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At the meeting to launch the Nuevo Momento national project, 30 executive leaders and members of 15 Catholic Hispanic organizations, and over a dozen expert collaborators and consultants, gathered with the Nuevo Momento team Aug. 25-28 at Boston College's The Connors Center in Dover, Massachusetts. (Luis Donaldo González)



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Almost 45% of Catholics in the United States [self-identify as Hispanic](#) — a number that will continue growing in the coming decades. This means the Catholic Church in America will become increasingly Hispanic. Undoubtedly, this is the time to step into a "*Nuevo Momento*" ("new moment") to serve the Hispanic community in this country.

To promote and strengthen ministry to Hispanics in the U.S., Boston College launched a national project called *Nuevo Momento: Leadership and Capacity Building for Ministerial Organizations Serving Hispanic Catholics*. This initiative, developed by the [Boston College Clough School of Theology and Ministry](#), is supported by a \$15 million [Lilly Endowment](#) grant and led by Latino theologian and Boston College professor [Hosffman Ospino](#).

[Nuevo Momento](#) is a unique initiative designed to strengthen the work and leadership of 15 Catholic organizations that have had a high ministerial impact at the local or national level. It is a five-year project during which some professors, researchers and ministers will also conduct careful research on U.S. Hispanic Catholic ministry.



As the leader of the national project, Latino theologian and Boston College professor Hosffman Ospino addressed the Nuevo Momento meeting participants during the opening talk. (Luis Donaldto González)

Officially, we inaugurated the Nuevo Momento first phase with a business meeting held Aug. 25-28 at Boston College's The Connors Center in Dover, Massachusetts. Thirty executive leaders and members of the organizations, more than a dozen expert collaborators and consultants, and the Nuevo Momento team gathered to pray and celebrate our faith and dialogue and discern together about the vision driving the project as well as its logistics.

### **Empowering organizations**

Each organization participating in Nuevo Momento has been carefully selected after a period of discernment and study. They all work in diverse and multi-ministerial areas. A good number of them specialize in the education and formation of youth and young adult lay ecclesial ministers, such as [Corazón Puro](#), [Instituto Fe y Vida](#),

[Inc.](#), [Iskali](#), [La RED Nacional de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana](#), the [National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry](#) and the [Southeast Pastoral Institute](#). Some dedicate their efforts to advocacy and empowerment of vulnerable populations, as in the case of [Pastoral Migratoria](#).

Others provide educational and professional support to Hispanic ministry entities and organizations, often bringing them together to strategize and implement national initiatives, such as the [Federación de Institutos Pastorales](#), the [Mexican American Catholic College](#), the [National Catholic Council for Hispanic Ministry](#) and the [Northwest Regional Office for Hispanic Affairs](#).



Ignacio Rodriguez, president of the National Catholic Association of Diocesan Directors of Hispanic Ministry, shares some words during the Nuevo Momento meeting. (Luis Donaldo González)

Some are membership organizations that convene, support and form Hispanic Catholic ecclesial leaders such as the [Asociación de Hermanas Latinas Misioneras en](#)

[América](#), the [Asociación Nacional de Sacerdotes Hispanos](#), the [Federation for Catechesis with Hispanics](#) and the [National Catholic Association of Diocesan Directors of Hispanic Ministry](#).

Each of these organizations has emerged to share the joy of the Gospel, heal wounds and address the many needs of Hispanics nationwide. These groups are reaching hundreds of thousands of Hispanic Catholics through their work.

"These organizations are looking to innovate, to respond to the most urgent needs of God's people," Ospino said during the Nuevo Momento meeting. This initiative is an opportunity for all of them to work "*en conjunto*" or together, as remarked by the Rev. Tito Madrazo, [program director](#) in the religion division at Lilly Endowment Inc.

Starting with the meeting, the 15 organizations have entered a readiness phase, something similar to a process of spiritual preparation to take the next step in assessing their structures and strengthening their capacity.

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## **Forging the future**

One of this initiative's main objectives is to provide high-quality resources, professional mentoring and generous financial support to each organization involved. In this way, they will be able to grow in sustainability and effectiveness. "It is crucial to provide organizations with the ecclesial, academic, organizational and leadership tools so they can continue growing," said Brenda Noriega-Flores, Boston College doctoral candidate and a project coordinator in Nuevo Momento.

However, we also know that the resources needed today to renew ministry among Hispanic Catholics go beyond theological reflection. The Gospel dynamics also call for courage and dialogue with *la realidad* or the current context. "We need a fresh look and stronger sense of sustainability," Southeast Pastoral Institute's executive director [Olga Lucía Villar](#) pointed out.

To move forward and provide the resources needed to support the ministerial organizations, Nuevo Momento has developed direct partnerships with the [Leadership Roundtable](#), [For Impact](#), [Corresponsables de Dios](#) and [Indiana University's Lake Institute on Faith & Giving](#). These four highly prestigious and

successful institutions will offer expertise, mentorship and guidance to the leaders involved in this project. In addition, Nuevo Momento has convened a select group of expert consultants in leadership, administration, theology and ministry.

Investment in the academic formation of future church leaders and ministers is essential to responding to the questions and addressing the challenges that ministerial organizations will face in the near future. Hence, one of the highlights of Nuevo Momento is that Boston College is designing and launching a hybrid-modality (online and in-person) master's degree in ministerial leadership in the summer of 2025.



Federación de Institutos Pastorales president Peter Joseph Ductrám, left, and Fr. Jobani Batista, president of the Asociación Nacional de Sacerdotes Hispanos, conduct individual dialogue as part of the Nuevo Momento meeting's work. (Luis Donaldo González)

This academic program will be housed at the BC Clough School of Theology and Ministry, provide creative formation in ministry and faith-based, nonprofit organizational management, and integrate expert mentorship at the academic and professional levels. The program's first three cohorts will draw solely from leaders recommended by the 15 organizations participating in Nuevo Momento. Each student enrolled in this master's degree program will receive a scholarship covering all study-related expenses. "This is a way to have a formation for our leaders who are already working," said [Christopher Leach](#), National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry's director of strategy.

"It is time to work on the effective leadership of organizations," said Noriega-Flores during the meeting. "We want to prepare leading ministers capable of facing reality and attending to the current culture."

It is very clear to me that having professionally prepared leaders to guide ministerial organizations is also key to the call to synodality Pope Francis has made and we need in the Catholic Church.

"Times are different, and we can no longer act like we used to," Bishop Emeritus Gerald Barnes of San Bernardino, California, highlighted during his keynote.



Brenda Noriega-Flores, Boston College doctoral candidate and a project coordinator in Nuevo Momento, at right, gives a gesture of peace to Elena Segura from Pastoral Migratoria at the end of one of the talks. (Luis Donaldó González)

### **Not to be afraid**

Today, it is not only necessary but urgent to invest in Latino ecclesial leadership and the ministerial organizations led by Hispanic Catholics at the service of the larger church, especially by empowering young Hispanic Catholics to be architects of a future being forged in our diverse communities.

"These ministerial organizations in Nuevo Momento truly give me hope and confirm that the Holy Spirit is moving among us," Ospino said. The current leaders of these ministerial organizations, and those who will be formed through the initiative, together are seeds of ecclesial renewal.

The fantastic work of these 15 organizations demonstrates clearly that Hispanic ministry involves much more than offering worship services in Spanish and translating brochures. Their bravery will mark history and open the possibility of speaking of a new ecclesiological understanding, always grounded in the Gospel and a spirit of service and renewal.

Nuevo Momento has emerged as a creative initiative to promote and strengthen current ministerial efforts and to prepare a new generation of Hispanic Catholic pastoral leaders. It is an invitation for those of us who exercise any kind of ministry with Hispanics or Latinos to renew our own leadership and not be afraid to be an *Iglesia en salida* or a church which goes forth. It is time to listen and "walk in all kinds of ways," as Charity of the Incarnate Word Sr. Teresa Maya stated during the meeting.

Are we ready to journey with the fast-growing Hispanic Catholics in the United States? With God's help, let us join this movement to empower ministerial organizations and Hispanic leaders. A *Nuevo Momento* is emerging.