

Unity in Diversity: One Size Does Not Fit All

When it comes to teaching stewardship in diverse multicultural and multilingual communities, one size definitely does not fit all. How should parishes and dioceses approach the opportunities and challenges of diverse ethnic, cultural and economic groups? By Dan Conway, Senior Vice President

Unity in diversity is the vision that the bishops of the United States proclaimed in *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*, which was published in 2000 during the Great Jubilee year. Looking back on the history of Catholicism in our country, the bishops called attention to the waves of immigration that shaped the character of our nation and of our local churches. The bishops also observed that the immigrant experience, which is deeply rooted in our country's religious, social and political history, is changing.

During the past half century, these new waves of immigration have challenged our society and our Church to remember where we came from as the descendants of immigrants and where we are headed as people who are on the way to a better life and a more secure world characterized by unity, peace and prosperity for all.

The overall challenges faced by dioceses and parishes as they welcome people from diverse cultures, and as they seek to engage them in the life of the Church, is magnified when pastoral leaders try to teach stewardship principles and raise the funds needed to carry out the Church's mission. What's the appropriate word for "stewardship" in Spanish or Portuguese or Korean? Even more importantly, how do different cultures understand—from the inside out—what it means to develop and share God's gifts with their families, their community and the Church?

Every member of the Catholic community, regardless of his or her place of origin, ethnic or cultural heritage, economic or social position, and legal status, should be welcomed as Christ and should be encouraged to feel a genuine sense of membership and belonging. This means that everyone has the right and responsibility to embrace the call to holiness and to exercise responsible stewardship of their time, talent and treasure.

How do we reach out to everyone? How do we make sure that diverse communities are appropriately engaged in the mission of their parish or diocese? Doesn't this require resources of time, personnel or budget that most parishes and dioceses don't have?

- 1 Tap leaders**
Identify local leaders in communities that are diverse ethnically, culturally, or economically
- 2 Devote time**
Visit their parishes. Spend time listening to them about "what works" and "what doesn't work" in their parishes.
- 3 Embrace uniqueness**
Design methods and supporting materials that reflect the unique traits of different communities while remaining faithful to fundamental principles and best practices.
- 4 Support your case**
Use tools such as printed and audio-visual materials, in consultation with local leaders, that "speak the language" of the people in each community.

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