

Devotion for Latin/Hispanic Heritage Month

National Hispanic Heritage Month is a period from 15 September to 15 October in the United States for recognizing the contributions and influence of Hispanic Americans to the history, culture, and achievements of the United States.

Deuteronomy 24:14 -- *Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns.*

Hebrews 13:2 -- *Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.*

When I was in 5th grade my family moved into a home next to the Simmers family. The husband was born and raised in our area, but had enlisted in the Navy and had been stationed at Galveston Naval Base in Texas. That's where he met Georgia Rodriguez, a Tex-Mex-American. Their home was always a whirlwind of activity and she was always making some food or engaging in some project in which she tried to include the whole neighborhood. There were a few of the folks who resented her outspoken way of communicating, but that did not make her generosity and loving attitude waiver. She taught us some Spanish words and phrases; made us different Mexican dishes; introduced their music, and told us of her family's history. I'm sure that Georgia is the reason that I felt so comfortable when I moved to Tucson with its rich Mexican-American heritage. Georgia had prepared me without ever knowing I'd live here.

This is what we call hospitality – being in relationship, learning about others, relating our stories, sharing food, drink and experiences. How often do we practice hospitality with those of Latin/Hispanic heritage? I'm sure there are many of us who have transactional relationships with Latin Americans: a woman who cleans your house, or a landscaper who takes care of your lawn and yard, or employees serving you at a Mexican restaurant. Do you treat them as equals, as valued members of our community?

And what about people of Latin descent that you see every day at work, or school, or church, the gym or social clubs? Have you ever volunteered at Nash or Estes Elementary School? Or met a student's parents? Have you taken the time to enter into conversation with them to build a deeper relationship? To share stories of your histories with each other? Or do you shy away from them because their accent makes it difficult to understand them? Do you question, even to yourself, if they are here legally? When ethnic jokes are told that disparage Latin Americans, do you laugh, or be silently uncomfortable, or do you speak up and say that it's inappropriate? When disparaging stereotypes are used about any ethnicity, do you disagree?

There are myriad Americans of Latin descent who have made the level of fame and success, especially in the arts: painters, authors, actors, singers, musicians. There are also many in medicine, sciences and business. But the majority of Latinos in our community are just hard-working family people who are trying to make the lives of their families better. They are "every-day" folks just like you and I are. Get to know them, you will be glad you did.

Prayer: Lord, help us show radical hospitality to those whose language and customs may be different. Give us the courage to enter into a relationship with them. Help us remember that we are all God's children and loved by you. Amen

<https://umcstmarks.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Latin.pdf> - St. Mark's Racial Equity Resource page.

Judy Boroto, Racial Advocate Representative, Church & Society Committee