholic Indigenous 2026

By Maria del Mar Muñoz-Visoso, MTS

In March 2026, the International Conference on Catholic Indigenous (ICCI) gathered in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, bringing together members of the United States, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand bishops' conferences. Several bishops and episcopal conference staff joined Catholic Indigenous delegates from the various countries in celebration of our common faith and in dialogue about Indigenous contributions to the Church, as well as hopes, concerns, and aspirations in their particular contexts.

The US delegation was led by Bishop John Folda of Fargo, North Dakota, chairman of the USCCB Subcommittee on Native American Affairs. US contributions included presentations by Deacon Andy Orosco (San Bernardino, California), Norma Valdez (Tekakwitha Conference, Texas), Robert Haarman (Gichitwa Kateri Community, Archdiocese of St. Paul–Minneapolis), and Fr. David Bailey, assistant director of Native American Affairs. In an episode of the podcast *The Church and Indian Country*, Fr. Bailey interviewed Professor Medicine Bull of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe on the importance of language for building cultural identity and pride.

Fr. Mike Carson (San Jose, California) and Bishop Folda presented on the history, contents, and priority activities included in the recently adopted bishops' *Pastoral Framework for Indigenous Ministry: Keeping Christ's Sacred Promise*. Our executive director, Mrs. Mar Muñoz-Visoso, spoke to the joy of witnessing the canonization of St. Kateri Tekakwitha in Rome over



Members of the US delegation to the ICCI 2026 in Auckland, NZ. From left to right Rosanne Orosco, Deacon Andy Orosco, Bishop John Folda, Norma Valdez, Mar Muñoz-Visoso, Fr. Mike Carson, Sylvia Barrios, and Robert Haarman.

a decade ago and about a couple other currently open canonization causes involving Indigenous people in the United States. She stressed the importance of upholding holy Indigenous peoples' lives as models of faith for the entire Church. She also facilitated an open afternoon dialogue between the US delegation and all other participants. The US presentations were well received, and in turn we learned a lot from the other delegations. The ICCI will reconvene in 2028 in Vancouver, Canada.

This summit follows the gathering convened by the USCCB Subcommittee on Native American Affairs in 2023 in Washington, DC.

ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLAND AFFAIRS

Continued from page 8

As these consultations continue, I find myself returning to the image of St. George—and to the Asian reverence for dragons as symbols of strength and blessing. Together, they remind us that courage often begins in quiet and true-love ways: the willingness to listen deeply, to attune ourselves to one another's stories, and to release what we cling to when it no longer

serves life or dignity. Watching my son hold fast to his knight saint with such trust invites me to believe that renewal begins with that same simplicity of heart. May we move forward with a love that nurtures, a hope that steadies, and a commitment to walk, fostering one another toward the newness God is preparing.

Clarissa Martinez is an assistant director in the USCCB's Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE CHURCH COMMITTEE

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Diocese of Brooklyn

Term: November 2024-November 2027

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Back Row (L to R): Robert Hancock, Marcelo Daniel Davila-Olivera, Fr. David Bailey, Dr. Alejandro Aguilera-Titus, and Clarissa Ann Martinez. **Front Row (L to R):** Dr. Ansel Augustine, Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ, Mar Muñoz-Visoso, Bishop Robert Brennan, Sarah Evans, Yolanda Taylor-Burwell, and Stefanie Miles

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RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

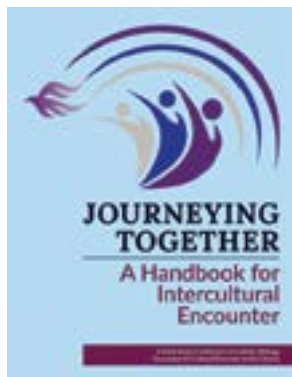
Print version: To learn more, visit www.usccb.org/committees/cultural-diversity-church/resourcesbooks.

Online version: Click for more [Secretariat Resources](#).

NEW! Journeying Together: A Handbook for Intercultural Encounter

This new handbook serves as a resource for local intercultural encounters. These foundational principles will guide your work:

- This process is intended to empower young adult voices while intentionally engaging the cultural communities that are represented in your community.
- This process is young adult-focused and includes intergenerational support. It is important for older generations to listen to the faith and cultural experiences of the young adults in the community and to seek to understand their lived experiences in the Church.



plan offers another opportunity for us to revisit our Christian vocation and ask ourselves, “What shall we do in such a time like this where many challenges abound?” However, it is in such a time like this when God’s grace keeps pace with whatever we face.

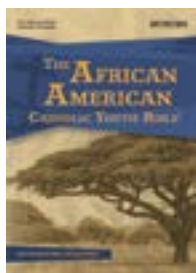
ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLAND AFFAIRS



Preserving the Apostolic Faith: The Living Faith of Indian American Catholics

This booklet offers a compelling portrait of the Indian and Indian American Catholic presence in the United States. It explores this community’s rich spiritual heritage, provides an overview of vibrant liturgical traditions, and evokes active participation in parish and diocesan life. In addition, the book provides pastoral insights and practical suggestions to help dioceses and parishes open new pathways of ministry, accompaniment, and leadership for Indian American Catholics.

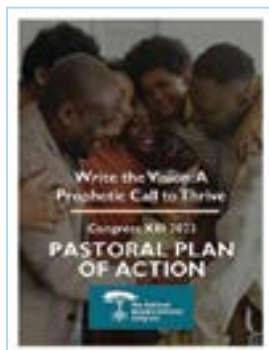
AFRICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS



The African American Catholic Youth Bible

This resource has been reprinted by the Josephite Pastoral Center. This resource highlights the gift of African American Catholic spirituality. Learn more about this resource at josephitepastoralcenter.org

(or call 202-526-4231).



Write the Vision: A Prophetic Call to Thrive: National Black Catholic Congress XIII 2023 Pastoral Plan of Action

Writing the vision and thriving are what “Come Follow Me” is all about. Following Jesus is what the National Black Catholic Congress Pastoral Plan is all about. The pastoral

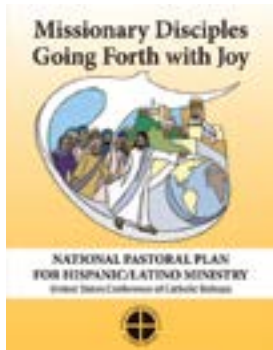
Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response to Our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters



The goal of this response is to make Asian and Pacific Island Catholics feel at home, both in the Church and in the United States, while being able to preserve the richness of the spiritual and cultural backgrounds that they bring as contributing member of the Body of Christ. Our hope is that it will be utilized by Catholic dioceses, parishes, and small faith communities in the United States to develop their own plans of action and pastoral outreach to Asian and Pacific Islanders in the United States.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES (Continued)

HISPANIC/LATINO AFFAIRS

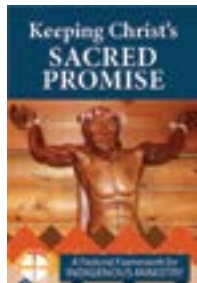


[Missionary Disciples Going Forth with Joy: National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry](#)

Addresses the entire Church in the United States and seeks to strengthen the Church's response to the Hispanic/Latino presence while embracing and fostering the contributions of

Hispanic/Latino Catholics as missionary disciples serving the entire People of God. Order hard copies online: www.orderosv.com/product/missionary-disciples-going-forth-with-joy-national-pastoral-plan-for-hispanic-latino-ministry.

NATIVE AMERICAN AFFAIRS

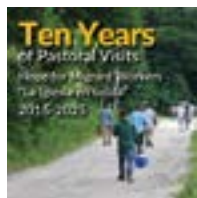


[Keeping Christ's Sacred Promise: A Pastoral Framework for Indigenous Ministry](#)

The Spirit of God is active, alive, and present in Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities. The Subcommittee on Native American Affairs is pleased to

present this pastoral framework to offer guidance to bishops, pastors, religious, Catholic Native leaders, and others serving Indigenous communities. Order hard copies online: www.orderosv.com/product/keeping-christ-s-sacred-promise-a-pastoral-framework-for-indigenous-ministry.

PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS, REFUGEES, AND TRAVELERS



[Ten Years of Pastoral Visits: Hope For Migrant Farmworkers, "La Iglesia en salida": 2015-2025](#)

This report highlights the many challenges facing migrant workers, the energy and creativity they bring to discussions about solutions to those challenges, and the support offered them by diocesan and national staff, pastoral leaders, and volunteers across the country.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Continued from page 2

A Pastoral Framework for Indigenous Ministry; National Black Catholic Congress XIII: Plan of Action; Ten Years of Pastoral Visits to Migrant Workers, etc.) will be the main way in which the committee both fulfills its mandate and advances the USCCB Mission Directive.

Finally, dioceses and national organizations continue to express strong demand for training according to the Building Intercultural Competence for Ministry (BICM) curriculum. After several consultations that included experts in the field, staff are now working to update the various modules and consider developing additional materials to explore the various competencies in greater depth.

Our bishops' committee and secretariat are fully committed to the USCCB Mission Directive and our own mandate. We are missionary disciples journeying together. Come and see!

Maria del Mar Muñoz-Visoso is executive director of the USCCB Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church.

ASUNTOS HISPANOS/LATINOS

Continuación de la página 9

Enseñanza Social Católica y la inmigración, la promoción y la defensa de los derechos y la dignidad de los inmigrantes como una manera de organizar la esperanza a través de la colaboración y comunión en la misión. Además, apoyará y participará activamente en el trabajo de la campaña de Justicia para Inmigrantes, así como en otras iniciativas que defienden y promueven una reforma migratoria integral que incluya un camino hacia la ciudadanía.

Estas cinco áreas pastorales reivindicadas en *Discípulos Misioneros en Salida con Alegría: Plan Pastoral Nacional Para el Ministerio Hispano/Latino* nos ayudan a traducir la Directriz para la Misión en auténticos caminos pastorales: formación anclada culturalmente, evangelización gozosamente misionera y acompañamiento en la defensa de la dignidad humana para todos.

Alejandro Aguilera-Titus es Director Asistente en la Secretaría de Diversidad Cultural en la Iglesia de la USCCB.



E te Atua aroha mā te whakapuaki
i tō mātou whakapono
Loving God in professing this faith
in which we are united as your people,
we unite ourselves with the yes of your mother
Mary, the first disciple.

E te Atua, te Puna o ngā mea ora katoa,
te kaihomai o ngā mea pai katoa
O God, Source of all life, giver of all that is good
we, your people of Aotearoa New Zealand
meet in the bonds of your love.
Keep us faithful in our response to your love
with Mary patroness of our land.

E te Atua aroha, ka karangahia houtia mātou
e koe ki ngā hua o te ora
Loving God, you call us anew to the abundance of life
for which we have been created.
In our life with you we mature
in relationship with you,
with one another, and with our land.
We repent the harm we have caused in this holy place
to our sisters and brothers and to our land.
In humility we turn to Mary,
Mother of God, Assumed into Heaven.

E te Atua, mā roto i te korowai o Maria
te whāea o tāu tamaiti, tō mātou whāea anō hoki
O God, under the patronage of Mary
the mother of your son, and our mother
we join with those gathered in the
Hokianga in January 1838
with the leadership of Jean-Baptiste Pompallier
first Catholic bishop of this place
to dedicate our land of Aotearoa New Zealand
to the care of Mary, Mother of God, Assumed
into Heaven.

I tenei wā, ka whakahoungia e mātou tēnei oati tapu
We now renew this dedication
turning to Mary with new fervour
in union with her Son
Our Lord Jesus Christ
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit
God forever and ever. Amen.

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference commissioned this image of Ko Hāta Maria, te Matua Wahine o te Atua (Holy Mary, Mother of God), and the prayer in the Māori and English languages to commemorate the rededication of Aotearoa New Zealand to Mary on August 15, 2021. Image and prayer used with permission. Copyright © New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference. Artwork: Damien Walker/The Studio of Saint Philomena.

For more information about St. Mary of the Angels, the National Shrine to Mary, Assumed into Heaven, in the Diocese of Wellington, visit www.tearaamaria.nz.



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US delegation to Aotearoa New Zealand
for the International Conference on
Catholic Indigenous, March 2026.
See Special Report, page 11.