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Holy Name Province  
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**For Immediate Release**

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**ENTHUSIASM BUILDS FOR FRANCISCANS' HISPANIC MINISTRY GATHERING**

SILVER SPRING, Md. -- Oct. 20, 2009 – More than 500 people are expected to participate in the community and evangelization event here on Saturday that features Mass with Auxiliary Bishop Francisco Gonzalez, music, theatre, and a variety of speakers.

The Franciscan friars of Holy Name Province are gathering Oct. 24 with their partners-in-ministry -- parishioners and staff members -- for “Encuentro Franciscano,” an all-day program on the challenges and opportunities of ministering to Hispanic communities where the friars serve on the East Coast.

“Encuentro Franciscano: Challenges for the Community & Evangelization,” which takes place at St. Camillus Church, will celebrate the blessings of the Hispanic presence in the Province. As of early this week, over 500 people from the local area as well as other states had registered for the “Encuentro Franciscano,” which means “Franciscan Encounter.”

The Rev. John O’Connor, OFM, provincial minister of Holy Name Province, will offer a welcome, and the Rev. Francisco Gonzalez, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., will conclude the Encuentro, celebrating at 6:30 p.m. Mass. Several talks will be given in both English and Spanish.

“People of Hispanic faith are among the fastest-growing ethnic groups in the Catholic Church today,” said O’Connor. “Consequently, it is important for us to get a better understanding of the culture so we may adequately respond to the ministerial needs of the people.”

To address some of those challenges, Alejandro Aguilera-Titus, associate director for the National Multi-Cultural Ministry Office of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, will discuss “Young Adults Committed to the Ecclesial and Social Mission of the Church,” as one of two keynote talks. The second, also by Aguilera-Tits, is titled “Weaving Together a Culturally-Diverse Church.”

**Encuentro Themes**

A variety of breakout sessions led by friars and lay ministers will focus on immigration, communication in diverse cultural settings, proselytizing sects, maintaining one’s faith in a foreign land, vocations, environment, scripture and Franciscan spirituality.

The program’s sessions include:

- "Comunicación con Hermanos(as) en las Culturas Diversas/Communication in Diverse Cultural Settings"

- "Contemplación Franciscana: Soledad y Oracion/Franciscan Contemplation: Solitude & Prayer"
- "La Fe y la Cultura al Cruzar la Frontera/ How Immigrants Can Maintain Their Faith and Culture in a New Land"
- "Jóvenes: Celebrando Autoestima/Youth & Young Adults: Celebrate Self Esteem"
- "Jóvenes: La Esperanza/Youth & Young Adults: Hope"
- "Nueve Pasos Para Realizar Integración Ecclesial/Nine Steps Towards Ecclesial Integratio
- "¿Que dice la Biblia Sobre la Inmigración? / What does the Bible Say About Immigration?"
- "El Reto de la Familia: Niños que Poseen Una Grandeza Escondido/ Family Challenges: Children with Undiscovered Greatness"
- "El Reto de la Inmigración / Immigration Challenges"
- "El Reto de las Sectas / Proselytizing Sects"
- "Salvando Nuestro Futuro: Protegiendo Nuestra Madre Tierra de un Desastre Ecológico/Saving Our Future: Protecting Our Mother Earth From an Ecological Disaster"
- "Vocación Religiosa: Una opción de vida Animando Vocaciones en la Comunidad Hispana / Religious Vocation: A Way of Life"

Information about the Encuentro Franciscano is available from Fr. Christopher Posch, OFM, director of the Hispanic Community Office of the Diocese of Wilmington, Del., at 302-655-0518. He is one of the organizers of the event.

### **About Holy Name Province**

Holy Name Province is one of seven provinces in the United States that belong to the Order of Friars Minor, better known as the Franciscans. Holy Name is the largest U.S. province, with ministries in 12 states along the East Coast. Its 365 Catholic priests and brothers serve in colleges, parishes, urban ministry centers and a wide variety of social ministries, as well as in overseas missions.

The Order, founded in 1209 by St. Francis of Assisi, commemorates its 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Today, St. Francis, whose feast day is Oct. 4, remains one of the most widely-known saints, revered for his affection for nature and care for creation.

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