



**“THE CHANGING FACE OF GLOBAL CATHOLICISM:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THEOLOGY AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION,  
A LATIN@<sup>1</sup> PERSPECTIVE”**

**ACHTUS REPORT FOR INSECT**

**MISSION<sup>2</sup>**

The Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States is an association of scholars dedicated to promoting research and critical theological reflection within the context of the U.S. Hispanic experience.

While influenced by other theologies, the articulation of the faith experience of U.S. Hispanics is a distinct theological enterprise whose depth and richness remain largely untapped by the Church. The urgency of providing a theological voice for the lived faith of U.S. Hispanics is further underscored by the rapidly increasing demographic significance of the U.S. Hispanic population.

In order to accomplish its mission, ACHTUS seeks to:

- Accompany the Hispanic communities of the United States, helping to critically discern the movement of the Spirit in their historical journey.
- Thematize the faith experience of the people within their historical, socio-economic, political and cultural contexts.
- Encourage interdisciplinary scholarly collaboration.
- Create resources, instruments and a professional network to develop a U.S. Hispanic *teología de conjunto*.
- Support Hispanics currently engaged in theological research and studies.

**MEMBERSHIP**

The Academy offers three categories of membership:

---

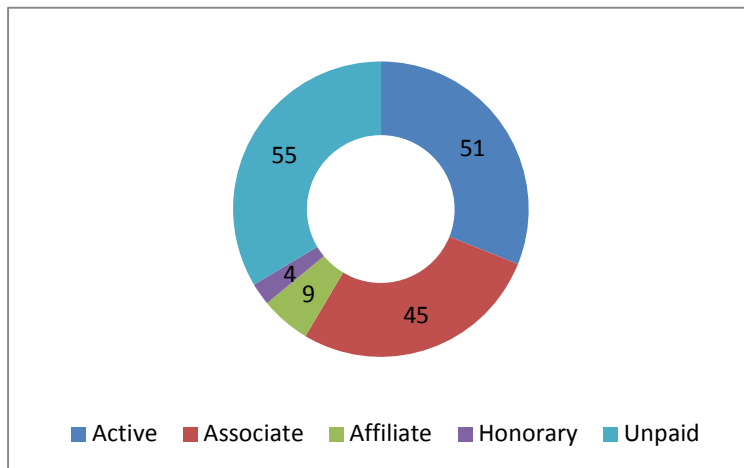
<sup>1</sup> The use of @ as a suffix is practiced in the United States, in particular in the field of culture studies by Hispanic scholars in referring to males and females collectively. It is one means of conveniently combining the “o” and “a” into one character that is gender inclusive and less cumbersome than o/a.

<sup>2</sup> ACHTUS website, <http://www.achtus.org/>

**Active membership** is open to Roman Catholic Hispanics who possess a doctoral degree in theology, Scripture, ministry, or general religious studies and are knowledgeable and actively engaged in the North American Hispanic religious experience.

**Associate membership** is open to Roman Catholic Hispanics who are enrolled in a doctoral program in theology, Scripture, ministry, or general religious studies; or to others with accredited doctorates who are engaged in the U.S. Hispanic religious experience.

**Affiliate membership** is open to Roman Catholics who have completed or who are enrolled in an accredited non-doctoral graduate program in theology, Scripture, ministry, or general religious studies.

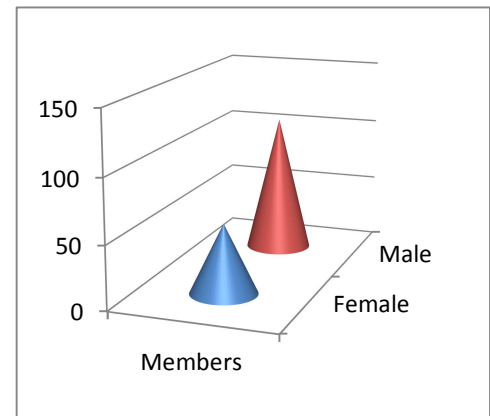


**Total number of members:**

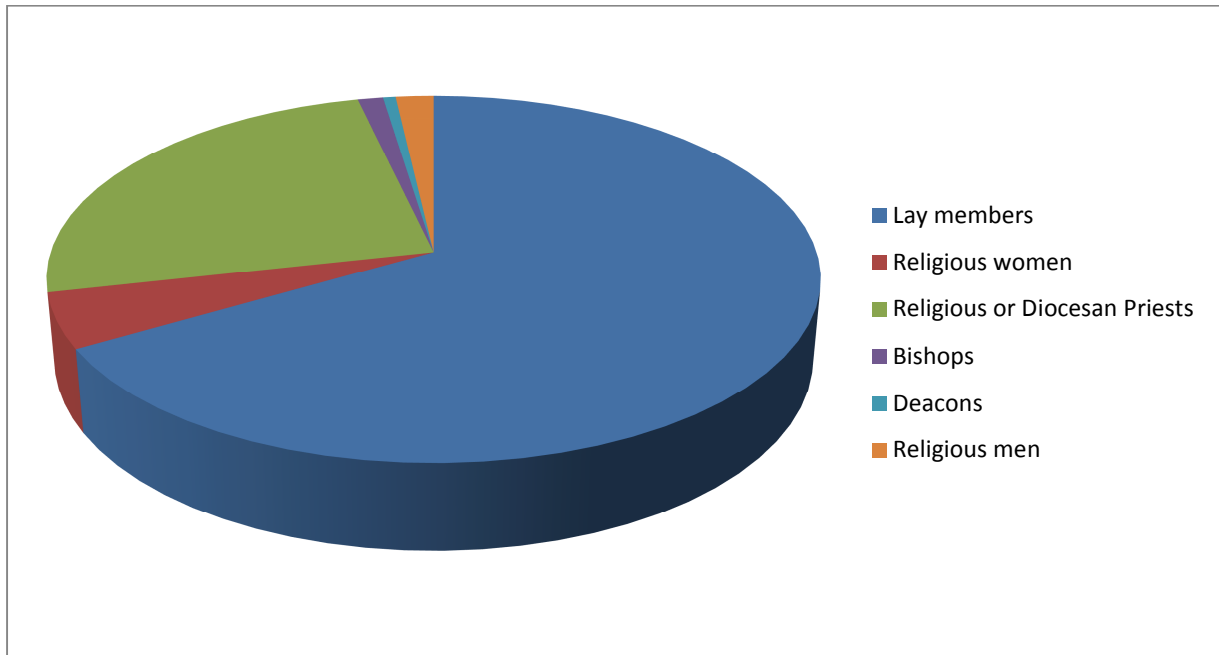
**164<sup>3</sup>**

Male: 109 // Female: 55

Ordained/vowed religious: 54 (8 vowed religious women, 41 religious or secular priests, 2 bishops, 1 permanent deacon, 3 vowed religious men) // 110 lay members



<sup>3</sup> These numbers reflect the most recent accounting of ACHTUS membership. The category “unpaid” refers to those members who owe dues but have not yet exceeded the three year time limit of nonpayment. ACHTUS dues include a one year subscription to the online *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* available at <http://latinotheology.org/>



In 2008 President Barack Obama's appointment of Cuban American theologian Miguel Díaz to the post of Ambassador of the United States to the Holy See significantly raised the profile of Latin@ theologies. Díaz's historic appointment as the first theologian and the first Hispanic to hold the position generated interest in Latin@ theologies as well as in ACHTUS. The ACHTUS online *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* received increased traffic during the months following the Díaz nomination, with particular attention to his published articles. Díaz, an active member, was also president of ACHTUS in 2006-2007, during which time he coordinated the annual colloquium with a theme focused on the relationship between African American and Latin@ Catholic theologies.

Despite this prominent presence, the reality is that Latin@s experience a disproportionate underrepresentation in the theological academy, Catholic church leadership and in professional ministry. This reality is best described in the following from an article in *Concilium* (2010/1) by the 2008-09 ACHTUS president.<sup>4</sup>

The obvious implications of under-representation in all forms of ecclesial leadership is that more often than not Latino/a programs, parishes, and offices on the local and diocesan levels are managed by non-Hispanics; and the presence of Latin@s in leadership, outside of the sphere of Hispanic ministries, is minimal and usually voluntary. The correlation between educational attainment and under-representation in theology and ministry cannot be under-

<sup>4</sup> "¡Despierta Iglesia! Reconfiguring Theologies of Ministry Latinamente," *Ministries in the Church*, (*Concilium* Series (2010/1). Eds. Susan Ross, Diego Irarrázabal, and Paul Murray. London: SCM, 2010. [Appears in multiple translations.]

estimated. The U.S. Bishops themselves admit “the Church is challenged by seeing that the number of Hispanics enrolled in degree programs is quite low, particularly in theology and related fields. The limitation of resources dedicated to the education of Latinos has a direct impact on the number of Hispanics who have the necessary credentials to hold leadership-level positions.”<sup>5</sup>

Not only are Latin@s under-educated for ministerial leadership, but also even fewer are involved in the education and formation of our church’s ministers. According to the data collected by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) from its member institutions, the presence of Latinos/as as students and faculty in theological education remains around 3%, only slightly higher than Native Americans.<sup>6</sup> Latin@s are the most under-represented community in the academy in comparison to the size and exponential growth of the Hispanic population in general. Within institutions charged with the responsibility of training leaders for ministries, according to theological educator Gary Riebe-Estrella, “Every area in the life of our institutions (curriculum, predominant pedagogies, personal and professional interaction) is reflective of a particular world view, which itself arises out of a particular context.”<sup>7</sup> These institutions not only lack a significant Latin@ presence at all levels, they also do not reflect our latinidad, assuming that educational agendas and delivery systems can and must be contextually neutral. Riebe-Estrella calls for theological educators, especially those from minoritized communities, to “challenge those pedagogies that have managed to insinuate themselves into the center of theological education and which are anchored in the power of those who are replicating their own training.”<sup>8</sup>

For Latin@s the trends remain disappointing. The most recent ATS data surveys (2010) indicate that the numbers of Latin@ faculty have decreased slightly and of the approximately 3300 professors of all ranks in ATS schools, 120 (less than 4%) are Latin@s, a number that remains consistently and statistically flat.<sup>9</sup> The numbers for student enrollments are no more promising. Of the 70,432 total enrollments in ATS schools, 3,474 (under 5%) were counted as Hispanic, the majority enrolled in ministerial programs. Of the 5402 total enrollment for advanced research

---

<sup>5</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry,” #75 (November 13, 2002). <http://www.usccb.org/hispanicaffairs/encuentromission.shtml>

<sup>6</sup> Association of Theological Schools, “Diversity in Theological Education,” Folio, see Racial/Ethnic Enrollment by Decade, 1969 – 1999,” and “Full-Time Racial/Ethnic Faculty in ATS Member Schools 1980, 1991, 2001.” <http://www.ats.edu/resources/foliocol.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Gary Riebe-Estrella, “Theological Education Revisited,” 2009 Presidential Address, Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States, 3 (June 2, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Riebe-Estrella, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Association of Theological Schools, 2010-11 Annual Data Tables, Table 31B, Number of Full-Time Faculty by Race/ Ethnicity, Rank, and Gender--United States, 74/169. <http://www.ats.edu/Resources/Publications/Documents/AnnualDataTables/2010-11AnnualDataTables.pdf>

degrees, Hispanics constituted 151 or approximately 3%, 24% of which were Latinas.<sup>10</sup> These trends indicate an immediate and, if not reversed, long-term, future where the majority population of the Catholic church will remain significantly and disproportionately represented if not marginalized in positions of leadership and influence in church and academia.

Latin@ theologies privilege a mutual relationship of accountability often articulated as *teología y pastoral de conjunto*. Among the implications of this stance are a more intentional and active participation by theologians in the pastoral ministry of the church, engagement with grassroots endeavors/communities and issues of social justice and an attraction to interdisciplinarity in scholarly research. These commitments too often are used to dismiss the scholarship of Latin@ theologians. While Latin@ theologies are in relationship with their Latin American counterparts, the theologizing that arises in the US is distinctive and grounded in the complicated contexts of the United States of America and its constellation of territories. However in the US academy too often Latin@ theologies are conflated into Latin American liberation theologies by Euro-Anglo scholars and teachers. This impacts the use of Latin@ scholarship in the resourcing of syllabi and curricula in theological education. Indirectly this has consequences for publication and, in higher education settings, for hiring, tenure and promotion of faculty.

These commitments also influence theological trajectories in Latin@ scholarship. The focus on daily lived experience (*lo cotidiano and cotidianidad*) as *locus theologicus* is explored through multiple lenses including but not limited to race/ethnicity, gender, colonization, hybridity, culture. These commitments open for study a broad range of concerns from popular Catholicism to popular culture, social issues such as migrations<sup>11</sup>, ritual and biblical studies as integrated into the lived experiences of situated communities. Theological anthropology and traditioning are prevalent themes for study and more recent developments embrace new directions in the academic discipline of spirituality as well as in the retrieval of indigenous, Iberian and colonial era sources. The experiences of shared life and historical legacies in the US have also served as impetus for the intentional cultivation of ongoing formal and informal relationships with theologians and scholars from the African American and Asian American communities.

Respectfully submitted en conjunto,

Dr. Gilberto Cavazos-González, ofm, President (2011-2012)

Dr. Carmen Nanko-Fernández, President (2008-09)

---

<sup>10</sup> Association of Theological Schools, 2010-11 Annual Data Tables, Table 2.12B, Head Count Enrollment by Race or Ethnic Group, Degree, and Gender, 2010, United States, 37/169.  
<http://www.ats.edu/Resources/Publications/Documents/AnnualDataTables/2010-11AnnualDataTables.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> These commitments are sometimes manifest in actions by ACHTUS. For example, the two public statements issued by the organization addressed immigration reform in the US. See STATEMENT SUPPORTING THE PASSAGE OF THE DREAM ACT (April 2009) <http://www.achtus.org/ACHTUSNEWS.html> and Statement on Just, Comprehensive, and Humane Immigration Reform (June 2006) <http://www.achtus.org/ImmigrationReform.html>