



NEWS

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U.S. Bishops to Launch Nationwide Consultation and Missionary Effort with Latino Catholics

*Fifth National Encuentro to focus on Latino youth and families
Four-year process to identify over 20,000 emerging Hispanic Catholic leaders nationwide
Consultation to involve more than 1 million Catholics from all walks of life*

November 15, 2016

BALTIMORE—Catholic dioceses around the country will soon be involved in an intensive consultation and missionary effort called the *Fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry*. Drawing inspiration from Pope Francis, the theme of the V Encuentro is *Missionary Disciples: Witnesses of God's Love*. The main goal of the V Encuentro is to discern ways for the Church in the United States to better respond to the ever-growing Hispanic presence, and to help Hispanics Catholics to strengthen their Christian identity and their response as missionary disciples for the entire Church.

The Encuentro starts at the grass-roots level and calls for the development of resources and initiatives to better serve the fast-growing Hispanic population in dioceses, parishes, ecclesial movements, and other Catholic organizations and institutions while at the same time promoting the development of Latino leadership within the Church.

“The Fifth Encuentro is a time of grace”, said Bishop Nelson Pérez, auxiliary bishop of Rockville Centre, New York, and chairman of the USCCB Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs. “It is a great opportunity for the Church to reach out to our Hispanic brothers and sisters with Christ's message of hope and love. It is a time to listen, a time to develop meaningful relationships, a time learn and bear abundant fruits, and a time to rejoice in God's love.”

Bishop Perez's report on the V Encuentro to the Fall General Assembly of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore, November 15, serves as the official launching of this wide-ranging USCCB initiative, which will start in parishes and dioceses across the country during early 2017 and continue for several years. After the parish, diocesan and regional phases of consultation, reflection and missionary activity are concluded, the process will reach its zenith at the National V Encuentro gathering to be celebrated in late September of 2018 in the Fort Worth area, with approximately 3,000 delegates from participating dioceses across the country. After that, a time for reflection on the findings, identification of good ministerial practices and implementation strategies at the local level will follow.

More than one million Catholics are expected to directly participate in the process at different stages and many more will be touched by the missionary activity of the participants. Over 150 U.S. dioceses have already formed local teams in preparation for the V Encuentro process and numerous others are expected to designate them soon.

“I have been formed by the process of Encuentro as a pastor and as a bishop”, said Bishop Perez. “I participated in the Third National Encuentro in the 80's, and was very active in its implementation as a pastor. Today I have the blessing of being a part of the V Encuentro as a bishop and look forward to the many fruits it will bring to dioceses and parishes across the country.”

The V Encuentro will especially engage Latino young people and families, and invite them to share their gifts and talents with people in their parishes and in society.

“Hispanics/Latinos are a great gift to the church and society in the United States. The V Encuentro is designed to engage, embrace and empower that gift”, said Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller of San Antonio and chairman of the USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, which is responsible for this initiative on behalf of the U.S. bishops.

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) estimates that 30.5 million Hispanics/Latinos in the United States self-identify as Catholic. Currently, approximately 60% of U.S. Catholics under the age 18 are of Hispanic/Latino heritage.