



Hispanic Heritage Month takes place from September 15th to October 15th every year as a time to recognize and celebrate the many contributions, diverse cultures, and extensive histories of the American Latino community. Beginning in 1968, Hispanic Heritage Month was originally observed as “Hispanic Heritage Week” under President Lyndon Johnson, but it was later extended to a month during President Ronald Reagan’s term in 1988.

Since then, the month has been celebrated nationwide through festivals, art shows, conferences, community gatherings, and much more. The month also celebrates the independence days of several Latin American countries, including Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua on September 15th, Mexico on September 16th, and Chile on September 18th. It also includes holidays recognizing Hispanic contributions, such as Virgin Islands-Puerto Rico Friendship Day, which is celebrated in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In the following link, you will find a two-minute video explaining the history behind Hispanic Heritage Month.

<https://www.oprahdaily.com/life/g36651645/hispanic-heritage-month-activities/>

This year we have selected the theme “Looking back to Move forward,” based on Hebrews 12:1-3.

How will you be celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month? We encourage you to acknowledge and celebrate this special month within your units! Here are a few suggestions on how to do that:

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE

Call to Worship	Psalm 137: 1-6
Invocation	
Welcome & Announcements	
Praise and Worship:	
	"Lord, reign in me" (HC #177)
	"Jesus, name above all names" (HC #82)
	"Knowing You" (HC #89)
	Lord, I need you (HC #236)
	"Open my Eyes" (HC #57)
Offering	
Song	"What a friend we have in Jesus" (SB #795)
Pastoral Prayer	
Scripture Reading	Hebrews 12:1-3
Sermon	"Looking Back to Move Forward" (See pages 3-7)
Song	"To Be like Jesus" (SB #328) or "Finish the Race" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fn3pPqoA_Y
Benediction	Jude 1:24-25
Doxology	"Fix Your Eyes upon Jesus" (SB #445)

LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

by Carlos Moran

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Central Idea

Succeeding in the life of faith and ministry requires perseverance, minimizing obstacles, and fixing our eyes on Christ.

Objective of the Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration

As we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, let us look back on what we have achieved, take the example and inspiration of those who have preceded us on this path, and venture forward with our eyes on Christ, to achieve wonderful things for the Kingdom of God in the Hispanic communities.

Context and content of Hebrews 12:1-3

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews addresses first-century Christians by exhorting them to look back at Old Testament examples of faith (heroes of faith in Hebrews 11), and to receive encouragement as an example for the present. He then exhorts them to run their own race, living the life of discipleship.

In the stands are these witnesses, witnessing their career (the heroes of faith), not as mere observers, but as real witnesses (martyrs) testifying that the life of faith and perseverance pays off. Faith triumphs.

There is an urgency to run with perseverance for what lies ahead. But they must do certain things to follow the course of their race.

First, they must drop all weight and all sin that disqualifies them and holds them off. There are two things that could stop these Jewish believers: on the one hand, they were being tempted to return to a legalistic religious life and thus they would be abandoning the difficult path of faith. If they were so shortsighted as to go back, they would be missing the promises that they have made their own by faith. And sin, like a weight, would delay or prevent them from running the race.

Second, they had to fix their eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. That look at Jesus is the anticipatory foundation for running the race well. "Considering" Jesus the Victor over all adversity and suffering was the example to follow so as to not get tired or discouraged.

The concept of running the race is one of the metaphors used by the New Testament authors to describe the Christian life. It is a favorite theme of the Apostle Paul who also teaches and exhorts to run the race well to obtain the prize (1 Corinthians 9:24); not to let oneself be in the way if we are running well (Galatians 5:7); to strive to achieve what lies ahead (Philippians 3:13).

At the end of his life, Paul says with gratitude and satisfaction, "I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (2 Timothy 4:7).

SERMON

INTRODUCTION

In Roman mythology, Janus is represented by a two-faced image, one looks back and one looks forward. The god Janus is the god of transition, contrast, back and forth, from the usual to change. The god Janus is used to name the first month of the year. Janus, is the transliteration for "January" in English. The idea of Janus is that at the beginning of the year, you must look forward, but you also must look back to the past, to be able to better look towards the future. You look to the past, to be able to look well into the future. A correct look to the past, to gain perspective looking forward.

And speaking of calendars, but not in January, we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, with that same motto: "Looking Back to Move Forward."

It is obvious that Janus is not our inspiration, but it is a good illustration that to produce change, to move forward, you must consider what has happened. You must know how to look back and thus be able to go forward.

Our inspiration in this sermon, comes from the biblical text found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 12, verses one to three.

If you are a Christian, then you are running a race. At this moment you are running your race. There is a starting line, there is a finish line, and there is a prize. To run it you must have discipline, sacrifice, and the focus and concentration necessary to reach the goal. In this race, you do not compete to beat others, but to reach that precious goal.

And in this race, you will find obstacles that try to slow you down and stop you. How is your race going? Are you running strong? Are you doing your best? Do you know you are in a race? Some may be running fast. They feel the wind against them, but they advance. For others, the pace is slow and delayed, they get distracted and are falling. Others have completely forgotten that there is a race and have stopped or are going backwards.

That is why we come to Hebrews 12:1-3, to be ready for the race, looking at the goal, to run now; moving forward with perseverance by the example set by Jesus.

Ready... set... go....

BODY

I. Preparing for the Race (verse 1)

- a) We prepare for the race by considering a great cloud of witnesses, faithful Christians who have run the race before and won. The author of Hebrews in chapter 11, gives us a list of heroes of the faith from Abel himself, to Enoch, to Noah, to Abraham, and so on through the Old Testament. Men and women, of distinct roles and trades in the Biblical history, and many nameless known to others, suffered mockery, sorrows, lashes, martyrdoms, sawn in half, killed by the sword.

But not only does the author of Hebrews focus on the heroes of the Old Testament, rather he includes his contemporaries who have reached martyrdom themselves in their Christian race. They look at us and encourage us by telling us that with faith and perseverance we can do it. Faith conquers. Keep going.

- b) We prepare for the race by taking off all the weight. To prepare for the Olympics, athletes strapped weights to their bodies during training, but at the actual moment of the race, they shed the weight so they can run nimbly toward the finish line.

Looking back will propel us forward, if we release the brakes, and what hinders and makes our progress slow or impossible, which is sin. The Christian race is not only where I am going, but who I am. Or put it in a better way, called to be who I am supposed to be. That is what is demanded of me.

- c) The high values of holiness, overcoming temptation, leaving everything that is opposed to God's plan, will and desire for you and me, that constitutes our going forward.

There is no rule in an athletic competition that prohibits, for example, the athlete from wearing a long coat, dress shoes or carrying a suitcase. Why not? It is obvious. If you add weight, you do not advance. You must get rid of that!

The sin that entangles us, our excessive concern for material things, our tendency to earthly things, our life motivated by interests and sinful practices are a burden that will not allow us to move forward. God calls us in this text to get rid of all weight we carry of sin and disobedience. Are we willing to leave all that behind, or is this weight in our lives such a delight that we prefer it? Does sin attract us more than Christ?

II. The Goal in Our Race (verse 2)

- a) The goal of the race is to be like Christ. Let me suggest that the race ahead has an ethical and a practical component. The author of Hebrews calls us to be someone and to achieve

something. With that purpose, he tells us that we have an example and inspiration: Jesus. Oh boy, that is an extremely high standard! Jesus is our inspiration in our race and is our very goal. To be like Jesus, in his obedience and in his service, in his mission for the Kingdom is our aim! The race is run with our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer of our faith and the very reason for our faith.

- b) What was the motivation of Jesus in his race to Calvary, in carrying his cross? Why did he suffer martyrdom? Why did he gladly go to that Cross? Why did he accept the shame, humiliation, mockery, and scorn?

The author of Hebrews is clear: For the joy that awaited him. The joy of redeeming humanity. The joy of reaching you and reaching me. The joy of creating his Church. The joy of being at the right hand of the Father today, waiting for us to complete our race, carry out our mission, bring many to the Kingdom. And one day, He will come for us.

- c) If we fix our eyes on Jesus, we will run the race well. If we constantly remember what Jesus did for us, nothing will stop us in our race. If we serve our Lord with love, we will love that race. Ahead of us goes Jesus.

III. Running the Race (verse 3)

- a) We are called to run with perseverance, that is, with patience, determination, sacrifice and decision. It does not mean to run, walk, stop, and go backwards. It is always forward. Persevering, it continues every moment.

Ahead is the one who won, the one who gave his life for us, the one who fulfilled the will of the Father; and that is why He is at his right hand. While I keep my eyes on Jesus, I advance to be and do what God wants of me.

- b) I am not Lot's wife, who looked back on what was left behind in Sodom and became petrified. I must, instead, follow the teachings of Jesus: "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62).

Paul says it this way talking about his life: "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." (Philippians 3:12).

- c) However, and despite all this, what we often see, unfortunately, are defeated Christian lives, apathetic Christian lives, Christian lives for whom this message from the book of Hebrews is completely foreign. We see runners who do not run, runners who go backwards instead of going forward, runners, who do not know they should run, are not ready to run, and do not really want to run.

They are tired Christians who have lost their spirit. They are discouraged, tired, disinterested, and static, making no difference in their lives or communities, producing nothing for the Kingdom.

Then, consider the one who persevered, look at Christ. Allow Him to take away your tiredness and discouragement.

CONCLUSION

The Hispanic population is immense in the United States. The Hispanic presence has been here since the founding of the Nation, and it is a population to which the term minority becomes more irrelevant every day. The continuous migration and biological growth of the Hispanic people through the years, brings us today to form an immense population segment.

As Christians, we are running a race, and there are those who have preceded us. There are those who have done pioneering work for the Church. There are those who are and have been bastions who could be on a contemporary list of Hebrews 11: They are heroes of the faith.

But are we going to celebrate the past only? Are we going to be seeing only black and white photographs of yesteryear (even if they are touched up with color today) of what was and no longer is? Will we have a constant “minority” mind?

Or, on the contrary, are we are looking ahead, have we set our sights on Jesus, and do we have witnesses looking at us from the stands? Therefore, we are going to run the race in the Hispanic Church. We are going to reach multitudes, we are going to develop leaders, we are going to reconstruct communities, we are going to celebrate our Hispanicity in values of commitment, family, compassion, sacrifices that are our cultural hallmarks, and that are fully transferable to the Kingdom of God.

We have a Lord and Master who tells us: “Come with me and I will make you a fisherman of multitudes.” There is plenty of Hispanic fishing ready. We follow the Lord who said the fields are white for the harvest. There is a lot of Hispanic harvest to gather.

There is no place for retreat in the Kingdom of God. We are an army, a Salvation Army. And this Army cannot be in retreat. Let us continue fighting the good fight. Let us continue the race to reach the goal set before us.

Yes, it is true, there are discouragements at times. Frequent limitations and temptations abound, and at one point, in many moments, there is the desire to give up or throw in the towel, and just stay in the Corps, warming up the bench.

But there is a cloud of witness martyrs who tell us, “It is possible to advance in the race.” And there is a Lord who summons us, who calls us, who encourages us, who trains us, who tells us, “Come, and follow me.” AMEN.







HOW TO START A HISPANIC MINISTRY

The Intercultural Ministries Department released a video called “How to Start a Hispanic Ministry” in July 2021. You may not be starting a Hispanic ministry soon. Still, this resource has some useful segments that you can use as you celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month. Here are a few suggestions:

<https://youtu.be/6mQmkCjsGng>

- ✚ **History** (7:05) – We invite you to listen to the beginnings of the Hispanic ministry in the Central Territory, particularly in the Metro Division. Hear the story of Raul Guerrero (Order of the Founder) as shared by his daughter, retired officer Major Yaneth Fuqua.
- ✚ **Values** (13:16) – Learn some important values about the Hispanic community, including “La Familia,” celebrations, food, and hospitality.
- ✚ **ESL** (30:44) – You may want to think about starting an ESL program. Listen to Carlos G. Moran, former ESL Director, as he gives some important insights about how to start an ESL Program.
- ✚ **Immigration** (39:01) – Listen to a part of Dr. Alexia Salvatierra and Dr. Rolando Cuellar’s presentation on immigration at the 2019 ONE Conference.
Topics include:
 - *Biblical Principles and Challenges
 - *Jesus and the refugee and orphan
 - *Positive aspects of current migration
 - *Fear and carrying the cross
 - *More and more future congregations will be multicultural
 - *The church is the answer

PROGRAM IDEAS TO CELEBRATE HISPANIC HERITAGE IN OUR CORPS OR INSTITUTIONS

-  **Sunday Worship Service:** Choose a Sunday between September 15th and October 15th to have a worship service to highlight this event. Ask someone in your congregation from a Hispanic background to share their testimony.
-  **Open Air or Open Gym:** Invite the community to learn more about the Hispanic Heritage. Prepare different stations around the Gym where people can find information about the Hispanic history, music, and healthy food preparation from different countries; play typical games of those countries, have activities for children, competitions, crafts, etc.
-  **Health Fair:** Invite community groups to participate in a free health fair. Provide free health services such as eye exams, blood pressure tests, weight control, etc. Have workshops available about health information, programs, etc.
-  **Recognize a Hero in the Community:** Identify a Hispanic person in your community (police, firefighter, teacher, etc.) and recognize their work in the community during your Sunday Service or at a special luncheon.
-  **Watch a Movie:** Host a movie night and show a movie or a documentary that talks about Hispanic culture. Here are a few suggestions: “Under the Same Moon,” “Bella,” “Spanglish,” “Instructions Not Included,” “The Other Side of Immigration,” or “Which Way Home.”
-  **Host a Citizenship or Immigration Workshop:** Contact your local World Relief or other similar agency and invite them to give a Citizenship or Immigration workshop.

USEFUL LINKS FOR NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

-  **“Hispanic Heritage Month Resources”**
In this National Museum of the American Latino link, you will find virtual exhibits, educational resources, and stories of Latino achievement.
<https://latino.si.edu/learn/teaching-and-learning-resources/hispanic-heritage-month-resources>
-  **“Crafts to Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month”** – In this link, you will find Hispanic heritage printable resources to use with children and crafts representing different countries like Chile, Cuba, Guatemala, and Mexico.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/05/crafts-hispanic-heritage_n_3875830.html
-  **“Celebrating Latino Culture for Hispanic Heritage Month”** – In this link, you will find Hispanic heritage month activities for kids, including How to make paper fiesta flowers;

musical crafts; Hispanic heroes trading cards; interactive activities, children’s books, Hispanic inventors and more.

<http://www.modernmami.com/hispanic-heritage-month-activities-for-kids/>

- 📌 **“National Day”** – In this link, you will find useful information on celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month with a Hispanic Heritage Month Timeline, Hispanic Heritage Highlights, and Why Hispanic Heritage Month is important.

<https://nationaltoday.com/hispanic-heritage-month/>

SMALL GROUP STUDIES

- 📌 **Sacred Conversations on Race, Culture, and Reconciliation** – This 10-session discussion guide for small groups creates a safe space and invites candid conversations about race and culture.

📌 <https://interculturalministriescentral.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2016/10/SACRED-CONVERSATIONS.pdf>

- 📌 **CULTURE 101: EMBRACING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES – ENGLISH & SPANISH**

This video, available in English and Spanish, is for those who want to develop cultural competence for intercultural and multi-ethnic ministries. The video, approximately 30 minutes long, can be used in a variety of program settings. Small group discussion questions and activities are included. The viewing guide is available.

Spanish Version: <https://vimeo.com/185958717>

English Version: <https://vimeo.com/174858793>

ARTICLES, BOOKS AND MORE

- 📌 **“Key Facts about U.S. Latinos”**

Here are some key facts about the nation’s Latino population by geography, and by characteristics like language use and origin group.

<HTTPS://WWW.PEWRESEARCH.ORG/SHORT-READS/2022/09/23/KEY-FACTS-ABOUT-U-S-LATINOS-FOR-NATIONAL-HISPANIC-HERITAGE-MONTH/>

- 📌 **“Among Latinos, Catholicism Continues to Decline”**

Catholics remain the largest religious group among Latinos in the United States, even as their share among Latino adults has steadily declined over the past decade, according to a new analysis of Pew Research Center surveys. By contrast, the share of Latinos who identify as Protestants – including evangelical Protestants – has been relatively stable, while the percentage who are religiously unaffiliated has grown substantially over the same period.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/04/13/among-u-s-latinos-catholicism-continues-to-decline-but-is-still-the-largest-faith/>

- ✚ **“What Christians can learn during Hispanic Heritage Month”** – This brief article by Giancarlo Montero gives a brief history of how this celebration started and invited Christians to celebrate with Hispanic brothers and sisters our unity in diversity.
<https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/what-christians-can-learn-during-hispanic-heritage-month/>

- ✚ **Short immigration course online**
Would you like to understand U.S. immigration better? Here is a five-part email minicourse by the Pew Research Center. You will receive an email every few days over the span of a couple of weeks. Each email will answer a different question about immigration: Who are U.S. immigrants? How has immigration changed the U.S.? Who are legal immigrants, and who are unauthorized ones? And more.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/16/want-to-understand-u-s-immigration-weve-got-an-email-course-for-you/>

- ✚ **“The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States”** – by Juan Francisco Martínez begins with a description of the Diverse Latino Protestant community. Then this book examines six main periods in the history of American Latino Protestantism, paying special attention to such key issues as migration patterns, immigration policies, enculturation, and assimilation.

- ✚ **“Welcoming the Stranger”** – Matthew Soerens & Jenny Hwang
Immigration is one of the most complicated issues of our time. Voices on all sides argue strongly for action and change. Christians find themselves torn between the desire to uphold laws and the call to minister to the vulnerable. The authors point us toward immigration reform that is compassionate, sensible, and just, as they offer concrete ways for Christians and local churches to welcome and minister to our immigrant neighbors.

- ✚ **“Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America”** – Juan Gonzalez
The new immigrants have ignited a vibrant “Latin explosion” in American popular culture. But the Latino influence reaches far beyond music, sports, cuisine, or the latest magazine cover. This book features family portraits of real-life immigrant Latino pioneers, as well as sketches of the political events and social conditions that compelled them to leave their homeland and how they have transformed the nation’s cultural landscape.


VIDEOS

- ✚ **“Join the Celebration” Music Video**
Watch the animated music video for "Join the Celebration" - an original song that celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month through icons, artists, and heroes like Frida Kahlo, Celia Cruz, and more!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tmJmcpUDhM>

 **“Latino Americans” a PBS documentary series**

Is the first major documentary series for television to chronicle the rich and diverse history and experiences of the Latino population. It is a story of the anguish, celebration, and gradual reconstruction of an American identity that connects and empowers millions of people today.

<https://www.pbs.org/video/latino-americans-episode-1-foreigners-their-own-land/>

 **“La Deuda” (The Debt)** is a brand-new short film produced by Share Change – the Los Angeles-based multimedia arm of The Salvation Army’s USA Western Territory. Filmed on location in Mexico, the Spanish-language film is loosely based on Jesus’ Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, found in Matthew 18. *La Deuda* premiered in early February, with a screening on the HBO Latino channel in the USA and Bermuda. Subsequently, the film will appear on HBO streaming services, including HBO Max. The film is a coming-of-age tale, following a young boy called Victor in his quest to save the life of his beloved pet goat, Isabel. It includes English subtitles, and a companion Bible study is available for download in both Spanish and English from salarmy.us/LaDeudaStudy.

 **“Which Way Home”**

This Academy Award Nominee-Best Documentary Feature follows some unaccompanied children as they make the long and treacherous voyage to the U.S. border. Often traveling for months or even years at a time, these courageous and determined children each have stories of hope and resilience, disappointment, and sorrow.

 **“The Other Side of Immigration”** – Juan Gonzalez

This video asks why so many Mexicans come to the U.S., and what happens to the families and communities they leave behind. Filmmaker Roy Germano provides a perspective on undocumented immigration rarely witnessed by American eyes, challenging audiences to imagine more creative and effective solutions to the problem.