

Centers for Specialized Ministry

What does it mean to have a parish designated as a center for some specialized ministry?

This designation does not refer to a building or an institution, but rather to an aspect of ministry being entrusted to the parish. In most cases, it is a territorial parish that is being designated a center for specialized ministry. This means that in addition to the responsibility the parish has for all the residents living inside its parish boundaries, it will also develop ministry among a specific cultural group in its general vicinity. The specialized ministry is more regional in nature.

Below is an explanation about centers for Hispanic Ministry. It is the best developed example that can be offered because of the existing *Pastoral Plan for Ministry among Spanish-speaking Catholics (2014)*. The same foundational principles and ministry elements can shape our understanding about what parishes designated as Centers for Portuguese Ministry or Haitian Ministry should strive to develop over time. Please notice the balance between particular ministry and integration into the parish community.

Example: Centers for Hispanic Ministry

History

- In the past, the pastoral care of Spanish-speaking Catholics was addressed by **personal parishes**.
- There was a **Diocesan Hispanic Apostolate** which provided directly for needs which were not met by these parishes. This model reflected Statute 135 from the Fourth Synod of Trenton (1991):

A diocesan apostolate especially dedicated to the Hispanic community shall continue to provide for the needs of that community. This apostolate shall address the specific concerns of the Hispanic community and the various ethnic groups within this community. These areas of concern include the Liturgy, Sacramental preparation for adults and children, supportive faith communities, assistance in living a Christian marriage, youth programs, cultural programs, legal assistance, and help with the annulment process.

- **Multicultural Parishes** - During the twenty years since the last Synod, the Spanish-speaking population in the Diocese has increased and become more geographically widespread. In the era of parish consolidations which began in 2005, many personal parishes were merged with surrounding parishes to strengthen ministry and address the serious challenges we face regarding the stewardship of resources, both human and financial.
- In light of these realities, the Curial reorganization that took place in 2011 took inspiration from two other Statutes from the Fourth Synod of Trenton (1991):
 - *Statute 93 - Every diocesan office shall include in its planning and programming the elements necessary to meet the needs of a multicultural Diocese.*
 - *Statute 128- The responsibility for the pastoral care of non-English speaking Catholics, including the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy in their own language, belongs by Universal Law primarily to their proper Pastor. Pastors shall inform the diocesan Bishop, through the annual spiritual report, the Status Animarum, of the number of non-English*

speaking people living in their parish boundaries, and what they are and are not able to provide in terms of meeting their spiritual needs. Whenever a Pastor becomes aware that he or others within his parish community cannot provide proper pastoral care, he shall seek assistance through the appropriate diocesan office(s), if one exists, or through the Chancery Office or other means provided by the diocesan Bishop.

- ***Pastoral Plan for Ministry among Spanish-Speaking Catholics*** (Sept 2014) describes the means the diocesan Bishop will use to provide pastoral care for Spanish-Speaking Catholics given that not every parish has the capacity to do so. This was accompanied by a Revision of the Diocese of Trenton Statutes (Dec, 2014).

Excerpts from the ***Pastoral Plan for Ministry among Spanish-Speaking Catholics (2014)***

There are more than 112,000 Spanish-speaking Catholics in the Diocese (about 15%; CARA). At present, fewer than 13,000 attend Masses in Spanish on an average Ordinary time Sunday. This population is increasing both in real numbers and as a percentage of Catholics in the Diocese.

Foundational Principles:

- (1) Pastoral Care of Hispanic Catholics should be provided for within the territorial parish, whenever possible.
- (2) Integration of the Hispanic Catholics in a given geographic area into a multicultural parish that celebrates both unity and diversity is the aim of this Pastoral Plan, rather than assimilation.
- (3) Culture and faith are intimately intertwined. Pastoral care, services and programs specific to the needs of Hispanic Catholics are necessary, alongside continual efforts to make a place at the table for participation in the wider parish community.
- (4) Ministry among Spanish-speaking Catholics entails more than providing for Liturgy in Spanish.
- (5) The number of parishes and their locations must be intentionally selected so that resources can be stewarded appropriately (including priest assignments) and a legitimately established and engaging Ministry among Spanish-speaking Catholics established at each site.
- (6) Diocesan offices exist to support parishes. They do so primarily through formation and training, and by opening up avenues for collaboration and cooperation between parishes to meet the needs of the people. Direct ministry is only to be provided by the diocese when a parish or group of parishes cannot meet the needs or when the diocese is in a better position to provide leadership on an issue.
- (7) Parishes and Diocesan offices work together, with the guidance of the Liaison for Hispanic Outreach and Ministry appointed by the Bishop, in order to address the needs of Spanish-speaking Catholics and oversee their integration into parish and diocesan life.

The first set of recommendations in the plan had to do with the locations.

- 1.1 Recommendation – **Select 17 or 18 parishes in which to develop a legitimately established Ministry to Spanish-speaking Catholics.** This number responds to the size of the Spanish-speaking population, the need to provide accessibility (geographic dispersal) around the diocese, and the availability of Spanish-speaking priests for assignment.

The phrase “legitimately established Ministry to Spanish-speaking Catholics” is synonymous with what the Faith in Our Future decisions refer to as a “center for Hispanic Ministry.” 18 parishes (one still to be named) are to be designated as centers for Hispanic Ministry.

- 1.2 Recommendation - Establish connections between current Spanish-speaking segments of neighboring parishes to **reduce the current 24 to 17 or 18, but strengthen the ministry provided.**

Each case will be different, but the connections might be made through parish merger, twinning, or by inviting Spanish-speaking Catholics to participate in a neighboring site to meet their needs.

The Faith in Our Future decisions have determined where parish mergers and linkages (twinning) will take place, and where Spanish-speaking segments will be invited to participate in neighboring sites.

The Plan went on to explain that reducing the number of sites is necessary because resources are limited, but acknowledges it will be difficult. A plan to transition the people over the course of a period of time (some months to a year) should be customized for each parish circumstance. Some of this work has already taken place in the interim between 2014 and 2017 (for example in West Long Branch and in Jackson). The plan emphasizes the duty of priests to encourage people and suggests a number of strategies that might be employed in the transition.

- 2.1 Recommendation - **Build on what is currently in place to develop and integrate ministry among Spanish-speaking Catholics into the parishes designated as Centers for Hispanic Ministry. Create a development plan** for those selected parishes which cannot support this form at this time.

A parish designated as a center for Hispanic Ministry would develop:

1. Spanish-speaking priest in residence
2. Bilingual lay staff in the parish including at least a secretary/receptionist, and someone in a formation role (either DRE or Assistant)
3. Pastor who is committed to and involved in the integration of the Spanish ministry within the larger parish (whether he speaks Spanish or not)
4. A liturgical musician who is open to a variety of music, respects other cultural expressions

5. Enough trained Spanish-speaking parishioners to serve in liturgical ministries
6. Bilingual faith formation elements
 - i. Baptismal Prep, Marriage Prep, RCIA should be available in Spanish if needed
 - ii. Preparation of children for reconciliation, communion, confirmation should include possibility of bilingual, especially for parent interaction
 - iii. Adult faith formation
7. Training for Spanish-speaking lay people for ministries within the parish; including training to become ministers of Holy Communion to the sick and homebound, and provide other forms of pastoral care
8. Lay leadership from among the Spanish-speaking community must contribute to all leadership groups in the parish (finance and pastoral councils, etc), and ministries integrated. Hispanic ministry should not create a parish within a parish.
9. All Clergy and staff of the parish should participate in Intercultural competency training in order to help them:
 - a. Develop ways to share the devotional life of various ethnic communities with each other
 - b. Use teaching materials to make the Spanish-speaking community at home in the larger community
 - c. Create an environment of welcome that includes symbols of faith from cultures of the people
 - d. Cultivate a sensitivity about different ways of doing things
10. Infuse an Hispanic flair into the traditions of the parish, so in time, everyone would feel like they belong [*making room for Hispanic style, celebrations and traditions*].
11. Support for Parents in light of the bi-cultural nature of their families

These elements describe an ideal toward which parishes should make steady progress. They must be applied to the local situation with an eye toward both the ongoing spiritual development of the cultural group and their integration into the life of the parish. These elements have the potential to benefit and enrich the whole parish community. While it is not envisioned that all of this would be achieved at once, the parish should make these developments a priority addressed over time.

The development of the specialized ministry and integration into the wider community might be taken into consideration during the discussion of the Cohort annually for Faith in the Future Implementation Plans.