



HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH 2025 Celebrate, Think, Decide, Act

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In the United States of America, by legal mandate, from September 15 to October 15, we annually celebrate HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH, when we recognize and honor the growing presence, influence, and contributions of the Latino/Hispanic American community to this nation's history, society, and culture.

For the millions of Hispanics who live here, these yearly celebrations must transcend mere parades, music, and national costumes. This must be a month in which, as a community, we evaluate, review, study, understand, and renew the importance of our historical and current presence in the United States and, at the same time, confront the challenges we face, now and in the near future, to make our life and existence more valid and stronger in the United States.

In this annual celebration of our Hispanic heritage, which traces its origins to 1968 and the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, and its expansion two decades later by President Ronald Reagan, we celebrate the enormous richness and diversity of the culture of the millions of men and women who come here, from the South or Latin American countries, Spain, or the Caribbean, and that, daily and with tenacity, honesty, and work, exalt our roots and build the greatness of this nation.

We celebrate the diversity and amalgamation of our national and regional cultural histories and identities, values, dialects, accents, music, traditions, cuisine, and customs from so many different places. We remember our historic presence in what is now the United States, a presence long before the constitutional founding of this nation. We celebrate our arts and knowledge, as well as the memory of all Hispanics who, in our countries of origin and here in the United States, have stood out and continue to stand out in all areas of social and cultural endeavor: leaders, artists, historians, athletes, politicians, teachers, scientists, and more.

Last year many U.S. voters were dissatisfied with the direction of the country and with the government policies of the previous administration, including those affecting the security of our southern border and matters of sexuality, gender, and family. The result was the election of the opposition party.

The policies of the current government, especially those on immigration, particularly mark and affect the present and near future of this nation's Hispanic community. We have all witnessed the subjugation, petulance, insensitivity, and cruelty with which many Hispanics are being violently and indiscriminately expelled from U.S. territory, unceremoniously and in violation of their fundamental human and citizen rights.

According to political and economic analysts, the recent bill approved by Congress will severely, deeply, drastically, and lastingly cut social benefits to the poorest communities of this nation. As president of the International Academy of Catholic Leaders, I am concerned about its impact and effects on the community.

That is why, beyond the noise and folklore of these Hispanic festivals, we must – within our communities – ask ourselves and engage in our education and social awareness around the impact of our presence as Hispanics or Latin Americans in the United States, through education that allows us to debunk stereotypes and racial prejudices.

We must seek support for Hispanic organizations and businesses. We must participate civically and politically with our votes and in a “better kind of politics” as our beloved first Latin American Pope Francis said: in daily political exercise that does not seek the personal, individual, selfish, disinterested, and dishonest good of our own pocket, but instead seeks the best social coexistence through the common good and the well-being of all.

We must engage in developing civic leaders within our communities and integrating all people in the new societies and cultures to which we arrive, without losing – of course – our identity, historical roots, language, values, and traditions. We must seek times and spaces of dialogue where we pursue and find consensus that benefits both the dominant culture and the Hispanic community.

All the challenges faced by the U.S. Hispanic community are important. We cannot postpone finding their solutions. If we want our Hispanic presence – here and now – to be both relevant and important, we all must face and solve issues such as discrimination and racial and xenophobic governmental and social prejudices, stigmatization against immigrants in a country that has always been comprised of immigrants, economic disparities, language and cultural barriers, the issue of each person's legal immigration status, issues about the health and disabilities of so many, access to social opportunities, and the wage gap.

We also must face and solve educational differences and gaps, insufficient financial support, labor exploitation, identity crises or generational traumas, misinformation, food insecurity or difficulties in acquiring housing, not to mention all the other challenges that touch our lives, every day, and those of our families and loved ones in our countries of origin.

These are our main challenges, our important and ongoing tasks. The importance or irrelevance, the quality or the defect, the value or insignificance, the success or failure of our Hispanic presence in the United States depends on the focus that these tasks receive and our successful arrival at their respective solutions. HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH is a propitious time and space to celebrate, but, above all, to think, decide, and act on all of this.

Mario J. Paredes is President of the Board of Directors of the International Academy of Catholic Leaders whose mission is educating leaders under the Catholic perspective to transform society in the political, social, and economic areas under the Social Doctrine of the Church.