

Archdiocese unveils plan to Hispanic young people

Georgina Vaca had been waiting for one moment for two years.

Standing in front of a crowd of more than 150 young Hispanics gathered at St. John the Evangelist, Columbia, she held a large binder in her hands.

She turned to auxiliary Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski and offered it.

“Bishop Mitch, it is with joy that we present to you the Hispanic Young Adult Strategic Plan,” Vaca said to those assembled at the parish’s Oakland Mills Interfaith Center location for the third “Explosion Juvenil.”

Bishop Rozanski held the binder above his head. The assembled applauded enthusiastically.

The unveiling of the plan, which is in both English and Spanish, was a landmark moment. Vaca, the Archdiocese of Baltimore’s coordinator of Hispanic young adult and youth ministry, said the goal is to create a greater collaboration between young Hispanics and the church. The plan also features an aspect of liturgy and prayer life, as well as how young Hispanics can become evangelists in the community at-large.

“It is very rewarding,” Vaca said.

The plan first became an idea in the spring of 2007 when archdiocesan staff members attended an event at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana called “Encuentro.”

That gathering brought thousands of Hispanics to speak with Catholic bishops and leaders about addressing their future role in the church.

Vaca said the archdiocese wanted to carry over that momentum. Determined to build a plan for reaching out to people of various Latin American countries, Vaca assembled a team of young people and church leaders to form a committee to develop it.

Bishop Rozanski has been a steadfast supporter of fostering more young Hispanic involvement in the archdiocese.

"I think there's a great spirit among the Hispanic community," Bishop Rozanski said. "There are many who wish to contribute so much. I think this plan is a means of helping to channel our energies and our spirit to helping us work together. It's just been a blessing to be involved in the steps of the plan."

Bishop Rozanski added "the work ahead is difficult, but will also be spirit-filled."

Vaca said Hispanic young adults must take ownership of the plan's implementation in parishes and elsewhere.

Those in the Hispanic community looking for inspiration need only to look at Rosy Trejo, a parishioner of St. Joseph in Cockeysville. Trejo was awarded the Messenger of Light award by Bishop Rozanski.

Trejo, who originally came from Mexico eight years ago, has worked for greater involvement amongst young Hispanics in the Catholic Church.

"I see myself in all the young adults from different countries and different backgrounds," Trejo said. "When I first got here, I thought it was hard just to get to church because I didn't have a car and then there was the language. When I see that in people, I remember I also had those troubles. I really feel that I want to help."

Explosion Juvenil is an annual gathering of archdiocesan young people from various Latin American countries. They share their talents and also look for ways to build solidarity.

"It's great to see so many young adults together," Trejo said, "and see that they somehow recognize God in their lives as well."