

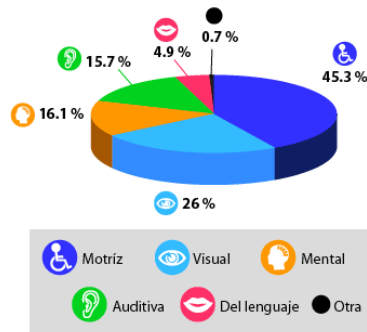
Discipleship in My Mexican Community

By: Luz Elena Bracamonte Zamora

1. Context.

Attention to Deaf Pastoral Ministry began in Mexico City in 1905, at the Church of San Hipolito; this church is currently working with the deaf. At that time, in other status of the country different services where offered to the deaf, but in a very isolated way and without systematic follow up.

At the moment in Mexico there are:



281,815 deaf people

In August of 2003, ICF held an International Conference in Mexico City. Different countries attended this conference (England, Ireland, The Netherlands, Holland, USA, Venezuela, Ecuador, Trinidad y Tobago y México) but more importantly 4 Mexican priests from different communities and dioceses, and many lay people that came with them. Thanks to this conference many pastoral experiences were shared, and this helped to motivate the group to do something in Mexico, in an organized and systematic way to benefit the Deaf Mexican Catholic Community.

At the end of this conference the group planned to make a petition to the Mexican Episcopate, with the purpose of having the serve the deaf community better. In January 2004, this group made a presentation to the Mexican Bishops Conference to motivate them and raise their aware of the importance of pastoral work with the deaf in their dioceses', we got very good results from this presentation and observed that the Bishops were motivated.

In 2005, at the City of Guadalajara, the first National Gathering of Deaf Pastoral Ministry was held, like with the ICF Conference in 2003, different experiences were shared about the communities where work is being done, and it was proposed to start working as a team. Representatives of 10 different Mexican communities attended.

In 2006, an International Camp of Deaf Youth was held in Valle de Bravo in the State of Mexico. This Encuentro was organized by ICF and coordinated by Rev. Joseph Mulcrone, with a team formed by: Ian Robertson, (USA), Consuelo Manero (Mex), Deacon Patrick Graybill (USA) and Maryann Barth (USA). Many Deaf Catholic Youth and priests attended from United States, Venezuela, Trinidad y Tobago, Ecuador and México. For Mexico this was a very positive and learning experience. This has helped us form new Deaf Catholic Young Leaders, which today are working in their communities, thanks to the blessings that Encuentro created.

In November of that same year, we held the Second National Gathering of Deaf Pastoral Workers in Hermosillo, northeast of Mexico, where representatives from 12 communities at the national level attended. A National Committee for Deaf Pastoral Ministry was established; this committee will promote the creation of deaf pastoral ministry at the Episcopal level, and will begin work sometime next year.

In August 2007, the third National Gathering of Deaf Pastoral leaders was held in Mexico City, where the National Committee was elected, it is formed by deaf people advised by a priest. This committee will work for a year, and they will be working on the bylaws of these National committee.

Presently from July 1 to August 3rd, 2008 the Fourth National Gathering of Deaf Pastoral Workers will be held. The bylaws will be evaluated as well as the work that the committee has done. A Bishop will be nominated to present the Deaf Catholic cause before the Episcopal Conference so they in turn create a special commission.

2. The life of Deaf People in the Church.

Deaf people generally, like to go to mass to give thanks to the Lord and to praise his name, but also they like to go to gather and talk with their deaf brothers and sisters. They also show a great interest in learning things about the Church and about God.

Deaf people like to participate in different activities that the Church offers, for example, retreats, conferences, sports, parties, choir, etc.

3. The satisfactions and pleasures from the deaf pastoral ministry.

The life changing experience from knowing Jesus Christ is something beautiful and gives many pleasures and happiness. Feeling as part of a family in the Church and making strong

bonds of friendship, and being able to see that people understand and receive His message is full of satisfactions. To see more and more deaf participating in masses as readers or catequist and pastoral workers is also an immense satisfaction.

4. The Challenges of Deaf Ministry.

We need to promote more vocations for priests and religious life among deaf people; there is a lack of printed materials to teach catequist to the deaf. We need to develop a training program for quality catholic interpreters. We need to develop a training program for the development of deaf pastoral agents; there is a need to establish a solid and coordinated effort all around the country.

There is a need to develop more bible study groups and the development and formation of deaf catholic leaders. The Jehovah Witnesses are confusing the deaf community of Mexico with their false doctrine; we need to strengthen the catholic faith.

5. How can ICF be a better presence in the Church with Deaf People?

ICF can have and impart workshops to help develop deaf catholic leaders; promote more information on their web page to help set up networks between pastoral workers from different countries. Establish regional representation to shorten distances and eliminate communication barriers. ICF can be a center that gathers and distributes information on successful experiences all around the world.

6. Closing Comments

I will like to thank ICF for organizing this World Wide reunion, and thank them also for having come to Mexico in 2003, because that gave us the opportunity to start working together all around the country, and we are doing it.