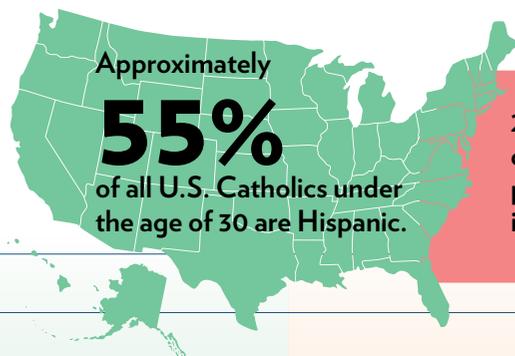
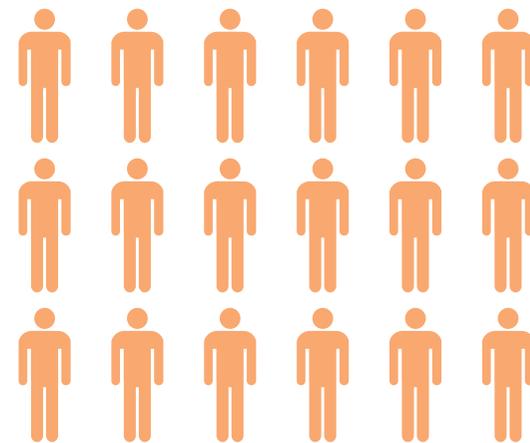


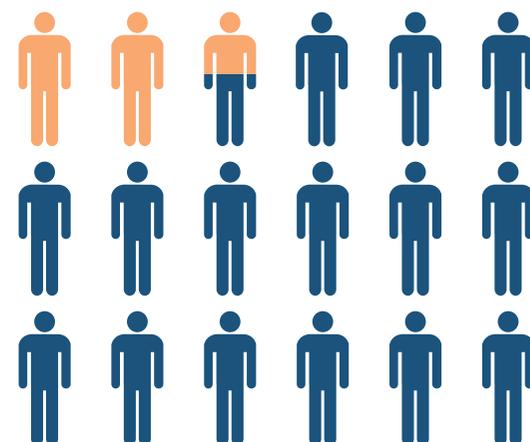
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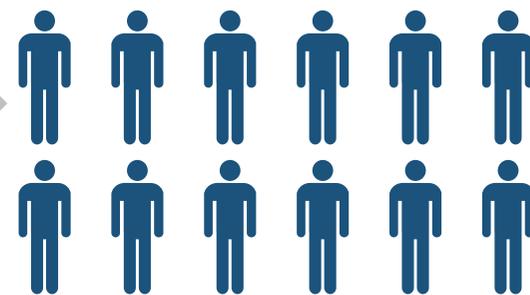
25 percent of all Catholic parishes in the country have Hispanic ministry (only 15 percent did in the 1980s). This percentage is expected to increase.



The Hispanic population is expected to triple by 2050.



Of the more than 50 million Hispanics living in the country, 59 percent self-identify as Catholic.



Hispanics account for **71%** of the growth of the Catholic population in the United States since 1960.

In the 1960s, about 10 percent of the Catholic population was Hispanic. In the 1980s, 25 percent. Today, 40 percent of all Catholics in the country share a Hispanic background.

1960s

1980s

2014

THE CHURCH'S CHANGING FACE

Staggering numbers from a new study show how important Hispanics are to the future of Catholicism in the United States

By Hosffman Ospino

A good indicator to measure the vibrancy of Catholic life in the United States is the parish. While not exclusively, for U.S. Catholics the parish has been and remains a privileged space to celebrate and share the Faith, to experience community and live our discipleship.

Catholic parishes in the United States have experienced many transitions during the last two decades. Closings and mergers have decimated the number of parishes in the country by 11 percent. In the meantime, the total U.S. Catholic population has increased nearly 20 percent.

The decline in the number of ordained ministers has led to conversations about whether parishes can or should remain

open without the presence of a resident priest, or at least one available to celebrate the Eucharist and other sacraments on a regular basis.

The aging of large sectors of the active Catholic population and the scant participation of young and young adult Catholics in many of these faith communities are serious reasons for concern. Is the Catholic parish in the United States on its way to extinction? Will we experience the fate of thousands of parishes in Europe?

My answer to these two questions is a hopeful "no." At least, not yet — if we take into consideration perhaps the most significant transformation of parish life in the past few decades, one many Catholics often miss: the fast-growing pres-

ence of Hispanic Catholics and Catholics of Asian background. In numbers, this is how the Hispanic presence is profoundly transforming the entire U.S. Catholic experience, with major implications for parish life:

Hispanics account for 71 percent of the growth of the Catholic population in the United States since 1960.

In the 1960s, about 10 percent of the Catholic population was Hispanic. In the 1980s, 25 percent. Today, 40 percent of all Catholics in the country share a Hispanic background.

Of the more than 50 million Hispanics living in the country, 59 percent self-identify as Catholic.

Approximately 55 percent of all U.S. Catholics under the age of 30 are Hispanic.

The Hispanic population is expected to triple by 2050.

Twenty-five percent of all Catholic parishes in the country have Hispanic ministry (only 15 percent did in the 1980s). This percentage is expected to increase.

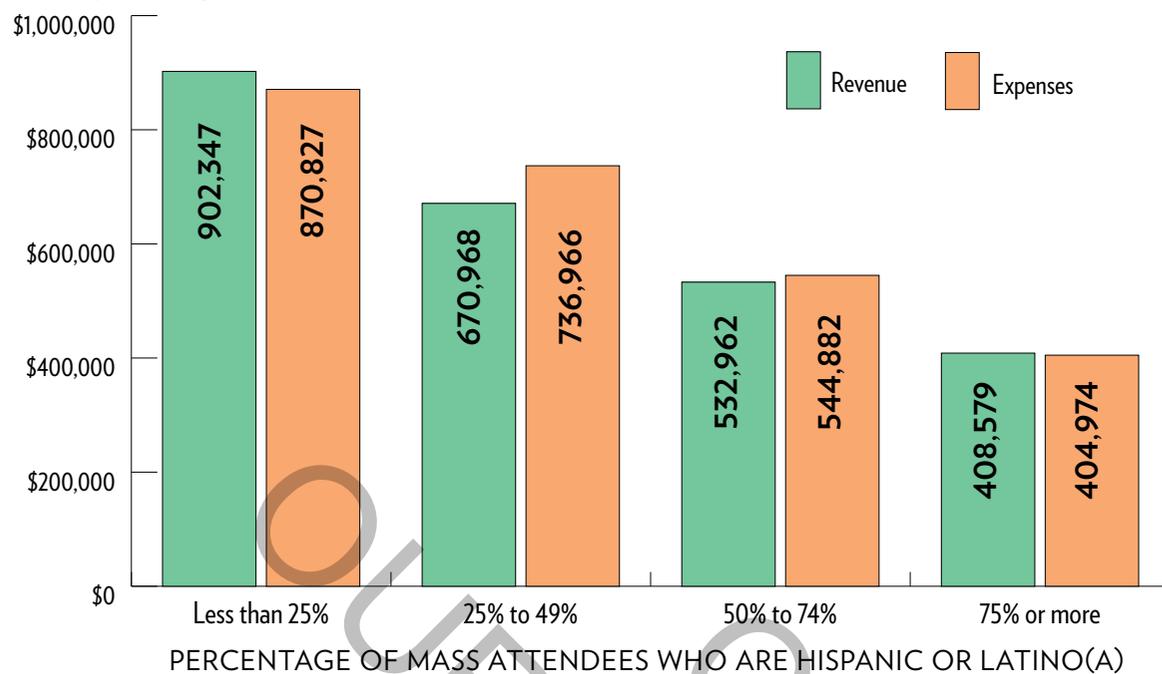
I hope that these numbers have gotten your attention. U.S. Catholicism in what remains of the first half of the 21st century will be largely shaped by the Hispanic experience. The vibrancy or decline of thousands of Catholic parishes in our country will be closely linked to how these communities embrace Hispanics with their joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties. In turn, the future of thousands of parishes will depend on how much Hispanic Catholics commit to bringing them to the

fullness of their potential. After all, the character of the parish is determined by the people who belong to it.

Tall order, isn't it? The cultural and demographic transitions transforming our parishes call for serious discernment on the part of the entire U.S. Catholic community to envision how to best serve Hispanic Catholics in our parishes in the spirit of the New Evangelization. But to do so, we need to do pastoral planning that leads to envisioning creative ways to passionately bring people to an encounter with Jesus Christ in the everyday of their lives. And to do such effective pastoral planning, we do well studying and learning more about the faith communities where Hispanics are present.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The survey of Hispanic parishes shows the stark contrast in parish finances, as churches with a higher percentage of Hispanic or Latino parishioners make (and spend) less money than those with a lower percentage.



experience of parishes with Hispanic ministry is that such transformation is not reduced to uncontested assimilation into pre-existing models of pastoral life. We are witnessing the birth a new way of a being a parish and with it, a fresher way of redefining the U.S. Catholic experience.

Most parishes doing Hispanic ministry today channel their resources and energy to meet the immediate needs of immigrants. Consequently, nearly all of these communities define Hispanic ministry as ministry done predominantly in Spanish. These Hispanic immigrants embody a world of experiences from all Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America, Puerto Rico (U.S. territory) and Spain — mostly Catholic nations. When all these experiences coincide, including the experiences that have shaped the lives of those Catholics who have been there longer, parishes, guided by their pastoral leaders, must develop the appropriate intercultural sensibilities to be places that all can call home.

But we need to keep in mind that Hispanics as a whole are hardly an immigrant population; nearly two-thirds (61 percent) were born in the United States.

Parishes need to develop creative approaches that simultaneously meet the needs of the immigrant and U.S.-born Hispanic Catholics. Some of these efforts are advanced, for instance, through religious education programs for Hispanic children in parishes with His-

panic ministry.

Fifty-two percent of parishes with Hispanic ministry conduct their religious education programs for Hispanic children primarily in English; 12 percent indicate that these meetings are conducted primarily in Spanish; 36 percent indicate they run bilingual meetings on an ongoing basis. But there are significant regional variations as to language preferences: parishes in the West are least likely to conduct meetings only in English (38 percent) while those in the South are most likely to conduct meetings in this language (60 percent). Parishes in the West (44 percent) and Northeast (40 percent) are most likely to offer bilingual catechetical programs. Something similar occurs with other faith formation programs for children and adults.

As we can see, to adequately respond to the complexity of the Hispanic Catholic population in parishes it is necessary that these communities have well-trained bilingual and bicultural pastoral agents. It also requires the development of catechetical and spiritual resources that appropriately connect with the experience of the various Hispanic subgroups.

Hispanic worship

Worship services for Hispanics in these parishes are largely conducted in Spanish. The higher the number of Hispanic Catholics who attend Mass in the parish, the more likely they are to go to a service celebrated in Spanish. Needless to say, we should not assume

that all Hispanics attend Mass said in Spanish. Also, a high percentage of Hispanic parishioners does not indicate that these parishes are exclusively constituted by Spanish-speaking Catholics. In fact, only in one-quarter of these parishes' Hispanics are more than 75 percent of total active Catholic population.

Most parishes with Hispanic ministry are "shared parishes" or "multicultural parishes." The group with whom Hispanics typically share their parishes is non-Hispanic white parishioners — about 80 percent of the cases.

About 84 percent of the parishes with Hispanic ministry celebrate Mass and other services bilingually (English and Spanish) a few times a year, mostly on major holy days.

Weekend Mass attendance in parishes with Hispanic ministry is 22 percent higher compared to all Catholic parishes in the country. On average Hispanics constitute 48 percent of all parishioners going to weekend Mass in these communities. However, it is interesting to observe that weekday Mass attendance tends to be very low among Spanish-speaking Hispanic Catholics. Thus, most parishes (65 percent) do not offer weekday Masses in Spanish.

What about finances?

Parishes with Hispanic ministry usually have to do more with less. On average, these parishes receive \$7,744 in weekly parish offertory collections (median of \$5,000). This is 15.7 percent lower than the average

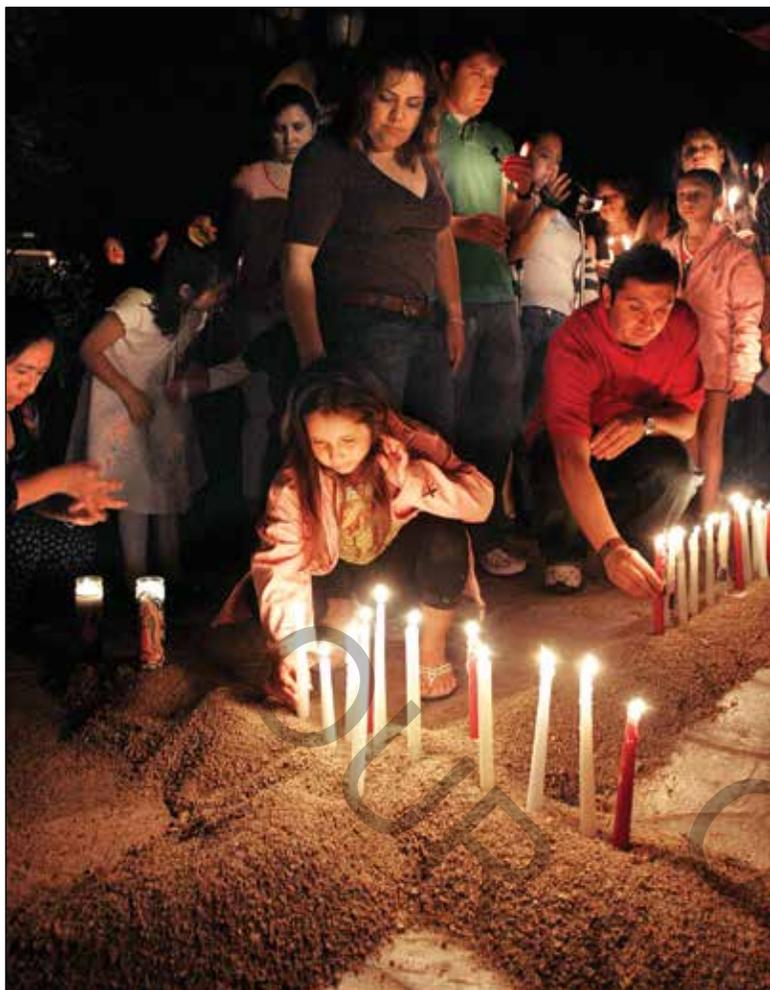
10 SIGNS OF VITALITY

The Hispanic presence in the Catholic parish is an opportunity for the Church in the United States to look at the 21st century with renewed hope and to creatively respond to the call to the New Evangelization.



Worshippers stand during a special Mass honoring immigrants at St. John the Evangelist Church in Riverhead, N.Y., last fall. CNS photo

- 1 On average, parishes with Hispanic ministry have larger numbers of Catholics attending Mass compared to all parishes nationwide. Approximately two-thirds of all baptisms in these communities are celebrated in Spanish.
- 2 These parishes are microcosms of the rich cultural diversity that is shaping Catholicism in many parts of the country and will continue to transform the U.S. Catholic experience in the future.
- 3 The vast diversity of experiences, backgrounds, contributions and needs of this population is an invitation for pastoral leaders to constantly explore creative approaches to pastoral care and accompaniment.
- 4 Active apostolic movements in parishes with Hispanic ministry nourish Hispanic Catholics spiritually, foster leadership and bring them closer to their faith tradition.
- 5 A new generation of young Hispanic pastoral leaders is emerging in the context of parish life. With the appropriate encouragement, support and promotion, these leaders will stay in ministry and make significant contributions.
- 6 Parishes with Hispanic ministry benefit from the experience of its leaders, many of whom are bilingual and bicultural and have lived in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- 7 Hispanic permanent deacons constitute one of the fastest-growing bodies of pastoral agents in positions of leadership in parishes with Hispanic ministry.
- 8 Diocesan offices of Hispanic ministry (and their equivalents) embody important competencies for pastoral leadership that are necessary to serve in a culturally diverse Church.
- 9 Hispanic ministry in parishes is essentially ministry with youth and young families, an opportunity to shape a new generation of Catholics.
- 10 Two-thirds of Hispanic parishes have developed initiatives for Hispanics to get involved in their children's religious education programs, giving them unique opportunities for adult faith formation.



Candles are placed in sand to form a cross at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Tulsa, Okla., during a “Dia de las Muertos” celebration at the predominantly Hispanic parish. CNS photo

of \$9,191 collected in all parishes nationally.

However, the average weekly offertory in responding parishes that is received from parishioners at Spanish language Masses is merely \$1,502 (median contribution of \$840). In our study, we found that the higher the percentage of Hispanic parishioners attending Mass in a parish, the smaller the total of revenues and expenses (see chart). These numbers are worrisome. The financial stability of parishes with Hispanic ministry will certainly depend on creative approaches to stewardship among all Catholics in these communities, Hispanic and non-Hispanic.

Apostolic movements

On a more positive note, apostolic movements play a very important role in Catholic parishes with Hispanic ministry throughout the United States. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal is the most widespread apostolic movement in these communities, with exactly half of all responding parishes indicating that it is active in them. Note that this number refers to presence of the movement in parishes, not overall affiliation of Hispanic Catholics to this particular spirituality. One-third (34 percent) of all parishes report the presence of the

Knights of Columbus. Three in 10 reported that the Cursillo movement is active and 1 in 5 notes the same about the Legion of Mary. Jóvenes Para Cristo and the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano are equally reported as being active in 13 percent of all responding parishes.

When the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is present in parishes with Hispanic ministry, it is typically the largest movement in the community. Though widespread throughout the country, it has a stronger presence in the Northeast and the West.

It is the apostolic movement most likely to form small groups, choose its own catechetical materials and celebrate Mass on a regular basis inspired in its spirituality. The movement has been significantly instrumental in fostering vocations to leadership among Hispanic Catholics.

Based on data collected through this national study, we can estimate that about 25 percent of all active Hispanics in parishes with Hispanic ministry are somewhat associated with an apostolic movement. Aware that 40 percent of self-identifying Hispanic Catholics attend Mass on a typical weekend, we can say that close to 10 percent of all active Hispanic Catholics are somewhat asso-

AREAS THAT NEED ATTENTION

The vibrancy of the Hispanic presence in parish life does not come without challenges. As Catholics in the United States work together to build stronger communities of faith, we must also pay close attention to several urgent dynamics:

- ▶ As thousands of culturally competent pastoral leaders approach the age of retirement, dioceses and ministerial formation programs must ensure that the new generations of pastoral leaders have the appropriate intercultural competencies to adequately serve the growing Hispanic population.
- ▶ Parishes must engage in serious discernment with all their members, Hispanic and non-Hispanic, about building communities where all members find themselves at home. Dialogue is needed about how the idea of integration is perceived by the various communities that coincide in the Hispanic parish.
- ▶ Too many pastoral leaders serving Hispanic Catholics continue to oversee multiple areas of ministerial life with little or no means. In a world of limited resources, parishes with Hispanic ministry as well as dioceses must develop sound strategies to generously invest in the evangelization of Hispanic Catholics as a non-negotiable priority.
- ▶ Offertory giving from parishioners at Spanish-language Masses is significantly low compared to the size of the Hispanic population in the parish. A comprehensive discussion is needed to address questions related to the financial sustainability of these parishes while taking into consideration sociocultural barriers.
- ▶ Dioceses and parishes need to foster vocations to pastoral leadership among Hispanics born and raised in the U.S. Hispanics in this group typically possess cultural and linguistic skills which, strengthened with appropriate training, can be significantly valuable to respond to the shifting demands of ministry in our culturally diverse Church.
- ▶ While it is positive that a large number of volunteers share their time and talent serving Hispanic Catholics, the delegation of major responsibilities associated with the pastoral care of Hispanics to volunteers is less than ideal. Parishes and dioceses must develop strategies to help volunteers by procuring adequate ministerial formation, professional support and integrating them more intentionally into the structures of the parish organization.
- ▶ About 1 in 5 pastoral leaders serving Hispanic Catholics in major ministerial positions in parishes and dioceses are not compensated. While clergy and vowed religious count on established support networks, a significant number of these unpaid leaders are lay women and men. Parishes and dioceses need to urgently attend to questions of fair compensation and parity with non-Hispanic ministries/ministers.
- ▶ Pastoral outreach to Hispanic youth, particularly U.S.-born Hispanics, is minimal in parishes (and dioceses) compared to the size of this population. Lack of appropriate investment in ministry with this population at a time when most young Catholics in the country are Hispanic is self-defeating.
- ▶ A widening distance between parishes with large Hispanic populations and Catholic schools may undermine the development of a “Catholic school culture” among Hispanic Catholics. Such distance may also have a negative impact upon efforts to increase enrollment of Hispanic children and youth in Catholic schools.
- ▶ Besides families, parishes are the most readily available resources for the vast majority of Hispanic Catholic children and youth not enrolled in Catholic schools to formally learn their faith tradition. Serious investment in faith formation initiatives for this school-age population at the parish level is urgent.
- ▶ Very few Hispanics participate in adult faith formation programs despite the fact that most parishes serving Hispanics offer initiatives in this area. Parishes and dioceses need appropriate tools designed to adequately measure progress and effectiveness of adult faith formation among Hispanics.
- ▶ Regular parish initiatives seldom focus on inactive Hispanics Catholics. Very few parishes have developed strategies to serve Hispanic Catholics, many of them young, who live in at-risk circumstances, are imprisoned, have joined gangs or live in other marginal situations.

ciated with an apostolic movement at the parish level.

An open-ended conclusion

The above findings and observations are glimpses of a reality that the National Study of Catholic Parishes with Hispanic Ministry has aimed to study more deeply. Hispanic Catholicism will continue to transform profoundly the U.S. Catholic experience.

The first Catholic parish in

what is today U.S. territory was Hispanic. This is true whether one looks at the first church erected in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1523 or the oldest Catholic mission established in 1566 in St. Augustine, Florida. Hispanic parishes have been part of our common tradition all this time. It is one of the anomalies of history that the Hispanic parish, which came first for American Catholicism, is often viewed as a new creation.

In what is left of the 21st century, nonetheless, Catholics in the United States cannot ignore what is happening in Hispanic parishes. We simply cannot afford it as a Church.

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