

From the Coordinator

Multicultural Affairs—New Office—Same Mission with Expanded Reach

The Secretariat of Catholic Life and Evangelization's administrative offices were restructured in early October. Multicultural Affairs, which had been a ministry within the Office for Social Action, is now designated as the *Office of Multicultural Affairs*.

The ministry of Multicultural Affairs was established in the Office for Social Action in 2004 as a response to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*. Through the work of the ministry of Multicultural Affairs, our diocese has provided outreach programs and resource materials that challenge parishes to remain faithful to the call of being welcoming communities. This call goes out to all members of our Church as we continue to receive newcomers with a genuine spirit of welcome. Much has been achieved in offering hospitality to the newcomers in our diocese.

Some examples of the outreach efforts of Multicultural Affairs include:

- The parish hospitality guide: *A Welcoming Parish: Best Practices Guide*
- The Multicultural Newsletter
- Multicultural Celebrations of Faith (see Fr. Kevin Bobbin's article in this issue)
- The workshop on parish hospitality: *A Welcoming Parish* (which addresses the need to provide outreach towards those from restructured parishes and closings as well as to the newcomers from other countries)
- Use of the Diocese of Allentown's website to raise awareness

The newly named Office of Multicultural Affairs is committed to continuing its mission of developing outreach programs and creating awareness of the rich cultural diversity within the Diocese of Allentown and encouraging inclusion in parish life. At the Catholic Cultural Diversity Network Convocation at the University of Notre Dame this past May, more than three hundred church leaders gathered to discuss the challenges of combining the Church's growing racial, cultural and ethnic diversity while fostering a strong Catholic identity. They discussed how to help ethnic groups in the Church develop leadership and communication skills with their brothers and sisters in faith from other cultures. One of the U.S. Bishops' priorities is the recognition of cultural diversity and a plan to begin an *Intercultural Competence for Ministers Program* for the entire Church in the U.S. This includes considering the changing demographics, how newcomers bring new life to the Church, and evangelization. The Office of Multicultural Affairs is aware that each parish is unique and that nurturing intercultural understanding begins with Christian hospitality.

Encouraging an ethnic community to share its particular cultural religious celebrations with the entire parish community is an opportunity to educate and raise

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Second Diocesan Multicultural Celebration of Faith

by Rev. Kevin J. Bobbin, M.Div., M.A., S.T.B.

The Office of Multicultural Affairs held the second diocesan Multicultural Celebration of Faith on Sunday, October 24, at the Cathedral. Our second celebration comes a full three years after the first celebration of faith (August 2007 at St. Francis Retreat House in Easton). This occasion was particularly special because it was our first multicultural event with the Bishop present. Bishop Barres presided at a prayer service and gave the homily, in which he spoke of his experience of spending a month immersed in a different culture and language in Peru this past summer.

Nearly 200 people attended the celebration, many wearing native attire, representing a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. During the Prayer of the Faithful, individual petitions were read in different languages by adults representing various ethnic backgrounds. As the celebration was held in October, the month of the rosary, children presented flowers to the Blessed Mother, reflecting the fact that a special devotion to Mary under various titles is a common characteristic of Catholics in virtually all Cultures.

The choir of St. Jane Frances de Chantal parish in Easton provided the music

for the prayer service to reflect the themes of the celebration. Deacon Cu Than of St. Paul, Allentown, served as deacon. Other clergy in attendance included Msgr. Andrew Baker, rector of the Cathedral, Fr. Kevin Bobbin, staff of the Office of Pro-Life Activities and Social Concerns, Fr. Keith Laskowski, assistant pastor of St. Jane and member of the Office's advisory board, Fr. Quyet Pham, assistant pastor of St. Paul, Reading, and Msgr. Victor Finelli, master of ceremonies.

An informal gathering was held in the parish center immediately after the prayer service. Members of various ethnic groups provided food, while music and dancing contributed to the joyful event.

The Multicultural Celebrations of Faith are intended as a way to celebrate our various ethnic backgrounds that shape who we are and represent our gifts to be shared with the entire Church and, at the same time, our Catholic faith which overcomes our differences and unites us all. We are grateful to the members of the Multicultural Committee, which assists the office, and all others, who have helped to make this event possible.

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The Office of Multicultural Affairs' Mission Statement

The Office of Multicultural Affairs is dedicated to creating an awareness of the rich ethnic diversity in the Diocese of Allentown, and develop outreach programs and resource materials which challenge parishes and individuals to strive to welcome cultural diversity.

The Church's call to communion, solidarity and conversion to the *stranger in our midst* encourages the newcomer's inclusion and participation in a parish.

This newsletter can be copied and/or translated.

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awareness. Other 'immersion' gatherings such as festivals, socials and parish appreciation events offer other opportunities for community building in ways that overcome language barriers. The spirit of welcoming and hospitality transcends language. These shared events provide outreach to the ethnic group while raising the awareness of the rest of the parish. The ethnic group is able to express its faith culturally, without fear of 'not belonging' while the rest of the parish gains an appreciation that our Catholic faith is centered on the Eucharist and is universal. These simple welcoming practices help in the integration of the ethnic community into parish life. It offers the opportunity to gradually enter into further communion and solidarity with all members of the Body of Christ. In time, a culturally diverse faith community will reflect a parish that celebrates diversity while strengthening unity.

Around the Diocese:

December : Simbang Gabi

The Nativity of Jesus was first celebrated in the Philippines in 1565. Introduced by Miguel Lopez de Legaspi, the Christmas celebration began with a novena of Masses. Simbang Gabi, meaning *mass at dawn*, was held at 4 o'clock in the morning so that farmers as well as fishermen could wake up early to hear the Gospel before going to their work and to ask for the grace of a good harvest. Simbang Gabi is a time to spiritually prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ while strengthening family relationships. This year, the novena Masses begins at 8:00 PM from December 15th and culminates with the Misa de Gallo on December 23rd at St. Jane Frances de Chantal Church, 4049 Hartley Avenue, Easton, PA. Each of the novena masses will be celebrated by a different priest each evening. The FCCDA (Filipino Catholic Community in the Diocese of Allentown) invites you to come and celebrate the welcoming the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ.

December – 2010 Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas – December 12

The Feast of our Lady of Guadalupe will be celebrated at the Greater Reading Expo Center on Sunday, December 12. Las Mananitas begin at 5:00 AM followed by Mass. The Solemn Mass will be celebrated in the evening beginning at 6:30 PM. The Spanish novena will be held on December 4-7 at St. Paul Church and continues at St. Peter Church the evenings of December 8-11. Unless advised otherwise, all evening services will begin at 7:00 PM. Everyone is welcome to honor the patroness of the Americas.

January – 2011 National Migration Week: *Renewing Hope, Seeking Justice*

Renewing Hope, Seeking Justice is the primary theme for the 2011 National Migration Week, held January 2-8. The observance began over a quarter century ago by the US Catholic Conference Bishops (USCCB) to provide Catholics an opportunity to take stock of the wide diversity of the Church and the ministries serving them. As Pope Benedict XVI is focusing on migrant families for his 2011 World Day of Migrants and Refugees message, the bishops have decided to focus on the family as a sub-theme this year. We are invited to download these resources directly from the website or materials can be ordered through the USCCB (www.usccb.org).

Welcoming Parish Communities ***Workshop on Welcoming in Spring 2011***

The Office of Multicultural Affairs is planning a Spring 2011 *Workshop on Welcoming* to continue the ongoing need to promote parish hospitality. Because of the positive response to the previous two workshops in Lehigh and Carbon Counties, the office looks forward to repeating the workshop in Northampton County.

The workshop draws from *A Welcoming Parish: Best Practices Guide*, produced by the Office for Social Action in 2007. The program highlights the need for all parishes throughout the diocese to be mindful of welcoming newcomers. Newcomers may include those arriving from other parts of the world, as well as those who have lived here most of their lives but who may now feel "homeless" because of the closing or restructuring of their parishes. More information to follow.

For this 2010 Advent season, Rev. Kevin J. Bobbin, Assistant Pastor at Holy Infancy, Bethlehem and Community Organizer in the Office of Pro-Life Activities and Social Concerns has written an Advent Calendar based on 'Charity in Truth' *Caritas in Veritate*, an Encyclical Letter by Pope Benedict XVI. Each daily meditation includes an excerpt from the encyclical, a reflection and prayer. The week's meditations will be available in the Diocesan Newsletter starting with the first week in Advent. Sr. Martha Zammatore in the Office of Hispanic Affairs has graciously translated the first four Sundays in Advent in Spanish for this newsletter.

Para esta temporada de Adviento 2010, Rev. Kevin J. Bobbin, el Vicario en Santa Infancia, Bethlehem y Organizador de la Comunidad en la Oficina de Actividades Pro-Vida y Asuntos Sociales ha escrito un Calendario de Adviento basado en la " La Caridad en La Verdad " *Caritas in Veritate*, una Carta Encíclica 'por Papa Benedicto XVI. Cada meditación diaria incluye un extracto de la encíclica, una reflexión y oración, meditaciones de la semana estará disponible en el Boletín Diocesano a partir de la primera semana de Adviento. Sor Martha Zammatore en la Oficina de Asuntos Hispanos ha tenido la amabilidad de traducir los primeros cuatro domingos de Adviento en español para este boletín.

1ª SEMANA

28 de Noviembre: 1º Domingo de Adviento

“Cada uno encuentra su propio bien asumiendo el proyecto que Dios tiene sobre él, para realizarlo plenamente: en efecto, encuentra en dicho proyecto su verdad y, aceptando esta verdad, se hace libre.” (La Caridad en La Verdad #1)

Reflexionar: Hoy muchos creen que van a ser felices haciendo lo que quieren en la vida. Pero, en realidad, Dios tiene un plan y sabe lo que es verdaderamente bueno para cada uno de nosotros. Cuanto más se descubre y vive por este plan, más felices seremos, y más experimentaremos la verdadera libertad.

Oración: Hoy pide a Dios que te ayude a conocer Su voluntad y esforzarte a vivirla cada día mejor.

2ª SEMANA

5 de Diciembre: 2º Domingo de Adviento

“No basta progresar sólo desde el punto de vista económico y tecnológico. El desarrollo necesita ser ante todo auténtico e integral.” (La Caridad en La Verdad #23)

Reflexionar: El verdadero progreso humano es mucho más que el alivio de la pobreza. Es mucho más que responder a las necesidades materiales de las personas, o el desarrollo de una tecnología más avanzada. Debemos dar atención a cada uno en todas sus dimensiones: espirituales, emocionales, sociales, e intelectuales.

Oración: Hoy pide a Dios liberarte de mirar las cosas solamente en términos materiales, y reconocer que también tenemos otras necesidades y aún mayores.

3ª SEMANA

12 de Diciembre: 3º Domingo de Adviento

“Los derechos individuales, desvinculados de un conjunto de deberes que les dé un sentido profundo, se desquician y dan lugar a una espiral de exigencias prácticamente ilimitada y carente de criterios. La exacerbación de los derechos conduce al olvido de los deberes.” (La Caridad en La Verdad #43)

Reflexionar: Nuestra sociedad se ha vuelto tan obsesionada con los derechos que pocas personas parecen cuestionar de donde vienen los derechos, o si todo el presunto derecho es en verdad un derecho como tal. Si no somos capaces de poner los deberes antes de los derechos, las cosas son al revés, lo que conduce a graves injusticias. No mirar más allá del aserto del "derecho de la mujer a elegir" sobre nuestro deber de proteger la vida humana de un inocente.

Oración: Hoy pide a Dios que te ayude (y a tus conciudadanos) a concentrarse más en el cumplimiento de sus deberes para con Dios y al prójimo que en exigir sus derechos.

4ª SEMANA

19 de Diciembre: 4º Domingo de Adviento

“Hemos de fortalecer el aprecio por una libertad no arbitraria, sino verdaderamente humanizada por el reconocimiento del bien que la precede. Para alcanzar este objetivo, es necesario que el hombre entre en sí mismo para descubrir las normas fundamentales de la ley moral natural que Dios ha inscrito en su corazón.” (La Caridad en La Verdad #68)

Reflexionar: La verdadera libertad no es simplemente la licencia para hacer, decir, pensar o elegir lo que uno quiere. No es una licencia para descartar las normas morales y confeccionar sus propias normas. Este tipo de libertad arbitraria en última instancia, es destructiva para el individuo y para los demás. Tenemos que aceptar las limitaciones de nuestra naturaleza humana. La libertad tiene que ser enraizada en la bondad y en la verdad misma. La verdadera libertad es ser capaz de rechazar las influencias dañinas y elegir lo que es verdaderamente bueno.