

Attending to the spiritual restlessness of humanity that manifests in migration/immigration, Dr. Hosffman Ospino addresses the relational encounter through culture that is required of the church. The resounding reminder that God always encounters through culture, in ethnic, sociological, and historical contexts, is inspirational for catechesis today.

✪ **MARGARET MATIJASEVIC**, *Executive Director,
National Conference for Catechetical Leadership*

One of the most innovative pastoral theologians in our country provides us with practical wisdom addressing the most urgent questions about being Catholic in our diverse U.S. communities. If you seek an accessible yet profound understanding of catechesis in a multicultural church, this is the resource for you!

✪ **TIMOTHY MATOVINA**, *author of **Latino Catholicism:
Transformation in America's Largest Church***

A timely and invaluable resource! In bringing together theory, research, and practice, Dr. Ospino has provided a practical resource for catechists seeking to understand the importance of language and culture in the process of faith formation and its transmission.

✪ **JAVIER W. BUSTAMANTE**, *Executive Director of the Office
of Cultural Diversity and Outreach in the Archdiocese of Washington*


Hosffman presents a practical, inspiring, and engaging book for all parish leaders committed to religious education and evangelization. It captures the current fundamental experience of life, faith, and culture.

✪ **REV. LUIS A. GUIDO**, *artist and poet, author of **Amar con Sabiduría
es Saber Volar***


Just when the felt need is so acute, along comes Ospino with an excellent comprehensive work on the encounter between faith and culture within the context of catechesis. A valuable resource for catechists and church leaders in their efforts to respond to the call of the gospel in a culturally diverse society.

✪ **SR. RUTH BOLARTE, IHM, D.MIN.**, *Director, Office of Multi-Cultural
Ministry, Diocese of Metuchen*

Cultural diversity is the reality today in the American Catholic Church: it is not a goal or an option! Hosffman Ospino leads catechists gently and concretely through this current reality to a deeper consciousness and appreciation of the relationship between faith and culture. While demonstrating this relationship through the writings of the church, he gives practical “dos” and “don’ts” for catechesis in U.S. Catholic churches and dioceses.

 **BARBARA ROMANELLO-WICHTMAN, D.MIN.**, *Director of Religious Education and Catechesis for the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio*

Professor Ospino has presented an important pedagogical approach to effectively sharing the faith in a culturally diverse church and community. This is a must-have guide packed with practical tools and tips for catechists and catechetical leaders that will assist us in the art of sharing the faith within the complexity of our culturally diverse contexts.

 **PETER J DUCTRÁM, MA., M.DIV.**, *Archdiocesan Director of Catechesis, Archdiocese of Miami; member of the Federation for Catechesis with Hispanics NCCL*

An indispensable tool for today’s catechist! Ospino provides a great summary of the church’s wisdom on why culture matters, and he provides excellent, experience-tested tips for religious educators.

 **MAR MUÑOZ-VISOSO, MTS**, *Executive Director, Cultural Diversity in the Church, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*

This essential guide responds to the needs that catechists face today. Dr. Ospino, using direct, clear, and concrete language, enumerates the challenges and offers recommendations for responding to them. This is an excellent pastoral resource for catechists.

 **REV. ALEJANDRO LÓPEZ-CARDINALE**, *President, The National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*



The ESSENTIAL CATECHIST'S BOOKSHELF

Interculturalism *and* Catechesis

~~~~~  
A CATECHIST'S GUIDE  
TO RESPONDING TO  
CULTURAL DIVERSITY  
~~~~~

Hosffman Ospino, Ph.D.



TWENTY-THIRD
PUBLICATIONS

twentythirdpublications.com

Contents

Introduction	6
1 Yes, Friends, Cultural Diversity Is Real . . .	10
2 A Few Thoughts on Culture	24
3 From Our Own Catholic Wells.	31
4 God's Way	43
5 Intercultural Competencies for Catechists	54
6 Dos and Don'ts about Culture	68
7 Ten Tips to Organize (or Reorganize) Catechetical Programs.	82



INTRODUCTION

What a wonderful time to be a Catholic catechist in the United States of America! My hope is that you agree. I am sure that many other catechists said something similar thirty, fifty, one hundred, and more years ago. Most likely they were right. Announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ and the richness of the Christian tradition is a great reason to rejoice.

What makes catechesis exciting at this time in history? Let me be honest. It has little to do with smooth paths or comfortable circumstances. We live in a time of major transitions—demographic, cultural, social, and even political—that demand significant adjustments to how Catholics share our faith.

Recent migration patterns, mainly from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa, among other places, are deeply transforming thousands of faith communities throughout the country. Catholicism in several regions and major cities has become a de facto bilingual (English/Spanish) and bicultural reality, thanks to the incredible growth of the Hispanic population. The rise of social media as a way of life, coupled with the pervasive use of technology, has not only expanded our global awareness but also compelled us to bring the message of Christianity to the virtual worlds that millions of Catholics inhabit.

Many speak of a paradigm change. Yes, a new cultural paradigm has emerged, characterized by diversity. This means that we live in a different context where cultural diversity is the standard for how millions of Catholics in the United States live and practice our faith. Such a shift requires fresher ways of doing catechesis and evangelization that respond to the demands of our culturally diverse contexts. This is a time of challenges and opportunities.

This short book addresses the question of what it means to do catechesis in a culturally diverse church. This question is without a doubt on the minds of many catechists and pastoral leaders in thousands of Catholic parishes, schools, organizations, and groups in every corner of our country. The feelings associated with the topic of cultural diversity often include anxiety, hesitation, puzzlement, skepticism, anger, expectation, and curiosity. It is fine to go through all these emotions since they indicate that we care about how we do catechesis. In fact, they invite some form of engagement. I worry more when there are no feelings at all or no conversations about cultural diversity.

If you are looking here for “solutions” to cultural diversity, then you will be disappointed. This book does not treat cultural diversity as a problem but as an opportunity. Cultural diversity is a unique opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in new and creative ways while taking the many cultural realities that shape the lives of U.S. Catholics seriously. We are not the first Catholics to do this; most probably, we will not be the last.

In some cases, catechizing in a culturally diverse context requires exploring a new language or learning about a different cultural tradition to better share our faith. Such contexts often require that we empower people from the cultural, linguistic, and racial/ethnic groups that are already present in

our faith communities. Because cultural diversity affects us all one way or another, catechists and catechetical leaders in diverse contexts need to develop the appropriate intercultural competencies.

Cultural diversity opens up a new world of possibilities for catechesis and for catechists. It compels us to go beyond the usual ways of doing things. It requires that we use the best of our imagination and wisdom. It takes us out of our comfort zones into spaces that demand new relationships and new pedagogical approaches. This is what makes it exciting!

In the following pages, you will find a combination of reflections and suggestions to catechize and organize catechetical programs in culturally diverse contexts. I draw from several sources. First, my own catechetical experience serving in a trilingual parish for several years, then working at the diocesan level, and currently as a professor of religious education at a Catholic university. Second, from various bodies of literature that inform the arguments presented. Third, and perhaps most important, from the wisdom of countless catechetical and other pastoral leaders from different cultural backgrounds whom I have engaged in dialogue during my travels throughout the country giving presentations and learning from their invaluable experience.

At the end of each chapter there are a few questions for reflection and discussion. I invite you to read or study the book with other people in your group or larger faith community. This topic definitely calls for a good interchange with others.

Hosffman Ospino

JANUARY 31, 2017

FEAST OF SAINT JOHN BOSCO

PART I

Wiley
Twenty-Third
Publications
Sample



Yes, Friends, Cultural Diversity Is Real

Chances are that if you are a Catholic in the United States, you have heard people talking about “cultural diversity.” If not, well, you just did! Maybe you are reading this book precisely because someone informed you that catechesis in your faith community from now on needed to be more mindful about cultural diversity.

The expression has become rather popular in conferences, church documents, and programs. Even the Catholic bishops of the United States a few years ago (in 2008) established a large office called the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church.

But what is it? What do we mean when we talk about cultural diversity? Some catechists and ministerial leaders feel bewildered by these two words. Others are curious. And let’s be honest, some are suspicious, perhaps dismissive, because in some corners of our society the terms “culture” and “diversity” are, as they say, loaded politically and ideologically.

To put many hearts and minds at peace, we will not delve into politics or ideology. And to make sure that that remains the case, we must state at the outset that cultural diversity *is*

not treated in this book as a “philosophy” (a set of particular ideas that lead us to a set of defined commitments) or an “ideal to be achieved” (i.e., let’s make Catholicism in the United States culturally diverse).

In this book, we speak of cultural diversity as *a reality* that already is shaping how the majority of U.S. Catholics live and experience God in the everyday. Yes, the majority! To be Catholic in the United States is to be part of a beautiful experience in which many baptized women and men from different cultures, races, and traditions are all together in parishes, schools, and other faith communities to experience the fullness of the love of Christ and to build the church in the twenty-first century.

A few numbers can help us put things in perspective:

There are about 17,200 parishes in the United States. In nearly 40% of these communities (approx. 7,000), Mass and other services are celebrated in a language other than English, or more than half of parishioners do not self-identify as Euro-American, White. Thousands exhibit both characteristics.

- About 4,500 Catholic parishes in the country explicitly serve Hispanic Catholics, primarily offering services in Spanish.
- The two fastest growing groups of Catholics in the country are Hispanics and Asians.
- More than 50% of Catholics older than 35 are Euro-American, White.
- Six out of ten U.S. Catholics under the age of 18 are Hispanic.

We do not need to imagine cultural diversity or figure out how to be more culturally diverse! Accepting who we are is a good beginning to better understanding our present reality and anticipating where we are heading in the near future. Also, being mindful of these realities will allow us to imagine the kind of catechesis and evangelization needed at this time.

Cultural diversity is a reality that has a direct impact on how we define ourselves as individuals and as members of a community, how we live our faith, and how we pass on the faith to the next generation. “We” in this case is everyone, from all cultures, races, and ethnicities, who self-identifies as Catholic in this country: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, etc.

As we imagine fresher and creative ways of doing catechesis in a culturally diverse context like Catholicism in the United States of America, we need to have honest conversations that invite us to reflect about

- the importance of the many languages Catholics speak in our own parishes,
- the cultural traditions that help them carry their values and convictions, and
- the ways in which they prefer to share their experience of God.

We are to do this while building *one* church in communion with God and with one another. Tall order, undoubtedly, yet a worthy project! If it is of any consolation, we are not the first Catholics in the history of the United States to have that responsibility.

EARLIER WAVES OF CATHOLIC MIGRATION

Catholicism in the United States from its very beginning has been sustained by the faithfulness, creativity, and the tenacity of immigrants from various parts of the world.

The first Catholics in what is now U.S. territory came from Spain, more than two centuries before the nation was founded. They settled mainly in the South and the West, and some in the Southeast as well as in the Caribbean. There they established missions that served as religious and educational centers for the local communities. As time went by, most of these missions closed and ceased having much influence upon how Catholics were evangelized.

French Catholics grew roots and built churches in the old Louisiana Territory. Some grew roots in the Northern part of the country close to other French immigrants who settled in what today we know as Canada. As territories with a large presence of French Catholics formally became part of the United States, elements of the French culture became part of the social fabric of their communities.

Black Catholics constituted a small, yet significant presence in the church between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Unfortunately the negative effects of slavery and racial discrimination prevented this population from fully integrating into the church and flourishing. Many of those effects are still felt in our day.

During the nineteenth century, in the years after the U.S. became an independent nation, millions of Catholics, mainly from Western Europe, arrived on U.S. shores and settled primarily in the Northeast and Midwest. Many others went to other parts of the young, expanding nation. Millions more would arrive in later decades. By the middle of the twentieth century, more than 23,000 parishes, more than 13,000 Catholic schools, and thousands of other structures, including hospitals