



Faith Formation with Hispanic/Latino Families

Ida Miranda

The majority of Hispanic/Latino families today identify themselves as Christians, specifically as Catholics,¹ and they attend church here in the United States more so than they did in their native countries. This is mainly due to the feeling of loneliness and isolation they experience after leaving behind their extended families and friends in their native countries; they look to the church for support and a sense of belonging during this time of loss, change, and transition.

Studies indicate that 72.6 percent of Hispanics living in the United States—close to 26 million—are Catholic, and that 64 percent attend church services regularly.² They are present today in every church in the United States, participating in the life of the church by way of prayer groups such as Talleres de Oración (prayer workshops), the Charismatic renewal, the Cursillo movement, Marriage Encounter, Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (small Christian communities), and other apostolic movements. Both those who are not as involved in church activities as well as those who are search for a deeper knowledge of the Bible, faith and leadership formation, and spiritual development. In addition, many practicing as well as non-practicing families come to the Catholic Church to register their children for *la doctrina* (religious education classes) so that they may receive their First Communion, and more and more families are registering their non-baptized children who are of catechetical age in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Children (RCIC).³

It is, therefore, of utmost importance that all church leaders recognize and affirm the Hispanic/Latino presence not only by responding to their spiritual needs, but also by ensuring that they are included in every facet of church life. Church leaders are challenged to support and nurture their relationship with God by making positive efforts to provide faith formation opportunities specifically for them.

This essay will address three key issues and challenges for faith formation with Hispanic/Latino families: 1) understanding their faith and religious practices; 2) presenting ways in which we can support and encourage Hispanic families to nurture, celebrate, and share faith at home; and 3) identifying ways in which churches can nurture family faith through family-centered faith formation models.

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I will be writing from my experience as a Latina Roman Catholic⁴ who has ministered in catechesis in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, in predominantly Anglo churches with a strong Hispanic/Latino presence. The majority of Hispanic/Latino families I served were first or second generation Mexicans or Central Americans and first generation Cubans. For the sake of uniformity, I will use the term “Hispanic,” which is used by the United States government and by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops.⁵

Faith and Religious Practices of Hispanic Families

Hispanic families have a very deep faith in God, Mary, and the saints. They may not know a great deal about the Bible or about the religion they profess, but without a doubt their faith in God is strong and constant. When asked to reflect on their relationship with the triune God, their testimony is of conversion and grace, giving witness to a loving, compassionate, and ever-present God. Although many struggle daily with the fact that they left behind some or all of their family members, the presence of God in their daily lives is very much a part of their lived experiences. They maintain their faith by being a people of hope and trust in a God whom they

know is always with them through their joys and sorrows, trials and successes.

Hispanics speak of God with endearing terms: Diosito, Papacito Dios, Papa Dios. They name their sons, Jesús, Ángel, Gabriel; their daughters Guadalupe, María, Miriam, Concepción, Milagros; and give names of saints to their children, clearly demonstrating their comfort and familiarity with the sacred and the holy. They attribute all that happens in their lives to God’s intervention with the words, *está en las manos de Dios* (it is in God’s hands), *que sea la voluntad de Dios* (may it be the will of God), *si Dios permite* (if God permits), *Dios es tan grande* (God is awesome), *Dios me libre* (God help me), and *lo que Dios quiera* (whatever God wants). When asked how they are doing or feeling, God is automatically included with use of the phrase *bien, gracias a Dios* (good, thanks be to God). Sr. Anita De Luna, professor of religious studies, describes the Mexican and Mexican-American image of God as a God of Providence who “chooses the poor to be rich in faith and inherit the riches in heaven.”⁶

Hispanic families have a passionate belief in the Blessed Mother and devotion to Mary plays a central role; it is a significant factor in the preservation of their identity. The Marian devotions are a strong element in the identity of a people

who, even when no longer in their native countries, maintain their devotion to the Blessed Mother who protects them, loves them, and intercedes to the Father for them. Hispanics call Mary by affectionate familiar names; she is their *madrecita* (little mother). For Colombians, she is *La Chinita*; for Cubans, she is *Cachita*; Costa Ricans, *La Negrita*; Mexicans, *La Morenita* or *Lupita*. The images of Mary and the stories of miracles related to many of these images speak to the people in a profound way. The mysterious and scientifically unexplained history of Mexico’s Our Lady of Guadalupe⁷ and Venezuela’s Virgin of Coromoto⁸ contribute to the national identity of each of these nations.

The religious practices of Hispanic families are linked with their everyday living, and encompass the struggle that exists between that which is good and that which is evil. The saints and souls of the dead are as real to Hispanics as are their own neighbors. In speaking of popular religious practices, Fr. Virgilio Elizondo states that devotions to Jesus, Mary, and the saints “celebrate and keep alive the best of the Catholic tradition of making God present and easily accessible to anyone and everyone.” The following are some of the many religious practices common to Hispanics.

Blessings

Blessings are important to all Hispanics, no matter what country they are from. I was born in New York City of Puerto Rican parents. As a child, I was taught that before I left for school and upon returning from school, I was to greet my grandparents, parents, aunts, and uncles by asking for *la bendición* (blessings). This pattern was repeated whenever I left the house, went to

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bed at night, or visited one of my relatives. I remember that they would respond *que Dios te bendiga*, (God bless you), and I would feel the presence of God whenever I heard this blessing. Blessings are so important to Hispanics that they will ask a priest or the pastor to bless their homes, travels, search for employment, businesses, the purchase of a car, and so on.

Hispanics bless themselves in a unique way. The blessing is called *persignarse* (literally, to sign oneself over the senses),⁹ and *santiguarse* (literally, to make holy).¹⁰ Many Hispanics make the sign of the cross when passing by a church, an expression of reverence and respect for the house of God, and when passing by a cemetery, out of respect and reverence for the dead. They use Holy Water extensively to bless themselves, their homes, their religious articles, etc

The *Novenario* Vigils

The rosary is prayed in the home of the departed for nine consecutive nights, an expression of intercessory prayer for the deceased and his or her family. *La rezadora* (female prayer person) or *rezador* (male prayer person), the person who is known in the community for the gift of prayer, is asked to lead the family and friends in praying the rosary. A *rezadora* is found in every community where the predominant neighborhood is Hispanic; many times the *rezadora* also teaches catechism classes in her home.

Promesas (Prayer Promises)

Promesas (promises) are made either to God, the Blessed Mother, or to a particular saint for a special petition that has been answered. The *promesa* can be

walking to a church on one's knees while praying, or for one year, wearing a habit of the saint who answered their prayer. These prayer practices might seem strange to many non-Hispanic Christians who may feel that these practices do not emphasize Jesus' message and mission. However, when you hear the stories of those making a *promesa* and how their petition was answered, you truly experience God working in their lives in a very deep and profound way.

Quinceañera

The *quinceañera* is one of the most misunderstood of these popular religious practices. In a study of Hispanic ministry, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops noted:

Despite the fact that there has been a clear change in attitudes towards popular devotions since Vatican II, instances of discrimination can still be found. This is evident in practices such as the *quinceañeras*. . . . In the eyes of some pastors, popular devotions are nothing more than "a Catholicism of a day" which focus on rituals and symbols, stressing great but isolated moments of fervor, yet failing to translate into deep and lasting spiritual transformation and sustained participation in the life of the Church. Some pastors mentioned that practices like *quinceañeras* are too time-consuming, especially when there are other more important pastoral needs such as celebrating the Mass and other sacraments. (USCCB, 5)

The *quinceañera* is a celebration of life and gratitude to God on the fifteenth birthday of a young girl; it is a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. It is

a time in which the young girl thanks God not only for her life but for the love and protection of her family, and for all the blessings she has received in her life. The parents, in turn, thank God for giving them the gift of their daughter, for all the blessings God has gifted them with, and for keeping their daughter from harm. Families usually request a Mass, which includes a renewal of baptism vows. The rite is most popular with Mexican families, although at times Central, South American, and Caribbean families may also request it, using different customs and/or at a different age.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is so engrained in Catholic culture that those who work in pastoral ministry know that on this day, many will remember they are Catholic and come to receive their ashes. Hispanic families are no exception; they will come in great numbers with their children of all ages and their elders. For many, Ash Wednesday is the first time they have been to church in a very long time. They come not only to receive the ashes but to hear the words traditionally used by the priest: *Recuerda que de polvo eres y al polvo volverás* (Remember that you are dust and to dust you will return). Hispanics take these words very much to heart, and the new words used in the ashes ritual, *Arrepiente y cree en el Evangelio* (Repent and believe in the gospel), do not resonate in the same way for them. To be reminded that we are dust and to dust we will return is an affirmation that *estamos solo de paso en esta tierra* (we are here on this earth for only a short time).

Holy Week

Hispanics place more emphasis on the six days of Holy Week, especially Good Friday, than on Easter Sunday itself because they identify more with the crucified Jesus, and see God as someone who suffers with them. Good Friday services during *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) are observed in dramatic fashion; for example, the Stations of the Cross become a public re-enactment of the Passion of Our Lord, accompanied by Scripture reflections and music. A young man portrays Jesus through the events of his passion and death, beginning with Pilate's condemnation, the carrying of the cross through the streets, Jesus' crucifixion, and his burial. Other men and women wear costumes that portray key figures in the Stations, while the rest of the community of men, women, and children follow along the route. This dramatic and public prayer recalls that there is violence, pain, and suffering as well as betrayal in their own neighborhoods, a reality that helps them walk along the path of Jesus' journey with hope and consolation.

Las siete palabras (seven last words of Christ) are also part of Good Friday services. Here the seven last words of Jesus, spoken as he hung on the cross, are recited and the words of the Scriptures are made more relevant. The reflections are filled with drama, music, and visuals.

Another Good Friday tradition includes the *Pésame* (condolence), where the community consoles Mary for the loss of her son, Jesus. For those families that have lost a loved one, especially an older son, the *Pésame* is both impressive and healing. Stephanie Innes, a newspaper reporter, interviewed a member of St. Monica Church in Tucson, Arizona, who said:

The call to ministry with Hispanic families challenges every Christian to acknowledge and respect the religious heritage they bring to our churches.

In Mexico on Good Friday, the condolences to Mary are so important and moving. They put a statue of Mary in a black dress and pray the rosary and share sorrow that her son died. The older ladies will offer incense, the young women offer perfume to Mary, the men give palms, and the children give flowers.

Easter in Spanish is called "Pascua Florida" (related to Easter and Spring flowers) although many Spanish speaking church leaders are changing the language so that Easter is called "Pascua de Resurrección" (Easter Resurrection), to give priority and emphasis to the importance of the resurrection of Jesus and its implication for all Christians.

Supporting Hispanic/ Latino Families to Nurture, Celebrate, and Share Faith at Home

The call to ministry with Hispanic families challenges every Christian to acknowledge and respect the religious heritage they bring to our churches. Fr. Elizondo reaffirms these religious practices, stating "Hispanics have a lot to receive from the Catholicism of this country, but we equally have a lot to contribute....the Hispanic religious heritage of our ancestors is a great fountain of religious wisdom, beauty, devotion and inspiration." Fr. Elizondo suggests that one of the more

important contributions that Hispanics make to Catholic life in the US is that their religion is home-centered; *religión casera*.

Church leaders who minister to Hispanic families need to recognize, encourage, and affirm the religious practices they are already doing at home to maintain their faith. In addition, church leaders need to be advocates for Spanish-speaking resources that support home-based religious practices by speaking to publishers of Christian communication media of the great need of resources that speak to their religious expressions, and by promoting and making available the resources that are presently in the market.

Altarcito (The Home Altar)

The home altar is a popular religious practice common to all Hispanic families. As a child I prayed the rosary and novenas to certain saints with my family at our little altar. I knew the words to every novena and could recite by heart the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Hail Holy Queen. These traditional prayers were taught to me at home in Spanish, and although I did learn them in English at an older age, to this day my favorite way to pray these traditional prayers is in Spanish. When I married, I created my own altar, which is still part of our home today.

The Mexican tradition of the home altar on the *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) in

November is a wonderful demonstration of the Hispanic understanding of death. Families welcome their dead into their homes, and visit the graves of their close relatives. Gravesites and family altars are decorated with flowers and adorned with religious amulets and offerings of food and drink. It is a festive interaction between the living and the dead, a recognition that the cycle of life and death are part of human existence.

Posadas (Seeking Shelter)

The *Posadas* is my favorite Advent-Christmas tradition. *Posada* is Spanish for “home” or “dwelling-house,” and this traditional Mexican devotion re-enacts Joseph’s search for shelter, highlighting the difficulties that Joseph and Mary faced in finding a room in Bethlehem. Adults and children form a procession and walk from house to house, carrying candles, a doll representing the Christ child, and images of Joseph and Mary riding a burro (donkey). Those in the procession are known as *peregrinos* (pilgrims), and at each house, they stop and sing a traditional song requesting *posada*. But the families (innkeepers) respond in song and refuse lodging, until the *peregrinos* reach the designated site where they are allowed to enter. All then kneel around the nativity scene to pray the rosary. This is followed by the singing of traditional Christmas songs and a party for the children, which includes a piñata. A *posada* typically will begin in a neighborhood on December 16 and end on December 24.

Presentación (Presentation of a Child)

Some Hispanic families keep their newborn babies at home for forty

days. Most families do this because they do not want their babies to contract any illnesses. For other families, however, this echoes the Old Testament practice where the mother remained at home for forty days after giving birth, and then presented her child to God.

The style of presentation varies by country: in Mexico, when a child is three years old the family will ask to present him or her at a special Mass. In other countries, families take their newborn child or their child up to three years old to be presented to the Virgin Mary, to thank God for the birth and to ask God’s protection against any illness.

Día De Reyes (Feast of Three Kings)

In Puerto Rico, Mexico, Spain, and other Latin countries, children receive the majority of their gifts on January 6, the feast of the Epiphany. Before they go to bed on January 5, the children fill their shoes or a shoebox with hay, straw, or grass for the camels to eat, then place their shoes or boxes under their beds. I remember my grandmother telling me that the tradition of Los Reyes Magos is taken very seriously in Puerto Rico, and how on the morning of Epiphany the island would be filled with the joy and laughter of happy children enjoying their new toys (some of them homemade). Later in the day a holiday dinner is prepared, and friends and relatives join in the festivities.

The Mexican people have another wonderful tradition called the *Rosca de Reyes*, which is a sweet bread filled with fruit and tiny baby Jesus dolls. The person or persons who find a baby Jesus will have to host a party on February 2, the feast day of the *La Candelaria* (Candlemas). I have many Mexican and Mexican-

American friends who continue this tradition every year in their homes, inviting family and friends to join in the festivities.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

As previously mentioned, Mary holds a special place in the heart of the Hispanic people. This is especially evident in their devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe, which is celebrated on December 12, throughout the continent of the Western Hemisphere. It is recommended that all church leaders attend *las mañanitas*,¹¹ which precedes the liturgy at many churches on this day, to experience first hand the special place Mary has in the heart of the people.

No matter what the weather, the people attend *las mañanitas* at 5 a.m. with their children and elderly relatives. Some adults and children dress in native costumes, and after *las mañanitas* the liturgy begins. At the Mass, there may be mariachis, and there is a narration of the apparition portrayed by actors from the community. After the liturgy many stay for the festivities where Mexican pastries, hot chocolate or champurrado,¹² perhaps menudo,¹³ and/or tamales are served. It is a joyful and communal event celebrating Our Lady of Guadalupe, Empress of the Americas, who without a doubt is a symbol of hope and unifying power for each and every one of us.

Visits to the Blessed Sacrament

This is a popular and deeply religious practice for many Hispanics. They see adoration as a way to pray and be in the presence of God, and to ask for intercession in times of most need. Many Hispanics believe in the real presence of Christ in the Holy

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Eucharist, yet do not receive communion at Mass. But they also believe in the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and receive this presence spiritually through adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In this way they experience how much God loves them and feel a deep connection to God.

Ways To Nurture Family Faith through Family-Centered Faith Formation

Although many Hispanics have received the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist, they have not had the opportunity to learn about their faith. Many do not know the basic tenets of their faith, including Scripture. It is crucial that church leaders recognize and understand that for Hispanics, their commitment and obligation to family is a priority, expressed by the phrase *la familia viene primero* (the family comes first). When they speak of family they speak not only of their immediate family—i.e., father, mother, and children—but the extended family: grandparents, parents, children, uncles, aunts, cousins, their *compadres* and *comadres*.¹⁴

Many Hispanics work two and three jobs not only to take care of their immediate family here in the United States, but also to support their families in their native countries. Many times you will find aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, and nieces all living together in one household. This is

not totally by choice but due to economics and to the support system they extend to each other; again, *la familia viene primero*. Some Hispanics are single parents, others work nights and weekends in hotels, restaurants, and hospitals. There are many who are domestics, gardeners, painters, maintenance workers, migrant workers, and so on. Many do not speak English and are unable to attend ESL classes due to their work schedules, problems of transportation, and lack of child care. Some may be illiterate, or their reading and writing skills in Spanish are poor.

Relationships are the primary focus for the Hispanic community, so that persons are more important than time. There are times when someone may have every intention of attending a church program or meeting, but a family member or friend stops by the house. Most Hispanics would never think of telling the friend that they have a previous commitment; they will extend hospitality to the visitor and forego attending the meeting or program.

When planning faith formation programs, these factors need to be considered. Families need to have space to come together to share their stories, their religious traditions, and their cultural richness. There should be flexibility when it comes to the days and times that events are held. The need to have staff members who can conduct meetings and programs in the Spanish language must be a priority, and child care provisions should be made. Here are several

examples of community faith formation opportunities.

CEBs (Small Christian Communities)

The CEBs offer families the opportunity to come together as vibrant communities to renew and nourish their faith. Since the 1970s, CEBs have provided a new model of being church in Latin-American countries. The CEBs—or small Christian communities, sometimes called faith-sharing groups—meet in homes to discuss the weekly Scriptures and how best to apply them to daily life. The CEBs also come together to pray, learn, respond to issues of social justice, and mutually support one another.

Quinceañeras

As noted before, the *quinceañera* has become very popular in many dioceses in the United States where there is a Hispanic presence. The *quinceañera* is a family affair that includes the extended family and friends. Sometime, this religious practice can be seen in a negative way because parents do spend a tremendous amount of money on the celebration.

Many families save for years in order to have this celebration for their daughter, granddaughter, goddaughter, or niece, but that the custom of having sponsors for the *quinceañera* makes it possible for many of the items to be donated by family and friends. All are considered sponsors, *padrinos*, and part of the extended family so important to Hispanic families. The celebration of *quince años* is an important teachable moment in which the young girl is invited to reflect on her relationship with God and the church.

Church leaders should have an idea of how this popular religious devotion is practiced, and how a church can use these events as opportunities for faith formation. Our young people today feel many pressures from their environment; this celebration can be a means of affirming and recognizing their coming of age, as well as of their acceptance of God and of responsibility for their lives. It can also be a time for young people to discover their roots by recognizing their cultural heritage. In this rite of passage, they can be challenged to develop their gifts and talents, to celebrate their faith in God, and to trust themselves as they continue to grow and mature in wisdom, age, and grace.

The congregation can support quinceañera by creating positive guidelines that will allow the young girl and her friends to learn more about the nature of the ritual and why the church considers spiritual preparation an important element in planning the celebration. (A blessing ceremony for the quinceañera will be incorporated in the Catholic Church's *Book of Blessings*.)

Family-Centered Faith Formation

There has been a recent move by many churches toward educating the whole community. Bill Huebsch describes the process in the following way:

Whole community catechesis is an approach to parish or school religious education through which youth and adults, as well as children, are invited to participate in faith formation programs throughout the year. It's a process through which we take up and implant elements of the catechumenate into the way we catechize in our

parishes and schools. These elements include "breaking open the word" of the Sunday readings, implementing a wider use of sponsors, focusing on education for community life, using the children's program as our springboard to lifelong learning for adults, and more. (Huebsch, 6)

Whole community catechesis provides a natural framework for family faith formation by incorporating learners of all ages into the learning process. Families participate in church-based learning and activities, but also bring elements of the formation process home with them, complementing the home-based faith practices described above.

A proven model for family-centered faith formation based on whole community catechesis is found in many parishes in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, where there is a large Hispanic community. This is not a new idea for Hispanics, as Latin American countries have been at the forefront of faith formation with the family, a key element in whole community catechesis.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* also gives special attention to the family and to the responsibility that the community has in supporting them in their role as the primary educators in the faith of their children:

...the Christian community must give very special attention to parents. By means of personal contact, meetings, courses, and also adult catechesis directed toward parents, the Christian community must help them assume their responsibility—which is particularly delicate today—of educating their children in the faith. (#227)

Family-centered faith formation should include

systematic and well-organized faith themes that reach learners of all ages, as well as an invitation to and support in doing Christian service in their churches, homes, and communities.

There are several ways in which family catechesis can be implemented:

- **Weekly parent gatherings** in which parents are invited to attend religious education classes at the same time their children attend. Child care is provided for smaller children (high school students and confirmation candidates can do this as a service to the church).
- **Monthly intergenerational gatherings** in which parents, children, other family members, and sponsors come together to share faith themes. They gather as one group for an opening prayer and song, are divided into faith-sharing groups according to age, and return to pray together, do an activity, and share a meal. Hispanic leaders of prayer groups and the Charismatic movement already gather in this way to reflect on Scripture. We need to tap into what is already working within the community, support these groups and affirm them.
- **Seasonal sessions** in which families are invited to attend religious education classes either with their children or while their children are attending their formation classes. Here they discuss themes of the liturgical season and of the faith, e.g., Advent, Lent, feasts of the saints, Mary, or the

faith themes their children are studying.

- **Sacramental preparation meetings and retreats** in which parents attend with their children to share, pray, and learn, do activities related to the sacrament they are studying, and share a meal together. Include the *padrino*, who many times are not only the godparents for baptism and confirmation, but also for First Communion.

Family catechesis, or *catequesis familiar* as it is called in Spanish, is an approach that helps share the faith with all generations. As each person grows in faith they will gradually become more like Christ, who shows us what it means to be his disciples.

twice a year. Whatever the reason, the church must welcome the growing numbers of Hispanic non-attendees. This can be done by training Spanish speaking lay leaders, deacons, priests, and religious to knock on the doors of Hispanic families and invite them back to church. Churches should also gather these families in their neighborhoods for celebrations of their traditions and important church feast days.

Conclusion

As we respond to the issues and challenges of faith formation with Hispanic families we must not lose sight of the fact that Hispanics can teach the church much about what it means to be a people of faith. We are called to affirm their special gifts and to

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Home Visits

The biggest challenge facing the church today is the number of Hispanics who do not attend any church. The reasons for this vary: they may not be accustomed to attending church services because they did not do so in their own country; some families who have gone to a church here in the States were made to feel unwelcome; others do not understand Anglo parishes practices, such as registering in order to be a member or perhaps not having services in Spanish. Many come from rural areas where there is no priest, or where they see a priest only once or

welcome them into our communities of faith. The mission for Hispanic families is the same mission for every culture; that is, to bring all people into full, enthusiastic participation in the life and mission of Jesus Christ, and to strengthen our unity as one Body of Christ. Providing faith formation for Hispanics of all ages is one of the ways in which this mission can be fulfilled.

We must also be open to the Spirit in this work, and allow the grace of God to motivate the marvelous deeds of salvation for all. Christian families are called to be “domestic churches,” praying together, living, and passing on the faith to their children and

youth. If we live up to this ideal, with the help of the Holy Spirit, our homes will be true centers of faith formation.

Endnotes

- ¹ Roberto Goizueta writes that “...while about three-fourths of U.S. Hispanics belong to the Roman Catholic Church, all Hispanics have Catholic roots: Latino culture and Catholicism have deep, historical links.” *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), p 8.
- ² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Hispanic Affairs – *Demographics*, 2002, p. 1.
- ³ *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) is a process of formation and liturgical rites that prepare adults and children of catechetical age for the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation and is celebrated on the Easter Vigil.
- ⁴ I have identified myself as “Latina” because I feel it best describes my Puerto Rican heritage.
- ⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Hispanic Affairs – *Demographics*, 2002, p. 6.
- ⁶ Anita De Luna, MCDP, *Faith Formation And Popular Religion: Lessons from the Tejano Experience* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002) 54-55. “I observe that Mexicans and Mexican Americans image God as a God of Providence. This God of Providence is not Jesus or Our Lady of Guadalupe, nor is He a dominant controlling God or the God of predestination. He is the consoler of his people’s pain and the one who listens to his prayers.”
- ⁷ The Virgin of Guadalupe is a symbol important to Mexican identity. In 1974, Octavio Paz, Nobel laureate wrote that “Mexican people, after more than two centuries of experiments, have faith only in Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Mexican Lottery.”
- ⁸ Venezuelans celebrate their patroness each year on three different occasions: February 2, September 8, and September 11.

⁹ *Persignarse* is done with the following gestures and words: with the thumb and forefinger in the form of a cross, a small sign of the cross is made on the forehead while saying *por la señal de la Santa Cruz* (by the sign of the Holy Cross), a small sign on the lips saying, *de nuestros enemigos* (from our enemies), a small sign over the heart saying, *libranos Señor Dios nuestro* (free us our Lord God.). The signing is completed with the sign of the cross over the forehead, shoulders, and heart. The Amen is said with a kiss on the same thumb used in signing.

¹⁰ *Santiguarse* means to make a large sign of the cross over the forehead, shoulders, and heart while reciting *en el nombre del Padre, del hijo, y del Espíritu Santo* (in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit).

¹¹ The *mañanitas* are a serenade to Our Lady of Guadalupe; the songs chosen are dedicated to her and tell the story of the people's love and devotion to her. Many times mariachis will be invited to sing the *mañanitas* and to sing at the liturgy.

¹² *Champurrado* is a creamy hot drink made with chocolate, sugar, milk, cinnamon (corn is optional).

¹³ *Menudo* is a hot soup made with beef tripe, beef "librillo" (book tripe), cow's feet, corn kernels (optional), oregano, lemon, salt, and chile colorado.

¹⁴ *Compadres* and *comadres* are the godparents of the child to be baptized. Mexican parents also have godparents for the celebration of First Communion. Sponsors of *quinceañeras* are also known as godparents, *padrinos*. Their responsibility is not as important as it is for baptism. If a family member does not step forward such as the grandparents or aunts and

uncles, the compadres for baptism are responsible for parenting the child if one or both of the parents are seriously ill or deceased.

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