



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: *THE INDIGENOUS FACE OF THE CHURCH*

During the week of September 18, 2023, through September 22, 2023, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops Subcommittee on Native American Affairs hosted an International Conference on Catholic Indigenous Ministry. The meeting and events were held in Washington D.C.

The Catholic Conferences of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States came together to dialogue and learn from one another on how to support and encourage Catholic Indigenous ministry. The various Catholic Conferences were in-

vited because of their shared cultural, linguistic, evangelization history, and the relationship between the Catholic church and the respective Indigenous communities.

This is the first time that these four Bishops' Conferences have come together for dialogue on this ministry. This International Conference offered a historic opportunity for the four episcopal conferences as well as the Catholic Indigenous representatives in attendance to take advantage of a shared wisdom in ministering to Indigenous populations in their



ICCI participants in front of the St. Kateri Tekakwitha statue at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC. Photo credit: USCCB Staff

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

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countries.

The participants exchanged ideas, information about programs, and resources for the enhancement of Catholic Indigenous ministry during the first part of the Conference. The Conference included moments of free exchange between bishops and the Catholic Indigenous leaders on specific topics and areas of concern. The dialogue between Bishops and Indigenous leaders was designed to promote interpersonal relationships, build trust and understanding, and offer potential future direction to their respective Indigenous ministries.

The topics discussed included evangelization, edu-

cation, reconciliation, and healing, inculturation, and social concerns such as poverty, racism, and the environment. One of the purposes of the gathering was to learn from one another and to explore ways to reinvigorate, enhance and grow Catholic Indigenous ministry.

Another aspect of this initiative was to help develop relationships across borders and oceans, not only among the bishops, but especially between Catholic Indigenous leaders. The hope is that the relationships will grow and develop over time, while increasing knowledge and solidarity within the global Catholic Indigenous ministries, and that they will help empower both Indigenous leaders and Indigenous ministry within the Church. Ω



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

A YEAR OF MANY BLESSINGS

Maria del Mar Muñoz-Visoso, M.T.S. | Executive Director, Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church, USCCB



As I sit to write this reflection, I must confess I feel a bit exhausted by the journey, but happy and especially very grateful. I contemplate in awe the year we leave behind and I immediately thought to myself: ‘Girl, it is time to pause and count your blessings!’

And what a year it has been! 2023 brought with it many blessings, big and small, but each equally meaningful to us in the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church and important to the groups and populations we work with. In many ways, it has been quite a historical year that brought to fruition some hard-fought battles.

To name only a few, in June of 2023 the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry, Missionary Disciples Going Forth with Joy, was approved—in a nearly unanimous vote—by the Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Bishops meeting in Orlando, FL. Only those who have worked behind the scenes know what it takes to pass something through the Plenary Assembly (250+ Active Bishops), much less unanimously. But all the efforts and consultation with USCCB committees and offices, as well as the bishops’ involvement in the process of the V Encuentro, made a world of difference.

The Plan provides a vision, pastoral principles, and strategies to animate Catholic Hispanic Ministry in the coming decade, and to propel Latino Catholics to the center of ministry and service in the Church. These will now need to be appropriated and implemented at the various levels (parish, diocesan, regional national and organizational). The official “launch” of the Plan occurred at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Diocesan Directors for Hispanic Ministry (NCHDDHM) in October in Houston. It is encouraging and refreshing to see the level of ownership and excitement among the diocesan directors and all collaborating organizations in Hispanic Ministry. Certainly, the Plan and other initiatives stemming from the

V Encuentro tell the story of how the synodal process of consultation and common discernment is well and alive in the Latino Catholic community, thusmaking an invaluable contribution to the Church and society in the U.S. Expect more regional and diocesan trainings to occur in the coming months, in 2024 and beyond, so that the Pastoral Plan is made known to every parish, diocese association, and apostolic movement.

Also, in late July, all roads converged in the Washington DC metro area to bring together the XIII National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) at the National Harbor in Maryland, and the African National Eucharistic Congress (ANEC IV), at the Catholic University of America in DC. What a shot in the arm for all who were able to attend either of these events! (Or both, like me.) The joy, the powerful preaching, the music, the excellent workshops...But nothing compares to the sight of thousands upon thousands of Black Catholics filling to the brim the immense Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in DC, claiming the space as rightfully theirs, and reminding all of us of the gift Black Catholics are in the Church!

In August, I had an opportunity to join the Episcopal Pastoral Visit to Migrant Farmworkers in the Diocese of Yakima. It was a great opportunity to dialogue with our migrant brothers and sisters who put food on our tables. We also shared meals, the Eucharist, and even a piñata for the children in one of the migrant camps. Sponsored by one of Cultural Diversity’s subcommittees, the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers (PCMRT), the visits were reinitiated after a four-year hiatus due to the COVID pandemic. We learned about best practices in migrant ministry. It was amazing to see what a mission diocese can do with very little resources, and the difference their pastoral outreach makes in the lives of these mobile, and often invisible and forgotten, populations. Spiritual care and facilitating access to the sacraments is one important concern; but so is the mental health and physical wellbeing of migrants, as well as making sure that their rights as workers and human beings are respected. We were joined by members of the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network (CMFN), and other departments of the Bishops’ Conference, including Migration and Refugee Services, the Justice for Immigrants Campaign, Secretariat of Evangelization and Catechesis, and Catholic Home Missions, as well as colleagues from various other dioceses and agencies,

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such as CRS, Catholic Charities in the State of Washington, and Pastoral Migratoria of Chicago. We deeply appreciate their involvement and contributions to the visit.

Finally, as I write this article, another landmark statement is on the docket for the Bishops' November Plenary Assembly: Keeping Christ's Sacred Promise, A Pastoral Framework for Indigenous Ministry. The Pastoral Framework gives shape to ideas that the Catholic Native leaders have been voicing for the last several years in listening sessions with the bishops, surveys of Native Catholics and in other forums. The purpose of the Framework is to offer guidelines for Catholic ministry with Indigenous populations in the United States. It encourages bishops and local Catholic Indigenous communities to work together, and to use the framework as a reference while developing their own local pastoral plans. The Framework has been anticipated by Catholic Indigenous communities who have long requested re-

newed pastoral attention and support from the bishops for their efforts on evangelization, reconciliation and healing, education, and in addressing matters of justice and social concerns in Native communities. It is our hope that the Pastoral Framework will help refocus and reinvigorate Catholic Indigenous ministry in the U.S. I pray for the approval of this important and historic document, and for the additional listening sessions that will follow with our Native brothers and sisters to determine how to properly implement the proposals contained in the framework.

I could go on and on, but you get the idea. The wheels of the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church are always moving, and we feel blessed to be called to serve you and accompany you on this journey. It's been a year of many blessings, indeed, that hopefully will give way to many more blessings and initiatives in the years to come. Praised be the Lord! Ω

Congratulations and best wishes to Donna Grimes, who retired on September 29, 2023, after serving 23 years at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in various capacities. She will be greatly missed by her Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church and other USCCB colleagues, and by many friends across the country. We wish Donna well as she starts a new chapter in her life. Well done, good and faithful servant!



CHAIRMAN'S REFLECTION WORLD YOUTH DAY 2023

Most Revered Arturo Cepeda | Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit | Chairman of the Committee on Cultural Diversity

The WYD of 2023 in Lisbon, Portugal, was a moment of grace and renewal. I have been privileged and blessed to attend ten of them, and always looking forward to the next. Each one of them brings grace to my life, ministry, and mission. Lisbon was not the exception!

Millions of young people around the world gather around the city and the region to celebrate our faith, and to become protagonists of the Church in the world.

In the words of Pope Francis during the closing liturgy he invited them “not to be afraid” – this message resonates with the words of Pope St. John Paul II, who initiated these gatherings. As I was looking at our young congregation, I was so moved by their engagement and enthusiasm, no doubt for me a moment of grace and hope.

Indeed, WYD 2023 in Lisbon continues the legacy of having our youth become evangelizers, celebrating our faith out in the streets, in the marketplace plazas and most importantly within themselves and among others.

During their time in Lisbon, they had the opportunity to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation and to have the opportunity for quiet time

before the Blessed Sacrament.

In my conversations with them one of the highlights they shared was about the experience of knowing and experiencing the universal nature of our Catholic Church. They were

very excited about sharing our common faith with people of other cultures and languages. They became evangelizers! They had the opportunity to freely share their stories about our risen Lord!

Without realizing, they were already making a statement in the city of Lisbon – “we are young, and we are Catholic.” – The streets were inundated by their presence and young energy. One local person said to me: “I have never

seen anything like this in my life.” My answer: “They are young evangelizers.”

WYD is an excellent example of how to engage our young people on how to celebrate their faith and how to proclaim the Good News.

Our mission is to have them engaged within our own parishes and dioceses. They have the energy and the openness to become truly joyful missionary disciples and the experience of grace and hope will continue to be alive within our communities.

Hope to see you in South Korea next World Youth Day! Ω



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SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Subcommittee on Native American Affairs

The Tekakwitha Conference Keynote on Human Trafficking: Missing and Murdered Women

Fr. Michael Carson | Assistant Director, Native American Affairs

At the 2023 Tekakwitha Conference – Bloomington, Minnesota, Fr. Mike Carson, Fr. David Bailey, and Felicitas Onetti gave a presentation concerning human trafficking and missing and murdered Native women. Fr. Carson presented the need for Natives to be involved in addressing this issue, and why it is so prevalent in many Native communities.

The Need for Natives to be Involved

Language Barriers

Most Natives are English speakers. But there are words and phrases that exist in Native languages that are difficult to translate into English. It is not only the words, but the meaning behind the words that is important. The best way to have a window on the culture is to start with the language.

Customs that allow programs to be more affective

One size does not fit all. Ideas, programs, and initiatives that work in one culture will not always work in a different culture. Further, there is not one “Native American Culture.” Natives are more like Europeans. There are vast differences in Native cultures, depending on lands and tribes. Even tribes that live next to each other have a different historical narrative. Putting the work and effort into adapting the outreach to the vastly different Native communities is one effective way to challenge human traffickers and to end this violence, especially against women and children.

Getting Natives Involved

In order to put in the work and effort with different tribal communities, the first and most important activity is listening, especially to Native community elders. There is a strong dislike in Native community for them to be talked to rather than listened to. They know how to work in their communities. They know what help they need. The response is far greater when Natives are talking to Natives, especially when personal stories are used of those that have been hurt by human trafficking.

The Importance of Native Survivors of Human Trafficking

Survivors are the strongest weapon that communities have to combat human trafficking among Natives. Some victim assistance programs currently incorporate “a peer-to-peer counseling model” and often hire survivors to provide either some or all of the services to clients. Victims seek “non-judgmental support” from those who have been in their situation before. Due to the high level of distrust that Natives have with law enforcement, a program with a peer-to-peer design could be extremely beneficial. A program like this provides victims with the help they need, and it will gather information on other possible victims. Peer-led services reduce or remove the cultural and language barriers that most victims of human trafficking experience.

Ten Reasons Why Human Trafficking is Pervasive in Indian Country

One: Pervasive Poverty

Poverty puts pressure on families and individuals and sometimes pushes them into desperate situations in order to meet their basic needs for survival. Trying to find money for housing or food leads to taking chances that otherwise individuals would not take.

Two: Overlapping Police Jurisdictions

Jurisdictional inquiries in Native are complex. Often, there is overlap in jurisdiction. The line where tribal authority ends and federal or state authority begins is blurred. This is one of the major reasons why there is a historical lack in prosecution of crimes committed against Native American women on tribal lands.

Three: Isolation of Many Communities

Many reservations are large in land area but have little population. The most critical problem is the difficulty in sharing information. Further, isolated communities tend to become more insular when these types of incidents happen. There also might be some fear and trepidation of those who are from outside of their community.

Four: Misinformation by Human Traffickers

Some criminals in human trafficking make the mistake of thinking that if they are not Native, they cannot be arrested by tribal police or be prosecuted by tribal courts. This thinking is wrong but still persists.

Five: Closeness to the Canadian Border or the Mexican Border

Immigration is directly linked to human trafficking. Many reservations that are near U.S. borders have a vast area and low population. Those who are involved in smuggling see reservations as an ideal place to hide drugs, weapons and people.

Six: Lack of Information

Along with the lack of resources, there is also a concern about the lack of information. Until recently, crime statistics were not even gathered for information about missing and murdered Native women and human trafficking. Although this has changed in recent years, there is still a lot of work to be done to make the gathering of information about Native peoples a national priority.

Seven: Cultural Barriers

Cultural barriers not only include language, but also who Natives trust, how are they perceived, the way information is shared, can determine which programs will be successful.

Eight: The Lack of Resources

The scarcity of technology, trained individuals, and funds for culturally appropriate programs to bring awareness of the issue, all need to be addressed before substantial progress is made to end human trafficking.

Nine: The Lack of Training

Inadequate training on sexual violence and a lack of understanding of tribal cultural norms sometimes affect tribal and state laws.

Ten: Criminal Charges Against the Victim

Seeing the victim as a criminal seriously prevents victims from coming forward. Already, children are considered victims no matter the circumstances, but is not the same for adults in many cases.



Fr. Michael Carson presents keynote at the Tekawitha Conference with co-presenters Fr. David Bailey and Felicitas Onetti.

Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs

Fifth Anniversary of Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response to our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters

Fr. Linh Hoang, OFM Ph.D., Consultant for the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs

Following the 2001 pastoral statement *Harmony in Faith*, by the Committee on Migration, *Encountering Christ in Harmony* (June 2018) was the first “pastoral response” created, adopted, and published by the whole body of U.S. Bishops to address the pastoral needs of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics. It was also a culmination of years of hard work and guidance by the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs. It now marks five years of informing and inspiring all people to the presence and engagement of the Asian and Pacific Island (API) Catholics in the U.S. Church and the wider society.

Since its publication, the pastoral response has been promoted and distributed to many parishes and dioceses around the U.S. Several national Catholic gatherings such as the L.A. Religious Education Congress, the California Catholic Ministry Conference, the Mid-Atlantic Congress, the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering, etc., have featured the *Encountering Christ in Harmony* in their keynote addresses, workshops, and panel discussions. The pastoral response also has been promoted through social media, various publications, and national gatherings of Asian and Pacific Catholic groups, including the Lao Catholic Conference of the U.S. and Canada, the Asian and Pacific Catholic Network, and several others. The response has been used in educational settings, for instance, in theology classes at a couple of theological schools.

While attention has been given to the response, currently there isn't a clear indication of how it is being utilized in parishes and dioceses. There hasn't been a survey or evaluation of the use of the response to understand its impact. Thus, this fifth anniversary of the pastoral response provides an opportunity to celebrate its achievements and to evaluate its influence. There are a few things in place to make this happen. An Asian and Pacific Island Catholics National Encounter will take place July 15-17, 2024, in Indianapolis, IN. The dates precede the National Eucharistic Congress which starts a day after. The API National Encounter will celebrate the pastoral response, highlight the cultural values and pastoral gifts that API

Catholics offer to the Church, as well as discuss future opportunities. It will be an occasion to strategically plan on how to make the pastoral response more effective in parishes, schools, and dioceses. From its very inception, the pastoral response wanted to enliven the Church through the faith, gifts, and participation of the API communities.

The mission has started, and the API Catholic communities continue to bring forth the Gospel message to all people. We are very excited to invite you to the API National Encounter! For more information, contact scapa@uscgb.org. Ω

Encountering Christ in Harmony

A Pastoral Response to Our Asian and
Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters



Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers (PCMRT)

Connecting Perspectives: The Impactful Episcopal Encounter with Young Adults at the Fourth African National Eucharistic Congress

David Ugonna Ifediba, Young Adult participant 2023 African National Eucharistic Congress (ANEC)

The Fourth African National Eucharistic Congress (ANEC), celebrated from July 21 to 23, 2023, at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., was a transformative spiritual journey characterized by profound encounters and thought-provoking discussions, leaving an indelible mark on all attendees, especially the vibrant community of young adults.

One of the standout moments of this inspiring gathering was the Episcopal Encounter, a unique opportunity that empowered young adults to engage in meaningful dialogues with bishops hailing from various dioceses across the United States. These conversations provided a fresh and insightful perspective on the Catholic faith through the eyes of the younger generation.

The Episcopal Encounter proved to be a remarkable platform where the voices of young adults resonated with influential bishops from the U.S. and around the world. This unique opportunity to interact with the bishops facilitated a dynamic exchange of ideas, perspectives, and insights. As the event unfolded, the atmosphere was charged with enthusiasm and a shared sense of purpose.

The session commenced with a comprehensive introduction to the Episcopal Encounter, outlining its significance and purpose within the broader context of ANEC. Following this, a communal lunch provided the perfect setting for participants to engage in informal conversations with the attending Bishops sitting at their tables. Amidst a warm and inviting ambiance, young adults had the privilege of engaging with bishops who were genuinely eager to connect and share their wisdom.

The guided facilitation and discussion flowed smoothly, ensuring that questions and insights were equally exchanged between the young adults and the bishops. This balanced interaction enhanced the richness of the conversation and allowed for a comprehensive exploration of topics that resonated with the younger generation. Some of the thought-provoking questions posed during the discussion included: How can we as young adults continue to trust the Catholic Church? In what ways can we continue to grow the message of the Church? And how can we stay engaged in our faith despite distractions from social media?

The Episcopal Encounter left an Indelible mark on ANEC

participants, offering a space for them to dive deeper into their Catholic faith and engage with clergymen who play active roles in their spiritual journeys. The event underscored the value of fostering intergenerational dialogue and understanding, bridging the gap between age groups, and enhancing the sense of unity within the Catholic community.

Beyond the event itself, the Episcopal Encounter contributed to a broader theme that emerged throughout ANEC — the importance of nurturing a sense of community and dialogue within the context of faith. The encounter highlighted the willingness of the bishops to listen to the perspectives of young adults, fostering a sense of inclusivity and relevance that is vital for the growth of any religious community.

In essence, the Episcopal Encounter was a testament to ANEC's commitment to provide an environment where all participants, regardless of age, background, or status, could engage in a meaningful conversation that strengthen their faith and sense of community. Indeed, the fourth

ANEC stands as a testament to the boundless potential of unity, faith, and collaboration within our diverse African Catholic communities.

The African Eucharistic Congress drew nearly 1000 African Catholics from all corners of the nation, uniting them in a shared purpose. Beyond the enlightening conferences and discussions, the Eucharistic Procession and Unity Mass held at the magnificent Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception witnessed the participation of countless more faithful, solidifying the bonds of community and faith. ANEC, held once every five years, serves as a vital pillar for anchoring African Catholics in the United States firmly in their faith and inspiring them to become active, engaged members of their local Church communities.

ANEC has created a lasting impact, empowering individuals to embrace their roles as missionary disciples. As we reflect on the event's impact, let us continue to foster open dialogue and understanding within our faith communities, recognizing the importance of embracing diverse perspectives to create a more unified and inclusive Catholic Church. Ω



Bishops and African young adults gather at The Catholic University of America for a dialogue with bishops. Photo credit: USCCB Staff

Episcopal Visit to Migrant Farmworkers in Yakima, Washington

Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ | Assistant Director, Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers (PCMRT)

After a four-year hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Subcommittee on the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers (PCMRT) resumed its annual pastoral visits to migrant farmworkers by visiting the Diocese of Yakima, WA, August 27-30, 2023. Along with Most Rev. Eusebio Elizondo, Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle and PCMRT chairman, Most Rev. Frank R. Schuster Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle, and Most Rev. Joseph Tyson, Bishop of Yakima and PCMRT Episcopal Liaison to Migrant Farmworkers, the group included members of the board of the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network (CMFN), USCCB staff, and diocesan delegates from several dioceses. The visit included dialogues with migrants, visits to the fields, shared meals, and the celebration of the Eucharist. In its daily work, PCMRT develops catechetical, liturgical and evangelization materials for use with farmworkers, the promotion of regional, diocesan, and local gatherings of persons involved in ministry with farmworkers, and consultation to the USCCB Migration and Refugee Services' Policy Office on the development of statements and positions regarding legislation affecting farmworkers.

The annual visit provides an opportunity to meet and pray with our brothers and sisters doing farm work and the ministry leaders who accompany them, and to provide clarity about the cultural, economic, and spiritual challenges that migrant workers confront while living and working in the United States. The visit sought to learn, empower, and strengthen migrant ministry efforts by, sharing resources and best practices, and creating opportunities for new collaborations with other migrant ministry leaders in the nation. It also provides an opportunity to engage the farmworker community in Yakima through conversation, cultural exchange, and pastoral accompaniment.

The visit included site tours of fields and orchards, fruit packing facilities, and work sites and housing facilities, and times of prayer, community sharing and meals, with H-2A workers and other local migrant farmworkers, as well as workshops and discussion of best practices with local and national leaders in migrant farmworker ministry. PCMRT continues to work to find opportunities to accompany and sustain these often isolated, forgotten, and invisible communities.

Here are some of the best practices in migrant ministry shared by the community of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Wenatchee, WA and the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network (CMFN).

1. Consider ways to be *iglesia en salida* (*Evangelium gaudium* 24) – in the words of Pope Francis, a church that “goes forth”, to bring the Gospel to and accompany the people where they are.

Accompanying migrant farmworker communities as “*iglesia en salida*” may look different across the country, depending on local pastoral realities of farmworkers, but may include elements seen in Yakima, such as developing an active and sustained ministry of presence, creating opportunities for community and connection, offering opportunities for integral human development, and being flexible with schedules of migrant worker communities.

2. In areas where migrant farmworkers are employed, consider including experiences working alongside farmworkers as a part of seminary and permanent diaconate formation and training.

3. Encourage seminarians to have Spanish language proficiency, as well as promote seminarians, permanent deacons and ministry leaders' participation in intercultural competency trainings, such as the Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers, offered by USCCB Secretariate of Cultural Diversity in the Church. Ω



Participants of the pastoral visit to the migrant farmworkers in the Diocese of Yakima. Photo credit: USCCB Staff



Subcommittee on African American Affairs

Writing The Vision for Black Catholic Ministry Today

The 13th National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC XIII) was more than five years in the making. The event drew more than 3,000 participants and was very successful in many ways. While participants are still sorting out their impressions, dioceses are now determining their next steps. The Subcommittee on African American Affairs offered three evangelization workshops at Congress XIII. Below, three subcommittee consultants share their personal reflections of the experience.

(The articles are condensed for printing purposes. See the full article [online](#).)

Ashley Morris, Director of Black Catholic Affairs in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, organized a panel on Catholic Campus Ministry at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and led the Atlanta delegation to Congress:

My National Black Catholic Congress XIII experience in July 2023 was one filled with an incredible amount of joy and encouragement. Perhaps the most profound moment of my overall experience came prior to the actual gathering, where I assumed the responsibility of preparing archdiocesan delegates for the Congress experience.

We hosted six large group gatherings and twelve small faith community gatherings to prepare for Congress. Each focused on an aspect of prayer and preparation for full participation. The six large group gatherings included a virtual and in-person Congress Day of Reflection, an opening Mass with delegates, two virtual pre-Congress meetings and an in-person gathering that featured a commissioning Mass with our delegates and attendees.

What made those gatherings profound to me was the energy and engagement of the thirty-seven delegates and attendees, each one actively and intentionally offered their insight, wisdom, and prayers towards building a strong community to not only go to Congress but to also return to the archdiocese prepared to share their experiences with their parish communities. I believe these pre-Congress touchstone gatherings were necessary and vital for our personal and communal faith journeys, as each moment we spent with one another gave opportunities for us to connect, heal, strategize, and focus our efforts as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Valerie Jennings, Vicariate VI Parish Vitality Coordinator in the Archdiocese of Chicago, presented a breakout session on lessons learned from parish mergers:

As our attention moves toward building the new reality of parish renewal, the question becomes, how



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do we cultivate parishes with mission vitality and a vision for the future? While preparing for Congress, three areas of concern surfaced: (1) the role of Evangelization, (2) attracting and engaging Youth and Young Adults, and (3) how to come together as a united body of Black Catholics in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Black Catholics around the country raised similar questions. We all desire thriving parishes. In a healthy and spirited parish people want to celebrate the Mass and the Sacraments, to feel welcome and to welcome newcomers. These parishioners are proud of their diversity and know how to draw from the gifts of the community.

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Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs

A Pastoral Plan that We All Can Be a Part Of

Alejandro Aguilera-Titus | Assistant Director, Hispanic Affairs

**This is an adaptation of an article that first appeared in the September 2023 issue of [America: The Jesuit Review](#)*

On June 16, 2023, the U.S. bishops approved the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry. The Plan refers to Hispanics/Latinos as a blessing from God, as a missionary and prophetic presence that revitalizes the church in the United States. A few of these graces include an abiding love for family and community, a rich practice of Catholic traditions, an authentic Marian devotion, and vibrant ecclesial movements.

For the past four decades, Hispanic/Latino ministry has flourished in thousands of parishes across the country. Such ministries have produced many fruits as millions of Hispanic/Latino families have been able to live and celebrate their Catholic faith. Building on that growth, the Plan calls for a synodal church that is more welcoming, evangelizing and missionary at all levels; a church that can build vibrant parish communities with our Hispanic/Latino brothers and sisters, in the context of a culturally diverse society.

The Plan is designed to further strengthen ministries among our Hispanic/Latino brothers and sisters over the next ten years. It also strives to redouble the church's efforts to mentor, form and embrace a new generation of Hispanic/Latino leaders as missionary disciples ready to serve the entire church and the society.

It is important to note that the Pastoral Plan is addressed to all church leaders, and everybody is invited to participate in its implementation. Also important is the Plan's call for all leaders in the church to become more interculturally competent. That is, to have the capacity to communicate, work and relate with people from other cultures. Intercultural competency involves gaining knowledge, developing skills, and adopting an attitude of openness and respect for people from other cultures.

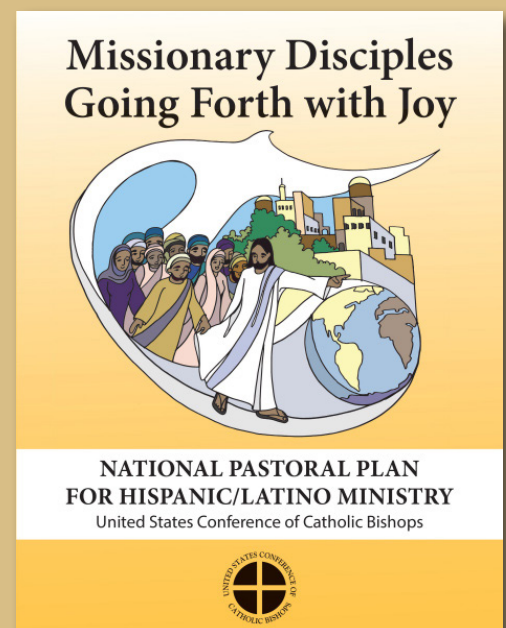
The following actions, activities and attitudes have proven to be effective in accompanying Hispanics/Latinos in their process of Ecclesial Integration/Inclusion to the parish, as articulated in the Plan.

Here's how you and your parish could participate in the 10-year plan for Hispanic/Latino ministry:

- Notice and acknowledge people in your parish as members of the faith community
- Take the first step in greeting people and asking questions to create a sense familiarity
- Try to take part in each other's activities with a genuine sense of openness and curiosity
- Create opportunities for intercultural dialogue to learn about each other's stories, cultural traditions, and ways of celebrating the faith
- Move from an Us-They to a We language and build relationships with people from other cultures
- Include representatives of all communities in the planning of parish activities and be supportive in the planning of activities led by different cultural/ethnic groups
- Identify potential leaders and advocate for leadership development and formation
- Form leaders to better understanding the structure and governance of the parish and how to engage them successfully
- Invest in the formation of leaders, particularly young adults
- Mentor leaders into becoming members of the Parish Council, and other advisory groups in parishes.

Let's continue walking together in building the beloved community of missionary disciples that Jesus calls us to be. The invitation to participate in the Plan provides a unique opportunity to engage and form new leaders, invigorate parishes and multiply creative pastoral responses to the growing Hispanic/Latino presence in all Catholic institutions and organizations.

To purchase a copy of the national pastoral plan, [Missionary Disciples Going Forth with Joy](#), go to the OSV website by clicking on the link.



Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs

Un Plan Pastoral del que Todos Podemos Formar Parte

Alejandro Aguilera-Titus | Assistant Director, Hispanic Affairs

**Una adaptación de un artículo que apareció en [America Magazine](#) en septiembre de 2023*

El 16 de junio de 2023, los obispos de los Estados Unidos aprobaron el Plan Pastoral Nacional para el Ministerio Hispano/Latino. El Plan se refiere a los hispanos/latinos como una bendición de Dios, como una presencia misionera y profética que revitaliza la Iglesia en los Estados Unidos. Algunas de las gracias que aportan incluyen un amor constante por la familia y la comunidad, una rica práctica de las tradiciones católicas, una auténtica devoción mariana y movimientos eclesiales vibrantes.

Durante las últimas cuatro décadas, el ministerio hispano/latino ha florecido en miles de parroquias en todo el país. Dichos ministerios han producido muchos frutos ya que millones de familias hispanas/latinas han podido vivir y celebrar su fe católica. Basándose en ese desarrollo, el Plan pide una Iglesia sinodal más acogedora, evangelizadora y misionera en todos los niveles; una Iglesia que pueda construir comunidades parroquiales vibrantes con nuestros hermanos y hermanas hispanos/latinos, en el contexto de una sociedad culturalmente diversa.

El Plan está diseñado para fortalecer aún más los ministerios entre nuestros hermanos y hermanas hispanos/latinos durante los próximos diez años. También se esfuerza por redoblar los esfuerzos de la Iglesia para asesorar, formar y abrazar a una nueva generación de líderes hispanos/latinos como discípulos misioneros listos para servir a toda la Iglesia y la sociedad.

Es importante señalar que el Plan Pastoral está dirigido a todos los líderes de la Iglesia y todos están invitados a participar en su implementación. También es importante el llamado que hace el Plan a que todos los líderes de la Iglesia sean más capacitados interculturalmente. Es decir, tener la capacidad para comunicarse, trabajar y relacionarse con personas de otras culturas. La capacidad intercultural implica adquirir conocimientos, desarrollar habilidades y adoptar una actitud de apertura y respeto hacia las personas de otras culturas.

Las acciones, actividades y actitudes en la lista a continuación han demostrado ser efectivas para acompañar a los hispanos/latinos en su proceso de integración/inclusión eclesial a la parroquia, como se articula en el Plan.

Así es como usted y su parroquia pueden participar en el plan de 10 años para el ministerio hispano/latino:

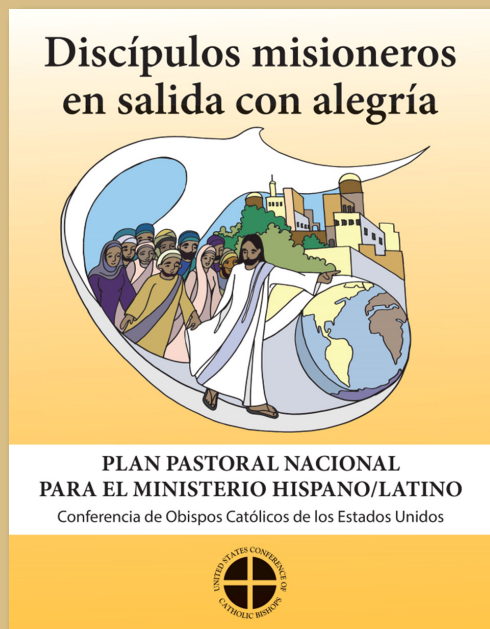
- Observar y reconocer a las personas de su parroquia como miembros de la comunidad de fe
- Dar el primer paso al saludar a las personas y hacer preguntas para crear un sentido de confianza
- Tratar de participar en las actividades de los demás con un sentido genuino de apertura y curiosidad
- Crear oportunidades para el diálogo intercultural para aprender sobre las historias, tradiciones culturales y formas de celebrar la fe de los demás
- Pasar del lenguaje de “nosotros vs. ellos” al lenguaje de “nosotros” y construir relaciones con personas de otras culturas
- Incluir representantes de todas las comunidades en la planificación de las actividades parroquiales y apoyar la

planificación de actividades dirigidas por diferentes grupos culturales/étnicos

- Identificar líderes potenciales y abogar por el desarrollo y la formación del liderazgo
- Formar líderes para comprender mejor la estructura y el gobierno de la parroquia y cómo interactuar con ellos con éxito
- Invertir en la formación de líderes, particularmente de jóvenes adultos
- Asesorar a los líderes para que se conviertan en miembros del consejo parroquial y otros grupos consultivos en las parroquias

Sigamos caminando juntos en la construcción de la comunidad fraternal de discípulos misioneros que Jesús nos llama a ser. La invitación a participar en el Plan brinda una oportunidad única para involucrar y formar nuevos líderes, revitalizar las parroquias y multiplicar respuestas pastorales creativas a la creciente presencia hispana/latina en todas las instituciones y organizaciones católicas.

Para adquirir una copia de *Discípulos misioneros en salida con alegría* ([Missionary Disciples Going Forth with Joy](#)) haga click en el enlace para visitar el sitio web de OSV.



JOURNEYING TOGETHER UPDATES



Journeying Together Goes to World Youth Day!

It was an absolute honor bringing Journeying Together to the international stage. Joined by several of our bishops and Journeying Together family, we shared our important work with a new audience. What followed was a very open and candid conversation between our shepherds and the young adults in the room. This was a reminder of what the core of Journeying Together is all about. Yes, we have put together an impactful process. Yes, we have developed useful tools for participants. But at the end of the day, it is all about conversation.

Matt Kresich, Diocese of Gary, Indiana



Encounter – that was what Journeying Together at World Youth Day was all about. In Lisbon, pilgrims had so many choices of what to be involved in each day. What brought everyone to the conversation in Lisbon was relationship – whether because they came with their group or because their bishop was on the panel. But what it came down to was that it was a chance for so many young people to listen and think about challenges of our church and dialogue with their shepherds. Some hard questions were asked. There was no single solution that came out – but the conversations that started on zoom, continued in Chicago, continued to be taken on by more people - and connections were made.

Fr. Jimmy Hsu, CSP

JOURNEYING TOGETHER UPDATES

My experience going to World youth day included a behind the scenes view. I went to experience WYD but also help the USCCB staff and the U.S. Bishops. I am truly thankful for this experience, especially when it came to taking Journeying Together to the world stage. We were able to let more people know about The JT experience. August 2 wasn't just a big day in the sense that we brought JT to WYD; it happened to be my birthday. Being able to celebrate with our Journey Together family and the bishops who journeyed with us was truly a blessing.

Jessica Gallegos, Diocese of Boise



Most Rev. Arturo Cepeda, Most Rev. Nelson Perez, and Jessica Gallegos Panel at Journey Together at World Youth Day breakout.



On the street at World Youth Day 2023 from L to R front row: Sarah Jarzembowski, Paul Jarzembowski, Patricia Visoso, Mar Munoz-Visoso. Second row: Raphael Visoso, Fr. Jimmy Hsu, Hannah Dell, Bishop Alberto Rojas, Amy McIntee, and Raphael Visoso.

JOURNEYING TOGETHER UPDATES

At the initiative of the Young Adult Multicultural Advisory Committee (YAMAC) a Journeying Together experience was held in Lisboa last summer, in conjunction with World Youth Day. The event attracted an international audience of about 150 participants, mostly from English-speaking countries, despite roads being blocked due to other papal events happening in the area earlier that day. A good number of young adults from different U.S. dioceses showed up, ready to have a good exchange with three very willing U.S. bishops who are veterans of the process: Archbishop Nelson Pérez of Philadelphia, Bishop Larry Silva of Honolulu, and Bishop Arturo Cepeda, auxiliary of Detroit. Jessica Gallegos and Carissa Corpuz facilitated the dialogue.



The frank and open, but always respectful, conversation drew in the audience, who were encouraged to ask questions to the bishops. The bishops responded with deeply personal stories that touched our hearts, honest responses to difficult questions, as well as their best advice on how to address areas of concern to young adults of diverse ethnic and cultural communities. Above all, some JT veterans had an opportunity to show members of their diocesan delegation what JT is all about. They also relished the opportunity to come together in person and embrace each other again, a year after the in-person gathering in Chicago. For some, it was a chance to meet their fellow journeyers for the first time after having participated in the virtual gatherings. Pictured here are people from places as distant as California, Hawaii, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Idaho, Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC. The joyful expression on their faces says it all! We are companions on the journey of faith and life!

Maria del Mar Muñoz-Visoso, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC

WORLD YOUTH DAY 2023 LISBON



I was very nervous in the days approaching World Youth Day Lisbon. It was getting closer and closer to seeing the fruits of a year's worth of effort and preparation, I didn't know what to expect. This was my first WYD, and not only was I going as pilgrim leader, but my pilgrims were about sixty U.S. bishops. Our WYD schedule was packed. I arrived in Lisbon on Friday, July 28th, and it was nonstop until Pope Francis gave the final blessing at the Closing Mass more than a week later.

I can honestly say that there wasn't a moment in Lisbon when I didn't feel the Lord's immense love for me through an outpouring of grace, awe, and excitement. There were many high-stress moments that required an abundance of grace to get through. Whether that be navigating transportation amidst city-wide road closures, juggling multiple bishops' schedules for events, or problem-solving with the other members of the USCCB team. A particular warming moment of experiencing God's grace was the USCCB-hosted U.S. National Gathering, which I had to emcee alongside two other colleagues.

The crowd doubled our expectations and upwards of 10,000 pilgrims attended the vocation and adoration event. At the national gathering, I felt immense wonder and awe that carried throughout the entire week. Meeting with the hundreds of thousands of young people and the Holy Father Pope Francis truly left all present with this feeling. The excitement was so palpable that it was felt in the air. As I looked around at the various flags waving around me and heard the multitude of languages, I felt deeply honored to play my role and be present in this historic moment in the life of the universal Church.

Fatima Godfrey, WYD Coordinator, US Conference of Catholic Bishops

EUCCHARISTIC PILGRIMAGE, REVIVAL, AND CONGRESS UPDATES

Below are updates for the pilgrimage, revival, and Congress. *New!* A Spanish-language version of the revival websites has been created specifically for Hispanic Catholics. Click on the top right corner of each page to change the site from English to Spanish. <https://www.eucharisticrevival.org/>



NATIONAL Eucharistic Pilgrimage

- We are looking for Perpetual Pilgrims for the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage. Accompany Jesus for a segment of the Pilgrimage or meet up with him at events held by local parishes and shrines along the routes! Join around 100,000 Catholics in this massive public witness to our love of Jesus in the Eucharist.
- Interested in applying to join the small group of Perpetual Pilgrims who will travel an entire route? **Submit your application.** Applications are now open for young people (ages 19-29) – apply today. For more information about the pilgrimage, go [here](#).



NATIONAL Eucharistic Revival

- [Jesus and the Eucharist](#) small group study has launched!! The first videos in English and Spanish have already had over 15,000 hours of viewing, and the remaining episodes will be released in the next several weeks. Thanks to all of our early adopters, as well as to all who are scheduling these small group sessions in the new year.



NATIONAL Eucharistic Congress

- [Registration](#) is open! Check out the full passes and daily passes. Looking ahead to the [National Eucharistic Congress](#), if your diocese purchased [discounted passes](#) last fall, please make it a priority to distribute them as soon as possible. This will allow the Congress team to work out the housing assignments as quickly as possible.
- Scholarships/Solidarity fund: The Solidarity Fund is an initiative led by the Bishops of the United States to help those in need of financial assistance for registration for the 10th National Eucharistic Congress. Our goal is to make thousands of passes available to individuals, families, or groups that need financial support to attend this historic gathering. Click to be notified when the application opens to the public: <https://www.eucharisticcongress.org/solidarity-fund>
- Congress Speakers: Check out the current [list](#)
- Impact Session Options: Each day at the Congress will begin with morning impact sessions. These unique experiences will focus on encountering Christ as we form our minds and hearts in the mystery of the Eucharist, ending in liturgies where that encounter happens. <https://www.eucharisticcongress.org/impact-sessions>
- The official [Revival store](#) is open: The colorful merchandise of the National Eucharistic Revival provides opportunities for you to share your love for the Eucharist with everyone you meet.



Cultural Diversity in the Church *Committee Members & Staff*

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Most Reverend Arturo Cepeda, Archdiocese of Detroit
Term: November 2018 – November 2024

Chairman-Elect

Most Reverend Robert J. Brennan, Diocese of Brooklyn

Committee Members

Most Reverend Oscar Cantú, Diocese of San José,
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Most Reverend Eusebio Elizondo, M.SpS.,
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Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Most Reverend Joseph Perry, Archdiocese of Chicago, Chairman of the Subcommittee on African American Affairs

Most Reverend Jorge Rodriguez-Novelo,
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Most Reverend Clarence Silva, Diocese of Honolulu, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs

Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson, Archdiocese of Indianapolis

Most Reverend Chad Zielinski, Diocese of New Ulm, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Native American Affairs

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Committee Chairman, Most Reverend Arturo Cepeda with Mrs. Maria del Mar Muñoz-Visoso, Executive Director of the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church. Photo Credit: Kendall McLaren

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Introducing New Staff

Please join us in welcoming CDC's newest team members!



Robert Hancock, Staff Assistant
Supports staff of Asian and Pacific Island Affairs, and Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, & Travelers

"I look forward to making use of what abilities God has given me to the help and betterment of those around me and the missions they serve."



Maria del Carmen Lopez Gonzalez, Staff Assistant-Bilingual
Supports staff of African American Affairs, Hispanic Affairs, and Native American Affairs

"I am looking forward to growing on this path as a professional and as a human being, meeting new people and learning everything I can. This opportunity is a blessing to me."

Subcommittee on African American Affairs

(continued from page 11)

Parishes known for mission vitality have no walls that keep them from reaching out to the poor, the marginalized, the immigrant, the elderly, the millennials, the Gen-Z, the divorced, the unchurched, and those that don't know Christ. A parish that strives to live in a spirit of mission vitality is not self-absorbed with internal issues, like maintenance problems, which are important to address, but takes seriously Jesus' command to make disciples and build the community of God through witnessing of his goodness.

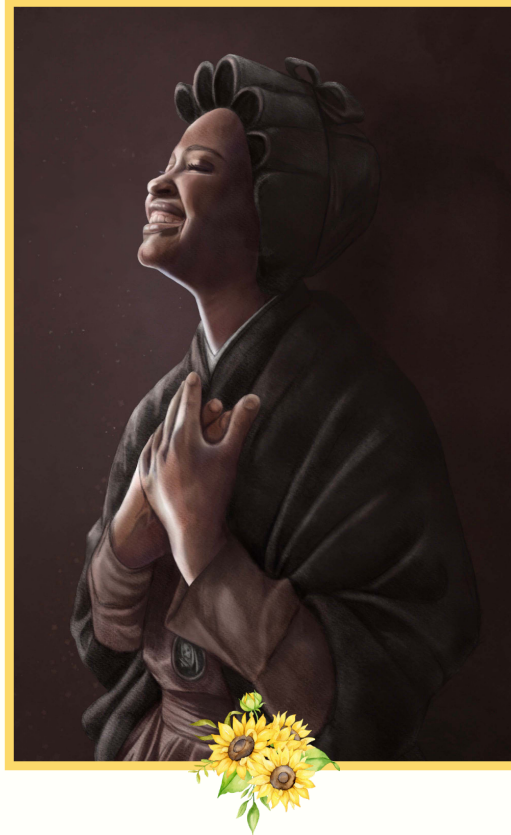
Sr. Odessa Stanford SFCC, a Catholic educator and administrator at Cristo Rey High School in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston was a first time Congress participant:

My interest to attend the National Black Catholic Congress XIII was charted through multiple channels - as an African American religious consecrated woman, Subcommittee on African American Affairs consultant, and my passion as a Catholic school educator. My heart and spirit were excited to have this opportunity to attend my first NBCC because I converted to faith in 1995. The most meaningful message for me was from Cardinal Gregory's homily that "visionaries are important people for every culture."

American Black Catholics are no longer a mission assignment. We are full members of the Catholic Church. An important factor that influenced growth in the Catholicism for African Americans and other marginalized people is the parochial schools provided for our families in our communities. Today there are several reasons for a decline in these schools. But this is why I was glad to support the Subcommittee's Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Initiative that was presented in several different ways during Congress. This initiative is a means of sustaining the Black Catholic community. It will enhance the presence of Newman Centers so that Black Catholic students can continue to learn, to live and to grow in their faith.

At Congress, I gained knowledge from breakout sessions that could help us to be more visionary concerning our faith. For example, most Black Catholic parishes are pastored by priests who are not of our culture which often influences the important dimension of praise and worship during the liturgy. I really enjoyed the excellent examples of Catholic liturgy that the extraordinarily talented Vallimar Jansen presented. Ω

St. Josephine Bakhita



A Prayer to St. Josephine Bakhita

St. Josephine Bakhita, you were sold into slavery as a child and endured untold hardship and suffering.

Once liberated from your physical enslavement, you found proper redemption in your encounter with Christ and his Church.

Oh St. Bakhita, assist all those trapped in a state of slavery; Intercede with God on their behalf so that they will be released from their chains of captivity. Those whom man enslaves, let God set free.

Provide comfort to survivors of slavery and let them look to you as an example of hope and faith. Help all survivors find healing from their wounds. We ask for your prayers and intercessions for those enslaved among us.

Amen.



Oración a Santa Josefina Bakhita

Santa Josefina Bakhita, fuiste vendida como esclava cuando eras niña y soportaste dificultades y sufrimientos indecibles. Una vez liberada de tu esclavitud física, encontraste la redención adecuada en tu encuentro con Cristo y su Iglesia.

Oh St. Bakhita, ayuda a todos los atrapados en un estado de esclavitud; Intercede ante Dios en su nombre para que sean liberados de sus cadenas de cautiverio. Aquellos a quienes el hombre esclaviza, que Dios los libere.

Proporcionar consuelo a los sobrevivientes de la esclavitud y deja que te miren como un ejemplo de esperanza y fe. Ayude a todos los sobrevivientes a encontrar la curación de sus heridas. Pedimos sus oraciones e intercesiones por los esclavizados entre nosotros.

Amén.

