

Pastor's Notes: Interview with Corinne Henderson of La Paz Chattanooga - Part 1 of 2

April 18, 2021

On Mar. 18, 2021, I interviewed Corinne Henderson, Basilica parishioner and board member of La Paz Chattanooga. The full interview can be found on the Basilica's website along with my Pastor's Notes for April 18 and 25, 2021, accessible at stspeterandpaulbasilica.com/pastors-notes.



Fr. Carter: Welcome to this interview with Corinne Henderson. She is a longtime parishioner here at the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul. She is our Finance Council Chair. And she also has a great love for our Hispanic community. I see her often at the Spanish Masses. And she is a board member for an organization here in Chattanooga called La Paz Chattanooga. Tell me, what is La Paz?

Corinne Henderson: La Paz is an organization that works to empower our Latino - largely immigrant - population. And they really want to help the folks in that part of our community become leaders, and to thrive in Chattanooga.

Fr. Carter: I know the full name was "La Paz de Dios". Is that correct? What was the inspiration for La Paz de Dios?

Corinne Henderson: Yes, it still is La Paz de Dios, Inc, The Peace of God. I believe that the leaders that started La Paz 17 years ago - quite a few of them - were from faith-based organizations. The immigrant population -the Latin American population - was being taken advantage of. And that's my understanding of why it was started. And it's interesting that in 2020, with all of the COVID stuff, and then in particular, the tornadoes that happened in East Brainerd, there were a lot of folks being taken advantage of. La Paz was able to step in and help folks —not just physically, but legally—in that respect. Definitely advocacy. And also boots-on-the-ground physically. At the Basilica, too, during the tornado, you had a lot of diapers and food and clothing. And La Paz has done that, too: helped families get the things physically that they need, as well as the social service things they need.

Fr. Carter: And I know that Sister Imelda with our Hispanic community has partnered very well with the work of La Paz, that we are arm and arm with a lot of what they do.

Corinne Henderson: Right. She's a hero of La Paz. They put out the HEROES publication, and she was featured in it. And it is beautiful, her words in that interview.

Fr. Carter: Absolutely. And we'll put a link to that Chattanooga publication and what all was there. And then also in the past, La Paz Chattanooga gave the Latino Leadership Awards, and Sister Celia Sanchez, who was the predecessor of Sister Imelda, had received one of the Latino Leaders Awards, but probably about six or seven years ago.

Corinne Henderson: Yes. I believe that a lot of the members of our parish receive services. A lot of them are educational, or they have a lot of informational sessions that help folks that are immigrants. Like banking - how do you navigate the banking system here? Just really practical things. A lot of our members of our parish are able to take advantage of those services.

Fr. Carter: Information is a huge thing. And knowing the how-to when you're in a foreign land and don't know how things work. That's power.

Corinne Henderson: I thought about you living in Rome and having to navigate the Italian services. And I wanted to share that I love the language. And the first time that I went to the Spanish Mass in our church, a church where I was baptized and where I am completely comfortable, I was the only Anglo person in the building. How I felt - it gave me a kernel, a grain of sand, bit of understanding of what it would feel like to be an immigrant in this city. But right when I walk out the door of the Basilica, I'm back in my familiar in my homeland. When I was asked to serve with La Paz, I kept saying no, because I thought my plate was too full. And when I finally did say yes, I am so glad that I did. Because I've gotten a lot of blessings from being able to be one of the few Anglo participants in all of our Spanish celebrations at the parish.

Fr. Carter: What you're describing there is what the Catholic Church calls solidarity. And it's one of the principles of the Catholic social teaching. So you're living it out. You experienced it in your heart, and you responded, in your in your call, your baptismal call for holiness. That's awesome. Thanks.

Corinne Henderson: And I also appreciate the name of the capital campaign, because that really resonates with me, too. Because Saints Peter and Paul is for every single person that comes without respect to where we were born, or the color of our skin, or our native language.

Fr. Carter: Corinne is referring to our Under One Roof capital campaign to preserve the historical building that is the Basilica. We need lots of upgrades and renovations, including a new roof. If you'd like to donate to the Under One Roof campaign, we'll put a link in this interview also for you to do so.

The interview will conclude in the April 25 pastor's notes, and the video and transcript will be posted on the Basilica's website. To find out more or volunteer with La Paz Chattanooga, visit <https://www.lapazchattanooga.org/>, call (423) 624-8414 or text (423) 401-0880. Read about the HEROES award given to Sister Imelda Quechol, the Basilica's Hispanic Ministry Coordinator, here: <http://www.stspeterandpaulbasilica.com/news/sister-imelda-honored-with-lapaz-heroes-award>. Find out more about the Basilica's Under One Roof campaign on our website.