

CONSULTATION ON HISPANIC LATINO/A THEOLOGY

- Topic: “Where Two or Three Gather...Latino Congregations and the Reconceiving of the U.S. Catholic Ecclesial Experience.”
Convener: Ramón Luzárraga, Benedictine University at Mesa
Moderator: Ramón Luzárraga, Benedictine University at Mesa
Presenter: Hosffman Ospino, Boston College

The Latino Theology Consultation attracted a final total of seven attendees this year. We continued our alliance with the African American group, coordinating our programming to contribute to the conference topic of “Sensus Fidelium.” To that end, our session was dedicated to Dr. Hosffman Ospino’s newly released *National Study of Catholic Parishes with Hispanic Ministry*. Dr. Ospino’s presentation, while it presented the basic findings of the study, did not have as its goal to present a detailed summary of it. Instead, in accordance with the conference topic, Dr. Ospino used his basic findings of the emerging Hispanic majority of the Roman Catholics in the United States as a starting point to ask a theological question. Is contemporary theological reflection paying enough attention to the questions and contributions emerging from our increasingly diverse Catholic congregations? Is the parish emerging from this seen by the Church as a *locus theologicus*? Dr. Ospino analyzed how U.S. Latino/a Catholics are reconceiving—from below—the idea of being ecclesial community in the context of parish life. This reconception of parish life he interpreted as a prophetic, creative, and revolutionary exercise of the *sensus fidelium* because it challenges received assumptions of being an ecclesial community.

Despite the low numbers, a lively conversation ensued in response to Dr. Ospino’s talk. Participants spoke of the ready applicability of Dr. Ospino’s findings to other U.S. Catholic groups, in particular Asian-Americans, who continue to grow as a major presence whose pastoral needs must be addressed. That these groups are not just newly arrived immigrants, but the majority in fact consists of second, third, and fourth generations of Catholics in the United States who continue to identify themselves as Hispanic, Asian, Haitian, etc., is noteworthy in itself. Pastoral strategies to engage these groups were hobbled by Canon Law ending the national parish. Bishops have used the designation of a personal parish to help these groups, but that is understood to be a temporary measure prior to an assimilation these groups do not seek. Hispanics, for example, are not interested in multicultural faith formation groups. Hispanics stay with catechetical and faith formation programming dedicated only for them because such programs respect their cultural mediation of the Catholic faith.

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