



Caption: Getty Images

“In our time, we still see too much discord, too many wounds caused by hatred, violence, prejudice, the fear of the other, and an economic system that exploits the Earth’s resources and marginalizes the poorest. We want to be, in this dough, a small leaven of unity, communion, and fraternity.”

*-Pope Leo XIV, Inaugural homily
as Bishop of Rome, May 18, 2025*

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Greetings!

When we set out to put together this issue of *One Church, Many Cultures*, in addition to reflecting on the Good News from many different perspectives, we also chose an overall theme and asked our contributors to tie their articles to it, no matter what topic they chose. That theme is *imago Dei*. This central tenet of our Christian faith understands that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God.

That each one of us is a beautiful reflection of the Divine, endowed with intellect and will, and called to love and live in communion with God and with one another. Each of us enjoys the dignity of being sons and daughters of God; a dignity that no one else can give or take away, because it is not granted by any earthly power or authority. A dignity that no government, no political system, no political party, no bully, no war, no torture, no amount of suffering can take away.

We are of royal stock, folks! Sons and daughters of the one true King, brothers and sisters in Christ. And it is time we begin treating one another with the love, dignity, and respect this inalienable truth implies.

In these pages you will find a reflection from our current chairman, Bishop Robert Brennan, about the canonization of the Church's newest young saints and what older folks can learn from young people. A young adult from Maryland offers a testimony of what it meant for her to travel to Rome and participate in the Jubilee of Young People. Nyle Grimes, daughter of the legendary Donna Grimes, speaks of the im-

portance of listening to Black Catholic young adults. Fr. David Bailey challenges us to get to know our neighbors, our Native brothers and sisters, beginning with those residing closest to us, and taking the time to learn about whose ancestral lands we live on. Bishop Oscar Cantú offers a beautiful reflection on Our Lady of Guadalupe's "methodology" as a perfect model of inculturated evangelization. A special feature reflects on

the pride and joy of Creole Catholics who found out they have a very special connection with Pope Leo XIV. Faith, art, and popular devotion come together in Clarissa Martinez's reflection on the Indian American Catholics' celebration of Our Lady of Vailankanni; while Sr. Joanna Okereke reminds us of the plea of migrant farmworkers, and the need to say thanks to and be grateful for those who labor to put food on our tables.

As for me, I felt compelled to lend my pen to the urgent need for peacemakers; yes, the kind that Jesus calls

'blessed' in his Sermon on the Mount, his programmatic discourse on the Christian life.

You will not find lengthy theological treatises in these pages. Rather, it is my hope that through these essays and reflections, the beauty of God's creation, his image and likeness will shine through in all its diversity and splendor.

Mar Muñoz-Visoso
Executive Director



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CHAIRMAN'S REFLECTION WHAT CANONIZATION OF THE CHURCH'S NEWEST YOUNG SAINTS TEACH US OLDER FOLKS

By: Most Reverend Robert Brennan | Bishop of Brooklyn | Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church

Shortly after the announcement of the approval of the canonizations of Saints Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis, I was asked in an interview, “What does Carlo Acutis teach the young people today?” It occurred to me that, the premise of the question is wrong. Certainly, his example inspires many and his virtues are worthy of imitation. But the real question is, “What does Carlo Acutis teach us older folks about what we can learn from our young people?”

With the canonizations earlier in September, these two young men join the company of young people through the centuries – stretching back to earliest witnesses of Jesus Christ – who teach the world the immense values of friendship with him.

In some ways these two new saints are extraordinary, but in many ways, they lived very similar lives to the young people we meet along the way today. Their love of the outdoors, sports and even video games and pets are all part of their appeal to the youth and young adults. But at the heart of everything they did was a profound friendship with Jesus Christ especially in the sacraments. In our parishes and movements, we encounter many of these same young people drawn to the Eucharist, prayer, service and the quest for truth.

The recent Jubilee for Youth is a powerful example. I am

proud of the delegations from Brooklyn and Queens that I was able to accompany. They were true pilgrims. They sought every opportunity for prayerful experiences. It was touching to see young people shopping for religious items to bring home to members of their families. The sharing of their faith journeys was profound and their concern for each other – and for other pilgrims – was inspiring.

The Holy Father seemed visibly moved by the young people. He spoke from the heart to them encouraging them in their faith and witness. He saw the rich cultural diversity of youth from all around the world along with sense of unity, especially with those who suffer. “We are with the young people of Gaza, we are with the young people of Ukraine, with those of every land bloodied by war. My young brothers and sisters, you are the sign that a different world is possible: a world of fraternity and friendship, where conflicts are not resolved with weapons but with dialogue.” Indeed, we need to learn from and encourage these young people who are engaged in the faith.

They are the most credible missionaries to other young people while in turn teaching and inspiring those of us who are older. We take the lead from Pope Leo XIV in his farewell at the Angelus at the Jubilee of Youth. “Yes, with Christ it is possible! With his love, with his forgiveness, and with the power of his Spirit. My dear friends, united to Jesus, like branches to the vine, you will bear much fruit. You will be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. You will be seeds of hope where you live, in your families, among your friends, at school, at work, and in sports. You will be seeds of hope with Christ, our hope.”

“

We are called to offer God's love to all, so that unity may be realized—a unity that does not erase differences but values each person's history and the social and religious culture of every people.

- Pope Leo XIV, Inaugural homily as Bishop of Rome, May 18, 2025

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

By: Maria del Mar Muñoz-Visoso, M.T.S. | Executive Director, Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church, USCCB



As one enters the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington DC, the eyes immediately turn to the Christ in Majesty Mosaic, the centerpiece of the Great Upper Church. The mosaic presents a manly and muscular depiction of the Son of God as “King of the Universe”, showing both his Lordship and Mercy, according to

the Shrine’s explanation.

Some years back, when our children were young, we brought them to the Basilica for Mass. Pointing to the very mosaic, one of them asked, “Mom, *por qué está Jesús enojado?* (why is Jesus upset?)” Uninformed as I was then about the image, I just said: “It represents the final judgment. Jesus is giving a warning to those that don’t behave well.” As we shared the anecdote with family and friends over the years, some have asked us to take them to see “*el Cristo enojado.*” Several have commented that the piercing eyes and severity of expression make the image feel more like a depiction of Christ in the Final Judgement.

Art speaks to us differently at different times in our lives. As I have come to know more about the different elements in the

mosaic and gotten used to the image, it seems to me that Jesus, is not so much ‘mad’ or ‘upset’, as he is exasperated with our hardness of heart. No matter how specific Jesus was and how clearly he laid his commandments for us, throughout history—and this day and age are no exception—we who claim to be his disciples, have always found ways to distort his message, bend it to our will, and managed to live lives not in accordance with his Gospel, even while at times keeping the appearance of righteousness and devotion.

The Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25, is very clear on what the King will judge us on: Did we see Him in the other, especially the neediest? Did we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, tend to the sick, visit the prisoner and welcome the stranger in our midst? Did we love God above all things and our neighbors as ourselves? (Mark 12:30-31) To be sure, our merits won’t save us; Jesus already has, and he has paid a hefty price for us. But faith has consequences, and we ought to take Jesus’ words and actions seriously, if we want to live a life worth of the children of God.

More so, I propose that the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 3-14) is a great programmatic description of the Christian life and the behaviors that will distinguish the community of believers and make of them light for the world and salt of the earth. Someone once told me that the saints are people who try to live the beatitudes well and, in doing so, become great at one or two. The world is in desperate need of everyday saints. Especially nowadays, in a world torn by violence and war, hateful rhetoric toward the other, and threats to human life and dignity, *blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God!*

“All of us are made ‘living stones,’ called by our Baptism to build God’s house in fraternal communion, in the harmony of the Spirit, in the coexistence of differences.”

- Pope Leo XIV, Inaugural homily as Bishop of Rome, May 18, 2025

JUBILEE SPECIAL

ATTENDING THE JUBILEE OF YOUNG PEOPLE: A RENEWED SENSE OF HOPE AND FRIENDSHIP

By: Elena Visoso | Young Adult | St. John The Baptist Parish, Silver Spring, MD



Night Falls at Tor Vergata as the Vigil for the Jubilee of Young People outside Rome progresses. Photo: Elena Visoso

From July 28 to August 3, 2025, I was blessed with the opportunity to visit Rome, Italy and participate in the Jubilee of Young People. The group I traveled with consisted of several Latino/Hispanic young adults from different states within the US, as well as a group from the island of Puerto Rico. I didn't know anyone before going, but that is what made the experience more exciting.

The week was physically intense. We would spend hours walking and standing under the sun's heat, but all of that was nothing compared to all the graces and blessings I have received since going on this pilgrimage. Seeing all the beautiful artwork, statues, and designs of each of the basilicas and churches was breathtaking. One couldn't help but wonder about how many pilgrims have passed through those doors, walked the same paths, and what stories they carried with them, each one with a hope and desire to strengthen their faith life and relationship with God.



Young Adults walking with cross of Jubilee to St. Peter's Basilica

Some of my favorite moments consisted of quick conversations exchanged with other pilgrims. Similar to World Youth Day, several pilgrims brought little items from home, such as stickers, prayer cards, bracelets, or pins with their flag, and they gifted or traded them with each other. It was fun trying to communicate despite not having a common language and learning new dance moves or words to a hymn in another language.

As someone who is bilingual, in both Spanish and English, it was beautiful to hear and witness Pope Leo XIV seamlessly transition between English, Spanish, and Italian, as it reflects how I often think or speak in my day-to-day life. During the Prayer Vigil at Tor Vergata, Pope Leo XIV said: *"Dear young people, love one another! Love one another in Christ! Know how to see Jesus in others. Friendship can truly change the world. Friendship is a path to peace."* These words truly struck me. Seeing Jesus in others, and trying to create friendships seems very hard nowadays, especially in a world that so often feels like it's in a constant state of hatred and despair. I hope to continue carrying this torch of hope and friendship with me, in my parish, in my community, and in every place I visit. Will you join me, fellow pilgrim?



Holy Door at St. Mary Major Basilica

AFRICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING TO BLACK CATHOLIC YOUNG ADULTS

By: Nyle Ayana Grimes | St. Teresa of Avila Parish, Washington, DC

Listening to Black Catholic young adults is not only an act of respect—it is a commitment to the vitality and future of the Church. This is precisely why the Black Catholic Young Adult (BCYA) Listening Sessions held across the United States are invaluable. Black Catholic young adults are heirs to a rich spiritual heritage, carriers of cultural traditions, and crucial partners in shaping the future of Catholic life in this country. In our most recent session in Washington, D.C., participants engaged directly with leadership from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

From this dialogue, three key themes emerged as essential to the continued flourishing of Black Catholic young adults: carrying forward Black Catholic spirituality, building authentic community, and ensuring young adults have an active voice in the growth and life of the Church.

First, Black Catholic young adults are vital to sustaining Black Catholic spirituality. This spirituality is far more than Gospel music, liturgical dance, or cultural celebrations like Kwanzaa—it is a living witness of faith forged through centuries of perseverance, prayer, and community. Passed down from generation to generation. I grew up immersed in this tradition watching my mother's work with the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, as Assistant Director for African American Affairs at the USCCB, and as a Master Catechist. I saw her create many spaces and lead multiple advocacy efforts for young Black Catholics to discover their rightful place in the Church. From my mother, I learned to embrace my cultural identity as a gift to the Catholic Church rather than a challenge. Since her passing, many young adults have shared with me how she personally introduced them to the legacy of Black Catholic saints, the prophetic vision of the National Black Catholic Congress, and the beauty of our liturgical traditions. When young people know they belong to a Church that values their story, they gain the courage to carry this spirituality into the future.

Second, listening to Black Catholic young adults is essential



for building authentic community. In her book *All God's People*, my mother wrote, "God acts simultaneously in the hearts of individuals and within the heart of the community, ensuring that those who respond to the invitation to follow Jesus may have full access to his saving vision." That saving vision calls us to create authentic communities where young people can thrive. Remember, young people crave authenticity and rebuke its absence. Building authentic community requires intentionality—mentoring young leaders, fostering connection between peers and Church leaders, and cultivating spaces where faith is shared and celebrated. When we listen to Black Catholic young adults, we invite the Holy Spirit

to ignite one heart after another until the entire community is set aflame. This Spirit-filled community becomes the soil where faith grows strong and lasting. When young adults feel supported, seen, and celebrated, they are more likely to remain engaged and invite others into the life of the Church.

Finally, third, Black Catholic young adults must have an active voice in the growth and life of the Catholic Church. They are not only the future—they are the present. Their concerns about inclusion, racial justice, and the intersection of Catholic Social Teaching with today's challenges must be heard and acted upon. Offering leadership opportunities and a true seat at the table ensures that the Church's decisions reflect the diversity and richness of the entire People of God.

My own experience—as both the daughter of Donna Tolver Grimes and as a young adult Black Catholic—has shown me that young adult Black Catholics flourish when we are mentored, empowered, and given a true sense of belonging. That is when we are embolden by our faith and active participants in evangelization. By listening to the voices of young adult Black Catholics, building community around them, and encouraging their leadership, the Catholic Church becomes more vibrant, more united, and more faithful to Christ's mission.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Pope Leo's Black Catholic Roots

By: Mr. Jari C. Honora | Family Historian at the Historic New Orleans Collection | St. Katharine Drexel Parish, New Orleans



Mr. Jari C. Honora, Family Historian at the Historic New Orleans Collection and Past National Lay Board Member of the Knights of Peter Claver; parishioner at St. Katharine Drexel Parish, New Orleans.

On May 8, 2025, the world's 1.4 billion Catholics were doubly surprised by the rapid election of a new pope (on the conclave's second day) and the election of the first American pope. I was at work in the research center of the Historic New Orleans Collection when the news began to buzz that a pope had been elected. Upon the announcement of Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost as Pope Leo XIV, my first thought was "Who is this American whom, so few Americans seem to know?" That was the question that led me to explore the biographical details and family history of our new Holy Father. You can imagine my surprise and joy when after first perusing Pope Leo's father's French and Sicilian immigrant roots, I turned to his mother's family only to discover that they were Creoles of color deeply rooted in my hometown of New Orleans, and in fact only left New Orleans in the second decade of the 20th century.

They carried familiar names like Martinez, Baquié, Lemelle, Ramos, and Maxent. The joy was bittersweet because, like so many branches of Black American families, the Pope's maternal family migrated out of the South, leaving behind not only their ancestral homeland but also identification as people of color - as we call the phenomenon, they "passed" for white. My mind immediately went to the well-known Healy family, the children of an Irish planter and an enslaved woman, who in the 19th century gifted the Church with so many vocations, but all while actively distancing themselves from their Black identities.

I shared my initial findings online, thinking that it would interest my many friends in the history and genealogy world and those who are actively preserving the heritage of families like Pope Leo's and mine, who are Louisiana Creoles. I was wrong! People all over the world have shown interest in the Pope's ancestry, which includes people from Louisiana, Martinique, Haiti, France, Acadie, Cuba, and even Romani who settled in Louisiana in the early 18th century.

Each of these family lines is intertwined with African-descended people who were enslaved or free people of color. As recently as the 1810s and 1820s, the Successor of St. Peter had family members who were enslaved. When we think about the adversities that Catholics of color experienced in the 19th and early 20th centuries just to participate in the Church and moreover to pursue religious vocations, it is incredible that in a winding path known only to God, the great-great-great-grandson of enslaved Catholics is now the Pope. It reminds us of Psalms 118:22-23: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the Lord has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes." As a resident of the most vibrant Black Catholic community in the country, an active member of the Knights of Peter Claver, and a person with free and enslaved Black Catholic ancestry for more than 200 years, I couldn't be prouder that Pope Leo's heritage of faith emanates from our community.

HISPANIC/LATINO AFFAIRS

THE METHODOLOGY OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE FOR THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

By: Most Rev. Oscar Cantú | Bishop of San Jose | Chairman of the Subcommittee on Hispanic/Latino Affairs



Growing up in the U.S. with immigrant parents from Mexico, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe was everywhere to be found in our house. I knew well the story of the apparitions of Mary to Juan Diego in 1531, as I had seen the story presented in live plays and heard it recounted multiple times. Those key compassionate words of the Blessed Mother to Juan Diego spoke to me even as a young boy, “Do not let your heart be troubled. Am I not here, who am your mother?” Yet, even as I understood and felt Mary’s motherly solicitude for me and all people, especially the forgotten people of the world, I always thought of the Guadalupan message as one primarily of consolation and identification with the lowly (as Juan was a commoner). I would not yet grasp the profound theological and ecclesial message in her apparitions, gestures, and overall message some 500 years ago until much later. These profound messages still speak to us today.

The following methodology and theological/ecclesial elements can be teased out of the gestures, images, and words of Mary’s encounters with Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill in 1531.

Human Dignity and Participation in the Christian Mission

By choosing Juan Diego, a relatively recent convert to the Catholic faith (perhaps around 1524), a humble man with little social status, Mary highlights the human dignity of all of humanity, regardless of social status. Not only does she acknowledge this dignity of the poor, the commoner, but she shows us how it is borne out – encouraging Juan Diego to be a protagonist in favor of his fellow indigenous people and in favor of their salvation in Christ Jesus. God’s grace extends to all, regardless of their position or status. God “lifts up the lowly,” (cf. Lk 1:52) and so Juan is seen as an exemplar of Christian dignity and hope.

Motherly Tenderness

Mary intercepts Juan on his way to the church one Saturday morning. Mary addressed Juan with motherly tenderness. “Juan Dieguito [my little Juan], the most tender of my chil-dren.” Mary uses the diminutive as a term of endearment and tenderness. The *Nican Mopohua*, in which the dialogue between Mary and Juan is documented, describes birds singing in the hills, in the background – emphasizing the pleasant, joyful, and hope-filled encounter between the Lady from heaven and the humble Juan from Cuautitlan.

Ecclesial

Mary not only asked that a *temple* be built on the hillside where she appeared, she asked Juan Diego to go to the *bishop* to share this request. Mary thus acknowledges and respects the structure of the Church her Son left for the Apostles. She models respect for the Church’s hierarchy and their rightful role as leaders and shepherds of the Church. The church is the privileged place of encounter of humans with the divine, with the One True God.

Lay Faithful

Juan Diego was a layman, married to Maria Lucia. They were both baptized (about 1524) early after the conquest of the Spaniards in New Spain. Juan never pursued ordination, nor did he enter a religious community. He became an evangelist and catechist to his fellow indigenous people and anyone willing to listen, sharing with them the Christian faith and the story of Mary’s apparitions and her message of maternal care, and the presentation of her Son, the Son of the true, living God.

Christo-centric

The floral designs on Mary’s tunic were not merely aesthetic patterns, but rather were hieroglyphs representing mountains (in the case of the larger floral designs) or other ideas for the indigenous people of the time. The large floral designs in this case were not just any mountain or hill, but specifically Tepeyac Hill, precisely where Mary appeared to Juan Diego, where she wanted the temple to be built. The miraculous image of Mary thus became a codex for the indigenous people, recounting the story Juan himself shared with great conviction with his fellow indigenous.

Among the floral designs on Mary’s tunic, there is one small four-petalled flower on Mary’s tunic, right at her belly. The indigenous people referred to it as the *Nauhi Ollin*. The *Nauhi Ollin* symbolized for the indigenous people plenitude and a

divine presence. Understanding that the Lady in the miraculous image was pregnant (indicated by the black ribbon around her waist), the indigenous people understood that her unborn child was divine and brought human life to completion.



“The first principle of pedagogy is going from the known to the unknown. As Mary would introduce the indigenous people to Christ and “the true, living God,” she would need to establish foundations that would allow them to understand, and eventually accept, the Christian message. ”

Monotheistic Message

In her dialogue with Juan Diego, Mary identifies as the mother of “the true, living God, from whom life is derived”. The God of Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary, would surpass and replace the various gods to whom the indigenous had offered sacrifices.

Inculturation of the Christian Message

The first principle of pedagogy is going from the known to the unknown. As Mary would introduce the indigenous people to Christ and “the true, living God,” she would need to establish foundations that would allow them to understand, and eventually accept, the Christian message. Thus, Mary appears as an indigenous woman, using indigenous hieroglyphics, speaking to Juan in Nahuatl, his native language. In these gestures, Mary acknowledges the dignity of the indigenous people, while calling for a purification of elements of the culture that were antithetical to Christianity, such as human sacrifice. Mary would use the concepts of the indigenous, such as the *Nabui Ollin*, to facilitate the understanding of the Christian message.

I propose Mary’s methodology for the New Evangelization. Where the friars in the New World had had limited success in bringing the indigenous people to the Christian faith 500 years ago, Mary was deeply successful. She attracted millions to the faith in relatively short order. She did so with tenderness, with appropriate inculturation of the Gospel message, bringing people into an ecclesial context for loving and compassionate encounters, giving the lowly agency and thus the dignity of being sons and daughters of God, and introducing them to the One, True God. She still attracts today. Mary, Star of the New Evangelization, help us to be missionaries of Jesus Christ today!

PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS, REFUGEES & TRAVELERS (PCMRT) ACCOMPANYING MIGRANT FARMWORKER COMMUNITIES

By: Sister Joanna Okereke, HHCJ, Assistant Director, Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers

The plight of farmworkers in our country is one of great concern to the Catholic Church. These men and women labor tirelessly in the fields, orchards, and other settings, helping to ensure we have food on our tables, while often enduring harsh conditions, isolation, and exploitation. They continue to struggle with low wages, minimal legal protection, and unhealthy work environments. Migrant farm workers are rarely seen as people. Their needs, both physical and spiritual, are rarely considered and opportunities for attending Mass and receiving the sacraments are infrequent.

It is important to remember that migrant farmworkers are human beings. As stated in Genesis 1:26-27, “...let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness... and God created mankind in His image; in the image of God, He created them.” Justice calls us to stand in solidarity with migrant farmworkers to change unjust conditions, ensure their contributions are recognized, and guarantee they are treated fairly. All of this in accordance with their God-given dignity as human beings made in His image.

The Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, & Travelers (PCMRT) is dedicated to encouraging leaders to develop an active and sustained ministry of presence along with opportunities for integral human development. PCMRT is also devoted to creating possibilities for migrant farmworkers to attend mass and meet their spiritual needs. Meeting migrant farmworkers where they are is an important aspect of the Church’s pastoral response and connecting them with the Catholic community around them is of paramount importance to them.

The Church’s concern for the pastoral care of migrant farmworkers stems from its mission to bring the message of salvation to all people (*cf. Matthew 28:19*). In the 110th message of World Day of Migrants and Ref-



ugees, our late Pope Francis said, “let us unite in prayer for all those who have had to leave their land in search of dignified living conditions. May we journey together with them, be ‘synodal’ together, and entrust them to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a sign of sure hope and consolation to the faithful People of God as they continue their journey”.

May we be encouraged to be, in the words of Pope Francis, *iglesia en salida*, (*Evangelii Gaudium* 24) – a church that “goes forth” – to bring forth the Gospel and accompany the people where they are. The Church must remain committed to walking with them and calling for reforms to

our immigration system that would provide a pathway to legal status.

Given the difficult circumstances migrants face, we must challenge ourselves as Christians to figure out ways to help those in need, with mercy and love for our neighbors. Pope Leo XIV in his message for the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, under the theme “*Migrants, Missionaries of Hope*”, calls on us to recognize the inherent dignity of every human being regardless of their migration status, and, to support people who are forced to leave their homes and places of origin. Our Catholic faith calls us to pray, work, and advocate for protections that allow all workers to thrive. We must uphold Catholic Social Teaching, which values the dignity of work and the rights of workers. Also, we must promote an environment where every worker can live with dignity and receive fair treatment. As echoed in the Scriptures, we must seek ways to welcome, promote, support, accompany, encourage, and empower migrant workers who, like all people, are created in the image and likeness of God.



***We must put human dignity back at the center and on that pillar
build the alternative social structures we need.”***

Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 168

NATIVE AMERICAN AFFAIRS

NATIVE AMERICANS - INVISIBLE NO MORE

By: Reverend David Bailey | Assistant Director of Native American Affairs



Caption: Getty Images

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, there are several tracts which pertain to one's civic responsibility toward their neighbor. But who are our neighbors? Sometimes, our neighbors can be long-standing enemies. Look at Jesus with the Samaritan woman for example (John 4:1-42). Jews and Samaritans were enemies, yet that didn't stop Jesus from having an authentic encounter with the Samaritan woman in which he didn't see her as an enemy. Instead, he saw her humanity.

As Catholics, we believe in the *imago Dei*—Image of God. This means that all men and all women—regardless of race, culture, country of origin, or first language—ALL of us are created in the image and likeness of God and, therefore, entitled to be treated with dignity. In John 13:35, Jesus tells us, "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." This is our mandate as Catholics: love each other and treat everyone with dignity.

In the US today, there are 574 federally recognized Native American nations. There are at least 2 million Natives in the US and about the same number in Canada. Yet, how many times do we consider Natives when we have conversations about equality, or human dignity, or race relations? In recent years, Native activists have adopted a slogan: *#notinvisible*.

Native Americans are often called the Invisible Minority. Yet, there are tribally enrolled Native men and women who live and work and go to school and raise their children in major cities all across North America. So, why are they invisible? It's about perspective. You usually don't think about someone until you're looking for them. In life, it is often the case that ignorance is a choice. We can be willfully ignorant by refusing to look for ways to encounter the neighbors we do not yet know.

The second Monday in October is Indigenous Peoples' Day. November is Native American Heritage Month. As those

dates approach, here are two points I'd like you to consider.

Ask yourself two questions:

1. Whose ancestral land am I on? Wherever you live now was part of the traditional land base of at least one tribe and probably several. Who are these people? Where are they now? What do you know about them?

2. Where is the closest tribe or Native cultural center to where I live? There are 567 reservations in the US and many more in Canada. What reservation is closest to you? Most reservations have visitor's centers, almost all have websites, and many offer events throughout the year which are open to the public.

Do you know any Natives? If not, there's something you can do about that. Native Americans are not invisible. They're here. They are alive. They have survived and they thrive. And it only takes a little effort to get to know them. As Catholics we believe that all men and women are created in the image and likeness of God and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. All means all... including the ones we don't yet know.

"Let us build a Church founded on the love of God and a sign of unity, a missionary Church that opens its arms to the world, that proclaims the Word, that allows itself to be unsettled by history, and that becomes a leaven of concord for humanity."

- Pope Leo XIV, Inaugural homily as Bishop of Rome, May 18, 2025

ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLAND AFFAIRS

WHERE SACRED ART MEETS SACRED PEOPLE: RADIANT HOPE AMONG ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLAND CATHOLICS IN THE UNITED STATES

By: Clarissa Ann Martinez | Assistant Director of API Affairs, USCCB
Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church



As I entered the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception one serene Saturday morning—just days before the Church celebrates the Nativity of the Blessed Mother—the sacred stillness invited awe and reflection. Every mosaic, statue, and sacred image revealed the mystery of God, embodied in saints and holy ones who stand

as living icons of the *imago Dei*. The Blessed Mother, portrayed in diverse cultural beauty, bore the mystery of Christ dwelling within her, reminding us that God is born among us.

Then came the living procession: families—young and old—garbed in vibrant saris and tunics, joined by religious women in the distinct white and blue saris of the Daughters of Charity. Together, the Indian Catholic community journeyed in pilgrimage to honor Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni. His Excellency, Bishop Earl K. Fernandes, himself of Indian heritage, presided with reverence—embodying the radiant faith of a community whose presence is both a gift and an invitation.

In that moment, sacred art and sacred people converged, revealing that the image of God is not confined to stone or canvas, but alive in the faithful who walk, pray, and build the Church together. Their witness echoes across the country, reminding us that when we truly see one another as bearers of the divine image, we glimpse the fullness of our shared home in the family of God.

Across the United States, Asian and Pacific Island Catholics breathe vibrant life into our parishes. Rooted in faith and shaped by diversity, they offer a joyful and resilient witness. In worship, they remind us that the Church grows together—with every voice, every heart, and every culture contributing to a community alive in grace.

Coming from lands where many religions live side by side, they show us how to stay grounded in our beliefs while living peacefully with others. In a world often divided, they remind us to remain open and kind. Many serve as bridge builders—working for the good of all, bringing their rooted faith into workplaces where they foster understanding, integrity, and compassion.

Their care for the poor and vulnerable comes from real struggle—compassion shaped by journeys on the margins.

Their love for family and elders brings healing to communities longing for connection. In a time when many feel alone, they remind us that healing often begins at home—with listening, kindness, and care across generations.

And here's the hope: their presence in our parishes proves that immigrants don't just adapt—they thrive. Their lives dispel fear and affirm that Catholic communities can be true spiritual homes. That's the kind of Church young people want to be part of. The Indian Catholic faithful at the Basilica stood as a testament to all who journey in faith, hope, and love. In their witness, we behold the *imago Dei*—not only in sacred art, but in the living Church. This is the Church we are called to live: radiant, grace-filled, and rooted in hope.

“Let this be our first great desire:
a united Church, a sign of unity
and communion, becoming a
ferment for a reconciled world.”



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Diocese of Brooklyn

Term: November 2024–November 2027

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Archdiocese of Washington

Chairman of the Subcommittee on African American Affairs

Most Reverend Oscar Cantú

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Chairman of the Subcommittee on Hispanic/Latino Affairs

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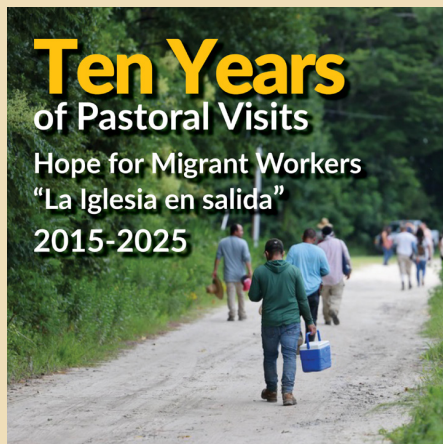
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Print Version: <https://www.usccb.org/committees/cultural-diversity-church/resourcesbooks>

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

NEW! Ten Years of Pastoral Visits: Hope For Migrant Farmworkers, “La Iglesia en salida” 2015 - 2025

The report highlights the many challenges faced by migrant workers, the energy and creativity they bring to discussions about solutions to those challenges, and outlines the support offered by diocesan and national staff, pastoral leaders and volunteers across the country. Download the resource: <https://bit.ly/49mFSm4>



NEW! 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 their rich spiritual heritage, provides a review 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.

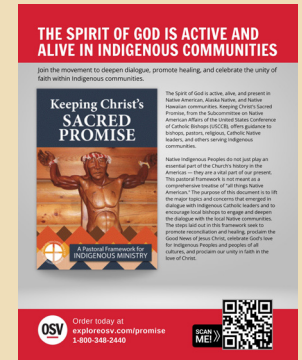
Download the resource: <https://bit.ly/3XC3Tyi>



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.

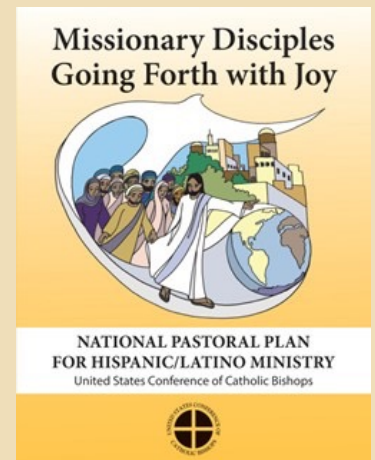
Click to order online: <https://www.orderosv.com/product/keeping-christ-s-sacred-promise-a-pastoral-framework-for-indigenous-ministry>



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.

Click to order online: - <https://www.osvcatholic-bookstore.com/v-encuentro-proceedings-and-conclusions.html>

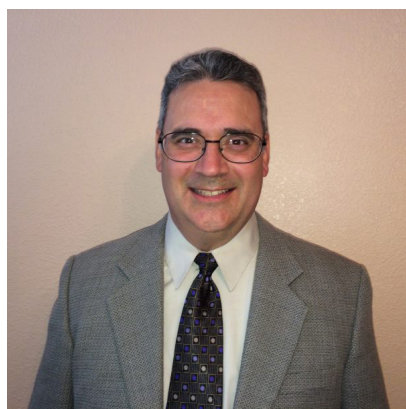


2025 Encuentro Awards

The Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs Recognizes Individuals for Contributions to Hispanic Ministry This award is the highest recognition given by the Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs for a sustained and significant contribution to the development and accompaniment of Hispanic/Latino Ministry at the national level over the years. The Encuentros Award was established by the Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs in 2023.

Pioneer in Research

Ken Johnson-Mondragón has dedicated over 25 years to serving Hispanic/Latino Catholics, establishing himself as a transformative leader in pastoral ministry and research. His extensive experience includes directing the National Research and



Resource Center for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry at Instituto Fe y Vida, and serving as Director of Latino Research and Development at RCL Benziger, where he developed innovative curriculum and resources that have equipped countless pastoral leaders to better serve Latino communities across the United States.

Ken was part of the National Team that led the implementation of V Encuentro, which culminated in the bilingual USCCB document “Proceedings and Conclusions of the V National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry.” Ken was also instrumental in producing key statistical reports for the USCCB, including the 2021 U.S. Catholic Population by Race/Ethnicity: Summary of National, Regional, and Diocesan Estimates and the 2019 Regional and National Statistical Summaries of the V Encuentro Consultation, which have helped shape and develop Hispanic/Latino Ministry across the nation.

In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the field, Johnson-Mondragón has received the 2008 National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana Leadership Award and the 2015 Catholic Press Award for Best Review. CARA also presented him the 2023 Rev. Louis J. Luzbetak, SVD, Award for Exemplary Church Research. Currently, he is the first-ever Director of Pastoral Engagement at the California Catholic Conference.



Accompanier

Sister Norma Pimentel has dedicated her life to restoring human dignity to immigrants and asylum seekers along the U.S.-Mexico border. Growing up in Brownsville, Texas, she entered religious life with the Missionaries of Jesus and began her ministry serving refugees at Casa Oscar Romero in the 1980s. Her commitment to bridging theology and missionary work led her to earn advanced degrees in theology and pastoral counseling, preparing her for over twenty years of leadership in providing humanitarian relief, clinical counseling, disaster relief, and social services throughout the Rio Grande Valley.

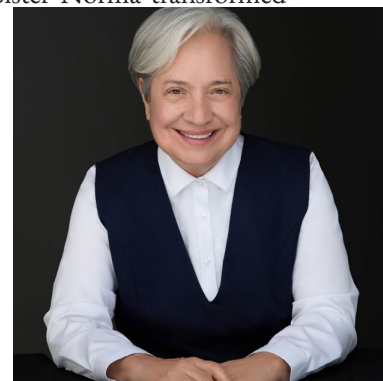
In 2014, when a surge of Central American immigrants arrived at the Southern Border, Sister Norma transformed

a borrowed parish hall into the Humanitarian Respite Center a safe haven where weary families could find hot meals, clean clothes, and compassionate welcome. What began as an emergency

response has grown into a respite center in the United States, welcoming over half a million immigrants

over the past decade and serving as many as 300 people daily. As Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, she oversees the charitable branch of the second largest Catholic Diocese in the United States. Her hands-on work at the Respite Center that has made her a powerful voice reminding our nation that immigrants are not numbers, but human beings deserving of respect and dignity.

Sister Norma's tireless advocacy has earned her national and international recognition, including Notre Dame's Laetare Medal, the Hispanic Heritage Award for Service, and over five honorary doctoral degrees from prestigious universities. Known as “Pope Francis’ “favorite nun” she has become one of the most recognized humanitarian leaders in our nation today.





Prayer for Pope Leo XIV

O God, shepherd and ruler of all the faithful,
look favorably on your servant Leo,
whom you have set at the head of your Church as her shepherd;
grant, we pray, that by word and example
he may be of service to those over whom he presides
so that, together with the flock entrusted to his care,
he may come to everlasting life.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

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20017 Website: www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/index.cfm | www.usccb.org

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