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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JULY 19, 2021

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Leadership Roundtable partners with the Diocese of St. Augustine to launch new Latino Pastoral Leaders cohort

WASHINGTON, D.C. / ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. — Leadership Roundtable and the Diocese of St. Augustine in Florida have partnered together to launch the second cohort of the Latino Pastoral Leaders Initiative.

“Leadership Roundtable is one of the best organizations of the Church in the United States,” said Bishop Felipe J. Estévez, who serves as bishop of the Diocese of St. Augustine. “The fact that Leadership Roundtable is facilitating outreach to the Hispanic/Latino Catholic community is such a blessing. And the fact that the Diocese of St. Augustine has been chosen for this project is a magnificent contribution to our pastoral care.”

The first service of its kind in the United States, the Leadership Roundtable’s Latino Pastoral Leaders Initiative provides critical leadership development to emerging Hispanic/Latino leaders in Catholic dioceses across the U.S., providing them the tools and capacity to step into Church leadership roles.

“We created the Latino Pastoral Leaders Initiative with the aim to support Hispanic/Latino Catholic pastoral leaders as they transition to key leadership roles early in their ministerial careers,” said Michael Brough, executive partner at Leadership Roundtable. “We’ve received positive feedback from our work with our inaugural cohort and we are eager to see the positive impact the program will have with the pastoral leaders in St. Augustine.”

The Initiative both seeks to support Hispanic/Latino leaders and to promote a new culture of co-responsible leadership to better serve the Catholic Church in the United States.

“In our work at Leadership Roundtable, we’ve found that the challenges faced by pastoral leaders are even more pronounced for individuals who are Hispanic/Latino,” said Andrea Blanco, program manager for the Latino Pastoral Leaders Initiative at Leadership Roundtable.

Hispanic/Latino pastoral leaders disproportionately minister in parishes that have fewer financial resources, less trained pastoral support staff, and greater social challenges, including racial injustice and poverty, which can make pastoral leadership more challenging.

Additionally, about 36 percent of U.S. Catholics identify as Hispanic/Latino, but only around 3 percent of pastors and 1 in 10 lay leaders are Hispanics/Latinos. With these challenges in mind, there is a need for greater support and peer mentorship of Hispanic/Latino pastoral leaders so they can better thrive in ministry.

The Latino Pastoral Leaders Initiative works closely with Hispanic/Latino pastoral leaders to provide mentorship, training, peer support and skill-building to thrive in ministry, while fostering greater representation of Hispanics/Latinos at the decision-making table of the Church.

“The vibrant, committed Latino community within the Catholic Church in the United States is being called to lead in carrying out the Church’s mission. The Latino Pastoral Leaders Initiative gives participants the tools to serve in many leadership capacities, including as pastors, parish staff, and lay ministers” said Rev. Allan Figueroa Deck, SJ, S.T.D., Ph.D., who serves as Distinguished Scholar of Pastoral Theology and Latino Studies at Loyola Marymount University and a member of the Advisory Committee for the Latino Pastoral Leaders Initiative.

“Expanding this Initiative with a new cohort in the Diocese of St. Augustine is a vital step for the continued formation of our Latino pastoral leaders. We look forward to the impact this will have in St. Augustine and in our Church writ large,” Rev. Deck said.

Leadership Roundtable chose the Diocese of St. Augustine as its second cohort from more than a dozen applicants. The national Advisory Committee of the Latino Pastoral Leaders Initiative, along with Leadership Roundtable staff, reviewed applications submitted by dioceses across the U.S. and selected the Diocese of St. Augustine in large part because of the strong local support, efforts, commitment, and leadership of the Hispanic/Latino leaders in the diocese and the ongoing accompaniment of Bishop Estévez of these leaders.

Leadership Roundtable launched the Latino Pastoral Leaders Initiative with support from Lilly Endowment Inc. through its Thriving in Ministry initiative. With Thriving in Ministry, Lilly Endowment is encouraging various religious organizations across the nation to create or strengthen programs that help pastoral leaders build relationships with experienced colleagues and guide them through key leadership challenges in parish ministry. Lilly Endowment has provided nearly \$70 million in grants to 78 organizations through Thriving in Ministry.

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***Leadership Roundtable** promotes best practices and accountability in the management, finances, communications, and human resources development of the Catholic Church in the U.S., including greater incorporation of the expertise of the laity.*

***The Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine**, established in 1870, encompasses 17 counties of Northeast and North Central Florida. About 150,000 registered Catholics are served in 67 parishes and missions of the diocese.*

***Lilly Endowment Inc.** is an Indianapolis-based, private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J. K. Lilly and his sons, Eli and J.K. Jr., through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment, the Endowment is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with its founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education, and religion, and it maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana.*