

Welcoming From a Hispanic Perspective

The following insights are from a workshop presented by Deacon Juan Barajas, Director of Evangelization, Stewardship, and Hispanic Ministry for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. He offers these tips for being hospitable to Hispanic families who are new to the parish.

1. **Welcome** - People from other cultures who are new to a parish are very sensitive to rejection. Be intentional about reaching out to them but treat them the same as you do others. “Mi casa es su casa” is a fundamental belief to them. Help them to feel that your parish is their parish.
2. **Acceptance** - Accept individuals as they are. They believe in the same Gospel as everyone else. Allow space for their uniqueness, gifts, and talents.
3. **Support** - Support their piety, ideas, and ways of doing things. Give them space to do things their way. When they request an opportunity to do something in the parish, don't let your first response be to send them to training to learn “our” way of doing things.
4. **Training** - Provide training (e.g., lector, RCIA, etc.) so that they may participate fully in the parish and offer input on how to best serve other Hispanic families. Acknowledge training that they may have received in their native land and give them credit/certification for their past educational accomplishments.
5. **Empowerment** - Empower them so that they can serve both themselves and the rest of the parish. Avoid keeping them dependent on others to have their needs met. Utilize their gifts in all areas of parish life.
6. **Appreciation** - Thank them for their contributions and service to the parish.
7. **Stewardship** - If you have made families feel welcome and a vital part of the parish, you will not have to ask them for money. They will already be giving of their time, talent, and treasure. Focus first on helping them become a part of the parish, and stewardship will happen. To reverse the process by giving them envelopes and stewardship material before they are active in the parish would be a failure to recognize their cultural uniqueness.

The presence of Hispanic families within a parish does not divide the parish but rather adds to the community. A change of heart and of attitude is needed to welcome and involve people from other cultures to our parishes. It is very possible that what we do or fail to do for our Hispanic families will determine what the Church will be like in the future.

