

A SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHIC: CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE MISSION OF THE LAITY

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America has always been a land of immigrants with an ever-shifting demographic. The most dramatic is the increase in the population of Hispanic origin. This reality is amplified within the American Catholic Church, where Hispanics will soon comprise the majority group, and already constitute over 60% of Catholics 18 years or less. It follows that the Hispanic presence is crucial to the future of the American Church, one that seems grim particularly in light of the clergy sex abuse crisis and our nation's polarized climate fueled by the agenda-driven culture, which find fertile ground in Hispanic communities due to the plague of machismo and marianismo. These factors [including the abuse crisis, etc.] contribute to a massive departure from faith and truth that desperately calls for a time of the laity. But, amidst this gloom, the Hispanic culture brings innate characteristics, strengths and a vision of what it means to be Catholic that if capitalized on and modeled, can help impel the laity of all cultural families to accomplish its mission by raising up in leadership and service to the Church. In fact, Hispanics—if properly understood, embraced and empowered—can become the key to rebuild the Church, pave the path to healing, unity, and growth and become a positive force in America. This result may appear counter-intuitive to many, but if we can work together to overcome the barrier of “otherness” the laity, united in its diversity, can finally assume the leadership role that the Church has been calling it to since Vatican Council II.