

Bishop Constantino Barrera

First of all, I would like to thank God for giving me this opportunity to be with you, and I am grateful to CELAM, who chose me to take part in this marvelous experience, all due to the fact that I am collaborating with the Department of Family, Youth and Life for the Region of Mexico-Central America. Since I have already been introduced, I will simply add that I am from El Salvador, from the Diocese of Sonsonate. Not Cincinnati, Sonsonate.

I would also like to thank the Hispanic Ministry team that has welcomed me with such love. It has truly been an experience of encountering Christ in His humanity, which is all of us, that humanity that walks, fights, and makes an effort to give witness to the living presence of Jesus within each one of us. My experience with all of you has been very enriching.

First of all, I notice a stronger and more thriving ministry, with great hopes of continuing to organize this effort so that Hispanics' actions within the Church become more and more concrete, and seeing so many bishops present here, I think the Hispanics' desire to have a larger role in the Church's action is being achieved, since they are part of the Church in the United States as well. The fact that many priests are supporting them is very important as well.

I also see very clearly as this Encounter evolves, which is truly an Encounter, that it is pastorally in line with Aparecida and especially the ministerial guidelines that Pope Francis laid out in very important documents such as *Evangelii Gaudium* and his Apostolic Exhortation on the Family [*Amoris Laetitia*]. And speaking of the Pope's support of the youth, he believes that they are a priority, not the future. The youth are the present of the Church, the face of the Church. But by investing in our youth we are also defining the Church of the future because they are going at a good pace.

At the same time, this intention, this desire to participate in *pastoral de conjunto* (communion in mission), that stems from Medellín and Puebla, is to be able to respond to the challenges and needs of the poor, of families, of education and development, making a preferential option for the poor and the youth. The integration of so many cultures that have known how to exhibit a cultural interchange through their participation has also enriched me and delighted me. I am very impressed.

I am taking a great experience back with me and I have so much to share. CELAM will most likely ask me what it was like to participate in the Encuentro, and I am really looking forward to sharing it. What can I tell them? That we continue moving forward, to continue onward, remain united, always seek to exchange ministerial experiences and strengthen your parish communities so that with a strong Diocesan Ministry, pastoral plans will be reached in order to achieve greater participation in ministry.

I also ask that we exchange experiences in order to get to know CELAM, which is an organization of the Conference of Latin American Bishops that serves the Conference of Bishops in each country, and aids in pastoral formation. Sharing could really help maintain that communion and the contribution you make to CELAM is important. It is also important to CELAM as a pastoral experience because you have been enriching ministry in this country through Hispanic Ministry and this brings me great joy.

Another thing I think is very important is that you don't lose communion with the ministry that has been going on in this country throughout the centuries, because Hispanic Ministry exists to unite and integrate. Remain always in that spirit of helping the poorest of the poor, the migrants, those who are suffering the most, those who are alone, and all those that the Church asks us to help today in age.

And lastly, I would like to ask you to remain united in prayer on October 14th when we celebrate the great occasion of Monsignor Romero's canonization. May each of you carry Monsignor's great love, his spirit, his surrender, his fight in your hearts, because that is what is most important in order to work for justice, peace, freedom and love. Let us work with Christ so that the Kingdom of Jesus, which he so often proclaimed, becomes a reality in each one of us, especially in this country, in each and every state. I am glad that we also have participants here from Canada. From coast to coast may we have that love for Monsignor Romero and a desire to imitate his great love for those who are suffering most. May God repay you. Thank you very much.