

# Hispanic candidate

## Looking at 1980-1985

1. Almost all men's and women's communities expressed an openness to considering the acceptance of Hispanics into their order. In actuality, Hispanics were accepted into postulancy/residency over the past six years by one fourth (26%) of the women's and half of the men's communities.

2. The most frequent requirement mentioned by those open to considering acceptance is the ability to speak English. Other stipulations refer to education, citizenship, work, and personal characteristics. Less than 10 percent of the communities have a written policy on the admittance of Hispanics.

3. Of all the cultural minorities accepted in this time span, Hispanics were the largest group. Twelve percent (209 women and 210 men) of all candidates (1712 women and 1820 men) received were of Hispanic origin

4. Seven percent (31 men) of all priests ordained (475) were Hispanic. Less than one-fourth (21 %) of the men's communities ordained someone of Hispanic origin over the past six years.

5. In September 1985 there were 156 Hispanic women in the various stages of formation. 38 in postulancy/residency, 50 in novitiate, and 68 temporary professed. Men had 144 in these stages with 65 in postulancy/residency, 19 in novitiate and 60 temporary professed. Hispanics were 12 percent of the novices in the 304 communities and 8 percent of the temporary professed.

6. Almost twice as many men's communities (66%) had at some time worked in serious discernment about entry with a person of Hispanic origin as had women's orders (38%). In September, 1985 Hispanics were 11

percent of the men and women seriously discerning about entry into religious life.

## What worked well with candidates who are Hispanic

1. Support system with other Hispanics
  - encourage frequent contact with professed Hispanic members
  - while in formation attend Hispanic ministry committee meetings
  - encourage finding support among young Hispanic religious in area
  - contact with cultural group through apostolic activity, prayer groups
  - keep involved with own community and family
  - visits to religious houses where there are Hispanics
  - making sure person has Hispanic connections in ministry
  - directing to other Spanish-speaking members
2. Opportunity to share culture with community
  - sharing cultural experiences and celebration
  - storytelling
  - styles of prayer, worship, food, etc.
  - called upon to educate community regarding Hispanic culture
3. Incorporation of family
  - include family in all processes of discernment/initiation
  - come to know family orientation and tradition
  - direct contact with family through visiting home and living with the person before entry
  - inviting family to visit community
  - accepting hospitality of family
  - look for racial identity/confusion in family visits

4. Pre-entry experience with community
  - contact program set up with individual and member/local house
  - person spends weekends with different members
  - allowing person to visit as often as desired
  - live-in for few months before entry decision
  - invitation to pre-entry programs, gatherings, retreats. etc.

5. Preparation/understanding/attitudes of vocation director and community at large

*Vocation director*

- honesty with candidate about community prejudices
- attitudes of openness, acceptance, appreciation, support
- willingness to continually learn about other culture
- personal immersion into Hispanic culture in city
- personal experience of culture in Mexico through GATE program
- study of pastoral on Hispanics
- talked with members who worked with Hispanics
- learned to speak Spanish
- took the CORHIM workshop
- previous work with Hispanics

*Community*

- minority vocation day for province with guest speaker and literature available
- have "Ministry to Many" workshop
- using returning missionaries to educate living groups
- set up workshop with panel of Hispanic religious men and women to explore the situation and focus on vocations from Hispanic community
- local community aware of and sensitive to cultural needs, e.g., regularly celebrating community Eucharist in Spanish
- educate about roots and culture of entering person
- workshops for all on diverse cultural appreciation

- pre-placement dialogue with local house on experience of different culture, e.g., food, prayer, recreation, traditions, etc.
- retreats, visits, interviews, vocation evenings with Hispanics

6. Special programs and processes

- adapt for individual needs
- Cursillio program geared toward formation, education, ministry, for selected parishioners where we work
- insist that English be mastered so they don't feel like second class citizens; Spanish kept to a minimum in community during formation, but more freely used after profession
- house of studies instead of institutional seminary while going through college
- for Spanish-speaking and English-speaking Hispanic candidates: ESL studies, high school preparation, G.E.D. preparation, religious studies
- treat as all others
- provide environment of structure (Mass, prayer, ministry, spiritual direction and counseling) conducive to cultural, educational, spiritual needs
- workshops to help prioritize values
- having a number of Hispanics enter together
- use resources of Mexican American Cultural Center
- formation in own country
- person familiar with language and culture to interview and work with candidate
- postulants spend 3/4 of postulancy in El Paso working in Hispanic culture
- inter-community pre-novitiate program where they meet others
- novitiate house in Spanish-speaking area
- daily prayer and Eucharist bilingually
- visiting friends of candidate with individual
- not keeping them too long away from their culture
- involve Hispanics in vocation ministry
- requests for reception or profession done in Spanish and provincial responds in Spanish
- not keeping them too long from their culture

## Problems/concerns that emerged in working with candidates who are Hispanic

### 1. Cultural differences

- very great cultural and language disparity
- respect candidates' attitudes and courtesy, not American attitudes
- difficult to really keep their culture in Anglo society
- different spirituality and discernment
- in spite of efforts made, person remains minority and must deal with it and some of the accompanying loneliness
- need patience in understanding their concept of Church, God, Mary, vocation, and call to celibacy
- missed their food and hearing their language spoken etc...

### 2. Community problems

- problem that problems did not emerge, very unhappy young persons smiled and put up good front for long time; in ignorance, community gave little or no thought to their accustomed foods, customs, traditions, emotional/cultural make-up
- candidate was accustomed to large urban Hispanic community and order's rural location was too much of a shock
- small numbers of Hispanics in order
- expect candidate to fit in; though province ministers among Hispanics it hasn't taken on any Hispanic elements to enrich its life
- tension among ordained/professed on acceptance of culturally diverse candidates
- insensitivity on part of members; prejudice, discrimination, fear, racism
- need for further understanding and education at large
- lack of knowledge of culture and religious practices to help transition
- concern by some members about so many Hispanics entering
- some of dominant culture try to be more Hispanic than Hispanics
- unable to adapt to their forms of music, liturgical celebration, food, diet

### 3. Family issues

- lack of understanding/support due to geographic distance
- desire of family to have daughter marry
- family ties got in way of community living; visits seem too frequent
- first-born daughter expected to care for family - religious life considered insult to middle class father who then lived out the denial of daughter's existence
- though living in convent, mother has strong hold and daughter really hasn't left home
- dependence on family placed much stress on student
- high-school age hesitant to leave family especially if seminary at great distance

### 4. Language and educational issues

- lack of tolerance of predominance of English led to leaving
- poor English great disadvantage
- took 6- 10 years before thoroughly oriented in English
- difficulty making it in school
- weak academic background
- adequate ministry difficult due to level of educational mastery
- needed encouragement to do college studies

### 5. Personal issues of candidate

- left due to celibacy issue
- poor self-image and difficulty with success-oriented Anglo environment
- relational difficulties
- not dealt with own Hispanic identity
- needed to know would not always have another Hispanic in local community
- hesitancy/resistance to part of community- total focus was ministry with Hispanics
- inferiority complex from previous discrimination
- too talkative, avoiding issues, rationalizing by using culture as device
- not clear about own identity so place a lot of prejudice on community
- extreme emotional shift thought to be cultural but found more a family trait
- attraction to opposite sex seen as sign not called by God

## Advice and Reflection questions for vocation directors and communities

### *Advice*

1. Familiarize yourself well with the candidate's background.
2. Try to contact someone who has a better understanding of the culture.
3. Try to understand the person's motivation for entering religious life or the seminary. In some Hispanic cultures, this is seen as a step up or a way to obtain a career; on the other hand, there are wealthy Hispanics who are willing to give up their present economical and social status to serve the Lord.
4. Understand some of the traditional views related to the wearing of habits, the role of women, and the roles which are played by women and men of the culture.
5. Be willing to listen and understand the different manifestations of the Hispanic culture, differences that we experience even among ourselves.
6. Give us the chance to prove we are suitable community people.
7. Know where you are coming from. Recognize your own experiences, prejudices, biases, values, criterion.
8. Don't promise anything you can't deliver; Hispanics' greatest interest seems to be community life and spiritual growth.
9. Provide an experience of comfortableness in which the candidate can be him/herself.
10. Encourage the positive aspects of the cultural difference without drawing too much emphasis to the individual's ethnicity as different.
11. Accept each as sister/brother which goes beyond race and nationality.

### Questions

1. Are you bringing members to a knowledge and respect for the fact of culture and an understanding of each one's own culture?
2. How are you educating your community in their understanding and acceptance of Hispanic candidates?
3. Where is there flexibility in your formation program to meet the needs of the Hispanic candidates? What are those needs as you perceive them?
4. What needs to change in your community to make it more welcoming to the Hispanic candidate?

## Advice and reflection questions for Hispanic persons discerning about religious life

### *Advice*

1. Look around at different communities for the one which most closely lives your ideal of religious life
2. Talk about yourself with members of communities.
3. Be open to recommendations and suggestions.
4. Choose a community that will enhance who you already are.
5. Beware of those who tell you, "We just see you as one of us," because you are not; you are different, but so are they and one is not better.
6. Choose a community that would allow you to change it; one that would serve among Hispanic people not just by allowing you to work with your people, but by extending itself to the Hispanic community through you.
7. Don't sell out. We need leaders who are proud and conscious of their roots and committed to our community.
8. Don't be afraid to try this lifestyle if this is what you feel called to. No one said it would be easy for any of us, but if the calling is true, you will get through the difficult times.

9. Develop a good relationship with God. Let your love of God and service to God's people determine your decisions.
10. Be realistic about your expectations and be flexible.
11. Be aware of the community's positive and negative qualities.
12. Choose an Hispanic community or one that has experience in ministry to and with Hispanics.

### Questions

1. How involved is the community in Hispanic ministry?
2. How does the community allow for the involvement of my family in my formation process and after?
3. How would the community consider adapting its lifestyle to meet my cultural language, expression needs?
4. How do I deal with prejudice and misunderstanding that may come from not being of the dominant culture in the community?

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