



## DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

McRaith Catholic Center | Office of the Bishop

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June 9, 2020

Dear people of God,

During this time of trial and uncertainty, please know that I hold each of you and your communities in my prayers. Although we will be unable to have large, in-person gatherings for some time, our diocesan staff is trying to find effective ways to continue their ministries. Deacon Chris Gutiérrez has initiated a pastoral planning process to create our next Diocesan Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry 2021-2025 following the process of the *V National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry*. I have delegated leaders from parishes with Hispanic Ministry across the diocese to form a Diocesan Hispanic Ministry Pastoral Planning Committee for this purpose. This letter is to inform you of this important work that will be happening virtually over the next several months as described in the attached summary. If you are interested in participating in this process or would like more information or updates, please contact Deacon Chris at [chris.gutierrez@pastoral.org](mailto:chris.gutierrez@pastoral.org).

Many of you have heard of the *V National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry* process that has taken place across the country. For the past almost five years, Hispanic Catholics in the United States have worked a process that has included prayer, study, consultation, reaching out to the peripheries, discernment and celebration. In our own diocese, several of our shared parishes worked this grassroots process in small groups followed by a gathering called a Parish Encuentro. The process followed the themes of encounter, getting involved, accompanying, bearing fruit and rejoicing based on Pope Francis' vision for the universal Church expressed in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel). This process has been led and encouraged by Bishops across the United States and has dovetailed perfectly into our own diocesan evangelization efforts.

After the Parish Encuentros, parish leaders gathered for a Diocesan Encuentro in August 2017 to bring together the parish results. I personally had the joy of presiding at the Opening Mass for that Diocesan Encuentro at St. Stephen Cathedral. A diocesan delegation participated in a Regional Encuentro in February 2018. Then in September 2018 I accompanied our diocesan delegation at the V National Encuentro event in Dallas, a truly mountain-top experience.

Since that event, the National V Encuentro team has been working on the *Proceedings and Conclusions* document which is now available. The next stage in this process is called "Coming down the Mountain" which means that each diocese is tasked with formulating their pastoral responses to the results of the *V Encuentro* process with local diocesan plans for Hispanic

Ministry. The regional and national conclusions will aid the work of the planning committee as they discern the appropriate pastoral responses to the realities that we have encountered at the local level and in the peripheries across our diocese. Even though the repercussions of COVID-19 will certainly have a lasting effect on our ministry, many of the priorities identified through the *V Encuentro* process will still be relevant as we move forward. Our Diocesan Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry will later be shared by leaders from our diocese as they participate in the planning process for a regional pastoral plan as well as the new National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry which will be developed in 2021.

Please pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance during this pastoral planning process and support the delegates from your area as you are able. The discernment and pastoral planning taking place now about how to more effectively welcome, form and integrate Hispanic Catholics in western Kentucky, who will in turn share their own gifts within the Diocese of Owensboro, will be a key element to our broader diocesan pastoral planning efforts over the next few years.

If you were not able to participate in the small group sessions and missionary actions at the beginning of this process, I highly recommend you consider using the adapted version: *Creating a Culture of Encounter: A Guide of Joyful Missionary Disciples* available through the USCCB Store. It is based on the five sessions of the *V Encuentro* process but has been adapted for use by any cultural group and is completely bilingual (English/Spanish). Deacon Chris' wife, Patti Gutiérrez, who works on the National V Encuentro Communications Team and was one of editors of that recent publication, will be assisting our diocesan pastoral planning process.

May God bless the process of this new stage and guide the work of the Diocesan Hispanic Ministry Pastoral Planning Committee. Thank you for your prayers and support.

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Reverend William F. Medley  
Bishop of the Diocese of Owensboro