



Photos © Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Academy

▲ Students from Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Academy in Corona are proud to receive a Catholic education, made possible for nearly 150 students and their families through scholarships provided by Futures in Education.

Scholarships Foster Strong Latino Presence in Catholic Schools

▲ by Emily Drooby

On a recent morning at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Academy in Corona, students were awarded for their outstanding grades in school.

But what is truly outstanding about this school is that over 99 percent of the student body identifies as Latino.

"It's amazing, we're 99.9 percent proud here," said Dr. Cristina Cruz, principal.

This is far from the norm across the U.S. In fact, a report published by Boston College back in 2016 said while there are about 8 million Hispanic school-aged Catholics in the country, only about 300,000 of them are enrolled in Catholic schools – that is less than four percent. But the Diocese of Brooklyn bucks that trend

with about 32 percent of students identifying as Hispanic or Latino.

But why is this number so high? It could have something to do with access to scholarships.

"The tuition is almost \$5,000 (at Our Lady of Sorrows). That's a lot of money for a family who makes hardly anything," Dr. Cruz said.

During a panel at the Catholic University of America, it was suggested the cost of Catholic schools is a key barrier to Latino enrollment, but many students within the Brooklyn Diocese benefit from the Futures in Education program, which provides scholarships to students who attend Catholic academies and schools.

"The scholarships are so important to our diocese, because there are many people that would like to send their children to our schools, many of them are immigrants and they struggle," said Msgr. Jamie Gigantiello, diocesan vicar for development. "They would not be able to send their kids to our schools if it weren't for the scholarships of Futures in Education."

At Our Lady of Sorrows, 147 students were awarded Futures scholarships worth more than \$290,000 this academic year.

"Thank God for it," Dr. Cruz said. "To be honest, without them (scholarships) we would be shut down."

▲ Dr. Cristina Cruz, Our Lady of Sorrows principal, is proud to lead a school that is 99.9 percent Latino.



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