

Godspeed to my bridge to Baltimore's Catholic Hispanic community



Today was the day Georgina Vaca said goodbye to the Archdiocese of Baltimore. For the last several years she's been the coordinator of Hispanic young adults and youths and worked with archdiocese's overall young adult community.

When I first showed to work for the Catholic Review back in 2008, Georgina immediately welcomed me. When I went out on assignments as youth and young adults beat writer that involved the Hispanic community, she was my go-between. More succinctly, she was my bridge.

That sounds odd, but as a young white guy wearing button-downs, khakis and carrying a notebook when showing up at events with largely Spanish-speaking audiences, it was not always easy. My three-years of Spanish were left back in the 1990s. For some of the Hispanic community, white guys, rightly or wrongly, were kept at arm's length. Some young men were new to the country and they didn't know who to trust and some guys that looked like me didn't always give them a reason to let their guard down.

The face they connected with most was Georgina. She saw no barriers. She only saw possibilities - mainly the opportunity to tell the stories of Catholic Hispanic young people in the U.S. When I would show up to cover something and wanted to talk to someone, Georgina would often go over to people and explain who i was, where I was from and what I wanted to do. They would nod. You could see the reluctance vanish. If she said I was OK, I was.

Almost uniformly, I got the interview. It was Georgina. She was my bridge to them. We connected because she cared. The Hispanic community knew that and always

will. So will I.

Georgina is leaving the archdiocese for Catholic Relief Services to be a materials development specialist, where she will put together materials for the U.S. Catholic Church when emergencies happen abroad. The materials include prayer services, petitions and lesson plans.

When I found out she was leaving, Georgina told me the work under her would continue and she let all the young adult councils know that. As always, when she said something was OK, people knew it to be true.

Georgina has an extraordinary heart and it'll put to great use at Catholic Relief Services. I know she'll be close, still, but she will be missed.