



Perspectivas sobre la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana



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La Pastoral Juvenil Hispana en EUA: Forjando una iglesia renovada en el siglo XXI al construir puentes entre el ministerio hispano y el de la cultura dominante*

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*Nosotros, jóvenes católicos,
miembros de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana en Estados Unidos,
nos sentimos llamados y comprometidos con la misión de la Iglesia,
a formarnos y capacitarnos integralmente en la acción,
y a evangelizar con amor a los jóvenes hispanos desde su realidad.*

*Queremos ofrecer a inmigrantes y ciudadanos,
la verdad siempre nueva y alegre del Evangelio,
resaltando los verdaderos valores evangélicos,
y haciendo un esfuerzo por llegar a
quienes más necesitan la Buena Nueva,
no conocen a Dios
o se han desviado del camino de Jesús.*

*Nos proponemos cumplir esta misión,
a través del testimonio de nuestra vida
y nuestro liderazgo profético entre la juventud,
invirtiendo nuestros dones y talentos
en una acción evangelizadora y misionera
donde viven, trabajan, estudian y se divierten nuestros compañeros,
siguiendo siempre el ejemplo de Jesús
y fortaleciéndonos en la Eucaristía.¹*

La Declaración de la misión de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana, presentada anteriormente, fue preparada y aprobada por los 1,680 jóvenes hispanos delegados en el Primer Encuentro Nacional de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana (Encuentro o PENPJH) en 2006. Estos delegados representaron a más de 40,000 jóvenes latinos que participaron en encuentros parroquiales, diocesanos y regionales en todo el país. Esta declaración es clave en la historia del ministerio hispano en Estados Unidos porque en ella, los delegados presentes en el Encuentro indicaron que:

- Están conscientes de su identidad como comunidad joven, latina y católica, presente en todo el país.
- Aceptan de todo corazón la misión de la Iglesia como suya.

- Son protagonistas de su misión como discípulos de Jesús, sin depender de la iniciativa de líderes adultos para comenzar a realizarla.
- Necesitan ayuda de la Iglesia para una formación adecuada, para seguir el ejemplo de Jesús y participar plenamente en la Eucaristía.

La madurez de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana (PJH) — como un ministerio con sus propios principios, visión y estructuras de liderazgo a nivel nacional, regional y local — constituye el contexto para cualquier conversación sobre el trabajo pastoral con adolescentes y jóvenes adultos en el siglo XXI. Sin embargo, este ministerio depende de los jóvenes que ejercen su liderazgo en él: está arraigado

* Adaptado de un ensayo comisionado para publicación en: Hosffman Ospino, ed., *El Ministerio hispano en el siglo XXI: presente y futuro* (Miami: Convivium Press, 2010). Reimpreso con permiso. Traducción del inglés por Aurora Macías-Dewhirst, Carmen M. Cervantes y Hosffman Ospino.

en los lenguajes y culturas de los jóvenes hispanos; está animado por su celo profético hacia la evangelización y la santidad, como respuesta al Bautismo; responde a la realidad de las personas involucradas, especialmente a los obstáculos y retos que encuentran en la vida diaria y ofrece formación en la fe católica para construir el reino de Dios.

Esta descripción de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana parece ser bastante clara, pero genera varias preguntas importantes. ¿Cuáles son los obstáculos y retos que los jóvenes hispanos enfrentan en su vida diaria? ¿De qué manera la cultura y el lenguaje impactan la experiencia y el entendimiento de la fe cristiana, según la tradición católica? ¿Qué formación tienen los líderes en el ministerio y qué recursos pastorales y catequéticos están disponibles para apoyarlos en su tarea? ¿De qué manera la Iglesia, en general, responde a sus miembros latinos jóvenes? ¿Cuál es el estado actual de la formación religiosa entre los jóvenes hispanos?

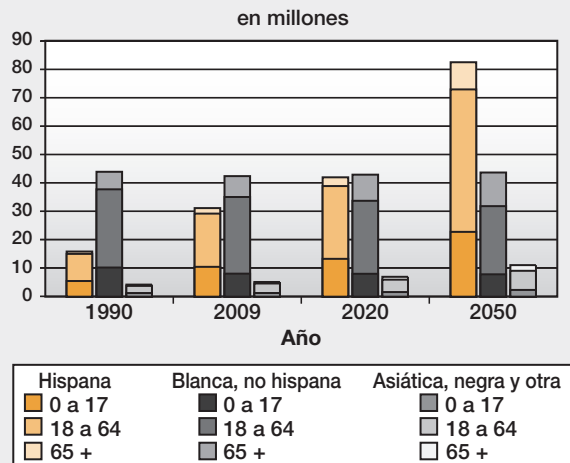
Este artículo responde a varias de las preguntas anteriores, en tres partes. La primera parte presenta el contexto contemporáneo de la PJH en Estados Unidos; la segunda muestra una visión general de la PJH en EUA hoy; la tercera ofrece algunas reflexiones sobre esfuerzos que se han dado en la historia y tareas para crecer en este campo.

Parte 1. Contexto contemporáneo de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana en Estados Unidos

Las *Conclusiones del PENPJH* ofrecen una breve historia de la PJH en Estados Unidos. Describen sus raíces en Latinoamérica; su desarrollo a través del proceso de los tres *Encuentros Nacionales Hispanos de Pastoral*; su relación con modelos tradicionales de *youth ministry* y *young adult ministry* en el país (ministerios con adolescentes y con adultos jóvenes, en inglés), y su crecimiento más reciente.² Este contexto histórico constituye el marco referencial de la primera parte de este artículo.

En 2002, el Instituto Fe y Vida publicó una evaluación de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana mostrando los retos materiales y espirituales más importantes que enfrentan los jóvenes hispanos. A pesar de que los obispos católicos en Estados Unidos se comprometieron a una opción misionera preferencial en favor de los pobres y los jóvenes en el ministerio hispano,³ el reporte reveló que “la mayoría de los programas parroquiales de *youth ministry* en EUA llega sólo a un segmento pequeño de adolescentes latinos católicos, mientras que los programas dirigidos directamente a los jóvenes hispanos son pocos y limitados en cuanto a su capacidad y profundidad”.⁴

Gráfica 1: Proyección de la población católica estadounidense por edad, raza/etnicidad y año



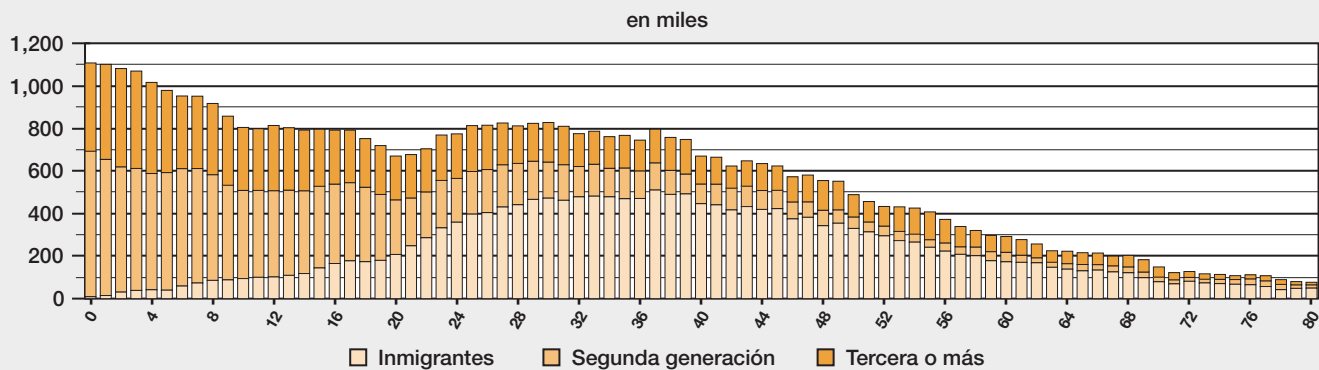
Basado en: RSL 2007, ICR Omnibus 2008, NSRI 1990, LNPS 1990, Censo 1990, los cálculos de la población nacional en 2009 del U.S. Census Bureau y proyecciones del Pew Hispanic Center

En años posteriores a esa evaluación preliminar, el proceso que condujo al PENPJH (2005-2006) estimuló esfuerzos en parroquias y diócesis para mejorar y aumentar el cuidado y el acompañamiento pastoral de los jóvenes hispanos. Además, el Estudio Nacional sobre Adolescentes y Religión (NSYR, por sus siglas en inglés, 2003-2008) ha dado una luz sobre el estado actual de la formación religiosa y los retos pastorales que nacen de las diferencias de idioma, cultura y estatus socioeconómico, entre los adolescentes hispanos. Teniendo en cuenta la abundancia de información disponible, gracias a éstas y otras fuentes, éste es un momento oportuno para evaluar una vez más en dónde estamos en nuestro ministerio *con, hacia y desde* la juventud hispana.⁵

Cambios demográficos

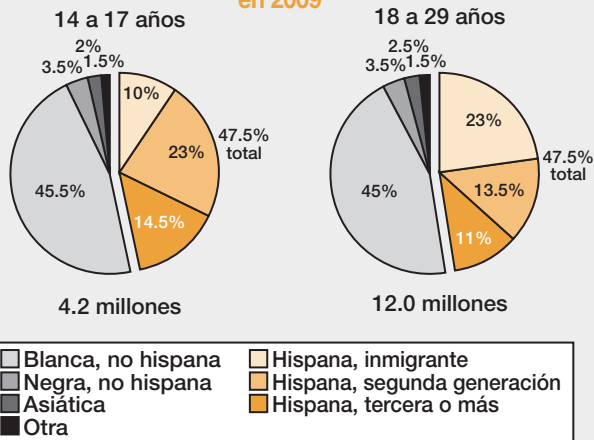
Como indica la Gráfica 1, los jóvenes latinos ya constituyen la mitad de los católicos menores de 18 años en Estados Unidos, y el pueblo latino constituirá dos tercios de la población católica en los próximos 40 años. Por consiguiente, el trabajo pastoral de nuestra Iglesia en este siglo será marcado por un fuerte cambio demográfico hacia una población latina mayoritaria. En este contexto hay que preguntarse: ¿está lista nuestra Iglesia para responder a este cambio constructivamente, preparando líderes y ofreciendo

Gráfica 2: Hispanos en Estados Unidos por edad y generación en 2009



Fuente: U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey, marzo de 2009

Gráfica 3: Cálculo de la población de jóvenes católicos en Estados Unidos por edad, raza/etnicidad y generación en 2009



Basado en: RSL 2007, ICR Omnibus 2008 y los cálculos de la población de Estados Unidos del U.S. Census Bureau, julio 1 de 2009

servicios pastorales que satisfagan las necesidades de toda la comunidad católica?

Debido al crecimiento elevado en el número de inmigrantes latinos entre 20 y 25 años de edad, según la Gráfica 2, casi la mitad de los jóvenes católicos hispanos nació fuera del país. Además, hoy día, la mayoría de los latinos más jóvenes en Estados Unidos son hijos de inmigrantes. Como resultado, su experiencia al crecer entre dos culturas tendrá gran impacto en la vida de nuestra Iglesia, conforme maduren como jóvenes. Si llegan o no a tomar su lugar entre nuestros líderes, dependerá de la calidad de formación en la fe y la capacitación para el liderazgo que reciban.

La Gráfica 3 ofrece otra mirada de la realidad demográfica de la pastoral juvenil en la Iglesia católica, según la etnia, raza y generación de la población total de adolescentes y jóvenes católicos. Esta comparación confirma que el grupo más grande de jóvenes adultos católicos hispanos es el inmigrante, mientras que entre los adolescentes, predominan los hijos de los inmigrantes. Es importante indicar que, según los cálculos del Instituto Fe y Vida, los hispanos ya sobrepasan a los blancos como el segmento más grande entre adolescentes católicos en edad escolar a nivel preparatoria (*high school*).

Aspectos clave del contexto sociocultural

Para situar la experiencia diaria de los jóvenes latinos en Estados Unidos es necesario resaltar algunas diferencias entre los jóvenes hispanos y los blancos en general, y contrastar la realidad de los jóvenes *católicos* —hispanos y blancos— cuando hay información disponible. Los resultados investigados aquí presentados provienen de varias fuentes reunidas y publicadas por el Instituto Fe y Vida.⁶

Idioma

- De los adolescentes hispanos, 58 por ciento habla español en casa tanto o más que inglés, incluyendo 47 por ciento de adolescentes hispanos nacidos en EUA.
- De los jóvenes latinos (entre 18 y 29 años), 62 por ciento dice que no habla inglés “bien”.

Estas estadísticas reflejan la proporción de inmigrantes e hijos de inmigrantes que aparecen en la Gráfica 2. Para la mayoría de las personas, el idioma que se habla en casa tiende a ser el idioma preferido en la oración y la fe.

Estatus migratorio

- Aunque la Oficina del Censo no mantiene información sobre estatus migratorio, se calcula que más de la mitad de los jóvenes latinos *inmigrantes* es indocumentada.
- Junto con los datos presentados en la Gráfica 3, esto indica que cerca de 76 por ciento de los jóvenes hispanos católicos en Estados Unidos tiene ciudadanía o residencia legal.⁷

Educación

- De los hispanos entre 20 y 29 años en el año 2007, más de 30 por ciento no había terminado la preparatoria, comparado con sólo 7 por ciento de los blancos de la misma edad.
- Sólo 15 por ciento de los hispanos entre 25 y 29 años había terminado estudios de licenciatura o superiores, comparado con 34 por ciento de los blancos de la misma edad.
- La diferencia entre los católicos es aún mayor. El NSYR mostró que entre los padres de adolescentes católicos, 38 por ciento de los padres blancos y 39 por ciento de las madres blancas tenía título universitario, en contraste con 12 por ciento de las madres y 8 por ciento de los padres hispanos.⁸

Economía familiar

No es sorpresa que estas diferencias también se reflejen en los ingresos familiares y posesiones materiales, según el NSYR:

- De los hogares católicos hispanos, 26 por ciento reportó un ingreso anual menor de \$20,000 dólares y 14 por ciento mayor de \$60,000, versus 4 y 52 por ciento, respectivamente, en hogares de las familias blancas católicas.
- De los padres católicos hispanos, 75 por ciento tenía deudas o sólo cubría los gastos, mientras que 1 por ciento tenía “muchos” ahorros y bienes. Entre los padres católicos blancos, sólo 41 por ciento tenía deudas o sólo cubría los gastos, y 13 por ciento tenía “muchos” ahorros y bienes.
- Comparados con los padres católicos hispanos, los padres católicos blancos tenían casi dos veces más probabilidades de ser dueños de su propia casa (82 versus 46 por ciento).⁹

Matrimonio e hijos

- De las latinas entre 16 y 30 años, 49 por ciento estaba criando un hijo o varios, y 19 por ciento de las latinas en estas edades era madres solteras, en contraste con 27 y 10 por ciento, respectivamente, entre las mujeres no latinas.¹⁰
- Los hispanos tienden a casarse más jóvenes que otros grupos. De los hispanos entre 16 y 30 años, 31 por ciento está casado o lo ha estado, en comparación con 25 por ciento del resto de la población de la misma edad.¹¹
- De los adolescentes católicos hispanos, 62 por ciento tiene padres casados, comparado con el 76 por ciento de los adolescentes católicos blancos.¹²

Hoy día, los latinos más jóvenes en Estados Unidos son, en su mayoría, hijos de inmigrantes. Como resultado, su experiencia al crecer entre dos culturas tendrá gran impacto en la vida de nuestra iglesia.

Conducta riesgosa y criminal

La tasa de conductas de alto riesgo y criminales entre los jóvenes hispanos, es significativamente más alta que entre los jóvenes blancos:

- Los adolescentes hispanos tienen 50 por ciento más probabilidades de intentar suicidarse; casi tres veces más de ser encarcelados, y aproximadamente 30 veces más de ser miembros activos de una pandilla. Las chicas latinas de 15 a 17 años se quedan embarazadas tres veces más que las adolescentes blancas.¹³
- La excepción a este patrón es el abuso de drogas y alcohol: los adolescentes católicos hispanos y blancos reportaron niveles similares en el uso de marihuana y los blancos indicaron haberse embriagado en el último año un tercio más que los hispanos.¹⁴

Estos factores de riesgo están relacionados con una exposición mayor de los hispanos a situaciones de violencia y abuso en el hogar, la escuela y el vecindario. También se relaciona con una menor supervisión y guía por sus padres, y por estar sujetos a experiencias de discriminación y estereotipos negativos.

Parte 2. Visión general de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana en Estados Unidos hoy

La primera parte de este artículo mostró que el segmento hispano de la población juvenil católica está creciendo más rápido que el resto de la población de la misma edad y está marcado por diferencias socioculturales con relación a otros jóvenes católicos. Sin duda, muchas de esas diferencias impactan el bienestar espiritual, emocional, intelectual y físico de los jóvenes católicos hispanos. Ciertamente, la información disponible indica que muchos jóvenes latinos están tomando decisiones nefastas con consecuencias terribles para ellos, sus hijos, nuestra Iglesia y el resto de la sociedad. Con esto en mente, esta segunda parte examina el estado de la formación en la fe y el cuidado pastoral de los jóvenes hispanos.

Identidad religiosa, formación en la fe y prácticas religiosas

El fenómeno de los hispanos que dejan la Iglesia católica por irse a comunidades evangélicas y pentecostales es discutido y analizado ampliamente.¹⁵ Sin embargo, existe una cuestión fundamental: ¿están los jóvenes católicos latinos recibiendo, en primer lugar, una formación adecuada en la fe? Muchos de los adolescentes católicos hispanos entrevistados en el NSYR hablaron con convicción de su identidad católica, pero reflejaron debilidad en sus prácticas religiosas y su habilidad de articular sus creencias. En general, los adolescentes católicos hispanos practican más devociones religiosas a nivel personal y familiar, mientras que los adolescentes católicos blancos tienden a estar más involucrados en actividades parroquiales.¹⁶ Ambos grupos tienden a describir su fe como una expresión de “deísmo terapéutico moralista” (*Moralistic Therapeutic Deism*, MTD, en inglés),¹⁷ más que un entendimiento adecuado de las enseñanzas de la Iglesia.

Lo que es motivo de preocupación pastoral es que aun los padres de familia católicos latinos que están muy comprometidos con su fe e involucrados en la parroquia, tienen dificultad para comunicar la fe a sus hijos adolescentes. Esto es el contrario de la experiencia de los padres de familia católicos blancos comprometidos con su fe. Según el análisis del NSYR:

Los hijos adolescentes de padres católicos latinos ‘comprometidos’ con su fe tienen menos probabilidad de

participar en la vida de la iglesia que los hijos de padres blancos comprometidos: tienen menos de la mitad de probabilidades de participar en la misa semanal; un tercio de probabilidades de participar en un grupo juvenil parroquial; una cuarta parte de probabilidades de ir a una escuela católica; una quinta parte de ser líderes en un grupo juvenil, y una sexta parte o menos de asistir a un retiro religioso o a un campamento de verano.¹⁸

El hecho de que los adolescentes latinos participen poco en la vida de la iglesia, a pesar de que sus padres estén comprometidos con ella, se debe a múltiples causas que varían de familia a familia y de parroquia a parroquia. Sin embargo, hay dos factores que resaltan: 1) la falta de identificación de muchos adolescentes nacidos en EUA con las tradiciones y expresiones de sus padres inmigrantes, debido a la gran brecha cultural entre ellos;¹⁹ 2) las diferencias de idioma, cultura y clase social entre los adolescentes latinos y sus compañeros de la cultura dominante, suele dificultar su participación en programas de *youth ministry*, especialmente cuando la parroquia sólo ofrece un programa pastoral para todos los adolescentes.²⁰

Vocaciones al ministerio eclesial

El alejamiento de los adolescentes católicos latinos de la iglesia refleja de muchos modos la poca atención y, en ocasiones, el racismo con el que la Iglesia católica —como institución— ha respondido a las necesidades pastorales de sus miembros hispanos, a lo largo de los años.²¹ Las consecuencias de esta falta de atención son evidentes en las estadísticas sobre las vocaciones religiosas y ministeriales. En la Iglesia católica de EUA:

- De los diáconos, 11 por ciento es hispano
- De los obispos, 9 por ciento es hispano
- De los sacerdotes, 6 por ciento es hispano y 83 por ciento de ellos es inmigrante
- De los ministros eclesiales laicos, 4 por ciento es hispano
- De los religiosos/as consagrados, 2 por ciento es hispano
- De los sacerdotes nacidos en Estados Unidos, 1 por ciento es hispano.²²

La proporción entre laicos y sacerdotes también puede verse como una medida del grado de identidad y compromiso institucional en la comunidad católica. Actualmente hay cerca de 1,900 laicos católicos por cada sacerdote católico en Estados Unidos. En contraste, hay cerca de 10,000 laicos católicos latinos por cada sacerdote latino, y la proporción aumenta a casi 30,000 laicos católicos hispanos nacidos en EUA por cada sacerdote latino nacido en este país.²³ Quizás esto no es sorprendente, ya que es difícil pedir un compromiso de por vida a los jóvenes latinos, en una iglesia con un récord mediocre e irregular de dedicación a la comunidad hispana, a pesar de los grandes ideales articulados por los obispos estadounidenses en el *Plan Pastoral Nacional para el Ministerio Hispano* y otros documentos sobre la pastoral hispana.

Lograr un compromiso eclesial en favor de los jóvenes latinos requiere un esfuerzo sistemático para crear programas acogedores que respondan a sus inquietudes y necesidades pastorales.

Categorías pastorales de jóvenes latinos

Lograr un compromiso eclesial en favor de los jóvenes latinos requiere un esfuerzo sistemático para crear programas acogedores que respondan a sus inquietudes y necesidades pastorales. En este sentido, los efectos alienadores de las diferencias lingüísticas, culturales y sociales entre quienes participan en *youth ministry*, con frecuencia pasan desapercibidos. La variedad de circunstancias pastorales existentes entre los jóvenes hispanos (sin considerar las de otras razas/etnias) es un llamado a crear espacios y programas pastorales que respondan a segmentos particulares de la población juvenil católica.

El Instituto Fe y Vida ha identificado cuatro categorías pastorales de jóvenes hispanos para ayudar a reconocer esta diver-

sidad.²⁴ Esa información no será repetida aquí en detalle; sin embargo, se presenta articulada en las Tablas 1 y 2.

Por supuesto, la proporción relativa de jóvenes latinos en cada categoría es diferente en cada lugar y las necesidades pastorales son tan distintas que es difícil que un solo programa o grupo responda efectivamente a las necesidades de todos. La Pastoral Juvenil Hispana es más efectiva cuando ofrece una respuesta pastoral diferenciada mediante diversas estructuras, programas, eventos y actividades diseñados para sectores específicos de la población juvenil parroquial o diocesana, según sus necesidades propias. Mientras más programas y actividades ofrezca una parroquia, más oportunidades de que los jóvenes católicos encuentren un hogar espiritual y una comunidad para crecer en la fe.

Tabla 1: Categorías pastorales de jóvenes hispanos

<p>Trabajadores Inmigrantes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La mayoría habla español • La mayoría de origen mexicano • Muchos son indocumentados • Más del 74% es católico • Buscan el apoyo moral y espiritual de la iglesia • La mayoría tiene pocos recursos económicos • Les interesa formar grupos y comunidades juveniles • Poca educación escolar • Tienen familias grandes • Motivados y esperanzados • Dispuestos a trabajar duro 	<p>Buscadores de Identidad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La mayoría es bilingüe • La mayoría nació en EUA • Son hijos de inmigrantes • Terminan la preparatoria con dificultad • Algunos buscan refugio en el alcohol, la droga o el sexo • Encuentran esperanza en el trabajo, la familia o los amigos • Se encuentran en la clase media baja • Pocos van a la universidad • Baja autoestima • No tienen motivación
<p>Integrantes a la Cultura Dominante</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La mayoría habla inglés • La mayoría nació en EUA • Van a la universidad y algunos asisten a escuelas privadas • No les interesa insertarse en la comunidad hispana pobre • A menudo abandonan la Iglesia católica • Tienen a despreciar a otros jóvenes hispanos • La mayoría pertenece a la clase media alta • Motivados y esperanzados • Dispuestos a trabajar duro 	<p>Pandilleros y Jóvenes de Alto Riesgo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inglés y español limitados • La mayoría nació en EUA • Viven en los barrios latinos • La mayoría está desempleada • Muchos consumen y/o venden drogas • La mayoría tiene pocos recursos económicos • Se acercan a la iglesia solamente en programas especializados • Poca educación escolar • Van contra la sociedad • Experimentan desesperanza • Muchos son encarcelados

Tabla 2: Necesidades pastorales de jóvenes hispanos por categoría

	Trabajadores Inmigrantes	Buscadores de Identidad	Integrantes a la Cultura Dominante	Pandilleros y Jóvenes de Alto Riesgo
Vida espiritual	Necesitan formar comunidades de fe con base en su cultura de origen	Necesitan asesoría y acompañamiento para integrar su fe y su vida en la transición cultural	Necesitan guía para superar el individualismo y consumismo, y valorar la espiritualidad hispana	Necesitan la fe para sanar las heridas y pasar del enojo y el odio al perdón
Desarrollo intelectual	Necesitan un sistema alternativo de educación	Necesitan motivación para terminar la preparatoria y cursar estudios universitarios	Necesitan ayuda financiera y orientación para entender el sistema educativo de EUA	Necesitan un sistema alternativo de educación
Madurez afectiva y socialización	Necesitan un ambiente sano para desarrollar relaciones sociales	Necesitan ayuda para incrementar su autoestima y seguridad en sí mismos	Necesitan personas que sean modelo de integración social y cultural	Necesitan un lugar y un grupo a los que pertenecer y personas que sean buenos modelos
Adquisición de virtudes humanas	Necesitan apoyo para no caer en el vicio / adicciones	Necesitan guía y orientación en la vida	Necesitan valorar el servicio a la comunidad y la justicia social	Necesitan consejería para superar los malos hábitos y actitudes
Porcentaje de jóvenes / adolescentes hispanos	25% a 45% 10% a 20%	25% a 45% 40% a 50%	15% a 25% 20% a 30%	10% a 15% 10% a 15%

Es importante reconocer que no todos los jóvenes católicos están listos para integrarse a un programa intensivo de catequesis y formación en la fe. El hogar y el ambiente social de muchos jóvenes latinos con frecuencia reflejan valores contrarios al Evangelio, tales como:

- Materialismo que valora a las personas por lo que compran
- Presión social para obtener satisfacción inmediata en el sexo, las drogas y otras conductas de alto riesgo
- Individualismo extremo que no considera el bien común ni los derechos de otras personas, sino que las ve como objetos a ser utilizados para beneficio o placer personal
- Secularismo que margina las convicciones y valores religiosos
- Experiencias de dominación, violencia, racismo, sexismo, abuso y discriminación, vistas como aspectos “normales” de la vida, ante las que nada se puede hacer
- Juicio moral disminuido causado por adicciones

En este ambiente, un ministerio efectivo puede requerir una etapa de preevangelización, con acciones que ganen la confianza de los jóvenes sin que se sientan juzgados, al tiempo que participan en actividades seguras y constructivas para orientar su vida. El compromiso amoroso, el testimonio personal de fe y las preguntas profundas de los líderes gradualmente estimularán en ellos un deseo mayor por entender la fe, una conversión de vida y una espiritualidad más profunda. También puede ser necesario catequizar a la comunidad parroquial sobre cómo acoger y aceptar a los jóvenes como son, para minimizar la experiencia común de ser juzgados o rechazados por los adultos por no parecer jóvenes católicos “buenos”.

Desarrollo y organización de tres respuestas pastorales complementarias

Aunque la Iglesia no ofrece una respuesta integral a las necesidades pastorales de las cuatro categorías de jóvenes latinos, existen tres ministerios que proveen respuestas parciales: *youth ministry* (pastoral con adolescentes), *young adult ministry* (pastoral con adultos entre 18 y 39 años; solteros, casados y con hijos; generalmente con estudios universitarios) y la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana. Como ya se mencionó, los elementos clave de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana, sus raíces en Latinoamérica y su proceso de inculturación en la Iglesia católica en EUA, se encuentran en las *Conclusiones del PENPJH*.²⁵ Los esfuerzos del *youth ministry* y el *young adult ministry* también tienen su historia y desarrollo particular en Estados Unidos.

Cada ministerio ha desarrollado su propio conjunto de principios operativos y organizaciones nacionales para apoyar a los líderes a nivel diocesano y parroquial:

- *Youth ministry* usa el documento *Renovemos la Visión: Fundamentos para el Ministerio con Jóvenes Católicos* (publicación de USCCB). Se apoya en la National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) y la National Association of Catholic Youth Ministry Leaders (NACYML).
- *Young adult ministry* usa el documento *Hijos e Hijas de la Luz: Plan Pastoral para el Ministerio con Jóvenes Adultos* (publicación de USCCB). Se apoya en la National Catholic Young

Adult Ministry Association (NCYAMA), la Catholic Campus Ministry Association (CCMA) y la National Association of Diocesan Directors of Campus Ministry (NADDCM).

- La Pastoral Juvenil Hispana usa los documentos *Civilización del amor: Tarea y esperanza* (publicado por el Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano – Sección de Juventud) y las *Conclusiones del PENPJH* (publicado por la USCCB). Se apoya en la National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana – La Red.

A pesar de los mejores esfuerzos de las organizaciones nacionales y los ministerios que representan, muchos jóvenes hispanos no son atendidos todavía. Quienes están en situaciones de alto riesgo pocas veces se benefician de la pastoral organizada y la mayoría de los jóvenes “buscadores de identidad” no está a gusto ni en grupos de *youth ministry* o *young adult ministry* ni en la PJH (si es que su parroquia ofrece opciones), por lo que eligen no participar. Estos jóvenes “estrujados culturalmente” tienen mayor probabilidad de perder su fe e identidad católica en su vida adulta, con frecuencia debido a un proceso que empieza con el rechazo de la cultura de sus padres, que los lleva a la larga a abandonar la fe.²⁶

Distintos enfoques pastorales y la protección de los adolescentes

La mayoría de los jóvenes “buscadores de identidad” no está a gusto ni en grupos de youth ministry o young adult ministry ni en la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana, por lo que eligen no participar. Estos jóvenes “estrujados culturalmente” tienen más probabilidad de perder su fe e identidad católica en su vida adulta.

Es importante reconocer algunas diferencias entre el enfoque de *youth ministry* y el de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana. En primer lugar, aunque *youth ministry* se describe como un ministerio hacia, con, por y para adolescentes,²⁷ en el contexto estadounidense se asume que estos sólo ejercerán liderazgo bajo la dirección de adultos —empleados o voluntarios— responsables de todas las actividades en este

ministerio. Hay límites en lo que los líderes pueden y no hacer de acuerdo con su edad, incluso para quienes tienen entre 18 y 25 años de edad. Además, a partir de los inicios de este siglo, los obispos han implementado un *Estatuto para la Protección de Niños y Jóvenes*, cuyas normas se aplican en casi todos los programas de *youth ministry*.

En contraste, la pastoral juvenil latinoamericana es un ministerio de los jóvenes hacia sus compañeros, generalmente sin un líder asalariado e incluso sin un adulto voluntario asignado para guiar las actividades.²⁸ En Estados Unidos *La Red* ha definido la PJH como el ministerio de jóvenes hispanos (solteros entre los 16 y 30 años) con sus compañeros,²⁹ aunque hay grupos que incluyen otras edades en muchos lugares. Con la publicación del *Estatuto* de los obispos, el liderazgo pastoral diocesano y parroquial tiene que asegurarse que la PJH ofrezca un ambiente seguro para sus participantes menores de 18 años. Esto es especialmente problemático en consideración de que muchos jóvenes adultos —líderes y participantes— están indocumentados, lo que dificulta la verificación de récords criminales. Como resultado, algunas parroquias y diócesis han optado por separar las edades, mientras que otras han designado los grupos como “ministerio intergeneracional” asignando líderes que han sido capacitados y han obtenido las debidas verificaciones para supervisar a los adolescentes presentes.³⁰

Aunque cada diócesis ha nombrado a una persona responsable de que las parroquias cumplan con el *Estatuto*, hay muchos movimientos apostólicos en la Iglesia que sirven a los jóvenes hispanos, con frecuencia sin supervisión adecuada por la parroquia o la diócesis. Los encuentros diocesanos de preparación para el PENPJH incluyeron representantes de más de 60 movimientos distintos, de los cuales 67 por ciento reportó trabajar con jóvenes y adolescentes juntos.³¹ Sin embargo, en la mayoría de las diócesis no hay estructuras claras de responsabilidad para asegurar que los líderes de estos movimientos provean la protección requerida en el *Estatuto*. De hecho, la experiencia revela que un número significativo de líderes en grupos con jóvenes de distintas edades desconoce el *Estatuto* —en algunos casos debido a una decisión práctica del personal diocesano que permite que los grupos funcionen así, en lugar de imponer normas difíciles de seguir pastoralmente.

Otras diferencias importantes con relación a *youth ministry*

Además de las diferencias en la agrupación de los jóvenes según su edad, la PJH y *youth ministry* dependen de distintas formas de liderazgo, enfrentan diversos retos y usan modelos diferentes en áreas clave del cuidado y acompañamiento pastoral de los jóvenes. Cuando los párrocos y los líderes diocesanos no entienden estas diferencias, se tiende a cancelar un ministerio en favor del otro. Por consiguiente, es importante reconocer la complementariedad de los enfoques para extender el ministerio *con, hacia y desde* la juventud latina en parroquias y diócesis. Veamos algunas diferencias clave entre ambos ministerios:

- **Estructuras de liderazgo.** La PJH, al ser un ministerio entre compañeros, se organiza mediante estructuras de liderazgo compartido, en las que el papel del líder se rota periódicamente, basándose en los dones y la disponibilidad de cada joven para que todos tengan oportunidad de desarrollar sus habilidades para liderar, independientemente de su edad.³² El equipo de líderes en la PJH casi nunca incluye un coordinador asalariado —puesto que es más común en *youth ministry*, especialmente en parroquias con posibilidad económica.³³ Los equipos de la PJH buscan asesores que los orienten, por ejemplo, un sacerdote, un director espiritual, un miembro del equipo pastoral de la parroquia o el coordinador diocesano de pastoral juvenil, sin que comúnmente esté presente en las reuniones del grupo, comunidad o movimiento.
- **Personal parroquial y formación para el liderazgo.** Idealmente, cada parroquia con una población latina grande contrataría a un asesor para la PJH, que le diera estabilidad y continuidad en tiempos de transición o crisis y brindara a los jóvenes asesoría permanente y formación para su liderazgo. Sin embargo, pocas parroquias mayoritariamente latinas tienen los recursos económicos para ello. Además, existe un gran vacío de líderes adultos capacitados para asesorar la PJH, con credenciales académicas ministeriales y habilidades lingüísticas y culturales requeridas para este rol, inclusive entre los sacerdotes y directores de educación religiosa. Como resultado, ministerios enteros suelen ser desmantelados al cambiar el liderazgo parroquial, y otros ministerios son vulnerables a la inexperiencia del equipo juvenil y a los cambios que ocurren cuando líderes establecidos pasan el liderazgo a otros jóvenes.
- **Coordinación y apoyo diocesano.** En este contexto, se ha comprobado que una de las estructuras más efectivas

para apoyar la PJH en las parroquias y los movimientos, es el coordinador diocesano de pastoral juvenil capacitado profesionalmente. En contraste con la mayoría de directores diocesanos de *youth ministry*, cuyo trabajo se centra en apoyar, ofrecer recursos y capacitar a los coordinadores parroquiales, el personal diocesano de la PJH necesita estar más directamente involucrado en el ministerio que apoya.

Las parroquias en donde no existe la PJH pueden pedir ayuda al coordinador diocesano para identificar, invitar, motivar y capacitar a un equipo de líderes jóvenes y asesores para establecer el ministerio. Otra tarea clave del coordinador es mediar el diálogo entre los jóvenes y los agentes de pastoral que no entienden bien la PJH o que insisten en tener un solo programa de pastoral “para todos” los jóvenes. Como no es posible que las parroquias ofrezcan niveles avanzados de formación pastoral, teológica y de liderazgo, la formación y el apoyo a los líderes voluntarios en las parroquias y movimientos es un componente importante en la misión del coordinador diocesano.

- **Pastoral de conjunto.** La Pastoral Juvenil Hispana también se diferencia del *youth ministry* y *young adult ministry* por su énfasis en una pastoral de conjunto —un concepto sin equivalente exacto en inglés, que suele traducirse como *communion in mission*. La colaboración de varios grupos y movimientos para organizar eventos y celebraciones masivos es fruto de este enfoque. Debido a la característica comunitaria de las culturas latinas, la PJH florece cuando se complementan las reuniones regulares de un grupo con la experiencia periódica de eventos grandes. Ésta es la manera más efectiva de acoger a jóvenes recién llegados al ministerio, mantener la energía y el compromiso de los que ya están involucrados y ayudar a formar nuevos líderes mediante un proceso de formación-en-la-acción. La carta pastoral de los obispos latinoamericanos para la pastoral juvenil enfatiza el establecimiento de redes, reuniones y colaboración entre grupos a distintos niveles: en la parroquia, entre parroquias, en la diócesis, así como a nivel regional, nacional e internacional.³⁴
- **Un ministerio diferenciado.** Otro aspecto de pastoral de conjunto que resaltan los obispos latinoamericanos es la coordinación de esfuerzos entre varios ministerios, tales como *youth ministry*, *young adult ministry*, pastoral carcelaria, ministerio hispano, trabajo con pandillas, PJH, apostolado familiar, apostolado con los enfermos y discapacitados, pastoral migrante, pastoral universitaria, y otras.³⁵ Sólo coordinando estos esfuerzos será que jóvenes procedentes de distintos ámbitos y con diversas necesidades tengan garantizado el acceso a la formación en la fe, el cuidado pastoral, acompañamiento y oportunidades para participar en la vida y la misión de la Iglesia.

Debido a la característica comunitaria de las culturas latinas, la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana florece cuando se complementan las reuniones regulares de un grupo con la experiencia periódica de eventos grandes.

La Pastoral Juvenil Hispana entiende que la proclamación y la inculturación del Evangelio son responsabilidad de todos los jóvenes católicos como respuesta a su Bautismo. De hecho, la evangelización no se completa hasta que los evangelizados asuman su misión de evangelizadores.

- **Perspectivas sobre evangelización y vocación.** Al ser un ministerio de jóvenes hacia jóvenes, la PJH promueve el protagonismo de los jóvenes en la evangelización.³⁶ Fiel a la misión de la Iglesia,³⁷ la PJH entiende que la proclamación y la inculturación³⁸ del Evangelio son responsabilidad de todos los jóvenes católicos como respuesta a su Bautismo.³⁹ De hecho, la evangelización no se completa hasta que los evangelizados asuman su misión de evangelizadores.⁴⁰ Por eso, el discernimiento del “proyecto de vida”, enraizado en la vocación común de todo bautizado, está en el corazón de la PJH porque define quiénes somos como seguidores de Cristo.⁴¹

En contraste, la teoría y la práctica de *youth ministry* ofrecen a los adolescentes poca formación para participar en la misión evangelizadora de la iglesia, al llevar a otros jóvenes la Buena Nueva de Jesús. La evangelización de adolescentes es vista primordialmente como la tarea de los adultos, en particular de quienes coordinan el ministerio con adolescentes.⁴² Por otro lado, los recursos vocacionales para *youth ministry* comúnmente se destinan a jóvenes en el último año de preparatoria, siendo casi inexistente la orientación vocacional durante otras etapas.

Parte 3. Evaluemos el camino

La declaración de la misión de la PHJ, visionaria y llena de fe, articulada por los delegados al Encuentro de jóvenes (ver p. 1) es aún más extraordinaria si se toma en cuenta los retos sociales y pastorales descritos anteriormente. Sin embargo, la realidad pastoral exige preguntarse si esta declaración refleja la intención y el entendimiento colectivo de todos los jóvenes católicos hispanos en EUA. La respuesta breve a la pregunta es: no, no en cuanto a la gran mayoría de ellos.

Logros recientes

Sin embargo, la descripción general del contexto pastoral esconde otra verdad: la pastoral *con, hacia y desde* la juventud hispana ha progresado notablemente desde el estudio preliminar del Instituto Fe y Vida en 2002, a pesar de retrocesos en algunos lugares y de que aún queda mucho por hacer. Algunos avances notables en los últimos siete años son:

- A. **Desarrollo de un liderazgo diocesano y nacional para la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana.** Gracias en gran parte a *La Red* por liderar el proceso del Encuentro, más diócesis ahora tienen personal dedicado a la pastoral con jóvenes hispanos. Un signo de esperanza es que algunas diócesis han contratado directores bilingües de *youth and young adult ministry*, para dirigir estos ministerios en inglés y español. Sin embargo, los líderes bilingües y biculturales que son calificados y

tienen la experiencia necesaria para ocupar estos puestos son todavía muy pocos.

- B. **Creciente rol colaborativo de *La Red* con otras organizaciones ministeriales nacionales.** El papel destacado de *La Red* es particularmente evidente en su colaboración continua con la NFCYM y el Secretariado para los Laicos, el Matrimonio, la Vida Familiar y la Juventud en la USCCB. Esta colaboración está ayudando a que el trabajo de la NFCYM sea más incluyente. Otro fruto es el *Plan estratégico de cinco años para la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*, elaborado por *La Red* con la colaboración de otras organizaciones nacionales.⁴³
- C. **Celebración del Primer Encuentro Nacional de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana y publicación de sus Conclusiones.** Los logros y limitaciones del Encuentro son una radiografía del alcance de la Iglesia en su compromiso con los jóvenes latinos. En el documento de las *Conclusiones del PENPJH*, el cual cuenta con el respaldo y apoyo de los obispos de EUA, existe un relato bilingüe de la historia, contexto teológico y pastoral, visión, principios, necesidades pastorales y mejores prácticas y modelos articulados por los mismos jóvenes.
- D. **Investigación sociológica sólida sobre la realidad religiosa de los jóvenes latinos.** El Estudio Nacional sobre Adolescentes y Religión (NSYR), con su muestra nacional representativa, incluyendo adolescentes y jóvenes hispanos encuestados y entrevistados, es fuente de información confiable sobre sus creencias y prácticas religiosas. En el libro *Pathways of Hope and Faith Among Hispanic Teens*, un grupo interdisciplinario de nueve escritores analizó desde distintas perspectivas las respuestas de los jóvenes latinos que participaron en dicho estudio. Este libro es un recurso valioso para el trabajo pastoral con la juventud católica latina.
- E. **Amplia disponibilidad de programas de formación para la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana.** El Instituto Pastoral del Sureste (SEPI) y varias diócesis del país han desarrollado programas de formación para líderes y asesores en la PJH. Además, el Instituto Fe y Vida tiene un sistema de formación de líderes, cuenta con un equipo pastoral móvil con capacidad de proveer formación a distintos niveles en cualquier diócesis del país que lo solicite y ofrece un programa intensivo anual de una semana (*Programa Nacional de Verano*) para la formación aun de los líderes cuyas diócesis no ofrecen oportunidades similares. Finalmente, varios movimientos apostólicos han desarrollado sus propios programas y recursos para la formación de líderes.
- F. **Aumento de recursos humanos en la comunidad católica, tanto entre hispanos como otros grupos.** Durante el proceso del Encuentro y después de éste, muchos directores, coordinadores y líderes de *youth ministry* se han percatado de la necesidad de incrementar su capacidad de servir a los adolescentes hispanos. Además, el mismo proceso del Encuentro fue diseñado como un proyecto de formación-en-la-acción que ha forjado una nueva generación de líderes latinos para la PJH y *youth ministry* en comunidades latinas.

Áreas que necesitan mayor atención

Los logros alcanzados han sido posibles gracias a esfuerzos de miles de líderes en programas de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana y *youth ministry*. Sin embargo, la realidad pastoral descrita en la primera parte de este artículo muestra que queda mucho por hacer. Dicha información no será resumida aquí. En lugar de ello, esta sección se

centra en los cambios estructurales que se requieren para facilitar una respuesta integral a las necesidades pastorales de los jóvenes latinos a nivel local, diocesano, regional y nacional.

A. Elaborar un plan pastoral integral a nivel nacional que coordine los distintos ministerios y organizaciones ministeriales para el cuidado pastoral y el acompañamiento de toda la juventud católica.

Este plan debe dar respuesta a la realidad social, cultural, lingüística, educativa y espiritual de la juventud católica actual, de la que los latinos son casi la mitad. Para ello se requiere considerar lo siguiente:

- Capacitación de los agentes de pastoral diocesanos y parroquiales para analizar la realidad de la juventud local y elaborar planes pastorales para atender la gama total de jóvenes bajo su responsabilidad, en particular a aquellos que forman parte de la gran mayoría que actualmente no participa en programas pastorales.
- Criterios pastorales y teológicos que ayuden a identificar las necesidades urgentes y fundamentales que deben ser consideradas como prioridad.
- Guía para discernir necesidades de preevangelización, evangelización, catequesis y atención pastoral.
- Enfoques diferenciados para responder a las diversas necesidades pastorales a través de programas, grupos, movimientos, eventos, actividades y servicios.
- Atención especial a la situación de las familias y a la capacitación de los padres como formadores en la fe de sus hijos.
- Pautas para organizar proyectos en los que los jóvenes sean los protagonistas de la acción pastoral.

B. Estructurar los ministerios juveniles basados en una eclesiología que entienda la parroquia como comunidad de comunidades. Con frecuencia los programas de *youth ministry* son limitados debido a una visión teológica errónea que asume que ofrecer diversos programas para los jóvenes puede dividir la parroquia.⁴⁴ En este sentido las *Conclusiones del PENPJH* son claras:

El liderazgo de la pastoral juvenil, el ministerio hispano y el *youth and young adult ministry* está cada vez más consciente de que los programas y actividades propios para la cultura dominante, no favorecen la participación de adolescentes y jóvenes hispanos, aunque hablen inglés. Esto sucede debido a las diferencias económicas, culturales, educativas, geográficas y lingüísticas, **especialmente cuando la pastoral en la parroquia se limita a un solo grupo juvenil.**⁴⁵ [énfasis añadido]

Como respuesta, las parroquias en Estados Unidos harán bien en seguir un consejo de la V Conferencia General de los Obispos Latinoamericanos, en Aparecida, Brasil:

La renovación de las parroquias al inicio del tercer milenio exige reformular sus estructuras, para que sea una red de comunidades y grupos, capaces de articularse logrando que sus miembros se sientan y

sean realmente discípulos y misioneros de Jesucristo en comunión.⁴⁶

C. Incrementar la colaboración y el diálogo con los líderes y organizaciones pastorales en Latinoamérica.

La cita anterior es una respuesta clara a la llamada del papa Juan Pablo II a las parroquias para convertirse en una “comunidad de comunidades y movimientos”, en su exhortación apostólica *Ecclesia in America*.⁴⁷ Resalta su esperanza de que la Iglesia en el Continente Americano empiece a verse como una sola Iglesia continental con una colaboración significativa entre los países del norte y del sur. Tal como este artículo ha demostrado, la práctica de *youth and young adult ministry* en Estados Unidos se beneficiará al dar mayor consideración a las orientaciones de *Civilización del Amor: Tarea y Esperanza* y a las prioridades pastorales en el *Documento de Aparecida*. Este intercambio de ideas y prácticas sería el primer paso en el desarrollo de una pastoral de conjunto genuina entre el norte y el sur.

D. Aumentar la colaboración y el diálogo entre los líderes y organizaciones ministeriales juveniles en EUA.

Dado el número de los católicos hispanos, es inaceptable que documentos importantes e iniciativas pastorales con implicaciones para todos los católicos en la Iglesia de EUA —especialmente la juventud— se escriban sin representación adecuada de los latinos, al tomar decisiones fundamentales y hacer ediciones finales. Hoy día, hay varias iniciativas significativas para dar orientación y criterios para el futuro de la catequesis de adolescentes, la evangelización, la educación escolar católica, la formación de líderes eclesiales laicos y la promoción de vocaciones al servicio eclesial. La PJH tiene mucho que contribuir

a estas áreas y *La Red* ha de ser parte de la conversación y un ente motivador de estos esfuerzos.

E. Diseñar estrategias y respuestas para vencer los obstáculos estructurales para la PJH. Algunos de los mayores retos que existen actualmente en este ministerio son:

- **Formación pastoral y reflexión teológica.** Pocos líderes diocesanos, sacerdotes y directores de *youth ministry* tienen un conocimiento adecuado de las necesidades, visión, misión, principios e historia de la PJH. Como consecuencia, sus convicciones pastorales son frecuentemente desacertadas, lo que les impide ofrecer un apoyo efectivo a este ministerio, llevándolos en varios casos incluso a cerrarlo o a bloquear su establecimiento en la parroquia o la diócesis.⁴⁸ Además, hay que ofrecer formación pastoral y teológica a los jóvenes líderes en la PJH para que puedan ejercer un ministerio efectivo entre sus compañeros. Desafortunadamente, los programas de formación para el ministerio hispano y el trabajo de los teólogos latinos/hispanos, tampoco tratan aspectos relacionados con la juventud latina. Como resultado, aun los líderes mejor preparados en el ministerio hispano con frecuencia carecen de la formación para apoyar y abogar en favor de la PJH.
- **Educación académica.** El bajo nivel educativo de los trabajadores inmigrantes latinos y la alta tasa de deserción

Con frecuencia los programas de youth ministry son limitados debido a una visión teológica errónea que asume que ofrecer diversos programas para los jóvenes puede dividir la parroquia.

escolar entre los adolescentes hispanos nacidos en EUA limitan al grupo de líderes latinos que puede cursar estudios académicos para servir en la pastoral u obtener un empleo pastoral en la Iglesia. Al mismo tiempo, cientos de escuelas católicas de primaria y secundaria están a punto de ser cerradas, mientras que millones de familias católicas de bajos recursos no logran cubrir sus necesidades educativas debido al pobre desempeño de las escuelas públicas donde asisten sus hijos. Esto requiere una iniciativa nacional para mejorar la educación académica de los inmigrantes católicos, sus hijos y otros grupos raciales/étnicos, tanto en las escuelas católicas como en las públicas.⁴⁹

- **Asuntos de inmigración.** Muchos inmigrantes jóvenes están indocumentados, lo que causa inestabilidad en su vida, limita su acceso a becas académicas y dificulta que asuman empleos pastorales y que sirvan en la pastoral con adolescentes. Sin embargo, la Iglesia debe ofrecerles atención pastoral y ayudarlos a que vivan su vocación y misión cristiana. Además, es necesario incrementar la conciencia, tanto a nivel parroquial como diocesano, sobre la prioridad establecida por los obispos de abogar por una reforma migratoria integral, fundamentada en los principios de la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia.
- **Pastoral de conjunto.** La falta de coordinación entre *youth ministry*, *young adult ministry* y la PJH ha contribuido al bajo nivel de participación de jóvenes hispanos nacidos en Estados Unidos, sobre todo la mayoría que habla principalmente inglés y no está en la universidad ni planea hacerlo. Un trabajo pastoral efectivo con estos jóvenes requerirá colaboración y atención compartida entre el ministerio hispano, *youth ministry*, *young adult ministry*, la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana y los movimientos apostólicos.

F. Incrementar los recursos humanos, económicos y programáticos para la PJH. Esto requerirá una inversión significativa en la formación de líderes a todo nivel, en español e inglés, para que los líderes jóvenes trabajando en la PJH y los coordinadores de *youth ministry* puedan mejorar y expandir su ministerio. Quizá la mejor inversión y primer paso a realizar debe ser la contratación de un director diocesano de la PJH. Esta persona sería responsable de coordinar la formación de líderes en parroquias y movimientos apostólicos, ofreciendo apoyo continuo a sus esfuerzos ministeriales y motivándolos a ser parte de un proceso de formación-en-la-acción y una pastoral de conjunto.

Además, hay pocos materiales programáticos y recursos audiovisuales disponibles para apoyar la PJH, al igual que pocos recursos bilingües para ayudar a los padres hispanos a superar los conflictos lingüísticos y culturales que tienen frecuentemente con sus hijos en su rol de primeros educadores en la fe. La mayoría de los recursos elaborados para los programas de *youth ministry*, *young adult ministry* y la pastoral juvenil latinoamericana no son adecuados al contexto latino estadounidense. Se requerirá una inversión substancial de la Iglesia en general, y de las editoriales católicas en particular,

para desarrollar la capacidad de líderes, escritores y artistas latinos para crear recursos que apoyen estos ministerios.

Por último, es necesario crear modelos efectivos para financiar estos esfuerzos a nivel local y diocesano, y compartirlos nacionalmente. El papel de *La Red* en el apoyo y avance continuo de la PJH a nivel nacional se ha hecho indispensable, pero aún sigue operando con líderes voluntarios, sin una oficina central para archivos y comunicaciones. Considerando que *La Red* ha aceptado la responsabilidad de abogar por la mitad de todos los jóvenes católicos en Estados Unidos, tiene que haber más apoyo institucional y filantrópico para este ministerio.

G. Crear estándares de certificación para la capacitación de coordinadores de *youth ministry* y la PJH —latinos y de la cultura dominante— para realizar una pastoral efectiva con, hacia y desde la juventud hispana. Hoy día, cinco organizaciones están revisando las *Normas Nacionales para Certificación de Ministros Eclesiales Laicos*. Tomando en cuenta el tamaño y la extensión geográfica de los católicos hispanos, las normas nacionales deben reflejar las capacidades y metodologías requeridas para la pastoral en comunidades hispanas. Además, los estándares para líderes de *youth ministry* deben incluir habilidades basadas en la visión, necesidades y principios para el ministerio con adolescentes hispanos descritos en las *Conclusiones del PENPJH*. *La Red* también debe participar en este proceso, proponiendo estándares de certificación de líderes, coordinadores y asesores en la PJH.

Conclusión

Los desafíos pastorales que enfrentan los jóvenes hispanos en Estados Unidos son inmensos y, sin duda alguna, contribuyen a la siguiente conclusión en el Estudio Nacional sobre Adolescentes y Religión (NSYR): “Los adolescentes latinos, como grupo, son menos articulados y comprometidos en su fe que otros adolescentes católicos, a pesar de que sus padres muestran un compromiso mayor con su fe que los padres católicos blancos”.⁵⁰ Ciertamente, sus necesidades son tan diversas y su presencia tan numerosa en las comunidades católicas en todo el país, que se requiere un esfuerzo coordinado de toda la Iglesia para ofrecerles un cuidado pastoral adecuado, formación en la fe y una invitación a participar en la vida y la misión de la Iglesia.

La buena noticia es que la comunidad católica ha sido bendecida con miles de jóvenes hispanos que son líderes en la PJH y miles más que son directores y coordinadores de *youth ministry* en parroquias y movimientos apostólicos. Además, en las *Conclusiones del PENPJH* y en el *Plan estratégico de cinco años para la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana* tenemos lineamientos para servir y empoderar a los jóvenes hispanos. Todo lo que necesita nuestra Iglesia es tener la voluntad institucional para implementar este plan mediante una auténtica pastoral de conjunto en parroquias y diócesis a lo largo y ancho del país. Al realizar este proceso, los esfuerzos de *youth ministry*, *young adult ministry* y la PJH serán un modelo de cómo establecer puentes entre el ministerio hispano y el de la cultura dominante para forjar una Iglesia renovada en EUA en el siglo XXI.

Apéndice – Metas del Plan Estratégico de Cinco Años para la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana: 2009 – 2014*

I. VISIÓN COMÚN

- Meta 1.1 Desarrollar una visión común para la pastoral *con, hacia y desde* la juventud hispana.
- Meta 1.2 Promover una comprensión unificada de la pastoral con la juventud católica que reconozca y honre la diversidad en la realidad de los adolescentes y jóvenes hispanos.
- Meta 1.3 Comprender y afirmar la diversidad en la pastoral con los adolescentes y los jóvenes hispanos, con el fin de atender eficientemente a las necesidades de la iglesia hispana joven en relación con sus diferentes generaciones, idiomas, estatus económico, educación, estatus migratorio y país de origen.

II. CONSCIENTIZACIÓN Y PROMOCIÓN (ADVOCACY)

- Meta 2.1 Promover la aceptación de la diversidad en la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana para satisfacer las necesidades de la iglesia joven hispana, incluyendo sus diferentes generaciones, idiomas, estatus económico y niveles académicos, sin limitarse a ellos.
- Meta 2.2 Promover cambios estructurales en las diócesis para mejorar y expandir la pastoral con la juventud hispana.
- Meta 2.3 Promover una Pastoral Juvenil Hispana encarnada en la realidad de la juventud latina en la iglesia y la sociedad de los Estados Unidos.
- Meta 2.4 Conscientizar sobre el impacto de la inmigración en los adolescentes y jóvenes hispanos.

III. DESARROLLO DEL LIDERAZGO

- Meta 3.1 Fomentar un enfoque y una visión inculturados sobre la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana, entre los ministros ordenados y laicos, que acompañan a la juventud hispana en sus procesos de desarrollo y formación integral.
- Meta 3.2 Incrementar entre la juventud latina las posibilidades y el acceso a programas comprehensivos de formación en la fe y en la pastoral.

IV. PASTORAL JUVENIL HISPANA

- Meta 4.1 Incluir la pastoral con los adolescentes y jóvenes hispanos como una prioridad en los planes estratégicos de las organizaciones afiliadas en la Alianza con este fin.
- Meta 4.2 Lograr que la Iglesia reconozca a los “líderes jóvenes” y a los asesores adultos en la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana como ministros.
- Meta 4.3 Considerar el proceso de los Encuentros de PJH como un *kairós* y un *locus* para un proceso de renovación y madurez continuo de la pastoral con la juventud latina.
- Meta 4.4 Promover y facilitar el uso del documento de las *Conclusiones del PENPJH*, por los líderes, asesores y coordinadores en la pastoral con jóvenes y adolescentes hispanos.

V. EDUCACIÓN ACADÉMICA

- Meta 5.1 Fomentar el avance académico y la participación cívica de los adolescentes y jóvenes latinos.
- Meta 5.2 Facilitar la interrelación entre el liderazgo pastoral y los educadores hispanos, para mejorar y expandir las oportunidades educativas de la juventud latina.

VI. PASTORAL DE CONJUNTO

- Meta 6.1 Promover una colaboración eficiente y efectiva entre las estructuras responsables para servir a los adolescentes y jóvenes hispanos, a nivel nacional, diocesano y parroquial.

* Las metas principales del *Plan Estratégico de Cinco Años para la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*, elaborado por *La Red* en una “Alianza” con varias otras organizaciones nacionales de pastoral, se presentan aquí. El texto completo está en línea en: <http://www.laredpjh.org>.

Notas

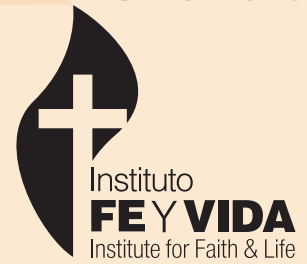
- ¹ National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana – La Red, *Conclusiones: Primer Encuentro Nacional de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Publishing, 2008), 54.
- ² *Ibid.*, 19 – 22.
- ³ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Plan Pastoral Nacional para el Ministerio Hispano*, nos. 51 – 56 y 64 – 66, en United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ministerio Hispano: Tres Documentos Importantes* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1995).
- ⁴ Ken Johnson-Mondragón, *The Status of Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry in the United States: A Preliminary Study* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2002), 30.
- ⁵ Esta frase es tomada del objetivo específico #3 del PENPJH, *Conclusiones*, 27. Un ministerio que es realizado “desde la juventud” es un ministerio que está informado y responde al contexto inmediato y global de la vida de los jóvenes. Al mismo tiempo, es un ministerio que depende de los dones de los jóvenes para desarrollar e implementar una respuesta pastoral. Una descripción completa de la articulación latinoamericana de este ministerio se puede encontrar en: Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, *Civilización del amor: Tarea y esperanza*, (Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia: CELAM, Sección de Juventud, 1995), 2ª Parte, Sección III, nos. 2.1 – 2.2.
- ⁶ Instituto Fe y Vida, “Pastoral Juvenil Hispana: Datos recientes”, *Perspectivas sobre la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana 4* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2007), disponible en línea: <http://www.feyvida.org/research/researchpubs.html>.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 3, 5.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 3, 5. En esta sección sólo se mencionan los resultados correspondientes a blancos e hispanos debido a que las muestras del NSYR no incluyeron suficientes participantes católicos de grupos negros, asiáticos, indígenas y “otros” para permitir una comparación adecuada.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.
- ¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey* de marzo de 2009.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² Ken Johnson-Mondragón, “Youth Ministry and the Socioreligious Lives of Hispanic and White Catholic Teens in the U.S.”, *Perspectives on Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry 2* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2005), 3, disponible en línea: <http://www.feyvida.org/research/researchpubs.html>.
- ¹³ “Pastoral Juvenil Hispana: Datos recientes”, 5.
- ¹⁴ “Youth Ministry and the Socioreligious Lives...”, 22.
- ¹⁵ Ver el análisis reciente de este fenómeno en: The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2007), 41 – 48.
- ¹⁶ Ken Johnson-Mondragón, ed., *Pathways of Hope and Faith Among Hispanic Teens: Pastoral Reflections and Strategies Inspired by the National Study of Youth and Religion* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2007), 97 – 100 y 324.
- ¹⁷ “Deísmo terapéutico moralista” es un término propuesto por Christian Smith, investigador principal del NSYR, para describir una actitud generalizada de “me vale” que caracteriza la fe religiosa de la mayoría de los adolescentes en los Estados Unidos hoy en día. Para una descripción de este término en relación con los adolescentes hispanos, ver *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 72 – 74 y 324.
- ¹⁸ *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 100. Ver también “Pastoral Juvenil Hispana: Datos recientes”, 6 – 7.
- ¹⁹ Ver Carmen M. Cervantes y Ken Johnson-Mondragón, “Las dinámicas de cultura, fe y familia en la vida de los adolescentes hispanos, y sus implicaciones para la pastoral con adolescentes”, *Perspectivas sobre la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana 5* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2008), disponible en línea: <http://www.feyvida.org/research/researchpubs.html>.
- ²⁰ *Conclusiones*, 33.
- ²¹ *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 326 – 329.
- ²² “Pastoral Juvenil Hispana: Datos recientes”, 8.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 33 – 39.
- ²⁵ *Conclusiones*, 19 – 22.
- ²⁶ Para una descripción de los patrones más comunes de adaptación entre padres inmigrantes y sus hijos nacidos en los Estados Unidos, ver “Las dinámicas de cultura, fe y familia...”, 3 – 5.
- ²⁷ United States Catholic Conference Department of Education, *A Vision of Youth Ministry: Edición Bilingüe* (Washington, DC: USCC, 1986), 6 – 7.
- ²⁸ Carmen M. Cervantes y Ken Johnson-Mondragón, “Pastoral Juvenil Hispana, Youth Ministry y Young Adult Ministry: Una perspectiva nueva sobre tres realidades pastorales diferentes”, *Perspectivas sobre la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana 3* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2008), 3, disponible en línea: <http://www.feyvida.org/research/researchpubs.html>.
- ²⁹ *Conclusiones*, 23.
- ³⁰ Para una presentación sobre los puntos en favor y en contra de tener grupos integrados con jóvenes de distintas edades versus separados de acuerdo con la edad, ver *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 342 – 344.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 99.
- ³² *Conclusiones*, 57.
- ³³ El NSYR reveló que es 50 por ciento más probable que los adolescentes blancos tengan un youth minister de tiempo completo en sus parroquias que los adolescentes hispanos. Ver *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 90 – 92.
- ³⁴ *Civilización del amor: Tarea y esperanza*, 3ª Parte, nos. 4.1 – 4.2.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3ª Parte, nos. 3.2 – 3.4.
- ³⁶ *Conclusiones*, 54 – 55 y 57, especialmente PJ-22, no. 3. Ver también *Civilización del amor*, 2ª Parte, Sección I, no. 1.2 y Sección III, no. 2.2.
- ³⁷ Ver Pablo VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos. 14, 17 – 18, 22 y 29.
- ³⁸ Para una explicación de inculturación y su aplicación a la pastoral con adolescentes, ver “Las dinámicas de cultura, fe y familia...”, 5 – 10.
- ³⁹ *Conclusiones*, 13 – 15, 54 y 60 – 61.
- ⁴⁰ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 24.
- ⁴¹ Ver *Civilización del amor*, 2ª Parte, Sección I, no. 2.3.1. La frase “proyecto de vida” aparece 35 veces en el documento.
- ⁴² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Renovemos la Visión: Fundamentos para el Ministerio con Jóvenes Católicos* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1997), 37-39.
- ⁴³ Las metas principales del *Plan Estratégico de Cinco Años para la PJH* están presentadas en el Apéndice en la página 11 de este documento, y el texto completo está en línea en: <http://www.laredpjh.org>.
- ⁴⁴ Para una presentación sobre las circunstancias culturales y pastorales que puedan contribuir a esta visión errónea, y para una articulación del modelo “comunidad de comunidades”, ver *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 332 – 339 y 345 – 352.
- ⁴⁵ *Conclusiones*, 33.
- ⁴⁶ CELAM, *Aparecida – V Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe: Documento Conclusivo* (Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia: CELAM, 2007), no. 172.
- ⁴⁷ Juan Pablo II, *Ecclesia in America*, no. 41.
- ⁴⁸ El capítulo 10 de *Pathways of Hope and Faith* describe diez factores que nuestra iglesia necesita tener en cuenta para mejorar y expandir la pastoral con adolescentes hispanos. Ver las páginas 321 – 359.
- ⁴⁹ Una iniciativa importante en esta línea de acción se describe en *Para alentar el espíritu de una nación: familias latinas, escuelas católicas y oportunidades educativas* (Notre Dame, IN: Alliance for Catholic Education Press at the University of Notre Dame, 2009).
- ⁵⁰ *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 324.



Perspectives on Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry



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Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry in the United States:

Bridging Hispanic and Mainstream Ministry to Forge the Church Anew in 21st Century America*

by Ken Johnson-Mondragón, D.Min. cand.

*We, the Catholic Latino young people
who participate in Hispanic youth and young adult ministry,
feel called and committed to the mission of the Church,
to wholly form and prepare ourselves through pastoral action,
and to lovingly evangelize other young Hispanics
according to their own situation and experience.*

*We strive to offer immigrants and citizens alike,
the ever new and joyous truth of the Gospel,
highlighting gospel values,
and making an effort to reach
those who need the Good News the most,
who do not know God,
or who have strayed from the way of Jesus.*

*We propose to carry out this mission
through the testimony of our lives
and our prophetic leadership among our peers,
investing our gifts and talents
in evangelizing and missionary efforts
rooted in the places where they live, work, study, and have fun,
always following the example of Jesus,
and strengthening ourselves in the Eucharist.¹*

The above *Mission Statement of Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry* was developed and approved by the 1,680 young adult delegates to the First National Encounter for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry (Encuentro or PENPJH for its initials in Spanish) in 2006. These delegates represented more than 40,000 young Latino/as who participated in the parish, diocesan, and regional encuentros across the country. This articulation is a milestone achievement in the history of Hispanic ministry in the United States because in these words, the Encuentro delegates indicated that they:

- are critically aware of their own identity as a nationwide community that is young, Latino, and Catholic
- wholeheartedly embrace the mission of the Church as their own
- are protagonists in their mission as disciples of Jesus, not dependent on the initiative of adult leaders to get them started
- need the assistance of the Church for proper formation, guidance in following the example of Jesus, and full participation in the Eucharist.

The maturation of *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana* (PJH – Hispanic youth and young adult ministry) as a ministry with its own principles, vision, and leadership structures at the national, regional, and local levels sets the context for any discussion of Hispanic youth and young adult ministry in the 21st century. Nevertheless, this ministry

* Adapted from an essay commissioned for publication in: Hosffman Ospino, ed., *Hispanic Ministry in the 21st Century: Present and Future* (Miami: Convivium Press, 2010). Reprinted with permission.

does not exist apart from the young Latino/a men and women who are called to exercise leadership in it. In other words, it is a ministry rooted in the languages and cultures of Hispanic young people; it is animated by their prophetic zeal for evangelization and holiness as a response to baptism; it responds to the pastoral circumstances of the young people involved, especially the obstacles and challenges of daily life; and it forms young Latino/as in the Catholic faith for the building of God's Kingdom.

This description of Hispanic youth and young adult ministry may appear very straightforward, but it raises a number of important questions. What are the obstacles and challenges young Hispanics face in their daily lives? How do culture and language shape their experience and understanding of the Catholic faith? What formation do our ministry leaders have, and what pastoral and catechetical resources are available to assist them in their ministry? How is the Church as a whole responding to its young Latino/a members? What is the current state of religious formation among young Hispanics?

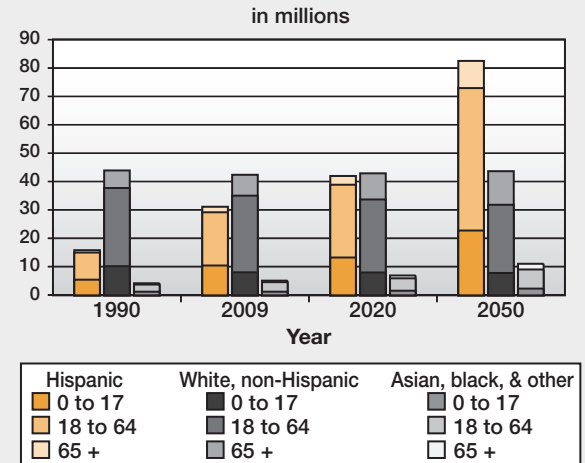
This essay responds to the various questions stated above in three sections. The first part presents the contemporary context of *PJH* in the U.S.; the second offers an overview of *PJH* in the United States today; and the third provides some reflections on current efforts and areas for growth.

Part 1. The Contemporary Context of Pastoral Juvenil Hispana in the U.S.

The *Conclusions of the PENPJH* provide a brief history of *PJH* in the United States that describes its roots in Latin America, its development through the process of the three national Encuentros for Hispanic Ministry, its relationship to mainstream youth and young adult ministry, and its recent growth.² Although it will not be repeated here, this historical context frames the discussion that follows.

In 2002, Instituto Fe y Vida published an assessment of the state of ministry with young Hispanics, providing clear evidence of the pervasive material and spiritual challenges facing young Hispanics. Despite the U.S. Catholic Bishops' commitment to a preferential missionary option in favor of service to the poor and the young in Hispanic ministry,³ the report found that "most mainstream Catholic youth ministry programs in the U.S. are reaching only a small segment of young Hispanic Catholics, while programs directed specifically to Hispanic *jóvenes* are both few in number and limited in scope and depth."⁴

Figure 1: U.S. Catholic Population Projections by Age, Race/Ethnicity and Year



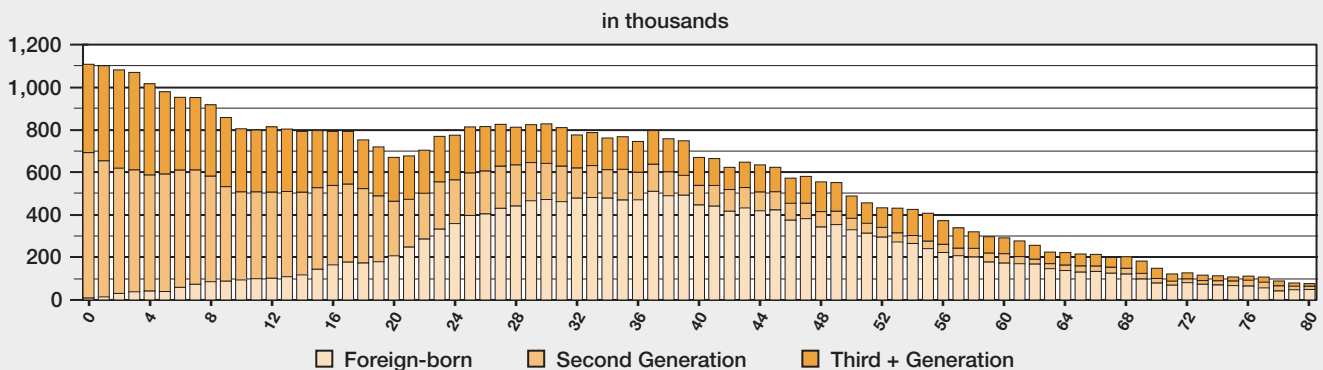
Based on: RSL 2007, ICR Omnibus 2008, NSRI 1990, LNPS 1990, Census 1990, U.S. Census Bureau national population estimates 2009, & Pew Hispanic Center projections

In the years since that preliminary assessment was made, the *PENPJH* process (2005-2006) has stimulated efforts in parishes and dioceses to improve and expand the pastoral care and accompaniment of Hispanic youth and young adults. In addition, the ground-breaking insights of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR, 2003-2008) have shed light on the current state of religious formation—as well as the numerous pastoral challenges that stem from differences of language, culture, and socioeconomic status—among Hispanic adolescents. Given the breadth of information now available from these and other sources, it is an opportune moment to assess once again where we stand in our ministry to and with young Hispanics, from their lived reality.⁵

Demographic shifts

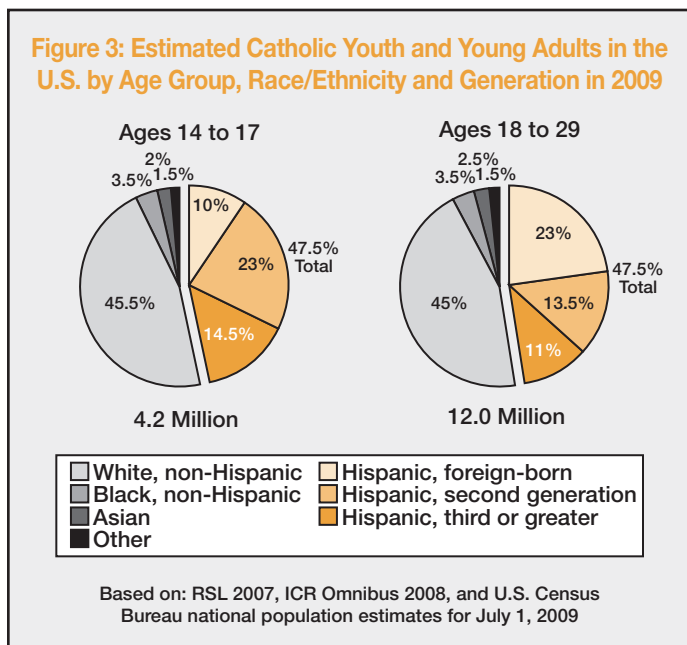
As shown in Figure 1 above, Latino/a children are already about half of all Catholics under age 18 in the United States, and Latino/as are poised to become nearly two-thirds of all Catholics in the next 40 years. Thus, the pastoral work of our Church in this century will be shaped by a tremendous demographic shift to a majority Hispanic population. In this context, we must ask ourselves: is our Church prepared to address this change constructively through leadership

Figure 2: Hispanics in the United States in 2009 by Age and Generation



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey for March, 2009

Figure 3: Estimated Catholic Youth and Young Adults in the U.S. by Age Group, Race/Ethnicity and Generation in 2009



development and pastoral services that meet the needs of the whole Catholic community?

Due to the steep increase in the number of Latino/a immigrants between ages 20 and 25, as shown in Figure 2, nearly half of our young adult Hispanic Catholics today are foreign-born. Furthermore, the youngest Latino/as in the U.S. today are mostly the children of immigrants. As a result, it should be expected that their experience of growing up between two cultures will have a great impact on the life of our Church as they mature into young adulthood. Whether or not they will eventually take their place among our leaders depends on the quality of leadership training and faith formation they receive.

As a final indication of the demographic reality of youth and young adult ministry in the Catholic Church today, Figure 3 divides the overall population of Catholic adolescents and young adults into its ethnic, racial, and generational segments. This comparison clearly shows that immigrants form the largest group of young adult Latino/a Catholics, while it is the children of immigrants who predominate among the teens. It is also significant to note that Hispanics have now surpassed the whites as the largest segment of the high school-age Catholic population in the United States according to Instituto Fe y Vida's estimates.

Key aspects of the sociocultural context

To situate the lived experience of Latino/a young people in the United States, it is helpful to highlight some of the significant differences between Hispanic and white youth and young adults in general, and to contrast the reality of Hispanic and white *Catholic* youth and young adults whenever the data are available. The research findings reported here come from various sources, collected and published by Instituto Fe y Vida.⁶

Language

- 58 percent of Hispanic teens speak at least as much Spanish as they do English at home, including 47 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic teens.
- 62 percent of Latino/a young adults (ages 18 to 29) said they do not speak English "well."

These statistics reflect the proportion of immigrants and children of immigrants shown in Figure 2 above. Pastorally, the language spoken at home tends to be the preferred language of prayer and faith for most people.

Immigration status

- Although the Census Bureau does not track immigration status, current estimates suggest that more than half of the *immigrant* Latino/a youth and young adults are undocumented.
- Combined with the Census data behind Figure 3, this means that about 76 percent of the Hispanic Catholic youth and young adults in the U.S. are citizens or legal residents.⁷

Education

- More than 30 percent of Hispanics in their 20s in 2007 had not completed high school, compared to only 7 percent of their white counterparts.
- By the age of 25 to 29, only 15 percent of Hispanics had completed a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 34 percent of their white peers.
- The differences for Catholics are even greater: among the parents of Catholic adolescents in the NSYR survey, 38 percent of the white fathers and 39 percent of the white mothers had at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 8 percent and 12 percent of their respective Hispanic peers.⁸

Household finances

Not surprisingly, these differences are also reflected in household income and assets:

- 26 percent of the Hispanic Catholic households in the NSYR survey had an annual income of less than \$20,000 and only 14 percent had more than \$60,000; this compares to 4 percent and 52 percent respectively for white Catholic households.
- Similarly, 75 percent of the Hispanic Catholic parents said they were in debt or just breaking even, and only 1 percent said they had "a lot" of savings and assets; among the white Catholic parents, only 41 percent were in debt or just breaking even, and 13 percent had "a lot" of savings and assets.
- The white Catholic parents were also nearly twice as likely to say they own their home (82 percent vs. 46 percent) as their Hispanic counterparts.⁹

Marriage and children

- 49 percent of all Latinas ages 16 to 30 are raising a child or children, and 19 percent of all Latinas in this age group are single mothers; this compares to 27 percent and 10 percent respectively for all other women combined.¹⁰
- Hispanics also tend to marry earlier than non-Hispanics. Among Hispanics ages 16 to 30, 31 percent were married

The youngest Latino/as in the U.S. today are mostly the children of immigrants. As a result, it should be expected that their experience of growing up between two cultures will have a great impact on the life of our Church.

or had been married, compared to 25 percent of their non-Hispanic peers.¹¹

- 62 percent of Hispanic Catholic teens have married parents, compared to 76 percent of their white peers.¹²

Risky and criminal behavior

Hispanic youth and young adults demonstrate significantly higher rates of risky and criminal behavior than their white peers:

- Hispanic youths are 50 percent more likely to attempt suicide; nearly three times as likely to become incarcerated; and roughly 30 times as likely to be active members of a gang. Latinas ages 15 to 17 are three times as likely to get pregnant as white girls of the same age.¹³
- The exception to this pattern was regarding substance abuse: Hispanic and white Catholic teens reported similar levels of marijuana use, and the white Catholic teens were actually a third more likely to have gotten drunk in the last year than their Hispanic counterparts.¹⁴

These risk factors correlate to increased exposure to violence and abuse at home, at school, and in their neighborhoods; less parental supervision and guidance; and experiences of discrimination and negative stereotypes.

Part 2. Overview of Pastoral Juvenil Hispana in the United States Today

The previous section of this essay demonstrated that the Hispanic segment of the Catholic youth and young adult population is growing far more rapidly than the overall young Catholic population, and it is marked by significant sociocultural differences with respect to other young Catholics. Undoubtedly, many of these differences impact the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical well-being of young Hispanic Catholics. Indeed, the data demonstrate that too many of our Latino/a young people are making poor decisions with

terrible consequences for themselves, their present or future children, our Church, and society at large. With that in mind, this section examines the state of faith formation and pastoral care among Hispanic youth and young adults.

Religious identity, faith formation, and religious practice

The phenomenon of Hispanics leaving the Catholic Church for evangelical and Pentecostal communities continues to be widely discussed and analyzed,¹⁵ yet a more fundamental issue is whether young Latino/a Catholics are being effectively formed in their faith in the first place. Many of the Hispanic Catholic teens interviewed for the NSYR spoke in very strong terms about their Catholic identity, but their professed commitment to the faith was only weakly reflected in their religious practices and their ability to speak about what they believe. In general, the Hispanic Catholic teens practiced more personal and family-based religious devotions, while their white peers were much more likely to be involved in parish-based activities.¹⁶ Even so, both groups tended to describe their faith as a form of “moralistic therapeutic deism” (MTD),¹⁷ rather than accurately reflecting Church teachings.

What is of great pastoral concern is that even the Latino Catholic parents who are very committed to their faith and involved in their parish are struggling to pass their faith to their adolescent children, in sharp contrast to the experience of their religiously committed white Catholic peers. The NSYR analysis described this reality in the following passage:

The Hispanic children of religiously ‘committed’ Catholic parents in the NSYR sample are less than half as likely as their white counterparts to attend weekly Mass, about one-third as likely to participate in a church youth group, about one-fourth as likely to attend a Catholic school, about one-fifth as likely to be a youth group leader, and

Table 1: Pastoral Categories of Young Hispanics

Immigrant Workers

- Mostly Spanish-speaking
- Mostly of Mexican origin
- Many are undocumented
- About 74% are Catholic
- Many seek moral and spiritual support from the church
- Mostly at the lower end of the economic spectrum
- Interested in forming peer groups and communities
- Little formal education
- Tend to have large families
- Motivated and hopeful
- Willing to work hard

Identity Seekers

- Mostly bilingual
- Mostly born in the U.S.
- Children of immigrants
- Some struggle to stay in high school and graduate
- May find hope in work or family relationships
- Some seek refuge in alcohol, drugs, or sexual promiscuity
- Mostly in lower-middle part of the economic spectrum
- Few will go to college
- Low self-esteem
- Unmotivated / apathetic

Mainstream Movers

- Mostly English-speaking
- Mostly born in the U.S.
- Will likely go to college, and some attend private schools
- Do not associate much with lower-income Hispanics
- More likely than other Hispanics to leave Catholic Church
- May look down on other categories of Hispanics
- Mostly in middle-upper part of economic spectrum
- Motivated and hopeful
- Willing to work hard

Gang Members and High-Risk Youth

- Limited bilingual abilities
- Mostly born in the U.S.
- Many live in inner cities
- Most are unemployed
- May become habitual drug users / sellers
- Mostly at the lower end of the economic spectrum
- Will only get involved at church in specialized programs
- Little formal education
- Anger towards society
- Experience despair
- Many are incarcerated

Table 2: Pastoral Needs of Young Hispanics by Category

	Immigrant Workers	Identity Seekers	Mainstream Movers	Gang Members and High-Risk Youth
Spiritual life	Need to form faith-based communities grounded in their culture of origin	Need mentoring to integrate faith and life amid cultural transition	Need guidance to overcome individualism and consumerism, and to value Hispanic spirituality	Need faith to heal and move from anger / hatred to forgiveness
Intellectual development	Need an accessible alternative system of education	Need encouragement to finish high school and set goals for higher education	Need financial aid and help understanding U.S. system of higher education	Need an accessible alternative system of education
Affective maturity and socialization	Need a healthy environment for developing relationships	Need assistance to develop self-esteem and faith in themselves	Need positive role models of social and cultural integration	Need a peer group and a safe place to belong with positive role models
Acquisition of human virtues	Need help to avoid the pitfalls of vice and addictions	Need guidance and direction in life	Need to value community service and social justice	Need counseling to overcome bad habits and attitudes
Percent of Hispanic young adults / teens	25% to 45% 10% to 20%	25% to 45% 40% to 50%	15% to 25% 20% to 30%	10% to 15% 10% to 15%

one-sixth or less as likely to have attended a religious retreat or summer camp.¹⁸

The reasons for the religious disconnect between Latino parents and teens are complex and vary from family to family and parish to parish, but two factors stand out: 1) many U.S.-born Hispanic youth do not easily relate to the faith expressions and traditions of their immigrant parents because of the overarching cultural divide they experience with their parents;¹⁹ and 2) the differences of language, culture, and social class that many Latino/a Catholic teens experience with other youth or adult leaders in their parish often lead them to opt out of participation in parish youth and young adult ministry programs, especially when the parish provides just one youth ministry program.²⁰

Vocations to ecclesial ministry

In many ways, the greater disengagement of Latino Catholic teens from parish life is a reflection of the neglect, and in some cases outright racism, with which the institutional Catholic Church in the U.S. has responded to the pastoral needs of its Hispanic members of all ages over the years.²¹ The consequences of this neglect are nowhere more evident than in the statistics about religious and ministerial vocations:

- 11 percent of U.S. Catholic deacons are Hispanic
- 9 percent of U.S. Catholic bishops are Hispanic
- 6 percent of U.S. Catholic priests are Hispanic, and 83 percent of them are foreign-born
- 4 percent of U.S. lay ecclesial ministers are Hispanic
- 2 percent of U.S. vowed religious (men and women) are Hispanic
- 1 percent of U.S.-born priests are Hispanic²²

From another perspective, the ratio of laity to priests can be seen as one measure of institutional identity and commitment in the Catholic community. There are currently about 1,900 Catholic lay people for every Catholic priest in the United States. In contrast, there are roughly 10,000 lay Latino Catholics for every Latino

priest, and the ratio jumps to nearly 30,000 U.S.-born lay Hispanic Catholics for every U.S.-born Hispanic priest.²³ Perhaps this should come as no surprise, since it is difficult to elicit a lifelong commitment among young Latino/as to an institution with a mediocre and uneven record of reciprocating that commitment in Hispanic communities, despite the high ideals articulated by the U.S. bishops in the *National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry* and other Hispanic ministry documents.

Pastoral categories of Latino/a youth and young adults

Bringing forth a commitment to the Church among young Latino/as will require a systematic effort to create welcoming programs that address their concerns and pastoral needs. In this regard, the alienating effects of linguistic, cultural, and social differences among youth ministry participants are often overlooked. The variety of pastoral circumstances found among just the young *Hispanics* (not to mention young Catholics of other racial/ethnic backgrounds) calls for ministry settings and programs targeted to particular segments. Instituto Fe y Vida describes four distinct pastoral categories of young Hispanics to assist youth ministry leaders in recognizing this diversity.²⁴ That information will not be repeated in detail here, but it is summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Of course, the relative proportion of young Latino/as in each category will vary from place to place. Nevertheless, the pastoral needs of each category are so distinct that it is difficult to imagine a single program or group that could effectively address the needs of all. Thus, Hispanic youth and young adult ministry is most successful when it provides a differentiated pastoral response through

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a variety of structures, programs, events, and activities designed to serve particular segments of the young people in the parish or diocese, each according to their needs. The more programs and activities a parish offers, the more likely it will be that the young Catholics in the community will find a spiritual home and community in which to grow in faith.

It is also important to recognize that not all young Catholics are ready to engage in an intensive program of catechesis and faith formation. The home and social environments of many Latino/a youth and young adults often reflect values contrary to the Gospel, such as:

- Materialism that values individuals for what they own
- Peer pressure to seek immediate gratification in sex, drugs, and other risky behaviors
- Extreme individualism that has no concern for the common good or the rights of others, seeing their peers as objects to be used for personal gain or pleasure
- Secularism that marginalizes religious beliefs and values
- Experiences of domination, violence, racism, sexism, abuse, and discrimination as “normal” aspects of their world, about which nothing can be done
- Impaired moral reasoning due to addictions

In these environments, effective ministry may require a period of pre-evangelization composed of activities designed to win the trust of the participants without making them feel judged, while providing them with safe and constructive activities to orient their lives. The loving commitment, the personal faith witness, and the probing questions of the adult and youth leaders will gradually draw these young people into a desire for greater understanding of the faith, conversion, and a deeper spirituality—when they are ready. It may also be necessary to catechize the larger community on how to welcome and accept young people as they are, in order to minimize the common experience of being judged or rejected by adults in the parish community for not having the “look” of proper young Catholics.

Development and organization of three complementary pastoral responses

Development and organization of three complementary pastoral responses

While it cannot yet be said that the Church consistently offers a comprehensive response to the pastoral needs of all four categories of young Latino/as in all parishes, there are three existing ministries that each provide at least a partial response: youth ministry, young adult ministry, and *pastoral juvenil hispana*. As already mentioned, key aspects of the development of *pastoral juvenil hispana*, including its roots in Latin America and a brief outline of its historical process of inculturation in the Catholic Church in this country, can be found in the *Conclusions of the PENPJH*.²⁵ Mainstream youth ministry and young adult ministry also have their particular history and development as distinct pastoral efforts in the United States.

One commonality is that each ministry has developed its own set of operating principles and national organizations to support leaders at the diocesan and parish levels:

- Mainstream youth ministry has *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (from USCCB Publishing). It is supported by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM), and the National Association of Catholic Youth Ministry Leaders (NACYML).
- Mainstream young adult ministry has *Sons and Daughters of the Light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults* (from USCCB Publishing). It is supported by the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association (NCYAMA), the Catholic Campus Ministry Association (CCMA), and the National Association of Diocesan Directors of Campus Ministry (NADDCM).
- *Pastoral juvenil hispana* has *Civilización del Amor: Tarea y Esperanza* (from the Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano – Sección de Juventud) and the *Conclusions of the PENPJH* (from USCCB Publishing). It is supported by the National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana – *La Red*.

Despite the best efforts of the national organizations and the ministries they represent, many Hispanic youth and young adults continue to fall through the cracks. The high risk Latino/a youth and young adults seldom benefit from an organized pastoral effort to reach them, and the vast majority of Hispanic identity seekers

do not feel at home in either the mainstream youth and young adult ministries or *PJH* (assuming their parish is one of the few that offers a choice), so they simply opt out. These “culturally squeezed” young people are among the most likely to lose their Catholic faith and identity in adulthood, often stemming from an initial rejection of their parents’ culture that extends over time to their religious faith as well.²⁶

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Distinct pastoral approaches and the protection of adolescents

It is important at this point to recognize some of the key differences in pastoral approach between mainstream youth ministry and *pastoral juvenil hispana*. First of all, although mainstream youth ministry is described as a ministry to, with, by, and for adolescents,²⁷ in the U.S. context it is assumed that the teens will only exercise leadership under the direction of adult leaders—paid or volunteer—who are responsible for everything that goes on in the ministry. There are limits on what leaders can and cannot do according to their age, even for adult leaders between 18 and 25 years of age. In addition, since the beginning of this century the bishops have implemented a *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, and its requirements are enforced in nearly all youth ministry programs.

In contrast, *pastoral juvenil hispana* takes the Latin American approach of a peer ministry—a ministry of the young people to their peers—generally without a paid staff person or even an adult volunteer appointed to be in charge of the gatherings.²⁸ In the U.S., *La Red* has defined *PJH* as a peer ministry serving single Hispanics between the ages of 16 and 30,²⁹ although examples of groups serving a broader range of ages can still be found in many places. With the arrival of the bishops’ *Charter*, diocesan and parish pastoral leaders have had to face the issue of how to ensure that *PJH* provides a safe environment for its participants under age 18. This

is especially problematic considering that many of the young adult leaders and participants may be undocumented, so they are fearful of undergoing a criminal background check. As a result, some parishes and dioceses have opted to separate the ages, while others have designated the groups as “intergenerational ministries” with screened and trained leaders assigned to supervise the adolescents during small group activities.³⁰

While each diocese has appointed someone to hold the parishes accountable to the requirements of the *Charter*, it is important to acknowledge that there are many apostolic movements in the Church that serve Hispanic youth and young adults, often with little oversight from the parish or diocese. The diocesan encuentros conducted as a preparation for the *PENPJH* included representatives from more than 60 distinct movements, 67 percent of whom reported that they serve youth and young adults together,³¹ and in most dioceses there are no clear structures of accountability to ensure that their leaders are prepared to provide the protections required in the bishops’ *Charter*. In fact, anecdotal feedback from the field suggests that leaders in a significant number of mixed-age groups are not even aware that this is an issue that needs to be addressed—in some cases due to an unspoken decision by the diocesan staff to allow the ministries to continue as they always have, rather than impose regulations that would be pastorally difficult to meet.

Other important differences with mainstream youth ministry

In addition to their distinct age groupings, *PJH* and mainstream youth ministry rely on different forms of leadership, face different challenges, and employ different approaches in key dimensions of the Church’s pastoral care and accompaniment of the young. When these differences are not understood by pastors and diocesan leaders, it often happens that one ministry is simply canceled in favor of the other. Thus, it is important to recognize the complementarity of their respective approaches in order to expand ministry to and with young Latino/as in parishes and dioceses. Listed below are some of the key differences between these two ministries:

- **Leadership structures.** As a peer ministry, *PJH* is organized with shared leadership structures in which leadership roles are periodically rotated based on the gifts and availability of the individual, so that all participants may have opportunities to develop their leadership skills irrespective of their chronological age.³² Also, the leadership team for *PJH* seldom includes a paid professional coordinator—a position that is increasingly common in mainstream youth ministry, especially in wealthier parishes.³³ Instead, the young adult leadership teams in *PJH* require guidance and oversight from an adult adviser (i.e. a priest, spiritual director, member of the parish pastoral staff, or the diocesan coordinator of *pastoral juvenil*) who usually is not present at the regularly scheduled gatherings of the group, community, or movement.
- **Parish staffing and leadership formation.** Ideally, every parish that serves a significant Latino population should have an adult adviser for *PJH* on staff. This would provide stability and continuity to the ministry during times of transition or crisis, as well as continuous mentorship and leadership development. However, few immigrant Latino parishes have the economic resources to hire a full-time professional for this ministry, and there is a critical lack of adult leaders with the training in *PJH*, the academic credentials for ministry, and the linguistic and cultural skills required to exercise this role—even among the priests and parish directors of religious education.

As a result, entire ministries are often dismantled when there is a change of leadership in the parish, while other ministries are vulnerable to the inexperience of their leadership team, or to the changes that occur when life circumstances require established leaders to step down.

- **Diocesan coordination and support.** In this context, one of the most effective structures to support *PJH* in parishes and movements has proven to be the trained professional coordinator of *pastoral juvenil* at the diocesan level. In contrast to the work of most diocesan directors of *youth ministry*—whose ministry consists largely of supporting, resourcing, and training the parish youth ministry leaders—diocesan coordinators of *PJH* have to be much more hands-on with the ministries they support.

In parishes where *PJH* does not yet exist, they may be asked to assist the pastoral staff in identifying, inviting, motivating, and training a team of volunteer leaders to establish a ministry. Advocating for the ministry with parish pastoral leaders who do not fully understand the model, or who are determined to have a single parish youth ministry program “for everyone,” is also a major component of the coordinator’s outreach. Furthermore, it is practically impossible for parishes on their own to provide intermediate and advanced levels of pastoral-theological and leadership training for this ministry, so the formation and support of volunteer leaders in parishes and movements is a critical component of the diocesan coordinator’s ministry.

- **Pastoral de conjunto.** *Pastoral juvenil hispana* also differs from mainstream youth and young adult ministry in its emphasis on a *pastoral de conjunto*—a ministry concept that has no exact equivalent in English, but is often translated loosely as “communion in mission.” One dimension of this approach to ministry occurs when various groups and movements collaborate for large-group events and celebrations. Due to the strong communitarian dimension of Latino cultures, *PJH* thrives when regular group meetings are supplemented with periodic experiences of larger gatherings. This is one of the most effective ways to engage newcomers to the ministry, maintain the energy and commitment of those already involved, and develop new leaders through a process of formation-in-action. The Latin American bishops’ pastoral letter on *pastoral juvenil* emphasizes that networking, gathering, and collaborating among groups should occur at multiple levels: intra-parish, inter-parish, diocesan-wide, regional, national, and international.³⁴
- **A differentiated ministry.** Another aspect of *pastoral de conjunto* that is highlighted by the Latin American bishops is the importance of coordinating the pastoral efforts of various ministries, such as: mainstream youth and young adult ministry, detention ministry, Hispanic ministry, gang outreach, *PJH*, family ministry, ministry to the sick and disabled, migrant

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ministry, campus ministry, and others.³⁵ It is only through the coordination of such efforts that young people of diverse backgrounds and needs will be guaranteed access to faith formation, pastoral care, accompaniment, and opportunities to participate in the life and mission of the Church.

- **Approaches to evangelization and vocation.** Because *PJH* is articulated as a peer ministry, it places great importance on the protagonism of the young in the work of evangelization.³⁶ Drawing from the mission of the Church,³⁷ *PJH* understands the proclamation and inculturation³⁸ of the Gospel to be the task of all young Catholics in response to their baptism.³⁹ Indeed, evangelization is not complete until the evangelized take up this mission as evangelizers.⁴⁰ Similarly, the discernment of a vocation rooted in our common baptismal call—a “*proyecto de vida*” (life project) as it is referred to in Spanish—is at the heart of *PJH* because it defines who we are as followers of Christ.⁴¹

In contrast, the theory and practice of U.S. mainstream youth ministry provide Catholic teens with little preparation to participate in the evangelizing mission of the Church by reaching out to their peers with a word of Good News. Instead, the work of evangelizing the young is visualized primarily as a task for the adults in the community—especially those adults engaged as youth ministry leaders.⁴² Also, while it is true that vocational resources for youth ministry exist, they are mostly targeted to high school seniors, and the vocational orientation of the ministry as a whole is nearly absent.

Part 3. Reflections on Current Efforts and Areas for Growth

Given the social and pastoral challenges described in the foregoing sections, the faith-filled and visionary mission statement articulated by the young Encuentro delegates (see page 1) becomes even more remarkable. Nevertheless, the pastoral reality begs the question of whether this statement accurately reflects the collective intentions and self-understanding of *all* Hispanic Catholic youth and young adults in the United States. The short answer to the question is: no, it does not—at least not for the vast majority of them.

Recent advances in the field

However, the general description of the pastoral context hides another truth: ministry *to and with young Hispanics, from their lived reality*, has made great strides in the years since Fe y Vida’s preliminary study in 2002, even though there have been setbacks in some places, and there is certainly much work yet to be done. The following list briefly describes some of the significant advances in the field over the last seven years.

- A. Development of diocesan and national leadership for Hispanic youth and young adult ministry.** Thanks in large part to the work of *La Red* in leading the Encuentro process,

more dioceses now have personnel dedicated to ministry with Hispanic youth and/or young adults. A hopeful sign is that some dioceses have begun to hire bilingual directors of youth and young adult ministry who are given responsibility for these ministries in both English and Spanish, but qualified and experienced bilingual/bicultural leaders to fill these positions remain scarce.

- B. Growing role of *La Red* as an important partner to other national ministry organizations.** The prominence of *La Red* is especially evident in its continuing partnership with the NFCYM and the U.S. Bishops’ Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life & Youth. This partnership is helping to make the work of the NFCYM more inclusive. Another fruit is the development of a *Five-Year Strategic Plan for Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*, developed by *La Red* with collaboration from other national organizations.⁴³
- C. Completion of the First National Encuentro for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry, and its documentation in the *Conclusions*.** The successes and limitations of the Encuentro provide a baseline account of where the Church stands in its outreach to Latino/a youth and young adults. Furthermore, in the *Conclusions* document—which has the endorsement and support of the U.S. bishops—we now have in one place a bilingual account of the history, theological and pastoral context, vision, principles, pastoral needs, and best practices and models as articulated by the young people themselves.
- D. Solid sociological research on the religious reality of Latino/a youth and young adults.** The nationally representative sample of adolescents and early young adults surveyed and interviewed in the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) provides a reliable account of the religious beliefs and practices of adolescents in the United States today. In *Pathways of Hope and Faith Among Hispanic Teens*, a multidisciplinary team of nine writers contributed to the analysis of the NSYR’s Latino/a respondents from a variety of perspectives, making it an invaluable resource for anyone preparing for or engaging in ministry with young Latino/a Catholics.
- E. Wide availability of formation programs for *pastoral juvenil hispana*.** The Southeast Pastoral Institute (SEPI) and several dioceses across the country have developed formation programs for leaders and advisers in *PJH*. In addition, Instituto Fe y Vida offers a leadership formation system, has a mobile pastoral team that is able to provide formation at a variety of levels in any diocese in the country on request, and it offers an annual week-long intensive formation program (*Programa Nacional de Verano*) to make formation available even to leaders whose dioceses do not yet offer a formation option. Finally, numerous apostolic movements have developed their own programs and resources for leadership formation.
- F. Increasing human resources in the Catholic community—among both Hispanics and non-Hispanics alike.** Through the Encuentro process and in its aftermath, many more mainstream youth ministry directors, coordinators, and leaders have become aware of the need to increase their capacity to serve Hispanic teens. In addition, the Encuentro process itself was designed as a formation-in-action process that has forged a new generation of young Latino/a leaders for *PJH* and youth ministry in Latino communities.

Areas for further development

Achieving these advances has been possible through the efforts of thousands of leaders in *pastoral juvenil hispana* and Catholic youth ministry. Nevertheless, the pastoral reality as presented in the first part of this essay reveals that there is much more that needs to be done. That information will not be summarized here; rather, this section will focus on the structural changes that need to occur in order to facilitate a comprehensive response to the pastoral needs of Latino/a youth and young adults at the local, diocesan, regional, and national levels.

A. Develop a comprehensive pastoral plan at the national level that brings together the various ministries and ministry organizations for the pastoral care and accompaniment of all Catholic youth and young adults. This plan needs to respond to the social, cultural, linguistic, educational, and spiritual reality of Catholic youth and young adults today, of whom Hispanics now make up nearly half. It must take into account the following:

- Training of parish and diocesan pastoral leaders to conduct an analysis of the local reality and develop a pastoral plan to serve the full gamut of young people under their care—especially those among the vast majority that does not yet participate in youth and young adult ministry programs.
- Pastoral and theological criteria to help leaders identify the urgent and fundamental needs that should be addressed as priorities in their ministry.
- Guidance for discerning the appropriate times and places for pre-evangelization, evangelization, catechesis and pastoral care in ministry with youth and young adults.
- A differentiated approach to address the diverse pastoral needs in the parish through a variety of programs, groups, movements, events, activities, and services.
- Special attention to the situation of families and the formation of parents to serve as role models and reliable guides in the formation of their children's faith.
- Guidelines for organizing projects and outreach efforts in which the young people themselves are the primary agents.

B. Structure parish youth and young adult ministry on an ecclesiology of the parish as a community of communities. Far too often, parish youth ministry programs are limited due to an erroneous theological vision which assumes that offering diverse youth and young adult ministry programs would divide the parish.⁴⁴ In this regard, the *Conclusions of the PENPJH* are quite clear:

The leaders in *Pastoral Juvenil*, Hispanic ministry, and mainstream youth and young adult ministry are increasingly aware that the programs and activities of the mainstream culture do not attract the full participation of Hispanic adolescents and *jóvenes*, even though they may speak English. This occurs due to economic, cultural, educational, geographic, and linguistic differences

between the young people, **especially when the parish ministry is limited to a single youth group** [emphasis added].⁴⁵

As a response, parishes in the United States would do well to take a tip from the Latin American bishops' Fifth General Conference, held in Aparecida, Brazil:

At the beginning of the third millennium, the renewal of the parish requires the reformulation of its structures, so that it may become a network of communities and groups capable of entering into relationship with one another in such a way that their members feel and really become disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ in communion with one another.⁴⁶

C. Increase collaboration and dialogue with partners in Latin America. The previous quote is a clear response to Pope John Paul II's call for parishes to become a "community of communities and movements" in his apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in America*.⁴⁷ It also underscores his hope that the Church on the American continent would begin to see itself as a single continental Church with meaningful collaboration between the countries of the North and South. As this article has already demonstrated, the practice of Catholic youth and young adult ministry in the United States would benefit from a greater consideration of the guidelines in *Civilización del Amor: Tarea y Esperanza*, as well as the pastoral priorities of the *Documento de Aparecida*. Such an exchange of ideas and practices would be the first step toward developing a genuine *pastoral de conjunto* between North and South.

D. Increase collaboration and dialogue among Hispanic and mainstream ministry leaders and organizations that serve youth and young adults in the United States. Given the size of the young Hispanic Catholic population, it is no longer acceptable (if it ever was) for major documents to be written for the whole U.S. Church, or for ministerial initiatives with implications for all—especially in the areas of youth and young adults—to be

undertaken without a meaningful representation of Latino/as at the decision-making and editorial tables. Significant initiatives are already underway to develop guidelines and criteria for the future of adolescent catechesis, evangelization, Catholic education, lay ministry formation, and the promotion of vocations to ecclesial ministry. *PJH* has much to contribute in all of these areas, and *La Red* ought to be both a conversation partner and a prime mover in these efforts.

E. Develop strategies and responses to overcome the structural obstacles to *PJH*. Some of the major challenges currently encountered in the field include:

- **Pastoral formation and theological reflection.** Too few diocesan leaders, priests, and youth ministers have an adequate understanding of the needs, vision, mission, principles, and history of *PJH*. As a consequence, their misguided pastoral convictions often prevent them from providing effective support to this ministry, and in many cases lead them to shut the ministry down or prevent its inception in the parish or diocese.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the

Far too often, parish youth ministry programs are limited due to an erroneous theological vision which assumes that offering diverse youth and young adult ministry programs would divide the parish.

Church must provide greater pastoral and theological formation to the young adult leaders in *PJH* to increase their capacity to form and sustain this ministry with their peers. Unfortunately, a lack of attention to the pastoral care of Latino/a youth and *jóvenes* is evident in Hispanic ministry formation programs and in the writings of Hispanic/Latino/a theologians. The result is that even our best-prepared leaders in Hispanic ministry are often ill-equipped to support and advocate for *PJH*.

- **Academic education.** The low educational attainment of young Latino/a immigrant workers and high drop-out rates among U.S.-born Hispanic teens conspire to limit the pool of Latino/a leaders qualified to begin academic studies for ministry or to secure a paid pastoral position in the Church. At the same time, hundreds of Catholic elementary and secondary schools are in danger of being closed, while millions of low-income Catholic families are not having their educational needs met by underperforming public schools. This calls for a national initiative to improve the education of Catholic immigrants, their children, and other underserved racial/ethnic groups, both in Catholic and public schools.⁴⁹
- **Immigration issues.** Many young Hispanic immigrants are undocumented, which causes instability in their lives, limits their access to scholarships, and makes it difficult for them to assume leadership positions in ministry, especially with adolescents. Nevertheless, the Church has a duty to provide them with pastoral care and help them to live their Christian vocation and mission. It is also necessary to increase awareness and understanding in parishes and dioceses regarding the U.S. bishops' priority to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform, grounded in the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.
- **Pastoral de conjunto.** The lack of coordination between mainstream youth and young adult ministry and *PJH* has contributed to the low participation rates among the vast majority of U.S.-born Hispanic youth and young adults, who primarily speak English and are not college-educated or college-bound. An effective outreach to these young people will require collaboration and shared oversight between Hispanic ministry, youth and young adult ministry, *pastoral juvenil hispana*, and the apostolic movements.

F. Increase the human, financial, and programmatic resources for *PJH*. This will require a significant investment in leadership formation at all levels—in both English and Spanish—so that mainstream youth ministry coordinators can improve and expand their ministry while immigrant young adult leaders of *PJH* are doing the same. Perhaps the most cost-effective and practical first step would be to hire a diocesan coordinator for *PJH*. This person would be responsible for spearheading the formation of the leaders in parishes and apostolic movements, providing continuous support to their ministerial efforts, and engaging them in processes of formation-in-action and a *pastoral de conjunto*.

On another note, there are few programmatic materials or multimedia resources available to support *PJH*. Equally hard to find are bilingual resources to assist Hispanic parents in overcoming the linguistic and cultural conflicts they often

experience with their children, in order to fulfill their role as their primary educators in the faith. Most of the resources developed for mainstream youth and young adult ministry or Latin American *pastoral juvenil* do not translate well to the U.S. Latino context. It will require a significant investment from the whole Church, and Catholic publishers in particular, to develop the capacity of Latino/a youth and young adult ministers and artists to create resources to support these ministries.

Finally, creative and effective models for financing these efforts need to be developed at the local and diocesan levels, and shared nationally. The role of *La Red* in the support and continued development of *PJH* at the national level has become indispensable, yet it continues to operate with only volunteer leaders and without a central office for records and communication. Considering that *La Red* is charged with advocating for half of all young Catholics in the United States, there ought to be greater institutional and philanthropic support for its ministry.

G. Create certification standards for coordinators of youth ministry and *PJH* designed to equip both mainstream and Latino/a ministers for effective ministry to and with young Hispanics, from their lived reality. Five national ministry organizations are currently revising the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministry*. Given the size and geographic extension of the Hispanic Catholic population, the general standards should reflect the competencies and methodologies required for ministry in Hispanic communities. Furthermore, the specific standards for youth ministers should include competencies based on the vision, needs, and principles for ministry with Hispanic adolescents described in the *Conclusions of the PENPJH*. *La Red* should also participate in the revision process, developing specific standards for the certification of leaders, coordinators, and advisers of *PJH*.

Conclusion

The pastoral challenges facing Hispanic youth and young adults in the United States are immense, and they undoubtedly contribute to the conclusion of the NSYR that “Latino/a teens as a group are even more religiously inarticulate and disengaged than other Catholic teens, despite the fact that their parents demonstrate greater commitment to their faith than do the white Catholic parents.”⁵⁰ Indeed, their needs are so diverse, and their presence so pervasive in Catholic communities throughout the country, that it will take a coordinated effort of the whole Church to adequately provide them with pastoral care, faith formation, and an invitation into the life and mission of the Church.

The good news is that our Catholic community is already blessed with thousands of immigrant young adult leaders of *PJH* and thousands more directors and coordinators of youth ministry in parishes and apostolic movements across the country. In addition we have a blueprint for how to serve and empower Hispanic youth and young adults in the *Conclusions of the PENPJH* and the *Five-Year Strategic Plan for PJH*. All that is required at this point is for our Church to muster the institutional will to implement this plan by means of a genuine *pastoral de conjunto* in parishes and dioceses throughout the country. In carrying out this process, the fields of Catholic youth ministry, young adult ministry, and *PJH* will set the example for bridging Hispanic and mainstream ministry to forge the Church anew in 21st century America.

Appendix – Goals of the *Encuentro Five-Year Strategic Plan for Pastoral Juvenil Hispana: 2009 – 2014**

I. COMMON VISION

- Goal 1.1 To develop a common vision for ministry to and with Hispanic youth and *jóvenes*, from their lived reality.
- Goal 1.2 To promote a unified understanding of Catholic youth and young adult ministry that recognizes and honors the diverse reality of Hispanic youth and *jóvenes*.
- Goal 1.3 To understand and affirm the diverse reality of ministry with Hispanic youth and *jóvenes* in order to effectively serve the needs of the young Hispanic church in relation to its different generations, languages, economic status, education, immigration status and country of origin.

II. AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY

- Goal 2.1 To promote acceptance of the diversity within *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana* to fulfill the needs of the Hispanic young church including, but not limited to their different generations, languages, economic status, and educational levels.
- Goal 2.2 To promote structural changes within dioceses to enhance ministry to Hispanic young people.
- Goal 2.3 To promote a *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana* incarnated in the reality of Latino young people within the church and society of the United States.
- Goal 2.4 To create an awareness of the impact of immigration on Hispanic youth and *jóvenes*.

III. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Goal 3.1 To foster an inculturated approach and vision about *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana* among ordained and lay ministers, so that they may accompany the Hispanic young people in their processes of holistic growth and formation.

- Goal 3.2 To increase availability and accessibility of comprehensive faith/pastoral formation programs to Latino young people.

IV. PASTORAL JUVENIL HISPANA

- Goal 4.1 To include ministry with *jóvenes* and Hispanic youth as a priority in the strategic plans of the *Alianza* partners.
- Goal 4.2 To have the Church recognize the “*líderes jóvenes*” and adult advisers in *PJH* as ministers.
- Goal 4.3 To consider the process of the “*Encuentros de PJH*” as a *kairos* and *locus* for the continuous renewal and maturation of ministry with Latino young people.
- Goal 4.4 To promote and facilitate the use of the Conclusions Document from the *Encuentro 2006* by leaders, advisers, and coordinators of ministry with *jóvenes* and Hispanic adolescents.

V. EDUCATION

- Goal 5.1 To foster the academic advancement and civic participation of Latino youth and *jóvenes*.
- Goal 5.2 To facilitate networking among church pastoral leaders and Hispanic educators to improve and expand the educational opportunities for young Latinos.

VI. PASTORAL DE CONJUNTO

- Goal 6.1 To promote efficient and effective collaboration among structures that minister to Hispanic youth and *jóvenes* at national, diocesan and parish levels.

* The main goals of the *Encuentro Five-Year Strategic Plan for Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*, developed by *La Red* in an “*Alianza*” with various other national ministry organizations, are presented here. The full text is available online at: <http://www.laredpjh.org>.

Notes

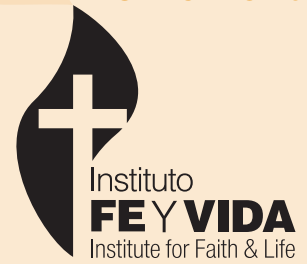
- ¹ National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana – *La Red, Conclusions: First National Encounter for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Publishing, 2008), 54.
- ² *Ibid.*, 19 – 22.
- ³ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry*, nos. 51 – 56 and 64 – 66, in United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Hispanic Ministry: Three Major Documents* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1995).
- ⁴ Ken Johnson-Mondragón, *The Status of Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry in the United States: A Preliminary Study* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2002), 30.
- ⁵ This phrase is taken from Specific Objective #3 of the *PENPJH, Conclusions*, 28. In many ways, it is a poor translation of the original Spanish, “*la pastoral con, hacia y desde la juventud hispana*.” In Spanish, a ministry that is carried out “*desde la juventud*” is one that is informed by and responds to the immediate and global context of the young people’s lives, while relying on the giftedness of the same *jóvenes* to develop and implement the pastoral response. The Latin American articulation of this ministry can be found in Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, *Civilización del Amor: Tarea y Esperanza* (Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia: CELAM, Sección de Juventud, 1995), 2ª Parte, Sección III, nos. 2.1 – 2.2.
- ⁶ Instituto Fe y Vida, “Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry: Recent Findings,” *Perspectives on Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry 4* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2007), available online: <http://www.feyvida.org/research/researchpubs.html>.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 3, 5.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 3, 5. In this section, only white and Hispanic results from the NSYR are mentioned because the survey sample did not include sufficient Catholic respondents among the black, Asian, Native American, and “other” teens to provide statistically meaningful comparisons.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.
- ¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, March 2009 Current Population Survey.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² Ken Johnson-Mondragón, “Youth Ministry and the Socioreligious Lives of Hispanic and White Catholic Teens in the U.S.,” *Perspectives on Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry 2* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2005), 3, available online: <http://www.feyvida.org/research/researchpubs.html>.
- ¹³ “Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry: Recent Findings,” 5.
- ¹⁴ “Youth Ministry and the Socioreligious Lives...,” 22.
- ¹⁵ For a recent analysis of this phenomenon, see The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2007), 41 – 48.
- ¹⁶ Ken Johnson-Mondragón, ed., *Pathways of Hope and Faith Among Hispanic Teens: Pastoral Reflections and Strategies Inspired by the National Study of Youth and Religion* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2007), 97 – 100 and 324.
- ¹⁷ “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” is a term developed by Christian Smith, the principal investigator of the NSYR, to describe the “benign whateverism” that characterizes the religious faith of most adolescents in the U.S. today. For a full description of this term as it relates to Hispanic teens, see *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 72 – 74 and 324.
- ¹⁸ *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 100. See also “Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry: Recent Findings,” 6 – 7.
- ¹⁹ See Carmen M. Cervantes and Ken Johnson-Mondragón, “The Dynamics of Culture, Faith, and Family in the Lives of Hispanic Teens, and their Implications for Youth Ministry,” *Perspectives on Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry 5* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2008), available online: <http://www.feyvida.org/research/researchpubs.html>.
- ²⁰ *Conclusions*, 33.
- ²¹ *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 326 – 329.
- ²² “Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry: Recent Findings,” 8.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 33 – 39.
- ²⁵ *Conclusions*, 19 – 22.
- ²⁶ For a description of the most common patterns of cultural adaptation between immigrant parents and their U.S.-born children, see “The Dynamics of Culture, Faith, and Family...,” 3 – 5.
- ²⁷ United States Catholic Conference Department of Education, *A Vision of Youth Ministry: Edición Bilingüe* (Washington, DC: USCC, 1986), 6 – 7.
- ²⁸ Carmen M. Cervantes and Ken Johnson-Mondragón, “Pastoral Juvenil Hispana, Youth Ministry, and Young Adult Ministry: An Updated Perspective on Three Different Pastoral Realities,” *Perspectives on Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry 3* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2008), 3, available online: <http://www.feyvida.org/research/researchpubs.html>.
- ²⁹ *Conclusions*, 23.
- ³⁰ For a discussion of keeping the mixed-age groups together versus separating them, see *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 342 – 344.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 99.
- ³² *Conclusions*, 57.
- ³³ The NSYR found that white Catholic teens were nearly 50% more likely to have a full-time paid youth minister in their parish than their Hispanic counterparts. See *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 90 – 92.
- ³⁴ *Civilización del Amor: Tarea y Esperanza*, 3ª Parte, nos. 4.1 – 4.2.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3ª Parte, nos. 3.2-3.4.
- ³⁶ *Conclusions*, 54 – 55 and 57, especially PJ-22, no. 3. See also *Civilización del Amor*, 2ª Parte, Sección I, no. 1.2 and Sección III, no. 2.2.
- ³⁷ See Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos. 14, 17 – 18, 22, and 29.
- ³⁸ For a deeper explanation of inculturation and its application in youth ministry see “The Dynamics of Culture, Faith, and Family...,” 5 – 10.
- ³⁹ *Conclusions*, 13 – 15, 54, and 60 – 61.
- ⁴⁰ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 24.
- ⁴¹ Cf. *Civilización del Amor*, 2ª Parte, Sección I, no. 2.3.1. The phrase “*proyecto de vida*” appears 35 times throughout the document.
- ⁴² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1997), 36-37.
- ⁴³ The main goals of the *Five-Year Strategic Plan for PJH* are presented in the Appendix on page 11 of this document, and the full text is available online at: <http://www.laredpjh.org>.
- ⁴⁴ For a fuller discussion of the cultural and pastoral circumstances that may contribute to this erroneous pastoral vision, and an articulation of the “community of communities” approach, see *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 332 – 339 and 345 – 352.
- ⁴⁵ *Conclusions*, 33.
- ⁴⁶ CELAM, *Aparecida – V Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe: Documento Conclusivo* (Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia: CELAM, 2007), no. 172, my translation.
- ⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, no. 41.
- ⁴⁸ Chapter 10 of *Pathways of Hope and Faith* describes ten factors that need to be addressed in our Church in order for ministry with Hispanic youth to gain greater traction. See pages 321 – 359.
- ⁴⁹ An important initiative along this line is described in *To Nurture the Soul of a Nation: Latino Families, Catholic Schools, and Educational Opportunity* (Notre Dame, IN: Alliance for Catholic Education Press at the University of Notre Dame, 2009).
- ⁵⁰ *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 324.



Perspectives on Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry



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Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry in the United States:

Bridging Hispanic and Mainstream Ministry to Forge the Church Anew in 21st Century America*

by Ken Johnson-Mondragón, D.Min. cand.

*We, the Catholic Latino young people
who participate in Hispanic youth and young adult ministry,
feel called and committed to the mission of the Church,
to wholly form and prepare ourselves through pastoral action,
and to lovingly evangelize other young Hispanics
according to their own situation and experience.*

*We strive to offer immigrants and citizens alike,
the ever new and joyous truth of the Gospel,
highlighting gospel values,
and making an effort to reach
those who need the Good News the most,
who do not know God,
or who have strayed from the way of Jesus.*

*We propose to carry out this mission
through the testimony of our lives
and our prophetic leadership among our peers,
investing our gifts and talents
in evangelizing and missionary efforts
rooted in the places where they live, work, study, and have fun,
always following the example of Jesus,
and strengthening ourselves in the Eucharist.¹*

The above *Mission Statement of Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry* was developed and approved by the 1,680 young adult delegates to the First National Encounter for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry (Encuentro or PENPJH for its initials in Spanish) in 2006. These delegates represented more than 40,000 young Latino/as who participated in the parish, diocesan, and regional encuentros across the country. This articulation is a milestone achievement in the history of Hispanic ministry in the United States because in these words, the Encuentro delegates indicated that they:

- are critically aware of their own identity as a nationwide community that is young, Latino, and Catholic
- wholeheartedly embrace the mission of the Church as their own
- are protagonists in their mission as disciples of Jesus, not dependent on the initiative of adult leaders to get them started
- need the assistance of the Church for proper formation, guidance in following the example of Jesus, and full participation in the Eucharist.

The maturation of *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana* (PJH – Hispanic youth and young adult ministry) as a ministry with its own principles, vision, and leadership structures at the national, regional, and local levels sets the context for any discussion of Hispanic youth and young adult ministry in the 21st century. Nevertheless, this ministry

* Adapted from an essay commissioned for publication in: Hosffman Ospino, ed., *Hispanic Ministry in the 21st Century: Present and Future* (Miami: Convivium Press, 2010). Reprinted with permission.

does not exist apart from the young Latino/a men and women who are called to exercise leadership in it. In other words, it is a ministry rooted in the languages and cultures of Hispanic young people; it is animated by their prophetic zeal for evangelization and holiness as a response to baptism; it responds to the pastoral circumstances of the young people involved, especially the obstacles and challenges of daily life; and it forms young Latino/as in the Catholic faith for the building of God's Kingdom.

This description of Hispanic youth and young adult ministry may appear very straightforward, but it raises a number of important questions. What are the obstacles and challenges young Hispanics face in their daily lives? How do culture and language shape their experience and understanding of the Catholic faith? What formation do our ministry leaders have, and what pastoral and catechetical resources are available to assist them in their ministry? How is the Church as a whole responding to its young Latino/a members? What is the current state of religious formation among young Hispanics?

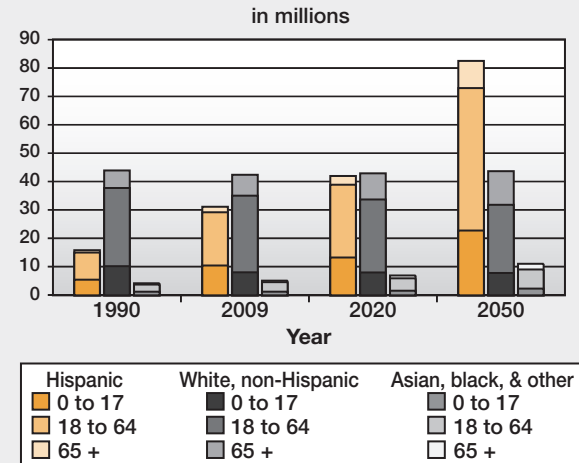
This essay responds to the various questions stated above in three sections. The first part presents the contemporary context of *PJH* in the U.S.; the second offers an overview of *PJH* in the United States today; and the third provides some reflections on current efforts and areas for growth.

Part 1. The Contemporary Context of Pastoral Juvenil Hispana in the U.S.

The *Conclusions of the PENPJH* provide a brief history of *PJH* in the United States that describes its roots in Latin America, its development through the process of the three national Encuentros for Hispanic Ministry, its relationship to mainstream youth and young adult ministry, and its recent growth.² Although it will not be repeated here, this historical context frames the discussion that follows.

In 2002, Instituto Fe y Vida published an assessment of the state of ministry with young Hispanics, providing clear evidence of the pervasive material and spiritual challenges facing young Hispanics. Despite the U.S. Catholic Bishops' commitment to a preferential missionary option in favor of service to the poor and the young in Hispanic ministry,³ the report found that "most mainstream Catholic youth ministry programs in the U.S. are reaching only a small segment of young Hispanic Catholics, while programs directed specifically to Hispanic *jóvenes* are both few in number and limited in scope and depth."⁴

Figure 1: U.S. Catholic Population Projections by Age, Race/Ethnicity and Year



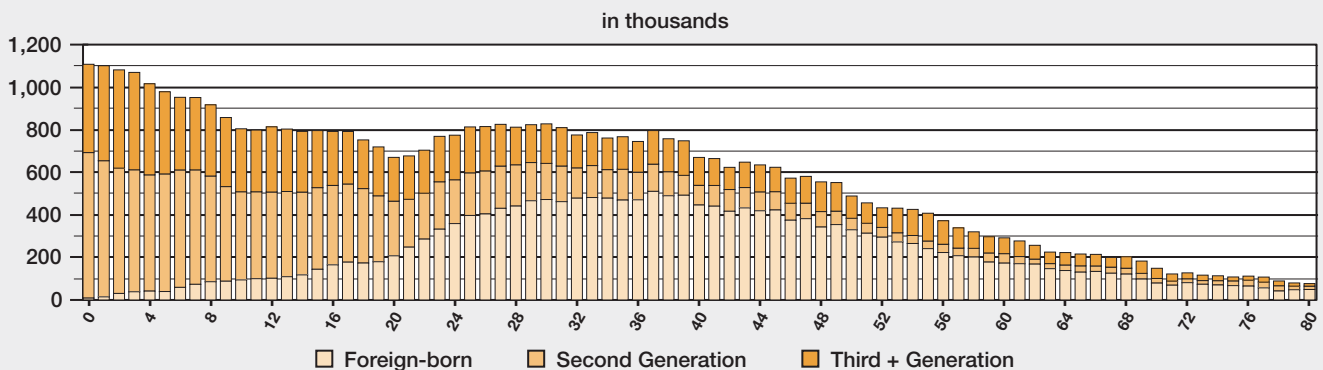
Based on: RSL 2007, ICR Omnibus 2008, NSRI 1990, LNPS 1990, Census 1990, U.S. Census Bureau national population estimates 2009, & Pew Hispanic Center projections

In the years since that preliminary assessment was made, the *PENPJH* process (2005-2006) has stimulated efforts in parishes and dioceses to improve and expand the pastoral care and accompaniment of Hispanic youth and young adults. In addition, the ground-breaking insights of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR, 2003-2008) have shed light on the current state of religious formation—as well as the numerous pastoral challenges that stem from differences of language, culture, and socioeconomic status—among Hispanic adolescents. Given the breadth of information now available from these and other sources, it is an opportune moment to assess once again where we stand in our ministry to and with young Hispanics, from their lived reality.⁵

Demographic shifts

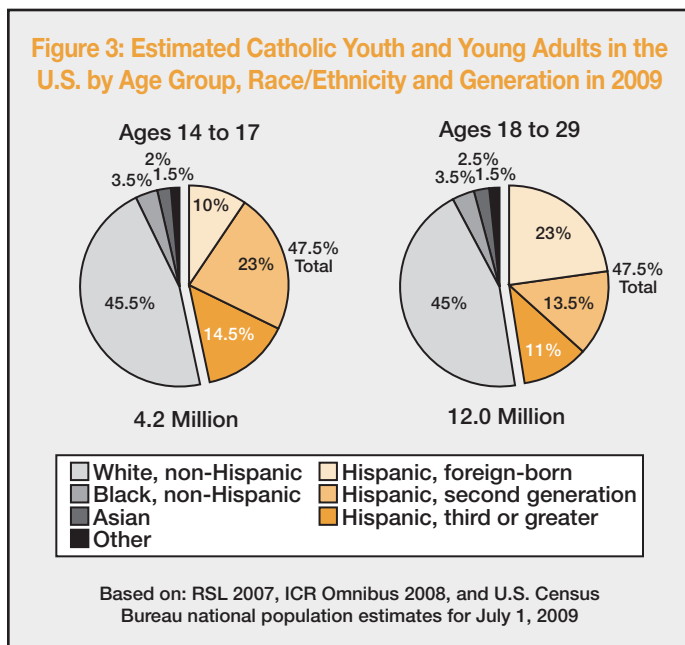
As shown in Figure 1 above, Latino/a children are already about half of all Catholics under age 18 in the United States, and Latino/as are poised to become nearly two-thirds of all Catholics in the next 40 years. Thus, the pastoral work of our Church in this century will be shaped by a tremendous demographic shift to a majority Hispanic population. In this context, we must ask ourselves: is our Church prepared to address this change constructively through leadership

Figure 2: Hispanics in the United States in 2009 by Age and Generation



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey for March, 2009

Figure 3: Estimated Catholic Youth and Young Adults in the U.S. by Age Group, Race/Ethnicity and Generation in 2009



development and pastoral services that meet the needs of the whole Catholic community?

Due to the steep increase in the number of Latino/a immigrants between ages 20 and 25, as shown in Figure 2, nearly half of our young adult Hispanic Catholics today are foreign-born. Furthermore, the youngest Latino/as in the U.S. today are mostly the children of immigrants. As a result, it should be expected that their experience of growing up between two cultures will have a great impact on the life of our Church as they mature into young adulthood. Whether or not they will eventually take their place among our leaders depends on the quality of leadership training and faith formation they receive.

As a final indication of the demographic reality of youth and young adult ministry in the Catholic Church today, Figure 3 divides the overall population of Catholic adolescents and young adults into its ethnic, racial, and generational segments. This comparison clearly shows that immigrants form the largest group of young adult Latino/a Catholics, while it is the children of immigrants who predominate among the teens. It is also significant to note that Hispanics have now surpassed the whites as the largest segment of the high school-age Catholic population in the United States according to Instituto Fe y Vida's estimates.

Key aspects of the sociocultural context

To situate the lived experience of Latino/a young people in the United States, it is helpful to highlight some of the significant differences between Hispanic and white youth and young adults in general, and to contrast the reality of Hispanic and white *Catholic* youth and young adults whenever the data are available. The research findings reported here come from various sources, collected and published by Instituto Fe y Vida.⁶

Language

- 58 percent of Hispanic teens speak at least as much Spanish as they do English at home, including 47 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic teens.
- 62 percent of Latino/a young adults (ages 18 to 29) said they do not speak English "well."

These statistics reflect the proportion of immigrants and children of immigrants shown in Figure 2 above. Pastorally, the language spoken at home tends to be the preferred language of prayer and faith for most people.

Immigration status

- Although the Census Bureau does not track immigration status, current estimates suggest that more than half of the *immigrant* Latino/a youth and young adults are undocumented.
- Combined with the Census data behind Figure 3, this means that about 76 percent of the Hispanic Catholic youth and young adults in the U.S. are citizens or legal residents.⁷

Education

- More than 30 percent of Hispanics in their 20s in 2007 had not completed high school, compared to only 7 percent of their white counterparts.
- By the age of 25 to 29, only 15 percent of Hispanics had completed a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 34 percent of their white peers.
- The differences for Catholics are even greater: among the parents of Catholic adolescents in the NSYR survey, 38 percent of the white fathers and 39 percent of the white mothers had at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 8 percent and 12 percent of their respective Hispanic peers.⁸

Household finances

Not surprisingly, these differences are also reflected in household income and assets:

- 26 percent of the Hispanic Catholic households in the NSYR survey had an annual income of less than \$20,000 and only 14 percent had more than \$60,000; this compares to 4 percent and 52 percent respectively for white Catholic households.
- Similarly, 75 percent of the Hispanic Catholic parents said they were in debt or just breaking even, and only 1 percent said they had "a lot" of savings and assets; among the white Catholic parents, only 41 percent were in debt or just breaking even, and 13 percent had "a lot" of savings and assets.
- The white Catholic parents were also nearly twice as likely to say they own their home (82 percent vs. 46 percent) as their Hispanic counterparts.⁹

Marriage and children

- 49 percent of all Latinas ages 16 to 30 are raising a child or children, and 19 percent of all Latinas in this age group are single mothers; this compares to 27 percent and 10 percent respectively for all other women combined.¹⁰
- Hispanics also tend to marry earlier than non-Hispanics. Among Hispanics ages 16 to 30, 31 percent were married

The youngest Latino/as in the U.S. today are mostly the children of immigrants. As a result, it should be expected that their experience of growing up between two cultures will have a great impact on the life of our Church.

or had been married, compared to 25 percent of their non-Hispanic peers.¹¹

- 62 percent of Hispanic Catholic teens have married parents, compared to 76 percent of their white peers.¹²

Risky and criminal behavior

Hispanic youth and young adults demonstrate significantly higher rates of risky and criminal behavior than their white peers:

- Hispanic youths are 50 percent more likely to attempt suicide; nearly three times as likely to become incarcerated; and roughly 30 times as likely to be active members of a gang. Latinas ages 15 to 17 are three times as likely to get pregnant as white girls of the same age.¹³
- The exception to this pattern was regarding substance abuse: Hispanic and white Catholic teens reported similar levels of marijuana use, and the white Catholic teens were actually a third more likely to have gotten drunk in the last year than their Hispanic counterparts.¹⁴

These risk factors correlate to increased exposure to violence and abuse at home, at school, and in their neighborhoods; less parental supervision and guidance; and experiences of discrimination and negative stereotypes.

Part 2. Overview of Pastoral Juvenil Hispana in the United States Today

The previous section of this essay demonstrated that the Hispanic segment of the Catholic youth and young adult population is growing far more rapidly than the overall young Catholic population, and it is marked by significant sociocultural differences with respect to other young Catholics. Undoubtedly, many of these differences impact the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical well-being of young Hispanic Catholics. Indeed, the data demonstrate that too many of our Latino/a young people are making poor decisions with

terrible consequences for themselves, their present or future children, our Church, and society at large. With that in mind, this section examines the state of faith formation and pastoral care among Hispanic youth and young adults.

Religious identity, faith formation, and religious practice

The phenomenon of Hispanics leaving the Catholic Church for evangelical and Pentecostal communities continues to be widely discussed and analyzed,¹⁵ yet a more fundamental issue is whether young Latino/a Catholics are being effectively formed in their faith in the first place. Many of the Hispanic Catholic teens interviewed for the NSYR spoke in very strong terms about their Catholic identity, but their professed commitment to the faith was only weakly reflected in their religious practices and their ability to speak about what they believe. In general, the Hispanic Catholic teens practiced more personal and family-based religious devotions, while their white peers were much more likely to be involved in parish-based activities.¹⁶ Even so, both groups tended to describe their faith as a form of “moralistic therapeutic deism” (MTD),¹⁷ rather than accurately reflecting Church teachings.

What is of great pastoral concern is that even the Latino Catholic parents who are very committed to their faith and involved in their parish are struggling to pass their faith to their adolescent children, in sharp contrast to the experience of their religiously committed white Catholic peers. The NSYR analysis described this reality in the following passage:

The Hispanic children of religiously ‘committed’ Catholic parents in the NSYR sample are less than half as likely as their white counterparts to attend weekly Mass, about one-third as likely to participate in a church youth group, about one-fourth as likely to attend a Catholic school, about one-fifth as likely to be a youth group leader, and

Table 1: Pastoral Categories of Young Hispanics

Immigrant Workers

- Mostly Spanish-speaking
- Mostly of Mexican origin
- Many are undocumented
- About 74% are Catholic
- Many seek moral and spiritual support from the church
- Mostly at the lower end of the economic spectrum
- Interested in forming peer groups and communities
- Little formal education
- Tend to have large families
- Motivated and hopeful
- Willing to work hard

Identity Seekers

- Mostly bilingual
- Mostly born in the U.S.
- Children of immigrants
- Some struggle to stay in high school and graduate
- May find hope in work or family relationships
- Some seek refuge in alcohol, drugs, or sexual promiscuity
- Mostly in lower-middle part of the economic spectrum
- Few will go to college
- Low self-esteem
- Unmotivated / apathetic

Mainstream Movers

- Mostly English-speaking
- Mostly born in the U.S.
- Will likely go to college, and some attend private schools
- Do not associate much with lower-income Hispanics
- More likely than other Hispanics to leave Catholic Church
- May look down on other categories of Hispanics
- Mostly in middle-upper part of economic spectrum
- Motivated and hopeful
- Willing to work hard

Gang Members and High-Risk Youth

- Limited bilingual abilities
- Mostly born in the U.S.
- Many live in inner cities
- Most are unemployed
- May become habitual drug users / sellers
- Mostly at the lower end of the economic spectrum
- Will only get involved at church in specialized programs
- Little formal education
- Anger towards society
- Experience despair
- Many are incarcerated

Table 2: Pastoral Needs of Young Hispanics by Category

	Immigrant Workers	Identity Seekers	Mainstream Movers	Gang Members and High-Risk Youth
Spiritual life	Need to form faith-based communities grounded in their culture of origin	Need mentoring to integrate faith and life amid cultural transition	Need guidance to overcome individualism and consumerism, and to value Hispanic spirituality	Need faith to heal and move from anger / hatred to forgiveness
Intellectual development	Need an accessible alternative system of education	Need encouragement to finish high school and set goals for higher education	Need financial aid and help understanding U.S. system of higher education	Need an accessible alternative system of education
Affective maturity and socialization	Need a healthy environment for developing relationships	Need assistance to develop self-esteem and faith in themselves	Need positive role models of social and cultural integration	Need a peer group and a safe place to belong with positive role models
Acquisition of human virtues	Need help to avoid the pitfalls of vice and addictions	Need guidance and direction in life	Need to value community service and social justice	Need counseling to overcome bad habits and attitudes
Percent of Hispanic young adults / teens	25% to 45% 10% to 20%	25% to 45% 40% to 50%	15% to 25% 20% to 30%	10% to 15% 10% to 15%

one-sixth or less as likely to have attended a religious retreat or summer camp.¹⁸

The reasons for the religious disconnect between Latino parents and teens are complex and vary from family to family and parish to parish, but two factors stand out: 1) many U.S.-born Hispanic youth do not easily relate to the faith expressions and traditions of their immigrant parents because of the overarching cultural divide they experience with their parents;¹⁹ and 2) the differences of language, culture, and social class that many Latino/a Catholic teens experience with other youth or adult leaders in their parish often lead them to opt out of participation in parish youth and young adult ministry programs, especially when the parish provides just one youth ministry program.²⁰

Vocations to ecclesial ministry

In many ways, the greater disengagement of Latino Catholic teens from parish life is a reflection of the neglect, and in some cases outright racism, with which the institutional Catholic Church in the U.S. has responded to the pastoral needs of its Hispanic members of all ages over the years.²¹ The consequences of this neglect are nowhere more evident than in the statistics about religious and ministerial vocations:

- 11 percent of U.S. Catholic deacons are Hispanic
- 9 percent of U.S. Catholic bishops are Hispanic
- 6 percent of U.S. Catholic priests are Hispanic, and 83 percent of them are foreign-born
- 4 percent of U.S. lay ecclesial ministers are Hispanic
- 2 percent of U.S. vowed religious (men and women) are Hispanic
- 1 percent of U.S.-born priests are Hispanic²²

From another perspective, the ratio of laity to priests can be seen as one measure of institutional identity and commitment in the Catholic community. There are currently about 1,900 Catholic lay people for every Catholic priest in the United States. In contrast, there are roughly 10,000 lay Latino Catholics for every Latino

priest, and the ratio jumps to nearly 30,000 U.S.-born lay Hispanic Catholics for every U.S.-born Hispanic priest.²³ Perhaps this should come as no surprise, since it is difficult to elicit a lifelong commitment among young Latino/as to an institution with a mediocre and uneven record of reciprocating that commitment in Hispanic communities, despite the high ideals articulated by the U.S. bishops in the *National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry* and other Hispanic ministry documents.

Pastoral categories of Latino/a youth and young adults

Bringing forth a commitment to the Church among young Latino/as will require a systematic effort to create welcoming programs that address their concerns and pastoral needs. In this regard, the alienating effects of linguistic, cultural, and social differences among youth ministry participants are often overlooked. The variety of pastoral circumstances found among just the young *Hispanics* (not to mention young Catholics of other racial/ethnic backgrounds) calls for ministry settings and programs targeted to particular segments. Instituto Fe y Vida describes four distinct pastoral categories of young Hispanics to assist youth ministry leaders in recognizing this diversity.²⁴ That information will not be repeated in detail here, but it is summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Of course, the relative proportion of young Latino/as in each category will vary from place to place. Nevertheless, the pastoral needs of each category are so distinct that it is difficult to imagine a single program or group that could effectively address the needs of all. Thus, Hispanic youth and young adult ministry is most successful when it provides a differentiated pastoral response through

Bringing forth a commitment to the Church among young Latino/as will require a systematic effort to create welcoming programs that address their concerns and pastoral needs.

a variety of structures, programs, events, and activities designed to serve particular segments of the young people in the parish or diocese, each according to their needs. The more programs and activities a parish offers, the more likely it will be that the young Catholics in the community will find a spiritual home and community in which to grow in faith.

It is also important to recognize that not all young Catholics are ready to engage in an intensive program of catechesis and faith formation. The home and social environments of many Latino/a youth and young adults often reflect values contrary to the Gospel, such as:

- Materialism that values individuals for what they own
- Peer pressure to seek immediate gratification in sex, drugs, and other risky behaviors
- Extreme individualism that has no concern for the common good or the rights of others, seeing their peers as objects to be used for personal gain or pleasure
- Secularism that marginalizes religious beliefs and values
- Experiences of domination, violence, racism, sexism, abuse, and discrimination as “normal” aspects of their world, about which nothing can be done
- Impaired moral reasoning due to addictions

In these environments, effective ministry may require a period of pre-evangelization composed of activities designed to win the trust of the participants without making them feel judged, while providing them with safe and constructive activities to orient their lives. The loving commitment, the personal faith witness, and the probing questions of the adult and youth leaders will gradually draw these young people into a desire for greater understanding of the faith, conversion, and a deeper spirituality—when they are ready. It may also be necessary to catechize the larger community on how to welcome and accept young people as they are, in order to minimize the common experience of being judged or rejected by adults in the parish community for not having the “look” of proper young Catholics.

Development and organization of three complementary pastoral responses

Development and organization of three complementary pastoral responses

While it cannot yet be said that the Church consistently offers a comprehensive response to the pastoral needs of all four categories of young Latino/as in all parishes, there are three existing ministries that each provide at least a partial response: youth ministry, young adult ministry, and *pastoral juvenil hispana*. As already mentioned, key aspects of the development of *pastoral juvenil hispana*, including its roots in Latin America and a brief outline of its historical process of inculturation in the Catholic Church in this country, can be found in the *Conclusions of the PENPJH*.²⁵ Mainstream youth ministry and young adult ministry also have their particular history and development as distinct pastoral efforts in the United States.

One commonality is that each ministry has developed its own set of operating principles and national organizations to support leaders at the diocesan and parish levels:

- Mainstream youth ministry has *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (from USCCB Publishing). It is supported by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM), and the National Association of Catholic Youth Ministry Leaders (NACYML).
- Mainstream young adult ministry has *Sons and Daughters of the Light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults* (from USCCB Publishing). It is supported by the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association (NCYAMA), the Catholic Campus Ministry Association (CCMA), and the National Association of Diocesan Directors of Campus Ministry (NADDCM).
- *Pastoral juvenil hispana* has *Civilización del Amor: Tarea y Esperanza* (from the Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano – Sección de Juventud) and the *Conclusions of the PENPJH* (from USCCB Publishing). It is supported by the National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana – *La Red*.

Despite the best efforts of the national organizations and the ministries they represent, many Hispanic youth and young adults continue to fall through the cracks. The high risk Latino/a youth and young adults seldom benefit from an organized pastoral effort to reach them, and the vast majority of Hispanic identity seekers

do not feel at home in either the mainstream youth and young adult ministries or *PJH* (assuming their parish is one of the few that offers a choice), so they simply opt out. These “culturally squeezed” young people are among the most likely to lose their Catholic faith and identity in adulthood, often stemming from an initial rejection of their parents’ culture that extends over time to their religious faith as well.²⁶

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Distinct pastoral approaches and the protection of adolescents

It is important at this point to recognize some of the key differences in pastoral approach between mainstream youth ministry and *pastoral juvenil hispana*. First of all, although mainstream youth ministry is described as a ministry to, with, by, and for adolescents,²⁷ in the U.S. context it is assumed that the teens will only exercise leadership under the direction of adult leaders—paid or volunteer—who are responsible for everything that goes on in the ministry. There are limits on what leaders can and cannot do according to their age, even for adult leaders between 18 and 25 years of age. In addition, since the beginning of this century the bishops have implemented a *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, and its requirements are enforced in nearly all youth ministry programs.

In contrast, *pastoral juvenil hispana* takes the Latin American approach of a peer ministry—a ministry of the young people to their peers—generally without a paid staff person or even an adult volunteer appointed to be in charge of the gatherings.²⁸ In the U.S., *La Red* has defined *PJH* as a peer ministry serving single Hispanics between the ages of 16 and 30,²⁹ although examples of groups serving a broader range of ages can still be found in many places. With the arrival of the bishops’ *Charter*, diocesan and parish pastoral leaders have had to face the issue of how to ensure that *PJH* provides a safe environment for its participants under age 18. This

is especially problematic considering that many of the young adult leaders and participants may be undocumented, so they are fearful of undergoing a criminal background check. As a result, some parishes and dioceses have opted to separate the ages, while others have designated the groups as “intergenerational ministries” with screened and trained leaders assigned to supervise the adolescents during small group activities.³⁰

While each diocese has appointed someone to hold the parishes accountable to the requirements of the *Charter*, it is important to acknowledge that there are many apostolic movements in the Church that serve Hispanic youth and young adults, often with little oversight from the parish or diocese. The diocesan encuentros conducted as a preparation for the *PENPJH* included representatives from more than 60 distinct movements, 67 percent of whom reported that they serve youth and young adults together,³¹ and in most dioceses there are no clear structures of accountability to ensure that their leaders are prepared to provide the protections required in the bishops’ *Charter*. In fact, anecdotal feedback from the field suggests that leaders in a significant number of mixed-age groups are not even aware that this is an issue that needs to be addressed—in some cases due to an unspoken decision by the diocesan staff to allow the ministries to continue as they always have, rather than impose regulations that would be pastorally difficult to meet.

Other important differences with mainstream youth ministry

In addition to their distinct age groupings, *PJH* and mainstream youth ministry rely on different forms of leadership, face different challenges, and employ different approaches in key dimensions of the Church’s pastoral care and accompaniment of the young. When these differences are not understood by pastors and diocesan leaders, it often happens that one ministry is simply canceled in favor of the other. Thus, it is important to recognize the complementarity of their respective approaches in order to expand ministry to and with young Latino/as in parishes and dioceses. Listed below are some of the key differences between these two ministries:

- **Leadership structures.** As a peer ministry, *PJH* is organized with shared leadership structures in which leadership roles are periodically rotated based on the gifts and availability of the individual, so that all participants may have opportunities to develop their leadership skills irrespective of their chronological age.³² Also, the leadership team for *PJH* seldom includes a paid professional coordinator—a position that is increasingly common in mainstream youth ministry, especially in wealthier parishes.³³ Instead, the young adult leadership teams in *PJH* require guidance and oversight from an adult adviser (i.e. a priest, spiritual director, member of the parish pastoral staff, or the diocesan coordinator of *pastoral juvenil*) who usually is not present at the regularly scheduled gatherings of the group, community, or movement.
- **Parish staffing and leadership formation.** Ideally, every parish that serves a significant Latino population should have an adult adviser for *PJH* on staff. This would provide stability and continuity to the ministry during times of transition or crisis, as well as continuous mentorship and leadership development. However, few immigrant Latino parishes have the economic resources to hire a full-time professional for this ministry, and there is a critical lack of adult leaders with the training in *PJH*, the academic credentials for ministry, and the linguistic and cultural skills required to exercise this role—even among the priests and parish directors of religious education.

As a result, entire ministries are often dismantled when there is a change of leadership in the parish, while other ministries are vulnerable to the inexperience of their leadership team, or to the changes that occur when life circumstances require established leaders to step down.

- **Diocesan coordination and support.** In this context, one of the most effective structures to support *PJH* in parishes and movements has proven to be the trained professional coordinator of *pastoral juvenil* at the diocesan level. In contrast to the work of most diocesan directors of *youth ministry*—whose ministry consists largely of supporting, resourcing, and training the parish youth ministry leaders—diocesan coordinators of *PJH* have to be much more hands-on with the ministries they support.

In parishes where *PJH* does not yet exist, they may be asked to assist the pastoral staff in identifying, inviting, motivating, and training a team of volunteer leaders to establish a ministry. Advocating for the ministry with parish pastoral leaders who do not fully understand the model, or who are determined to have a single parish youth ministry program “for everyone,” is also a major component of the coordinator’s outreach. Furthermore, it is practically impossible for parishes on their own to provide intermediate and advanced levels of pastoral-theological and leadership training for this ministry, so the formation and support of volunteer leaders in parishes and movements is a critical component of the diocesan coordinator’s ministry.

- **Pastoral de conjunto.** *Pastoral juvenil hispana* also differs from mainstream youth and young adult ministry in its emphasis on a *pastoral de conjunto*—a ministry concept that has no exact equivalent in English, but is often translated loosely as “communion in mission.” One dimension of this approach to ministry occurs when various groups and movements collaborate for large-group events and celebrations. Due to the strong communitarian dimension of Latino cultures, *PJH* thrives when regular group meetings are supplemented with periodic experiences of larger gatherings. This is one of the most effective ways to engage newcomers to the ministry, maintain the energy and commitment of those already involved, and develop new leaders through a process of formation-in-action. The Latin American bishops’ pastoral letter on *pastoral juvenil* emphasizes that networking, gathering, and collaborating among groups should occur at multiple levels: intra-parish, inter-parish, diocesan-wide, regional, national, and international.³⁴
- **A differentiated ministry.** Another aspect of *pastoral de conjunto* that is highlighted by the Latin American bishops is the importance of coordinating the pastoral efforts of various ministries, such as: mainstream youth and young adult ministry, detention ministry, Hispanic ministry, gang outreach, *PJH*, family ministry, ministry to the sick and disabled, migrant

Due to the strong communitarian dimension of Latino cultures, *PJH* thrives when regular group meetings are supplemented with periodic experiences of larger gatherings.

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ministry, campus ministry, and others.³⁵ It is only through the coordination of such efforts that young people of diverse backgrounds and needs will be guaranteed access to faith formation, pastoral care, accompaniment, and opportunities to participate in the life and mission of the Church.

- **Approaches to evangelization and vocation.** Because *PJH* is articulated as a peer ministry, it places great importance on the protagonism of the young in the work of evangelization.³⁶ Drawing from the mission of the Church,³⁷ *PJH* understands the proclamation and inculturation³⁸ of the Gospel to be the task of all young Catholics in response to their baptism.³⁹ Indeed, evangelization is not complete until the evangelized take up this mission as evangelizers.⁴⁰ Similarly, the discernment of a vocation rooted in our common baptismal call—a “*proyecto de vida*” (life project) as it is referred to in Spanish—is at the heart of *PJH* because it defines who we are as followers of Christ.⁴¹

In contrast, the theory and practice of U.S. mainstream youth ministry provide Catholic teens with little preparation to participate in the evangelizing mission of the Church by reaching out to their peers with a word of Good News. Instead, the work of evangelizing the young is visualized primarily as a task for the adults in the community—especially those adults engaged as youth ministry leaders.⁴² Also, while it is true that vocational resources for youth ministry exist, they are mostly targeted to high school seniors, and the vocational orientation of the ministry as a whole is nearly absent.

Part 3. Reflections on Current Efforts and Areas for Growth

Given the social and pastoral challenges described in the foregoing sections, the faith-filled and visionary mission statement articulated by the young Encuentro delegates (see page 1) becomes even more remarkable. Nevertheless, the pastoral reality begs the question of whether this statement accurately reflects the collective intentions and self-understanding of *all* Hispanic Catholic youth and young adults in the United States. The short answer to the question is: no, it does not—at least not for the vast majority of them.

Recent advances in the field

However, the general description of the pastoral context hides another truth: ministry *to and with young Hispanics, from their lived reality*, has made great strides in the years since Fe y Vida’s preliminary study in 2002, even though there have been setbacks in some places, and there is certainly much work yet to be done. The following list briefly describes some of the significant advances in the field over the last seven years.

- A. Development of diocesan and national leadership for Hispanic youth and young adult ministry.** Thanks in large part to the work of *La Red* in leading the Encuentro process,

more dioceses now have personnel dedicated to ministry with Hispanic youth and/or young adults. A hopeful sign is that some dioceses have begun to hire bilingual directors of youth and young adult ministry who are given responsibility for these ministries in both English and Spanish, but qualified and experienced bilingual/bicultural leaders to fill these positions remain scarce.

- B. Growing role of *La Red* as an important partner to other national ministry organizations.** The prominence of *La Red* is especially evident in its continuing partnership with the NFCYM and the U.S. Bishops’ Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life & Youth. This partnership is helping to make the work of the NFCYM more inclusive. Another fruit is the development of a *Five-Year Strategic Plan for Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*, developed by *La Red* with collaboration from other national organizations.⁴³
- C. Completion of the First National Encuentro for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry, and its documentation in the *Conclusions*.** The successes and limitations of the Encuentro provide a baseline account of where the Church stands in its outreach to Latino/a youth and young adults. Furthermore, in the *Conclusions* document—which has the endorsement and support of the U.S. bishops—we now have in one place a bilingual account of the history, theological and pastoral context, vision, principles, pastoral needs, and best practices and models as articulated by the young people themselves.
- D. Solid sociological research on the religious reality of Latino/a youth and young adults.** The nationally representative sample of adolescents and early young adults surveyed and interviewed in the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) provides a reliable account of the religious beliefs and practices of adolescents in the United States today. In *Pathways of Hope and Faith Among Hispanic Teens*, a multidisciplinary team of nine writers contributed to the analysis of the NSYR’s Latino/a respondents from a variety of perspectives, making it an invaluable resource for anyone preparing for or engaging in ministry with young Latino/a Catholics.
- E. Wide availability of formation programs for *pastoral juvenil hispana*.** The Southeast Pastoral Institute (SEPI) and several dioceses across the country have developed formation programs for leaders and advisers in *PJH*. In addition, Instituto Fe y Vida offers a leadership formation system, has a mobile pastoral team that is able to provide formation at a variety of levels in any diocese in the country on request, and it offers an annual week-long intensive formation program (*Programa Nacional de Verano*) to make formation available even to leaders whose dioceses do not yet offer a formation option. Finally, numerous apostolic movements have developed their own programs and resources for leadership formation.
- F. Increasing human resources in the Catholic community—among both Hispanics and non-Hispanics alike.** Through the Encuentro process and in its aftermath, many more mainstream youth ministry directors, coordinators, and leaders have become aware of the need to increase their capacity to serve Hispanic teens. In addition, the Encuentro process itself was designed as a formation-in-action process that has forged a new generation of young Latino/a leaders for *PJH* and youth ministry in Latino communities.

Areas for further development

Achieving these advances has been possible through the efforts of thousands of leaders in *pastoral juvenil hispana* and Catholic youth ministry. Nevertheless, the pastoral reality as presented in the first part of this essay reveals that there is much more that needs to be done. That information will not be summarized here; rather, this section will focus on the structural changes that need to occur in order to facilitate a comprehensive response to the pastoral needs of Latino/a youth and young adults at the local, diocesan, regional, and national levels.

A. Develop a comprehensive pastoral plan at the national level that brings together the various ministries and ministry organizations for the pastoral care and accompaniment of all Catholic youth and young adults. This plan needs to respond to the social, cultural, linguistic, educational, and spiritual reality of Catholic youth and young adults today, of whom Hispanics now make up nearly half. It must take into account the following:

- Training of parish and diocesan pastoral leaders to conduct an analysis of the local reality and develop a pastoral plan to serve the full gamut of young people under their care—especially those among the vast majority that does not yet participate in youth and young adult ministry programs.
- Pastoral and theological criteria to help leaders identify the urgent and fundamental needs that should be addressed as priorities in their ministry.
- Guidance for discerning the appropriate times and places for pre-evangelization, evangelization, catechesis and pastoral care in ministry with youth and young adults.
- A differentiated approach to address the diverse pastoral needs in the parish through a variety of programs, groups, movements, events, activities, and services.
- Special attention to the situation of families and the formation of parents to serve as role models and reliable guides in the formation of their children's faith.
- Guidelines for organizing projects and outreach efforts in which the young people themselves are the primary agents.

B. Structure parish youth and young adult ministry on an ecclesiology of the parish as a community of communities. Far too often, parish youth ministry programs are limited due to an erroneous theological vision which assumes that offering diverse youth and young adult ministry programs would divide the parish.⁴⁴ In this regard, the *Conclusions of the PENPJH* are quite clear:

The leaders in *Pastoral Juvenil*, Hispanic ministry, and mainstream youth and young adult ministry are increasingly aware that the programs and activities of the mainstream culture do not attract the full participation of Hispanic adolescents and *jóvenes*, even though they may speak English. This occurs due to economic, cultural, educational, geographic, and linguistic differences

between the young people, **especially when the parish ministry is limited to a single youth group** [emphasis added].⁴⁵

As a response, parishes in the United States would do well to take a tip from the Latin American bishops' Fifth General Conference, held in Aparecida, Brazil:

At the beginning of the third millennium, the renewal of the parish requires the reformulation of its structures, so that it may become a network of communities and groups capable of entering into relationship with one another in such a way that their members feel and really become disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ in communion with one another.⁴⁶

C. Increase collaboration and dialogue with partners in Latin America. The previous quote is a clear response to Pope John Paul II's call for parishes to become a "community of communities and movements" in his apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in America*.⁴⁷ It also underscores his hope that the Church on the American continent would begin to see itself as a single continental Church with meaningful collaboration between the countries of the North and South. As this article has already demonstrated, the practice of Catholic youth and young adult ministry in the United States would benefit from a greater consideration of the guidelines in *Civilización del Amor: Tarea y Esperanza*, as well as the pastoral priorities of the *Documento de Aparecida*. Such an exchange of ideas and practices would be the first step toward developing a genuine *pastoral de conjunto* between North and South.

D. Increase collaboration and dialogue among Hispanic and mainstream ministry leaders and organizations that serve youth and young adults in the United States. Given the size of the young Hispanic Catholic population, it is no longer acceptable (if it ever was) for major documents to be written for the whole U.S. Church, or for ministerial initiatives with implications for all—especially in the areas of youth and young adults—to be

undertaken without a meaningful representation of Latino/as at the decision-making and editorial tables. Significant initiatives are already underway to develop guidelines and criteria for the future of adolescent catechesis, evangelization, Catholic education, lay ministry formation, and the promotion of vocations to ecclesial ministry. *PJH* has much to contribute in all of these areas, and *La Red* ought to be both a conversation partner and a prime mover in these efforts.

E. Develop strategies and responses to overcome the structural obstacles to *PJH*. Some of the major challenges currently encountered in the field include:

- **Pastoral formation and theological reflection.** Too few diocesan leaders, priests, and youth ministers have an adequate understanding of the needs, vision, mission, principles, and history of *PJH*. As a consequence, their misguided pastoral convictions often prevent them from providing effective support to this ministry, and in many cases lead them to shut the ministry down or prevent its inception in the parish or diocese.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the

Far too often, parish youth ministry programs are limited due to an erroneous theological vision which assumes that offering diverse youth and young adult ministry programs would divide the parish.

Church must provide greater pastoral and theological formation to the young adult leaders in *PJH* to increase their capacity to form and sustain this ministry with their peers. Unfortunately, a lack of attention to the pastoral care of Latino/a youth and *jóvenes* is evident in Hispanic ministry formation programs and in the writings of Hispanic/Latino/a theologians. The result is that even our best-prepared leaders in Hispanic ministry are often ill-equipped to support and advocate for *PJH*.

- **Academic education.** The low educational attainment of young Latino/a immigrant workers and high drop-out rates among U.S.-born Hispanic teens conspire to limit the pool of Latino/a leaders qualified to begin academic studies for ministry or to secure a paid pastoral position in the Church. At the same time, hundreds of Catholic elementary and secondary schools are in danger of being closed, while millions of low-income Catholic families are not having their educational needs met by underperforming public schools. This calls for a national initiative to improve the education of Catholic immigrants, their children, and other underserved racial/ethnic groups, both in Catholic and public schools.⁴⁹
- **Immigration issues.** Many young Hispanic immigrants are undocumented, which causes instability in their lives, limits their access to scholarships, and makes it difficult for them to assume leadership positions in ministry, especially with adolescents. Nevertheless, the Church has a duty to provide them with pastoral care and help them to live their Christian vocation and mission. It is also necessary to increase awareness and understanding in parishes and dioceses regarding the U.S. bishops' priority to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform, grounded in the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.
- **Pastoral de conjunto.** The lack of coordination between mainstream youth and young adult ministry and *PJH* has contributed to the low participation rates among the vast majority of U.S.-born Hispanic youth and young adults, who primarily speak English and are not college-educated or college-bound. An effective outreach to these young people will require collaboration and shared oversight between Hispanic ministry, youth and young adult ministry, *pastoral juvenil hispana*, and the apostolic movements.

F. Increase the human, financial, and programmatic resources for *PJH*. This will require a significant investment in leadership formation at all levels—in both English and Spanish—so that mainstream youth ministry coordinators can improve and expand their ministry while immigrant young adult leaders of *PJH* are doing the same. Perhaps the most cost-effective and practical first step would be to hire a diocesan coordinator for *PJH*. This person would be responsible for spearheading the formation of the leaders in parishes and apostolic movements, providing continuous support to their ministerial efforts, and engaging them in processes of formation-in-action and a *pastoral de conjunto*.

On another note, there are few programmatic materials or multimedia resources available to support *PJH*. Equally hard to find are bilingual resources to assist Hispanic parents in overcoming the linguistic and cultural conflicts they often

experience with their children, in order to fulfill their role as their primary educators in the faith. Most of the resources developed for mainstream youth and young adult ministry or Latin American *pastoral juvenil* do not translate well to the U.S. Latino context. It will require a significant investment from the whole Church, and Catholic publishers in particular, to develop the capacity of Latino/a youth and young adult ministers and artists to create resources to support these ministries.

Finally, creative and effective models for financing these efforts need to be developed at the local and diocesan levels, and shared nationally. The role of *La Red* in the support and continued development of *PJH* at the national level has become indispensable, yet it continues to operate with only volunteer leaders and without a central office for records and communication. Considering that *La Red* is charged with advocating for half of all young Catholics in the United States, there ought to be greater institutional and philanthropic support for its ministry.

G. Create certification standards for coordinators of youth ministry and *PJH* designed to equip both mainstream and Latino/a ministers for effective ministry to and with young Hispanics, from their lived reality. Five national ministry organizations are currently revising the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministry*. Given the size and geographic extension of the Hispanic Catholic population, the general standards should reflect the competencies and methodologies required for ministry in Hispanic communities. Furthermore, the specific standards for youth ministers should include competencies based on the vision, needs, and principles for ministry with Hispanic adolescents described in the *Conclusions of the PENPJH*. *La Red* should also participate in the revision process, developing specific standards for the certification of leaders, coordinators, and advisers of *PJH*.

Conclusion

The pastoral challenges facing Hispanic youth and young adults in the United States are immense, and they undoubtedly contribute to the conclusion of the NSYR that “Latino/a teens as a group are even more religiously inarticulate and disengaged than other Catholic teens, despite the fact that their parents demonstrate greater commitment to their faith than do the white Catholic parents.”⁵⁰ Indeed, their needs are so diverse, and their presence so pervasive in Catholic communities throughout the country, that it will take a coordinated effort of the whole Church to adequately provide them with pastoral care, faith formation, and an invitation into the life and mission of the Church.

The good news is that our Catholic community is already blessed with thousands of immigrant young adult leaders of *PJH* and thousands more directors and coordinators of youth ministry in parishes and apostolic movements across the country. In addition we have a blueprint for how to serve and empower Hispanic youth and young adults in the *Conclusions of the PENPJH* and the *Five-Year Strategic Plan for PJH*. All that is required at this point is for our Church to muster the institutional will to implement this plan by means of a genuine *pastoral de conjunto* in parishes and dioceses throughout the country. In carrying out this process, the fields of Catholic youth ministry, young adult ministry, and *PJH* will set the example for bridging Hispanic and mainstream ministry to forge the Church anew in 21st century America.

Appendix – Goals of the *Encuentro Five-Year Strategic Plan for Pastoral Juvenil Hispana: 2009 – 2014**

I. COMMON VISION

- Goal 1.1 To develop a common vision for ministry to and with Hispanic youth and *jóvenes*, from their lived reality.
- Goal 1.2 To promote a unified understanding of Catholic youth and young adult ministry that recognizes and honors the diverse reality of Hispanic youth and *jóvenes*.
- Goal 1.3 To understand and affirm the diverse reality of ministry with Hispanic youth and *jóvenes* in order to effectively serve the needs of the young Hispanic church in relation to its different generations, languages, economic status, education, immigration status and country of origin.

II. AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY

- Goal 2.1 To promote acceptance of the diversity within *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana* to fulfill the needs of the Hispanic young church including, but not limited to their different generations, languages, economic status, and educational levels.
- Goal 2.2 To promote structural changes within dioceses to enhance ministry to Hispanic young people.
- Goal 2.3 To promote a *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana* incarnated in the reality of Latino young people within the church and society of the United States.
- Goal 2.4 To create an awareness of the impact of immigration on Hispanic youth and *jóvenes*.

III. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Goal 3.1 To foster an inculturated approach and vision about *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana* among ordained and lay ministers, so that they may accompany the Hispanic young people in their processes of holistic growth and formation.

- Goal 3.2 To increase availability and accessibility of comprehensive faith/pastoral formation programs to Latino young people.

IV. PASTORAL JUVENIL HISPANA

- Goal 4.1 To include ministry with *jóvenes* and Hispanic youth as a priority in the strategic plans of the *Alianza* partners.
- Goal 4.2 To have the Church recognize the “*líderes jóvenes*” and adult advisers in *PJH* as ministers.
- Goal 4.3 To consider the process of the “*Encuentros de PJH*” as a *kairos* and *locus* for the continuous renewal and maturation of ministry with Latino young people.
- Goal 4.4 To promote and facilitate the use of the Conclusions Document from the Encuentro 2006 by leaders, advisers, and coordinators of ministry with *jóvenes* and Hispanic adolescents.

V. EDUCATION

- Goal 5.1 To foster the academic advancement and civic participation of Latino youth and *jóvenes*.
- Goal 5.2 To facilitate networking among church pastoral leaders and Hispanic educators to improve and expand the educational opportunities for young Latinos.

VI. PASTORAL DE CONJUNTO

- Goal 6.1 To promote efficient and effective collaboration among structures that minister to Hispanic youth and *jóvenes* at national, diocesan and parish levels.

* The main goals of the *Encuentro Five-Year Strategic Plan for Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*, developed by *La Red* in an “*Alianza*” with various other national ministry organizations, are presented here. The full text is available online at: <http://www.laredpjh.org>.

Notes

- ¹ National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana – *La Red, Conclusions: First National Encounter for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Publishing, 2008), 54.
- ² *Ibid.*, 19 – 22.
- ³ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry*, nos. 51 – 56 and 64 – 66, in United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Hispanic Ministry: Three Major Documents* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1995).
- ⁴ Ken Johnson-Mondragón, *The Status of Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry in the United States: A Preliminary Study* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2002), 30.
- ⁵ This phrase is taken from Specific Objective #3 of the *PENPJH, Conclusions*, 28. In many ways, it is a poor translation of the original Spanish, “*la pastoral con, hacia y desde la juventud hispana*.” In Spanish, a ministry that is carried out “*desde la juventud*” is one that is informed by and responds to the immediate and global context of the young people’s lives, while relying on the giftedness of the same *jóvenes* to develop and implement the pastoral response. The Latin American articulation of this ministry can be found in Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, *Civilización del Amor: Tarea y Esperanza* (Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia: CELAM, Sección de Juventud, 1995), 2ª Parte, Sección III, nos. 2.1 – 2.2.
- ⁶ Instituto Fe y Vida, “Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry: Recent Findings,” *Perspectives on Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry 4* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2007), available online: <http://www.feyvida.org/research/researchpubs.html>.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 3, 5.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 3, 5. In this section, only white and Hispanic results from the NSYR are mentioned because the survey sample did not include sufficient Catholic respondents among the black, Asian, Native American, and “other” teens to provide statistically meaningful comparisons.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.
- ¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, March 2009 Current Population Survey.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² Ken Johnson-Mondragón, “Youth Ministry and the Socioreligious Lives of Hispanic and White Catholic Teens in the U.S.,” *Perspectives on Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry 2* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2005), 3, available online: <http://www.feyvida.org/research/researchpubs.html>.
- ¹³ “Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry: Recent Findings,” 5.
- ¹⁴ “Youth Ministry and the Socioreligious Lives...,” 22.
- ¹⁵ For a recent analysis of this phenomenon, see The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2007), 41 – 48.
- ¹⁶ Ken Johnson-Mondragón, ed., *Pathways of Hope and Faith Among Hispanic Teens: Pastoral Reflections and Strategies Inspired by the National Study of Youth and Religion* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2007), 97 – 100 and 324.
- ¹⁷ “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” is a term developed by Christian Smith, the principal investigator of the NSYR, to describe the “benign whateverism” that characterizes the religious faith of most adolescents in the U.S. today. For a full description of this term as it relates to Hispanic teens, see *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 72 – 74 and 324.
- ¹⁸ *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 100. See also “Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry: Recent Findings,” 6 – 7.
- ¹⁹ See Carmen M. Cervantes and Ken Johnson-Mondragón, “The Dynamics of Culture, Faith, and Family in the Lives of Hispanic Teens, and their Implications for Youth Ministry,” *Perspectives on Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry 5* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2008), available online: <http://www.feyvida.org/research/researchpubs.html>.
- ²⁰ *Conclusions*, 33.
- ²¹ *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 326 – 329.
- ²² “Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry: Recent Findings,” 8.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 33 – 39.
- ²⁵ *Conclusions*, 19 – 22.
- ²⁶ For a description of the most common patterns of cultural adaptation between immigrant parents and their U.S.-born children, see “The Dynamics of Culture, Faith, and Family...,” 3 – 5.
- ²⁷ United States Catholic Conference Department of Education, *A Vision of Youth Ministry: Edición Bilingüe* (Washington, DC: USCC, 1986), 6 – 7.
- ²⁸ Carmen M. Cervantes and Ken Johnson-Mondragón, “Pastoral Juvenil Hispana, Youth Ministry, and Young Adult Ministry: An Updated Perspective on Three Different Pastoral Realities,” *Perspectives on Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry 3* (Stockton, CA: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2008), 3, available online: <http://www.feyvida.org/research/researchpubs.html>.
- ²⁹ *Conclusions*, 23.
- ³⁰ For a discussion of keeping the mixed-age groups together versus separating them, see *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 342 – 344.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 99.
- ³² *Conclusions*, 57.
- ³³ The NSYR found that white Catholic teens were nearly 50% more likely to have a full-time paid youth minister in their parish than their Hispanic counterparts. See *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 90 – 92.
- ³⁴ *Civilización del Amor: Tarea y Esperanza*, 3ª Parte, nos. 4.1 – 4.2.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3ª Parte, nos. 3.2-3.4.
- ³⁶ *Conclusions*, 54 – 55 and 57, especially PJ-22, no. 3. See also *Civilización del Amor*, 2ª Parte, Sección I, no. 1.2 and Sección III, no. 2.2.
- ³⁷ See Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos. 14, 17 – 18, 22, and 29.
- ³⁸ For a deeper explanation of inculturation and its application in youth ministry see “The Dynamics of Culture, Faith, and Family...,” 5 – 10.
- ³⁹ *Conclusions*, 13 – 15, 54, and 60 – 61.
- ⁴⁰ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 24.
- ⁴¹ Cf. *Civilización del Amor*, 2ª Parte, Sección I, no. 2.3.1. The phrase “*proyecto de vida*” appears 35 times throughout the document.
- ⁴² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1997), 36-37.
- ⁴³ The main goals of the *Five-Year Strategic Plan for PJH* are presented in the Appendix on page 11 of this document, and the full text is available online at: <http://www.laredpjh.org>.
- ⁴⁴ For a fuller discussion of the cultural and pastoral circumstances that may contribute to this erroneous pastoral vision, and an articulation of the “community of communities” approach, see *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 332 – 339 and 345 – 352.
- ⁴⁵ *Conclusions*, 33.
- ⁴⁶ CELAM, *Aparecida – V Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe: Documento Conclusivo* (Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia: CELAM, 2007), no. 172, my translation.
- ⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, no. 41.
- ⁴⁸ Chapter 10 of *Pathways of Hope and Faith* describes ten factors that need to be addressed in our Church in order for ministry with Hispanic youth to gain greater traction. See pages 321 – 359.
- ⁴⁹ An important initiative along this line is described in *To Nurture the Soul of a Nation: Latino Families, Catholic Schools, and Educational Opportunity* (Notre Dame, IN: Alliance for Catholic Education Press at the University of Notre Dame, 2009).
- ⁵⁰ *Pathways of Hope and Faith*, 324.