

Coffee & Doughnuts with Lia Salinas

The Catholic Review sits down with Lia Salinas, Director of Hispanic Ministry for the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

CR: What, and where, are your Catholic roots?

Salinas: I was born and raised Catholic. An early childhood memory is attending Mass on Sundays in my hometown of Santa Tecla, El Salvador. It wasn't until my family and I migrated to Miami, however, that we started engaging more in parish life.

Being strangers in a new land, we found comfort in our parish community. That is really what cemented my faith and allowed me to understand the importance of the support of a faith community. In my hometown parish of St. Catherine of Siena in Kendall, Fla., my sisters and I began attending youth group and volunteering in the religious education program, etc. I currently reside in Arlington, Va., and worship at Our Lady, Queen of Peace.

CR: What brought you to the U.S.?

Salinas: I was 12 years old when I moved to Miami. My father was a mechanical engineer in El Salvador, his company transferred him to Miami, and he was soon offered the opportunity to bring along his family. Due to the civil war in El Salvador and the uncertainty in the country at that time, he did not hesitate in his decision for us to move to the U.S. It was a tough decision at the time for all of us, but my dad knew it was an opportunity he could not pass.

CR: What do you best like about your ministry?

Salinas: I have worked most of my life for the Catholic Church in several ministries, and have always considered that I am a servant, whether it is providing services to people, connecting them to resources or simply listening to their stories and concerns. I also enjoy working with youths and young adults. They are great reminders that the church is young and that we need their energy to evangelize.

They also remind me how important it is to pass along our Catholic faith and roots to future generations.

CR: Why is Hispanic ministry vital to the Catholic Church in the U.S.?

Salinas: Our community has many gifts to offer. As Hispanics/Latinos are deeply rooted in family values and rich, colorful and dynamic faith traditions, we can greatly contribute to the life of the church.

A recent study by CARA (the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate) disclosed that Hispanics account for 30 percent of the Catholic population in this country. About 40 percent of all Hispanics in the U.S. are under the age of 21 and 93 percent of Hispanics 18 and older are U.S.-born. Those statistics show how important Hispanics/Latinos are to the future of the Catholic Church in the U.S.

We must act now. Hispanics can no longer be viewed as guests or strangers in our parish communities, but rather, as protagonists of the New Evangelization, especially our youths.

One of the objectives of the V Encuentro process of evangelization and consultation is to begin to strategize ways to engage and form Hispanics in leadership roles in our parish communities, Catholic schools, universities and other institutions.

CR: Favorite saint?

Salinas: St. Teresa de Avila. I have always found her deep spirituality to be very intriguing and challenging - in a positive way. She is a great role model for women.

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