

Supporting Ordained Latina Ministries

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Latinas discerning and living out a call to ordained ministries can be supported in many ways along their journey. These steps can help reduce the challenges they can face because of differences in language and culture, so that their ministries are valued equally to those of other clergy.

Discerning a call to ordained ministries

For Latinas who come from English-speaking congregations with Latino Hispanic ministries:

1. Training needs to be offered to both English and Spanish-speaking parishioners regarding the discernment process. What exactly does the “discernment process” mean? What are specific ways to help a person discern and respond to a call to ordained ministry? What exactly is expected of a person who enters a discernment process?
2. What are some of the possible gender biases that can arise when a Latina seeks to enter a discernment process for responding to the call to ordained ministry? Some biases may be internal, such as not thinking of women in clergy roles. Others may be external, such as wanting to keep talented women in lay leadership roles. All of these can affect the discernment of a genuine call to ordained ministries.
3. A clergy or lay person member of the Commission of Ministry should provide an ongoing accompaniment and support to the Latina aspirant and the parish discernment committee. This can be helpful to the diocese and the parish by clarifying questions and supporting good discernment processes as they arise.

For Latinas in seminaries

1. Offer advanced classes for Latinas who are in need of English and Spanish language oral and written skills.
2. Offer mentoring for academics, spirituality, and overall support, as well as best practices for parish administration.
3. Provide opportunity for research on the different realities of Latino Episcopal communities in the USA and in Province IX.

4. Field placement in congregations with Latino/Hispanic Ministries and in English-speaking congregations. If necessary, send Latinas to other dioceses for field placement, or for an immersion practicum in Province IX.
5. Collaborate with the Commission of Ministry to provide mentorship to Latinas.
6. Actively support the wellbeing of Latinas who are bi-vocational. Provide an educational forum to dioceses with bi-vocational clergy and that expect them to sustain viable and vital growth in their congregations. Also include a discussion of expectations of part-time work for part-time compensation.
7. Address the cultural competency needed of English-speakers who are part of a ministry led by Latina clergy.
8. Address the cultural competency needed to affirm the gifts and talents of Latina clergy and how their needs are similar and different from English speaking female clergy, and particularly how they differ from the male-centric, full-time rector model.
9. Provide financial management courses and grant writing courses with a requirement to write a grant while in seminary.
10. Find human resources for Latinas seeking spirituality from Latina spiritual directors.

For Latinas recently ordained

1. Support Latinas clergy in gender power issues with male clergy: how to be aware and how to recognize and address misogyny. How to handle abusive situations by either male or female clergy.
2. Teach Latinas to claim their power and get the respect they deserve.
3. Connect Latinas to other Latina clergy (priests, deacons, bishops in the USA and in Province IX) to avoid isolation, burnout, and depression.
4. Learn how to identify English speaking allies and work with them in areas where they are needed.
5. Help Latina clergy to be empowered to use their voices so that they can fully acknowledge being part of a culture that is good and different.

Commission on Ministry

All Commissions on Ministry should be prepared to take these steps:

1. Take multiculturalism training regularly.
2. Assume pastoral responsibility for Latina postulants and candidates.
3. Learn about Latino/Hispanic history, spirituality, and the social and economic status of Latinas in the diocese, and in the USA (and Province IX).

4. Demand that seminaries and diaconal programs including Latino culture, Latino theology and spirituality, and the social and political issues related to our Latino immigrant communities in the USA, Spanish speaking Caribbean countries, and Latin America.