

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings in Christ. It is with great joy and gratitude that I greet you at the beginning of this *V National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry!*

Queridos hermanos y hermanas,

¡La paz de Cristo resucitado este´ con todos ustedes! Con gran alegría y gratitud les saludo al comienzo de este Quinto Encuentro Nacional del Ministerio Hispano/Latino.

El camino que nos ha traído hasta aquí ha sido largo pero fructífero. En nuestras parroquias y comunidades hemos orado y reflexionado juntos, hemos escuchado y acompañado a otros, y hemos salido a las periferias de nuestros pueblos y comunidades como discípulos misioneros. Ahora, como delegados de nuestras diócesis y representantes de organizaciones y grupos católicos, traemos esas voces y reflexiones al Encuentro Nacional.

The Encuentro has been a provocation for us to go face to face with people and bring alive the truth, the beauty, and the radiance of the Gospel. Over the last year and a half, most of you have engaged in missionary and community building activities in your parishes, ecclesial movements, and other Catholic organizations and institutions. The process of the *V Encuentro* has truly been an experience of the joy of the Gospel, and a source of deep and fruitful conversations in our dioceses.

My friends, we know that this is also a time of pain in our mother Church. The revelations of misconduct by a few bishops and priests, the release of the Pennsylvania grand jury report, and other continuing revelations cause great shame and sorrow. As bishops, we have fallen short of what God expects of His shepherds. For this, we again ask forgiveness from both the Lord and those who have been harmed, and from you, the People of God. May God grant us the wisdom and resolve to reform and renew His Church. We will continue to support survivors of abuse in their healing. We also commit to stronger protections to ensure the evil of sexual assault and abuse of all kinds is rooted from the Church.

Amidst this darkness, the *Encuentro* is a light that shines and illuminates the way forward. The enthusiasm, the passion, the love, and the joy of the *Encuentro* process is a means of grace, a gift to us as we rebuild the Church.

Now we come together to listen, to share, and to celebrate as we hear and respond again to the call to strengthen and renew Hispanic/Latino ministries with faithfulness, vigor, and confidence.

I am proud of, and extremely thankful for all those who have dedicated their time, talent, and treasure to bring about this remarkable gathering of missionary disciples. The *National Encuentro* could not have been possible without the leadership of the bishops and the generous support of so many sponsors. In a particular way, I want to thank all of you, the delegates and

other Catholic leaders, who have dedicated so many hours to lift up the voices, hopes, dreams, commitments, and pastoral recommendations that are at the center of this ecclesial gathering, contributing so much to the life and mission of the Church in the United States.

May our time together be fruitful and filled with prayer and friendship in the Lord, so that we can go forth, after the *Encuentro*, with renewed commitment and enthusiasm to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to a Church and a world very much in need of it.

As always, we implore the maternal blessing and protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of the Americas. Today as yesterday, she calls forth from among us, in the most unsuspected places, new “Juan Diegos” to carry on the mission of evangelization.

A nuestra Madre Santísima de Guadalupe, con afecto filial y llenos de esperanza le decimos hoy:

¡Ven con nosotros al caminar, Santa María, ven!