Hacia el Futuro – Toward the Future in Jesuit Hispanic Ministry

REV. WILLIAM C. RICKLE, S.J.

The U. S. Bishops’ formulation of Hispanic Ministry may seem self-evident, but its implications are not. The document poses two central questions to the whole Church. First, what model of leadership will Hispanic Catholics offer as they continue to become a strong presence within the Catholic Church in the United States? And, second, how will this model strengthen the unity of the body of Christ in increasingly culturally diverse communities? Both of these questions address themes and challenges close to the hearts of Jesuits and our colleagues, especially training and formation for service leadership, and work for the reconciliation of men and women with each other and with God.

The Bishops also identify three specific challenges. First, structures and ministry networks that have effectively served the ministry, such as diocesan and regional offices and pastoral institutes, should be strengthened. Second, Hispanic ministry should build closer collaborative relationships with ethnic, racial and ministerial groups and organizations. And third, ministry efforts should foster the active participation of Hispanic Catholics in the social mission of the Church.

To anyone party to questions of apostolic discernment and prioritization for Jesuit apostolates in recent years, these questions and challenges should have a familiar ring to them. But we have not often enough, in my view, taken sufficiently into account the vast number of new, as well as more established, Hispanic communities that could benefit from a rethought and reimagined approach to what used to be called “ethnic ministry.”

From the Office...

REV. WILLIAM C. RICKLE, S.J.

In the time and space available, we cannot address all aspects of the challenges and opportunities before us in Hispanic ministry. U.S. Church efforts, where they have been most developed, have been with and on behalf of the newer arrivals, the ones with the greatest material and social needs. We must acknowledge that this has in some places exacerbated tensions with the older, more established and slightly more invested Hispanic communities. Without a doubt those with more economic and social stability are in need of formation for justice, training to live a life of vibrant faith in a world of professional and commercial work and trade. At the same time, recent exhortations from Fr. General Kolvenbach and emerging transnational apostolic efforts by Jesuits throughout the world urge us to do

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Cultures and Nationalities

In many ways, “Hispanic” is a term that denotes an increasingly complex and diverse group of people whose primary self-identification tends to be more by nationality and ancestry than by a more global Hispanic, or the more recent Latino, label. These differences are critical to understanding of and effective ministry with the specific communities in question. As noted by the USCCB document:

Even though Hispanics find their ancestors in many different countries, most share a common faith and language, as well as a culture rooted in the Catholic faith. These elements, which give a common identity to Latin American and Caribbean people, are even more important for Hispanics in the United States as they struggle to define their own identity in a culturally diverse context and under pressure to assimilate. The commitment of Hispanics to become active participants and to offer their unique contributions in the life of the Church and society – versus being assimilated – has been a key value and principle for Hispanics in ministry.

The Hispanic/Latino presence in what is now the United States has a long and dynamic history. The Gospel was introduced to the American continent by Spanish missionaries more than 500 years ago. The new mestizo community that evolved from the clash of the Spanish and the indigenous peoples gave “the new world” a people born into the Catholic faith. Today, the descendents of the first mestizo people are Hispanic communities with roots in more than 20 distinct nations. Each community brings with it its unique anthropological and historical context – faith traditions, cultural, social, economic, and political realities – that are different from mainstream Catholic culture.

The term Hispanic, used in government and most official documents and studies, and the term Latino, a newer term with a sometimes political and more urban connotation, are, for practical purposes, interchangeable. We will follow the USCCB, the U.S. Census and other major bodies in using the term Hispanic. It is important to remember that this is not a term Hispanics tend to use to describe themselves in the first instance.

Pastoring a Diverse Flock

REV. EDMUNDO E. RODRIGUEZ, S.J.

It is a given that the whole Church in the United States is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Therefore, those who serve in parishes need to learn how to build bridges between people of different cultures and backgrounds, how to celebrate diverse traditions and how to resolve differences when these arise. The Society of Jesus can be at the cutting edge of demonstrating how we can overcome our American syndrome of racism and ethnophobia by actually bringing diverse communities together.

As the pastor of a culturally diverse parish in Albuquerque, N.M., there are many opportunities to minister to people of all ethnicities. One of those opportunities is the challenge of ministering during times of inter-ethnic friction, which will inevitably arise and which can be an instrument of growth and increased understanding within the parish and the community.

The pastor of a culturally and racially diverse parish must first make certain that he shows no favoritism – conscious or unconscious – toward any group, and that the parish staff is trained to do the same. It helps a great deal if the parish staff and volunteers are a culturally diverse group. A healthy sensitivity to ethnic and racial differences is enhanced by working on a daily basis with people representing the many diverse faces of the parish.

The church at the parish level needs to be conscious of its nature as priestly, pastoral and prophetic. By priestly I mean that the community of faith is a place of theological reflection, social action, education and community building. Jesuits who have taken the trouble to study the changes since Vatican II, especially the developing role of the laity in ministry and in decision-making, know that the influence of the Society of Jesus can be tremendous at the parish level. Moreover, if Jesuit parishes are well run, then Jesuits can also have an impact on the diocese and in the region.

Some might ask why it is important for the Society to be in ethnically diverse parishes. These churches are very much in action – that can be shared with parishioners whether through devotions like the Apostleship of Prayer or through lectures, conferences and prayer sessions. Our Jesuit tradition is also mission-minded, so that the parishioners can be encouraged to support churches in poverty areas, whether in the same community or in a foreign country. This tradition emphasizes understanding the whys and wherefores of Catholic doctrines. Therefore, homilies and conferences should have a studied and thoughtful aspect to them. Too many of us in the pastoral sector still think of ourselves simply as those who provide for, prepare others for, and dispense sacraments. We are confused as to what the real nature of the Church community ought to be and what its ramifications are.

An important question is: should Jesuits be more involved in parish work, not just as a second or third career, but as a primary career? The parish today is a place of theological reflection, social action, education and community building. Jesuits who have taken the trouble to study the changes since Vatican II, especially the developing role of the laity in ministry and in decision-making, know that the influence of the Society of Jesus can be tremendous at the parish level. Moreover, if Jesuit parishes are well run, then Jesuits can also have an impact on the diocese and in the region.

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divided along economic lines. The very fact that parishes are located in different parts of the city, some very poor and some more affluent, means that while there may be cultural diversity, there will be less economic diversity. It is much more difficult to integrate an economically diverse parish than one which is economically homogenous because class often creates greater discomfort than ethnicity. This is an issue that will not soon be resolved in the United States – or elsewhere for that matter – in large part because of urban housing patterns.

What about conflicts that may arise between groups? This is less likely to happen if parish organizations, such as religious education, RCIA, Habitat for Humanity, etc., are inclusive of the various cultural groups. In our case here in Albuquerque, that includes Italian-Americans, Irish-Americans and other “Anglos,” Hispanics whose roots go to the Spanish colonization of New Mexico, African Americans, Native Americans of different tribes, and newly arrived Mexican and other Spanish-speaking immigrants. This means personal and aggressive recruiting among ethnic groups, as well as planned meetings and social events that enable parishioners to work together and to get to know each other.

Where there is actual friction, it is important not to allow the friction to be defined in racial or ethnic terms but in terms of the individuals involved. Because disputes and misunderstandings do arise between individuals, so too they must be resolved at that level.

Our goal as shepherds of culturally and ethnically diverse parishes must be to promote the vision of Church not as institution but as community.

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A diverse group from Dolores Mission in Los Angeles protests the War in Iraq.
Hispanics at a Crossroads: The Jesuit Response

REV. GERALD CHOJNACKI, S.J.

Deep faith and trust in God; love of Mary; respect for the dignity and value of each human person; hospitality; compassion for the poor, weak and downtrodden; an ardent thirst for justice; an ability to build community. These are unique gifts of the Hispanic community. After recognizing their gifts, we as a Society must ask what are their needs, and how can we respond to them?

Affirmation, Formation and Education

One of the strongest needs I have sensed in the years I have worked with this community is a very fundamental human need: the desire to feel welcomed, appreciated and valued. This affirmation of human dignity is basic for all of us but, for the Hispanic, it is particularly important. Coming from countries that for years have been labeled “underdeveloped,” they struggle to present themselves as equal partners at the table of human discourse. But how can you be an equal partner when you country is called “underprivileged,” your culture is considered inferior and your language and ethnicity are dubbed “alien” and “minority”? Labels may be important tools for sociologists and economists, but they can be devastating for a sense of self-worth in human relationships.

A second need is formation and education—human and intellectual, as well as spiritual and religious. Hispanics in the United States face myriad obstacles in attaining the level of education that other groups in our society have attained. Only 16 percent of Latino high school graduates earn a four-year college degree by age 29, compared with 37 percent of non-Hispanic whites and 21 percent of African-Americans, according to a recent study of census data by the Pew Hispanic Center.¹ (See also Fr. Stephen Privett’s piece on higher education on p. 16)

The type of religious instruction and spiritual formation all Catholics need is one that will equip them to understand and explain their faith. Hispanics often face a particular challenge to their faith by fundamentalist churches that are eager for new members, often found among recent immigrant populations. Catholic Hispanics in this country have been sustained largely by the Charismatic and Cursillo movements, which have provided them with an anchor for their faith. What is needed now is a fuller explication of that faith and education – human and intellectual, as well as spiritual and religious.

Hispanics Leaving the Church

Recent studies on Hispanics and religion show that many Hispanic Catholics leave the Church every year. At the same time, though, observers of the Hispanic community report that parishes throughout the country are filled with Hispanic families. The number of Masses celebrated in the Spanish language, or bilingually, on any given Sunday runs in the thousands, with new liturgies added every day. Hispanics make up more than 25 percent of all Catholics in formation programs, and there are more than 4,000 parishes with a majority Hispanic presence throughout the country.¹

For more than 30 years, the U.S. bishops have worked to develop Hispanic pastoral leadership and strategies with a pastoral network that consults with the laity. Through its Encuentro processes,² Hispanic ministry establishes pastorial priorities and strategies that come from the people themselves or their representatives. Pastoral institutes, Catholic organizations, apostolic movements and a variety of other ministerial programs exist among the Hispanic Catholic community to assure its total involvement in the life of the Church. Hispanic ministry in this country consistently assesses and takes the pulse of what is evolving in the community.

Hispanics at a Crossroads: The Wider Church’s Response

RONALDO M. CRUZ

The faith traditions and cultural values that Hispanics inherited and which have evolved through the centuries are having an influence on the life of the Church in the United States and on society in general. Fr. Jeff Chojnacki is absolutely correct in his contemplation on Hispanics: the need to respond is obvious; the question is how? Fr. Chojnacki challenges the Jesuit community, and the Church in general, to look to the many gifts the Hispanic peoples have to offer in formulating a sensitive and effective response to the largest ethnic group in the Church. The Jesuits sponsor many excellent programs and projects that serve Hispanics well, but all involved must understand that this is a diverse and dynamic community that changes everyday. Though

Mr. Cruz is the executive director of the USCCB Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs

Fr. Chojnacki (New York Province) is the New York Provincial.

¹See also Fr. Stephen Privett’s piece on higher education on p. 16

²See also Fr. Stephen Privett’s piece on higher education on p. 16
Where Were They, Where Are They Going?

Census 2000 shows us that the Hispanic population is both growing and spreading geographically at an accelerating rate. Growth and expansion are uneven. Some of the newest and most rapidly growing Hispanic population centers are in areas of the country where Catholic presence and institutional infrastructure is the weakest, most notably in the Southeast. Fifty-four percent of all Hispanics in the U.S. now live in the suburbs of metropolitan areas. According to analysis by the Pew Hispanic Center, the Hispanic population is growing in most metropolitan areas, but the rate and location of increase vary widely. Four distinct patterns of growth can be discerned:

1. Established Hispanic metro areas, such as New York, Los Angeles, Miami and Chicago, posted the largest absolute increases in Hispanic population between 1990 and 2000.
2. New Hispanic destinations like Atlanta and Orlando charted the fastest growth rates, despite their historically smaller bases.
3. Metro areas with relatively larger Hispanic bases, such as Houston, Phoenix and San Diego, meanwhile, became fast-growing Hispanic hubs during the last 20 years, with population growth averaging 235 percent.
4. Cities with small Hispanic populations, such as Baton Rouge, posted much lower absolute and relative growth than the other locales.

—Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy and the Pew Hispanic Center.


(http://www.pewhispanic.org/page.jsp?page=reports)

Hispanics at a Crossroads: The Jesuit Response

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A clear focus of our Jesuit mission today is our commitment to work for the faith that does justice. If we join that with the Hispanic community’s great drive to struggle against injustice and oppression, together we can create leaders for social change in the Church and in society.

Fr. Tim House (CHG), pastor of St. Procopius Church in Chicago, greets members of the congregation.

a deepening of a spirituality that can root them in Scripture, tradition and spiritual discernment.

According to a “Preliminary Apostolic Audit of Hispanic and Migrant Ministry in the U.S. Assistancy”:

It is clear from contemporary and historical church and Jesuit documents that an interest in the burgeoning Hispanic populations is not simply for the sake of cultural diversity. The preponderance of significant economic, social and religious needs presented by this young, energetic, mobile but often ill-prepared, and historically Catholic people demands our attention for apostolic commitment. From a religious point of view alone, it is disconcerting that the fastest growing religious category among Hispanics is “don’t belong to any church.”

Finally, as Hispanics struggle against discrimination and injustice, I sense among them the need to be equipped with an understanding of the social teaching of our Catholic faith as it finds expression in both our Catholic tradition and in our own Jesuit congregations. Prepared with those tools and enlightened by a religious formation that helps them to understand more completely their faith, Hispanics can then move toward their rightful leadership positions in their communities, civic institutions and, above all, their churches. The formation of leaders is the key need in the Hispanic Catholic community today as singled out by numerous documents of our own U.S. bishops. They are the future leaders of the Church in the United States, and so their training and formation is essential today.

Again, I quote the “Preliminary Apostolic Audit of Hispanic and Migrant Ministry in the U.S. Assistancy”:

It seems that our attention to the Hispanic Catholic community has largely remained at the pastoral-social ministry level which is focused more on helping with immediate need rather than nurturing longer term development both in terms of socioeconomic advancement through quality education and in terms of helping form more firmly grounded and intellectually well equipped Catholic Hispanic leaders who can help assist their communities come to terms with cultural and social change from a perspective of a more critically resilient faith.

These, then, are some of the needs that I see present in this community today: affirmation of their worth and dignity; the opportunity of earning a solid human and intellectual education; the development of a spirituality rooted in Scripture, tradition and discernment; a solid formation in the social doctrine of the Church; and leadership preparation. These needs lead us to the final question: what is the specific contribution the Jesuits in the U.S. Assistancy can make to the Hispanic community?

What Can the Hispanic Community and the Jesuits Create Together?

The answer to this question comes from combining the strengths and needs of the Hispanics with our Jesuit mission as explained in our recent documents.

With their need for a spirituality rooted in Scripture, tradition and discernment and our commitment to sharing the gift of the Spiritual Exercises with the whole Church, we can create with them an opportunity to have a lived experience of the Spiritual Exercises in their daily life. Making the 19th Annotation retreat available to Hispanics – in Spanish (the original language, of course) – is a first step. I have seen the difference this has made in peoples’ lives and in their ability to face everyday challenges. If we combine this with an introduction to the Christian Life Community, we will see a blossoming of CLC in this country as has occurred in Latin America. Hispanics enjoy coming together
in community – even more so when it enables them to develop the innate deep faith and trust they have in God.

Our Jesuit strength in the United States is education. Through the education and formation of Hispanic sons and daughters, we will be preparing the future leadership of the Church and civic society. Hispanics are and will continue to be the fastest growing population in the United States. If we want our future leaders – political, civic and ecclesiastical – to be intelligent, committed and informed, then the ball is in our court. We need to make the education and formation we provide available for the next generation of leaders.

But how can we do that? We are already doing it through the creation of our Nativity model middle schools (for a more thorough treatment, see Fr. Jack Podsiadlo’s article, p. 14), our Cristo Rey schools (see Jeff Thielman’s article in the online version of In All Things), our H.A.P. and REACH programs, our ability to offer financial aid packages. But we need to do much more; we are only reaching a limited audience. Can we open our schools and institutions to participate in specialized leadership training programs in our institutions in the after school or evening hours?

Can we offer weekend or summer programs of spiritual and human enrichment for community leaders? Can we offer parenting skills courses or programs in fine arts for children or adults who cannot afford a formal degree program? Can we collaborate with other institutions to do all of this? We can. We need only be creative enough to capitalize on the community’s needs and desires and our strengths and talents.

A clear focus of our Jesuit mission today is our commitment to work for the faith that does justice. If we join that with the Hispanic community’s great drive to struggle against injustice and oppression, together we can create leaders for social change in the Church and in society. In the past, we worked with immigrants to create labor schools that established unions and improved workplace conditions. Is it not time for us once again to establish schools or programs to benefit recent immigrants? Is it not possible for us to create social centers around the country that train people as advocates for social justice and peace? Think of a network of social justice and peace centers, perhaps located in our middle or high schools or universities, training faculty members or civic, corporate and community leaders in the social doctrine of the Church and in advocacy for peace. Hispanics can take the lead in this area and become agents for social change in our nation and in the world.

Finally, we need to heed the call of our own recent Congregations to be engaged in active dialogue with peoples across national, religious, cultural and ethnic boundaries. Hispanics in the United States, with their connections to their home countries, provide us an entrée to a range of nations and peoples with whom we can collaborate. Together, we can realize the vision of bringing the North and South together as one America with the dawning of that justice for which all of us are called to labor.

For many people in the United States, the growing population of Hispanics is seen as a threat to them and to their vision of America. As Jesuits, we are called to help our fellow citizens realize that our nation is enriched by the contributions of Hispanics to our economy, our culture and our civic life. Now is an exciting moment for the Society of Jesus.

We have a splendid opportunity to collaborate with our Hispanic sisters and brothers to help them realize the dreams that first brought them to this country.

Juntos podemos! ♦

Comparative Incomes

Per capita income for Hispanics in 2000 was $12,011; for African-Americans, $14,881; for Asian Americans-Pacific Islanders, $21,844; and for non-Hispanic whites, $24,919. Hispanic children (25 percent) are nearly twice as likely as African-American children (13 percent) and three times more likely than Euro-American children (7 percent) to have no health insurance.


3 Ibid.
Hispanics in the Future Church
Not all Hispanics are Catholic. Will there be fewer Hispanic Catholics? For an unknown, but certainly growing number of Hispanics, becoming a part of U.S. culture also means becoming a member of a fundamentalist sect or church, or joining the ranks of those without religious community and faith beyond a generalized sense of being “spiritual.” The 2001 American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) Study (unfortunately conducted only in English) estimates that the number of Hispanics who are Catholic has decreased from 66 to 59 percent since 1990, and that the biggest growth is not among Protestant denominations or fundamentalist sects, but among those with “no religion,” which has doubled in the same time period to 13 percent. In part, this can be a pastoral challenge related to geography. Many Hispanics work and live in areas where the Church’s presence is weak, especially in Spanish language services.


(http://www.gc.cuny.edu/studies/key_findings.htm)

Ministering to Hispanics

While extensive research needs to be done as to why Hispanics leave the Church, there is sufficient information to suggest that there are basic elements in ministering to Hispanics and other groups that should be considered in pastoral planning and implementation. When Hispanics do leave the Catholic Church, they leave for a variety of reasons. The Church must provide a welcoming atmosphere, time and space to celebrate within their own cultural context, a response to both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking Hispanics. In the secular world, the Hispanic presence is evident. Not only is it seen in people in the streets, small businesses, and in all types of gathering places and public transportation, it is now quite common to hear non-Hispanic adults and children use Spanish words in their vocabulary. Within the popular culture, Hispanics are seen in the media, movies and television. They are actors and singers and news people who have crossed over to American mainstream culture. Schools provide opportunities to learn more about Hispanic literature, music and art. In the political arena, the number of Hispanic women and men appointed to political positions and elected to political offices increases with each election. There are thousands of Hispanic elected officials at the local, state and federal levels of government.

In churches, there is a demonstrated awareness of the cultural sensitivity due its members. Liturgical décor, language, relevant preaching and music, as well as participation by various cultural groups during religious services, are more evident today than ever before. The growing involvement of different cultural groups, including Hispanics, in leadership positions that involve decision-making for the entire community is becoming more evident in parishes and diocesan structures. However, these pastoral efforts are not reaching all Hispanics.

The Church and the Society of Jesus must continue their commitment to accepting the diversity of cultures that makes up the one body of Christ.

Hispanics want to give back to the Church and their community, but if they are ignored, or worse, seen as insufficiently prepared to minister the Word among their own community, let alone the broader community, they may go to another faith tradition where they feel they will make a difference.

ty and does theological reflections on the pastoral implications. It is one of the best-organized pastoral networks in the Church today.

Yet, Hispanics are leaving the Church, their traditional home. Increasingly, they leave and have no religious affiliation at all. According to a 2002 PARAL (Program for the Analysis of Religion Among Latino) study at Brooklyn College, second and third generation Hispanics are more apt to leave the Church than new arrivals. For new arrivals who do leave the Catholic Church, going to other churches could be a matter of survival. Upon arriving in a new environment, they are in need of social orientation and of a support system that affirms their cultural identity and their need for immediate basic necessities. If the local Catholic Church does not meet these needs, or if there is no Catholic presence in the community, as there often is not in the Southeast, Hispanics may well go elsewhere.

The Hispanic Presence

According to the 2000 Census, about one in seven residents living in the United States – 13 percent or 35 million people – is of Hispanic origin. Fifty-eight percent of the population growth in the United States since 1990 is due to the Hispanic presence. In the Catholic Church, 71 percent of its growth, since 1960, is also due to Hispanics. As a result, many parishes throughout the country have seen the growth of a single population the likes of which have not been seen in nearly a century.

The Hispanic community is a very young population. At least 57 percent are under the age of 18, and at least 50 percent of all Hispanics are under the age of 39. Only five percent are over the age of 65. Of the 46,000 Catholic priests in the United States, approximately 3,000 are Hispanic. Of those, approximately 500 were born in this country. An excellent new development is that a significant number of seminarians were born in Latin America. Given that new immigrants account for approximately 46 percent of the growth of the Hispanic population in the United States, it is not surprising that a significant number of seminarians are from Latin America. But where are the U.S. born seminarians? This is a pastoral challenge that needs extensive study.

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speaking youth, a response to generational differences, culturally relevant preaching and music, and pastoral support, such as Bible study, schools of formation, and ministry opportunities that allow the people to apply what they have learned. Again, pastoral vision, leadership development, pastoral formation, structures that are integral to the diocese and parish, and communication with the broader community on the importance of the efforts implemented are necessary to legitimize the pastoral efforts.

Hispanic lay leaders, like all lay leaders, take their vocation seriously. Much harm is done when they take the time, energy and their hard earned resources to prepare themselves and to mature in their faith, but are ignored when they have completed the formation program. Hispanics want to give back to the Church and their community, but if they are ignored, or worse, seen as insufficiently prepared to minister the Word among their own community, let alone the broader community, they may go to another faith tradition where they feel they will make a difference. All means must be taken to ensure an atmosphere that welcomes and utilizes the time, talents and treasure of all the faithful – no exceptions! This is important to keep in mind, as the growth of the Catholic Church in the next 50 years will be due largely to the Hispanic peoples.

Hispanics are here to stay, although not everyone is ready for that reality or is accepting of their presence. The Church and the Society of Jesus must continue their commitment to accepting the diversity of cultures that makes up the one body of Christ. It is the right thing to do. All must take responsibility to prepare future leaders to be responsible stewards, ministers and administrators within the church. Failure to do so could mean a missed opportunity and, ultimately, fewer Hispanic Catholics. Given the Hispanic and Jesuit spirituality, as well as the mutual commitment to lay vocations, Hispanics and Jesuits can collaborate fully and effectively in a common mission to build the one body of Christ and to keep Hispanics in the Catholic faith.

Hispanic Catholics are at a crossroads. As their numbers continue to grow and become more mainstream within a culturally diverse reality, will their future in the Church be one of strong leadership and full participation or will it be one of a majority Catholic population not truly feeling comfortable in its own home, its original faith tradition? Will Hispanic Catholics become more secular and less Church-centered? These are the complex questions that require theological and pastoral reflection and action. Fr. Chojnacki is on the right track. It would be a wonderful thing if all religious orders accepted the challenge and follow the Society’s example for action. It would be even greater if all dioceses and parishes did the same.

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4 All numbers in this section are drawn from the USCCB Department of Hispanic Affairs. http://www.usccb.org/hispanicaffairs/demos.htm.
Opportunities to Serve a New Community

MARK PIEROTTI

It was a Wednesday, and we had just finished day three of admissions deliberations for our incoming freshman class. We were emotionally drained. We had offered seats to 15 young Latino students, after reading writing samples such as the two below:

“When we lived in Mexico, my dad sent us money. Every month he would send about $200. My mom always waited for the money . . . [she] had to pay bills, gas for the stove, water to drink, and for food. My mom made about 200 pesos a month. Barely enough for food and water. Sometimes my dad could not send money. That was very bad because sometimes we wouldn’t eat very well. That is when I learned not to expect things from other people but from yourself.”

And . . .

“One of the challenges I went through that made me a better person was when my mom and dad got into an argument . . . we left home for five months and returned . . . my dad started acting the same way as before, he was getting drunk starting to yell at us. So this time only my mom left to Mexico she got treatment from the burn my dad did to her. Now I only call my mom around twice a month . . . I try to do my best in school so when I graduate I can be able to get my mom home.”

Not your typical applicants to a school used to setting the pace for others in the Silicon Valley. We knew we were fortunate at Bellarmine College Preparatory—our students talented, our faculty and staff dedicated, our parent community extremely generous. But it was time to be atypical. So in 2002, we launched a program to accept Hispanic students from San Jose’s east side, a minority traditionally underrepresented at our school. Until last year, that is.

As we broke for lunch, our Director of Diversity Outreach and Enrollment, Enrique Flores, asked if he could read a letter from a friend. Enrique himself is a Bellarmine graduate who comes from a gang-riddled east side neighborhood. He knows what it is like for a young Hispanic to lie to his friends about attending a public high school, only to change into his uniform after arriving at Bellarmine in the morning. Enrique has seen friends killed by gang warfare; he has experienced families torn apart by senseless violence. He also remembers what it is like to beat the odds and graduate from a Jesuit high school and university. He wants that same dream for the young people in his neighborhood.

Enrique began to read . . .

“You know, bro, I am proud of the work you are doing. I wouldn’t wish where I am on my worst enemy. You are an inspiration to me and the others . . . when I get out I want to finish school and change things . . . I want to make a difference too.” The letter was from a childhood friend of Enrique who made some very poor decisions and now finds himself in San Quentin Prison for four years. The look on Enrique’s face said it all—we were making a real difference in the life of a community we had ignored for many years.

Reading the Signs of the Times

Bellarmine, founded over 150 years ago, is an all-male college preparatory school serving the spectacular Santa Clara Valley. We attract an academically talented student body that scores well above average on our high school placement test and whose SAT scores far exceed state and national averages. Of the 1,410 students we enroll, a vast majority can afford our tuition; about 225 students receive financial aid. In short, we are in a blessed position to make some extraordinary things happen. And in 2002, we decided to do just that.

I hired Enrique Flores in 2001 with the idea of building a relationship with traditionally underrepresented schools in the San Jose area and of one day making the Bellarmine experience an option for their students. Little did I know how fast the Holy Spirit would work! I was armed with thoughts of carefully planning the program, researching the courses we could offer, and spending a few years ripening the culture—both on campus and off campus—to the idea. I quickly realized, though, that I was approaching the issue with the same ennui some do when confronted with the decreasing number of Jesuits available for the secondary education apostolate: somewhere over the next horizon there will be a flood of options if we just sit and wait . . . patiently.

There were so many questions and considerations. For years, we have polished the floors and prayed religiously, and still the east side did not come to us. Year after year, financial aid sat unused in endowment accounts. We have come to see this school as the panacea for all the ills of civilized society, but there are students in the east side community who do not even know our name.

Principal, at times, run the risk of being curators rather than administrators. We are handed the keys to well-established institutions filled with priceless treasures and fail prey to treating the school as a museum.
How do we reach them? What fire must be lit within to motivate us to go to them? What resources do we make available? What people? Where do we fit in? And how do they fit in with us?

Principals, at times, run the risk of being curators rather than administrators. We are handed the keys to well-established institutions filled with priceless treasures and fall prey to treating the school as a museum. We can dust the artwork but we dare not move it to another room! And bringing in a new piece of art is as challenging as housebreaking a Jack Russell Terrier. After a lengthy conversation one afternoon with my assistant principal, Chris Meyercord, we came to a mutual conclusion: if we don’t do it now, when will we do it?

Just as Catholics struggle to confront the changing face of the Church in the United States, the secondary schools of the Society of Jesus are not excused from this conversation. Traditional Jesuit schools similar to Bellarmine have flourished for years in the states, often seating a predominantly white population. The years have been good to us; our reputation has taken on mythical proportions. Yet, as the world shifted around us, have we truly had the courage and desire to keep pace with the change? Judging from the statistics compiled over the past decade by the Jesuit Secondary Education Association (JSEA), we have not. In fact, our schools across the nation have actually become less diverse.

One has to wonder how that could happen. Intelligent people who pride themselves on reading the signs of the times have seemingly been blind to these new signs. Or perhaps the signs are no longer in a language we understand. I think it is the latter. We must invest new energy into this changing apostolate so that all of our schools reap the benefits of a more inclusive educational system in the years to come. Facing the challenge of involving the Hispanic community takes enormous effort from all stakeholders, but the possibility of changing the face of a community is well worth the costs – fiscal and formational.

The Freshman 15

In 2002, we admitted 15 east side students whose application essays resembled those quoted above. We knew the students would not be of the same academic caliber of those we traditionally accepted. We also knew we would have to turn down some very qualified students in order to start this program. With the help of our learning specialist, who spent two decades in public schools, we established an AVID program (Advancement Via Individual Determination) to address the important academic skills that needed attention in order for these young men to meet with some level of success. Two faculty members stepped forward to teach summer courses in math and writing so that our new students could grow comfortable with the school culture, the campus, one another and higher academic expectations than they may have encountered in the past. At the same time, this afforded us a chance to see how they performed in a high school class.

All 15 – including the teachers – made it through the summer and began classes in August 2002. By the end of October, only two students (a set of brothers) had left the program in favor of attending their local high school. As of March, 2003, the remaining students had overcome some incredible odds to succeed at Bellarmine. Students whose scores on the entrance examination were 9 or 21 out of 100 are now carrying grade point averages nearing 3.14. These young men have contributed to the life of the community in ways that have made us richer – in sports, clubs, cultural presentations and liturgies. Together, we both make a difference.

Rising to the Challenge

Responding to the signs of the times is not always glamorous. The counter-cultural desires we should cultivate as Ignatian educators often become dulled by the determined naysayer we all encounter, sometimes even within ourselves. I knew in my heart that the school was up to the challenge. I also understood, with the help of Enrique and Chris, that we had an obligation to the community in which we lived. When considering the challenges put forth by Father General, the goals of the California Province, the documents of the American Bishops and an openness to the work of the Holy Spirit, I really didn’t have an option – or an excuse.

What a different place the San Jose area will be in 20 years when these talented and gifted young men – many of whom will stay in the area, never moving more than 10 miles from home – begin making decisions in our community. What type of future leaders will they be? Armed with an Ignatian education rather than a gun, how will they influence our world?

There are other Jesuit schools in the country that have taken on similar challenges, but one has to ask whether this is enough? Can we really celebrate that we admit 15 students a year out of a school population of 1,450? It is more a muted joy as the statistics slap us in the face. Jesuit secondary schools and the Society of Jesus are being called to enter into a serious period of discernment. Has the time come to re-define secondary education? With more and more lay people at our schools trained in the Spiritual Exercises, can the Society now address the needs of this new Church in a more concerted, direct manner? With fewer Jesuits available for the work of secondary education, how can the Society staff these new, exciting and deserving ventures, ones that will certainly have a greater impact than our 15 new students a year, without overlooking the good work of the current schools? Is there room for both models? I think so.

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School

Cristo Rey is a coeducational, college preparatory secondary school, founded in 1996 by the Chicago Province for the immigrant, predominantly Mexican people of Chicago’s Pilsen/Little Village neighborhood. As a Jesuit and Catholic school, Cristo Rey strives to advance the human and intellectual capacities, as well as promote the religious and cultural heritage, of all the families it serves.

Through its dual-language curriculum and Corporate Internship Program, Cristo Rey intends to maximize the potential of its graduates so they can assume leadership roles in the civic, religious, business and cultural life of Chicago and the nation. The Cristo Rey model is catching on in other parts of the country. De La Salle North Catholic of Portland, Ore., and Juan Diego Catholic High School of Austin, Texas are sponsored by the De La Salle Christian Brothers. Verbum Dei in Los Angeles is administered by the Jesuits.

Two schools are opening in August of 2003: Cristo Rey New York High School and the Bronx and Ampere Jesuit High School of Denver. These schools must serve economically disadvantaged students, that is, those young people who otherwise would not have the means to attend a private high school. Visit the website at http://www.cristoreynetwork.org for more information.

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Growing Up Hispanic, Catholic... and Jesuit

JIM GARCIA

Growing up in Albuquerque, New Mexico in a lower, middle class family, my parents instilled the value of Catholic education in me and my 10 brothers and sisters at a very young age. Although there was a public high school less than six blocks from our house, we all knew that we would be making the trek across town to attend Albuquerque’s only Catholic high school. Though neither of my parents had been to college, they expected our high school education to be only the first step in a life-long process of learning. My parents lived out their faith by example, and I came to understand that an education was not only a means to a better future, but a gift to be shared with others, especially the disadvantaged.

I was the first of all of my siblings to leave Albuquerque to attend college out of state. I was drawn to Regis College in Denver. I had heard about the Jesuits and intuitively knew that this would be the place in which to continue the faith journey I had begun in high school.

At Regis, I encountered Jesuits who not only took a personal interest in my academic development, but also challenged me to think critically about my faith and provided “real world”

Escuela de Guadalupe

A unique member of the Nativity Network is Escuela de Guadalupe in Denver, Colo. Although strongly supported by the Missouri Province (a Jesuit or representative of a Jesuit institution has an ex officio seat on the Board of Directors) it is not a Jesuit sponsored ministry. Escuela de Guadalupe is a community-based, private Catholic elementary school in northwest Denver that opened in 1999 and focuses on providing children from low income families with a quality, dual-language education. The Escuela features a highly innovative education model. The children learn academic subjects in their primary language, vocabulary and communication principles of their second language, and, in mixed groups, extend and deepen their understanding of their lessons by alternating between English-only and Spanish-only instruction on a weekly basis. Instead of weaning the students away from their first language and into English-only classes, Escuela de Guadalupe focuses on developing equally strong understanding, speaking, reading and writing in both English and Spanish.

Entering students are tested to determine their comprehension and communication skills in their primary and secondary language and are grouped accordingly in the grade level class that has a teacher and aid who are both bi-lingual. If the primary teacher is dominant in English, the aid is dominant in Spanish and vice-versa. In the early grades, English as a Second Language and Spanish as a Second Language are taught. In the higher grades, Language Arts classes are offered in both languages. Math, science, religion and social studies are taught one week in Spanish and the next in English. In drama and choral presentations, students move fluently between the two languages.

The fourth grade class publishes a monthly bi-lingual newspaper. Portfolio assessments attest to the growth in academic areas.

At the Escuela, students are served breakfast and lunch plus a snack in mid-afternoon. Some students are picked up at 4:30 p.m. while others remain until 5:30 p.m. in a special after-school program. The school year runs from late August until July 4. Extended vacations are offered at Christmas and Easter to accommodate parents’ desire to return to Mexico to celebrate these major family celebrations. Although the Escuela is presently only at K-5 with plans for a sixth grade next year, local Jesuit and Catholic high schools are showing interest in providing financial resources so that graduates of the Escuela will be able to continue their education in some of the best secondary schools Denver has to offer. Hopefully, Escuela de Guadalupe and its dual language curriculum will serve as a model for other communities with high Hispanic populations.

Fr. Jack Podsiadlo, S.J.
opportunities through which I could actually live it. It was at Regis that I realized that success is measured by the extent to which we give back to our community and that it is our obligation to seek out opportunities to serve others.

After graduating from Regis, I accepted a position at an inner-city Catholic grade school teaching language arts, social studies, and religion to students from low-income, predominantly Hispanic families, many of whom were recent immigrants from Mexico. This experience awakened me, personally and professionally, on many levels. I had not known, for example, that the vast majority of the parents I was working with were functioning in a basic survival mode. Although these parents clearly wanted the best for their children, they were facing substantial barriers that, in many cases, prevented the children from realizing their full potential.

Given my Jesuit experience in college, I remained convinced that if I could create opportunities for students to obtain a quality, college preparatory high school education, it would be the first step in interrupting the cycle of poverty that had gripped these families. What I soon realized, however, is that the majority of the families I encountered had virtually no first-hand knowledge of the value of Catholic high school education. This was due in part to the fact that over the previous 25 to 30 years, virtually all Denver Catholic high schools either closed or had been relocated to serve a far wealthier constituency. For those left behind in the cities, the thought of sending their sons or daughters to a remote, suburban Catholic high school was an idea that bordered on the absurd.

Despite this challenge, I successfully convinced a number of students and their parents to attend several of the suburban high schools, including a Jesuit high school. In retrospect, I grossly underestimated the barriers that these students and their families would ultimately experience in what was for them a completely foreign environment that offered little in the way of basic support. The combination of economic, linguistic, and cultural barriers soon overwhelmed these students and parents, and many of them dropped out long before graduating. Not surprisingly, several of the students who did manage to graduate from the Catholic high schools did not go on to pursue higher education because, I believe, they were not convinced they would succeed.

I vividly recall one family that experienced the brunt of these barriers. Immigrants from Mexico, the parents spoke no English, had no means of transportation and were undocumented. In addition, one of their children had a serious medical condition that required expensive treatment, and both parents worked minimum wage jobs. Despite challenges that would have paralyzed the average family, when it came time for their oldest son to go to high school, the parents – knowing that education was the key to their son’s future – enrolled him at the Jesuit high school 15 miles from their home. The sacrifices made by this family were nothing short of heroic, yet from their perspective, they were simply fulfilling their parental obligation.

After five years of teaching, I moved on to pursue other endeavors tangentially related to education. Always in the back of my mind, though, was the intense desire to be part of an effort to create a viable educational option for the types of families I encountered during my early teaching experience. Unfortunately, with the passing of time, the barriers facing this underserved segment of the Hispanic community have become greater, to the point that unconscionable numbers of Hispanic youth are being relegated to the permanent undereducated underclass.

This problem has been compounded by an educational system and mainstream media that consistently view Hispanic families in terms of multiple deficits rather than assets. Based on my experience, Hispanic families confronted with even the most overwhelming barriers were willing to make extreme sacrifices if it meant their children would have better educational opportunities.

My first thought upon hearing about Arrupe Jesuit High School in 2001 was that it was exactly the educational model to bridge the gap to higher education and overcome the barriers that have plagued disadvantaged Hispanic youth. Arrupe, patterned after the enormously successful Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago, represents an exceptional educational alternative for families accustomed to being told that they have no choice or to aim low so as not to be disappointed when their dreams fall flat. As in Chicago, Arrupe will raise the level of academic expectations by ensuring that its students possess a clearly defined road map to success.

Intrinsic to the Hispanic culture are the characteristics of hard work, perseverance, commitment to family and an abiding faith in God’s providence. Arrupe’s aim is to cultivate and nurture these characteristics in all of its students so that in four years they exude the confidence that will be the lynchpin to their future achievement. In keeping with the Jesuit motto of “Men and Woman in Service of Others,” Arrupe will foster an environment whereby students are encouraged not only to excel academically, but to also embrace fully the notion of leadership through service to others. The measure of success for Arrupe will be the extent to which it is able to raise up the next generation of Hispanic leaders.
Forming Men and Women for Others in the Formative Years

REv. Jack Podsiadlo, S.J.

A Child, Like So Many Others

Samantha Ramirez recently celebrated her third birthday. She was born in Georgia of Mexican immigrant parents who now live in Maryland. Amid the mariachi music, piñata smashing and festive family celebration, I tried to project ahead 20 years and imagine Samantha’s chances of reaching the American Dream of a college education. As the baby boom generation reaches retirement age during the next 10 to 20 years, many lucrative opportunities for those seeking to move up the economic ladder will become available. Having excellent English communication skills will be essential. Will Samantha be prepared?

As a Jesuit involved for more than two decades in the middle school education of Hispanic and African-American children, I want to explore the challenges facing educators who daily face the influx of Spanish speaking children into their classrooms.

Like so many of the children of recent Spanish-speaking immigrants from Mexico, the Caribbean, Central or South America, Samantha’s parents plan to stay in the USA — whether documented or undocumented. They have decided that, for their own economic security and for her future, the United States is their home. Like so many of the new wave of Hispanic immigrants, Samantha’s parents have not been drawn to the large centers of Hispanic population: California, New York, Texas. Maryland is where they have found new employment possibilities, a relatively affordable standard of living and other members of the Ramirez family.

Samantha is growing up physically in the United States but her reality is Mexican. Everyone in the home speaks Spanish. The Ramirez’s apartment is decorated with pictures of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe and Mexican landscapes. The food is Mexican, as are all the family traditions and customs. Samantha watches some American television and has learned to speak a few English phrases. Television will be the extent of her exposure to English until she begins school. Her parents want to enroll her in a Head Start program, but there are none in the neighborhood. So she stays at home watching TV and learning from her mother the traditional female roles in the household.

What will happen when Samantha reaches school? What educational opportunities does the future hold for her and for other Hispanic children like her? And how does the Society of Jesus enter into this picture?

The Nativity Network

According to a Jesuit Conference report published in National Jesuit News, there isn’t a single province in the Assistancy that has not seen a growth in the Hispanic population in the last 10 years. Yet the numbers of Hispanics enrolled in our high schools and colleges is low. According to the Jesuit Secondary School Association (JSEA), approximately 18 percent of all Jesuit high school students are minorities, with 6.5 percent being Hispanic. Nevertheless, there are programs sponsored by Jesuit institutions to address the educational needs of Hispanic youth.

The Nativity Middle Schools are based on the model developed in New York City to prepare Hispanic boys to enter Jesuit and other Catholic high schools and then move on to successful careers in college. Founded in 1971, the Nativity Mission Center has served as an inspiration nationwide for middle schools that address the educational needs of youngsters from low-income families, mainly Hispanic and African American. Employing a combination of challenging academics, small classes, a personal concern for the well being of each student and family, extended day, extended year, parental involvement, and support as students move through high school and into college, these schools send their graduates on to competitive high schools and colleges.

One significant sign of success is that the number of schools is growing. There are presently 36 programs in the Network; five more schools are scheduled to open in 2003. The De La Salle Christian Brothers have a network of 15 schools which incorporates the essential elements of the model. Graduates of the middle schools have more than an 85 percent rate of graduation from high school. Of those, almost 90 percent go on to college. Graduates of two of the oldest schools – Nativity Mission Center and Nativity Prep of Boston – have returned to their alma mater as teachers.

A key to this success is the Graduate Support Program. Each school is required to develop this program, which supports and monitors the students through their years in high school and into college. Supervised study space, tutoring, counseling, retreats, career guidance and familiarity with the college application process are made available to those now in high school. In most cases there is also a financial aid component which enables the middle school graduates to attend a Jesuit, Catholic or independent high school. This accompaniment and support through the most difficult years of adolescence has led many students to successfully complete high school and move on to post-secondary education. Graduates come back to the middle school on a regular basis and serve as role models for the younger students.
Even though there will soon be 15 Jesuit-sponsored Nativity schools across the country, the number of students touched by the program is small. No school, when fully operating, enrolls more than 75 to 100 students. Classes are held at 15 to 20 students each. There are so many more youngsters out there who would thrive in the Nativity environment – a dream is to have a Nativity school in every barrio of the country.

How Do We Define Success?

Although the selection process may differ from school to school, there are some common elements. First, since these are all schools for the economically poor, most students qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Meal Program. All the schools recruit from outside the Catholic school population. The Nativity schools are not trying to take potential students away from the Catholic schools, but rather to make a Catholic school education available to those whose families would not otherwise have the financial resources. Local public schools, neighborhood organizations, local churches and even health clinics refer the youngsters. Parental word of mouth is probably the most successful form of recruitment. Before students are accepted, there is usually an interview process that includes the family. Some schools have a Saturday component in which the candidate can be observed performing in a variety of situations, and standardized testing might be administered to know at what academic level the candidate is performing. Yet there is no skimming for the cream of the crop. Many of the incoming students are reading and doing math below grade level. Motivation and the desire to do well in a new learning environment are the key elements for which we look.

How successful are these Jesuit-sponsored Nativity schools? Like all Jesuit educational endeavors, the first goal is forming men and women for others, even at the middle school level. A second goal is developing the academic, social, physical and attitudinal skills necessary to be successful in high school and beyond. St. Andrew Nativity School in Portland, Ore. has an exemplary program for helping their students develop according to the elements found in the JSEA’s “Profile of the Graduate at Graduation” but scaled down to the middle school level. Community service is a component in almost all of the schools. The fact that the graduates continue their education in the top Jesuit, Catholic and independent schools in the area attests to the success of the program. A list of colleges and universities where graduates have or are studying includes the following Jesuit institutions: Boston College, Holy Cross, Fairfield, Fordham, LeMoyne, Canisius, St. Peter’s, Loyola (Maryland), Georgetown, Scranton, Loyola (New Orleans), University of Detroit Mercy and Marquette.

For 20 years, the Jesuit Hispanic Ministry Conference has been meeting to discuss, evaluate and discern the various ministries of Jesuits in Hispanic communities of the United States. From the beginning, the Conference has been interested in and supportive of the Nativity middle schools as an instrument for helping young Hispanics break out of the cycle of poverty and become responsible, contributing citizens.

Fr. Bill Rickle, the Jesuit Conference representative to the Jesuit Hispanic Ministry Conference, recently prepared a Preliminary Apostolic Audit of Hispanic and Migrant Ministry in the US Assistance. One of his conclusions is particularly relevant to any discussion of Jesuit secondary education. He writes:

The low percentages of Hispanic students (of whatever socio-economic class) enrolled in our schools calls for serious reflection. To be more nuanced in evaluation, those figures should be compared with the proportions of high school or college age youth in the market regions served by the schools. There is little doubt that a much smaller proportion of Hispanic youth is academically prepared to thrive in most of our schools. The growth of Nativity and Cristo Rey Schools is clearly a response to this condition, but the question can still be raised as to the adequacy of our efforts to recruit and retain Hispanic students.

What Does the Future Hold?

The challenges involved in Samantha’s education are multiple, the obstacles to her graduating from college immense. So much will depend on the quality of the public schools she will be enrolled in and the preparation of the teachers who will help her become proficient in English. If she is fortunate, she might receive further assistance through a Jesuit sponsored program like the ones mentioned above. She certainly will have the support of a family that dreams of a better future for her. Those of us involved in whatever level of Jesuit education must work creatively as partners with her parents to help make that dream come true.

He challenges and opportunities posed by the increasing numbers of Hispanics in the United States are many and pressing. The 2000 census revealed that Hispanics now number about 13 percent of the U.S. population, surpassing African Americans for the first time in U.S. history and leading all population groups in growth from 1990 to 2000. Four out of 10 Hispanics are under 18 years old. Hispanic elementary school enrollment has grown by 157 percent, eight times greater than African American and 16 times that of white, non-Hispanic students. By 2025, Hispanics are predicted to be 25 percent of the elementary school population and approximately 23 percent of the secondary age school population. Significantly for Jesuit universities, 41 percent of all Catholics under the age of 30 are Hispanic. The burgeoning Hispanic population faces a host of concerns around health care, housing, employment, immigration and education. In California, for example, Hispanics constitute half of the 4.5 million people without health care insurance. But education, especially, is of paramount importance.

A necessary response from Jesuit universities to the growing Hispanic presence in the United States is the sponsorship of collaborative research initiatives such as the Pew Charitable Trusts’ Religion and Immigration Project that engages Fordham, Loyola Chicago, Loyola New Orleans and the University of San Francisco, among other universities. In addition, an effort has just begun to develop cooperative projects that engage Jesuit universities in Latin America and the United States on issues of mutual concern. While scholarly activity is at the heart of a university’s mission, the determination of which issues and questions the institution will promote is discretionary. In addition to seeking out and supporting collaborative research projects, Jesuit universities should continue to direct their own internal resources to supporting research and scholarly activity that directly address the challenges facing Hispanic communities.

Recruiting, Retaining and Graduating Hispanics

The responsibility of universities to promote needed research on issues of concern to Hispanic populations, however, was not the top concern named by Hispanic colleagues on campus when asked about the most desired response from Jesuit universities to the increasing numbers of Hispanics in the United States. They were unequivocal in urging Jesuit universities to focus on recruiting, retaining and graduating Hispanic students. A quick review of materials (primarily from Hispanic Outlook) supplied by these same colleagues demonstrates that the source of their concern is well placed. Thirty-eight percent of Hispanics in the 25 to 29 age group did not have a high school diploma, compared to seven percent of whites and 13 percent of African Americans in the same age range. Findings show that a high percentage of Hispanics who finish their secondary schooling continue their education but fail to earn a degree. More than half of those Hispanic students who initially enroll at a community college never complete their postsecondary degree, whereas 60 percent of those who enter four-year colleges complete at least a bachelor’s degree. While Hispanic high school graduates value a university education, the numbers who attain a college degree are diminished by part-time employment, a concentration in two-year institutions and a tendency to stretch undergraduate education beyond the traditional age.

Given that the per capita annual income for Hispanics ($13,000) is about half that of non-Hispanic whites ($26,000), it is not surprising that financing higher education is a major challenge in recruiting and retaining these students. The ability to finance a college education is largely determined by three factors: where a student lives, the financial status of the family, and student’s race and ethnicity. For the most part, those three factors militate against Hispanic students and their families. The larger issue of financial support for needy students generally, and Hispanic students particularly, is not one that may be solved by Jesuit universities, individually or collectively. Pope John Paul II has called upon Catholic universities to search “for ways to make university education accessible to all those who are able to benefit from it, especially the poor or minority groups who customarily have been deprived of it.”

Each of our schools has responded to the Pope’s call and, at considerable effort, has struggled to shoulder the responsibility formerly exercised by the government for insuring a college education for financially needy, qualified students. Over the past decade, Jesuit schools have increased internal scholarship support to make up for decreasing funds from state and federal governments to educate needy students. We will continue to do so. At USF, institutionally funded aid has increased 300 percent since 1992; the vast majority is based on need. While increasing scholarship support for needy students generally is the goal of every Jesuit university, an adequate response to this challenge – made more urgent by the increasing numbers of Hispanics – is a national initiative along the lines of the GI Bill that opened the doors of colleges across the country to the veterans of World War II. No less an effort is called for at this time if qualified and needy students are to obtain the education that is indispensable for their...
well being and that of the country at large.

**Taking a New Approach**

Successful recruitment strategies for Hispanic students should avoid a “cookie cutter” approach to this population by taking into account generational, family context, and country of origin differences within the Hispanic population. Articulation agreements with local community colleges are essential for the success of efforts to increase Hispanic enrollment. Oftentimes, Spanish language materials are useful tools for efforts to reach out to the parents of prospective students. The bilingual website for The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans is both a valuable resource for and good model of an effective recruiting tool that engages parents in the college selection process. To my knowledge, no U.S. Jesuit university sites are bilingual.

Unfortunately, many Hispanics come from under-funded, under-staffed and under-performing high schools and have not been adequately prepared for college. They have the intelligence, the motivation and family support but lack the requisite knowledge base and skill set. These students cannot be accepted directly into college without prior preparation through summer bridge programs such as USF’s “Forward” program or other specially designed supplementary programs that run concurrently through the first years of college.

A recent National Public Radio story reported that television was responding to the growing number of Hispanics in the United States by dubbing popular English language programs into Spanish. Such programs apparently do not hold the interest of Hispanic audiences, so the networks are responding to the demand for Hispanic programming.

Universities should expect to change as increasing numbers of Hispanic students matriculate into their student bodies. A friend recalled that when Jesuit schools first accepted women students, they remained universities for men that had women attending classes. Women, at best, constituted a separate population requiring special attention. Most universities hired a Dean of Women and a Director for Women’s athletics, if such a program even existed, and employed separate residence halls and dress and conduct regulations for women. In some instances, women were even excluded from all male rooting sections. Those artifacts of a bygone era slowly eroded with the dawning realization that schools had to “do differently” in response to the presence of women on campus. As women made their presence felt, the Dean of Students and/or Director of Athletics was expected to have the knowledge, skills and sensitivities to deal with the entire student population. Fragmentation gave way to the acceptance of a more universal viewpoint and exercise of leadership.

The same situation prevails with regard to Hispanic students on our campuses. Our schools will change as increasingly diverse student populations bring their cultures, interests and values to campus. Changes should come easily in the food served on campus, artwork displayed, events celebrated, the flavor of liturgies and other religious expressions and heroes honored throughout the year, and more slowly and carefully in the restructuring of curriculum, recruitment of faculty and staff of color, redistribution of leadership roles and the design and delivery of services to students. This is precisely why Hispanic students and other diverse student populations are actively recruited – to enrich the campus culture as the university absorbs a new wave of students. These new populations represent energy to create a more vibrant learning community where differences evoke curiosity and conversation, which leads to understanding and appreciation of those differences, rather than fear and suspicion.

**A Mutual Relationship**

It is a truism that Jesuit education is both a learning experience and a social experience. For that reason, those offices and individuals on campus charged with responsibility for multiculturalism and diversity must focus on creating an environment in which adjustment difficulties are minimized for all students. Differences of culture, ethnicity and background should not be seen simply as the raw materials for creating “safe havens” for discrete groups of students, but rather such student organizations and clubs should be the base camp from which students move out to engage the larger community and to which they may return for companionship. If Hispanics pose a number of challenges for Jesuit higher education, they also represent the promise of sharing themselves and the riches of their culture with us.

Jesuit universities need Hispanic students and a diverse student body if they are to offer a quality education that prepares them to be humanly in the world as it is. The makeup of our campuses does not yet reflect the diversity of the larger world, yet that world is the one our graduates are responsible for shaping according to “those ethical and religious principles which give full meaning to human life.” We need Hispanic students for what they bring to the university, and they need the university to gain the knowledge and skills they will bring to society. This is a promising partnership for the university, for the Hispanic population, for the Catholic Church in the United States and for the world at large.

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1. Hispanic Outlook (HO), 9/23/02, Punto Final.
2. HO, 11/18/02, “Many Enroll, Too Few Graduate.”
4. HO, 11/18/02, “Making College Affordable.”
5. Ex Corde Ecclesiae, #34.
6. According to data collected by the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (ASCU) for the 2001-2002 academic year, Jesuit institutions distributed $113,268,733 in financial aid, accounting for 49 percent of all aid given to students. This includes both need-based and non-need-based aid. (Data based on 24 of 28 institutions responding.)
7. HO, 11/18/02, “Many Enroll, Too Few Graduate.”
8. Officially approved agreements that match coursework between schools. These are designed to help students make a smooth transition when transferring from community colleges to four-year institutions.
9. Ex Corde, #33.
Response: Education on Mission -- The Challenges Ahead

ROBERTO SURO

Some 230 years ago John Carroll had a very clear idea of how to secure a place for the Roman Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus in the young United States: “The object nearest my heart now and the only one that can give consistency to our religious views in this country, is the establishment of a school.”

Much has changed since that school was founded on a hilltop above the Potomac, but Carroll’s imperative has not. Catholics are in positions of power across the country, and the Church is a respected institution squarely in the mainstream of American culture. Yet, as in Carroll’s time, there is now a large population of Catholics at society’s least-privileged fringe that is sometimes viewed as an alien presence here. Then, as now, neither the Church nor the nation can afford to let them become permanent outcasts. In 1789, when he founded Georgetown University as the first Catholic and Jesuit institution of higher learning in the United States, Carroll understood that education was the only sure means to open doors for those who might encounter barriers because of their faith, culture and nationality. That has not changed.

Looking at Georgetown today and at all the other Jesuit universities, colleges, secondary and primary schools across the country, at their endowments and faculties and long lists of successful alumni, it would be very tempting to conclude that Carroll’s mission had been accomplished. Indeed, a few decades ago that might have been a fair conclusion. But, as in other eras, demographic change has renewed the challenges so nobly confronted by the founding fathers. In our time, the growth of the Hispanic population renews both the promise and the peril that have defined the United States since its beginnings. The promise lies in the energy and imagination gained when the nation incorporates newcomers by giving them a chance to exercise their talents in a condition of liberty. The peril comes when those chances are denied. For Jesuits, the challenges are even more explicit.

The Society’s Responsibility

As a religious order with a special ministry in education, the Society of Jesus has an unavoidable responsibility at this moment in the history of the nation and of the Church in the United States. Education served as a means of upward mobility during past eras of immigration. Today, it is a matter of survival for the newcomers or, more precisely, for their children. For Jesuits, addressing the educational needs of the Hispanic population is more than a historical mission, more than a moral obligation. It is, rather, a test of the order’s relevancy. Having created a great educational establishment in the United States, Jesuits could settle for credentialing the offspring of those who have already achieved a measure of success in American society – the role now played by most non-public institutions of higher learning. Or Jesuit schools can pledge themselves to ensuring that the children of Hispanic immigrants have a fair chance to become Americans in the most important sense of the term, people with an opportunity to develop and apply their God-given abilities. The first of these options might seem the more conservative, traditional path, but it is not. Rather, it is the radical choice.

In the United States today, having a parent who attended college is the single most potent predictor of whether a child will earn a four-year degree. It is the parents’ educational achievement, and hence their economic status, that is the most powerful determinant of whether a child will have the academic preparation and financial means to enter and complete college. Admissions standards and tuition costs are often defended as essential for preserving the character of private four-year colleges, but in fact what these policies are accomplishing, albeit unintentionally, is the preservation, even the calcification, of a social order on hereditary grounds. Catholic colleges, including Jesuit colleges, are no exception.

This dynamic is a product of the second half of the 20th century and the last quarter of the century in particular. It is a departure from the role played by Catholic higher education here in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and it is certainly very different from the mission that John Carroll envisioned. Indeed, there is nothing conservative or traditional about Catholic colleges and universities serving primarily to maintain the status of middle and upper class Catholics. Addressing the educational needs of Hispanic youth represents both a return to a traditional ministry and a response to contemporary human needs.

Catholic Social Evolution

With the onset of Hispanic immigration over the past three decades, the social evolution of Catholics in the United States has acquired a distinctly cyclical pattern. From the mid-19th century through the middle of the 20th, the struggle of immigrant families to make a place in a new land characterized the Catholic population, and the Church’s social and educational ministries squarely focused on that struggle. Success came slowly, typically across three generations, in the progression from menial work to blue-collar trades to the white-collar middle class. Peddler, plumber, professional was the stairway of the American dream.
Continuous immigration from heavily Catholic countries in Europe kept the Church and its schools busy providing the essential vehicle for this upward mobility, education. Then, starting in the mid-1920s, a succession of events—changes in immigration law, the Great Depression and World War II—ended the era of trans-Atlantic migration. Half a century passed with almost no influx of newcomers. American Catholics completed their social and economic evolution solidly into the middle class and beyond. The Church of Immigrants became the Church of Suburbanites. For the nation as a whole, for the Church, for Jesuits and for their schools, immigration and the process of incorporation faded into sepia-toned memories of an era that seemed long passed.

In the mid-1970s, a new era of immigration began as a result of changes in immigration policies and economic transformations, and the influx, dominated by migrants from the predomi-
nately Catholic nations of Latin America, gained momentum through the 1980s and 1990s. It shows no indication of abating. Today, once again, the Church finds itself ministering to immi-
grants and their offspring, but it is now an institution that must reinvent itself to become again what it once was.

The basic challenges are the same as before. The immediate, short-term, challenge is to help the new arrivals acquire basic survival skills and to protect them, when necessary, from discrimination and exploitation. Otherwise, these immigrants, like those of earlier waves, come armed with potent assets, most notably their low expectations, fierce determina-
tion and highly developed collab-
orative networks with relatives and other co-nationals. The much more difficult, long-term challenge is to ensure that their children—the second generation—have a fair chance to begin the move forward. The fate of an immigrant has always been to work hard in a strange land; for most that brings adequate rewards, and for the rest there is usually the option to go home. The real success or failure of the immigration enterprise comes with the second generation. They are native-born Americans. They are the products of our schools. They are our future. The task of simply giving them a chance has never been more difficult.

An Educational Underclass?

Today, as a century ago, the American economy has an enormous appetite for unskilled labor. During the indus-
trial era, however, the child of an immigrant could learn manual skills that would enable him to move up from the lowest rungs of the labor force. In post-industrial America, that middle tier of the labor force is vastly reduced and no longer serves as a vehicle for upward mobility. Instead, the American work force is ever more starkly divided between the unskilled and the well educated, and there is little in between except an enormous gulf in earn-
ings. Moreover, during the European migration, educational opportunities expanded with the extension of mandatory public education to secondary school, the creation of land grant univer-

sities and finally the GI Bill, which effectively completed the incorporation of the offspring of European immigrants. Of course, Catholic education was expand-
ing in that era as well. There is no need to belabor the fact that the trends in educational opportunity are now mostly going in the opposite direction.

At the beginning of the 21st century, one of every five children born in the United States has a Hispanic parent.1 Natural increase accounts for about twice as much Hispanic population growth as immigration—some one million people a year, mostly second generation Hispanics, versus about half a million new immigrants. The era of the sec-

ond generation is upon us, and it is a massive and rapid demo-

graphic development that will characterize the life of the nation

and of the Church for decades.

Ensuring that the children of Hispanic immigrants have a

chance to realize their promise as children of God, as children of America, might seem a compli-
cated task. One could wander through intellectual labyrinths

involving the acquisition of eth-
nic identity, acculturation, lan-
guage shifts, skills mismatches, welfare policy, etc. Those are all worthy debates, no doubt. But they are distractions in the absence of a concerted focus on one central and undeniable fact: education, specifically post-sec-

ondary education, is the only sure avenue to opportunity in the United States today. Our econo-

my and our society require the completion of high school to move beyond poverty and educa-
tion beyond high school for admission to the middle class.

While in the past, the incor-

poration of immigrants could proceed across three generations, today it is a zero-sum game that plays out in two generations. A

clear bifurcation is already taking place among the children of Hispanic immigrants. Those who

manage to acquire a four-year college degree outperform simi-

larly situated non-Hispanic whites. Those who never get past high school face a lifetime of 
closed horizons. Those who fail to graduate from high school are relegated to the underclass.

Currently, about 15 percent of the second generation are reach-

ing the high-end outcomes, about 15 percent are at the bot-
tom and the rest languish in between.2 One would like to

think that the public sector would dedicate itself to improving the ratio, given the vast number of young people pumping through this dismal equation. But that is not happening, and there is no reason to expect that it will any-
time soon.

Jesuit schools, colleges and universities certainly cannot be expected to take on the entire challenge; nor can they fail to embrace it.

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Strangers Among Us. Latino Lives in A Changing America

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¡Presente! U.S. Latino Catholics from Colonial Origins to the Present

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