

KELLOGG INSTITUTE



NEWSLETTER OF THE HELEN KELLOGG INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME



The Challenges of Pluralism and the Catholic Church

Perspectives from the Kellogg Institute

The post-World War II period has brought enormous challenges to the Catholic Church in Latin America. Among the challenges today are a gradual erosion of the religious monopoly the Church once enjoyed, growing secularization, and an erosion of some values that the Church has traditionally upheld, including a rapid increase in single-parent households.

Today, the Church is redefining its role in the region that is home to more Catholics than anywhere else in the world.

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CHALLENGES

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Since its inception in 1982, the Kellogg Institute has hoped to understand these challenges and the Church's responses to them. Here, we profile some of the Institute's recent work on these issues.

Hagopian: Framework for Explaining Pluralism

In March 2005, the Institute brought together leading scholars for a major conference, "Contemporary Catholicism, Religious Pluralism, and Democracy in Latin America." A volume edited by FRANCES HAGOPIAN, based on the conference findings, is scheduled to be published by Notre Dame Press in 2007.

In an article for the Kellogg Working Paper Series, Hagopian proposes a framework to explain the responses of Latin America's Roman Catholic churches to a new strategic dilemma posed by religious and political pluralism.

Drawing on an analysis of over 620 pastoral letters, messages, declarations, and reports issued or publicized by bishops in these countries since 2000, she explores four Latin America churches: Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Chile.

She argues that the more vulnerable the Church and the more it finds itself losing the battle for culture and political space, the more likely it will be tempted to ally with politically conservative elites on the right to protect its corporate interests and implement its moral agenda.

She points to Argentina and Chile as examples. In Argentina, upper clergy have spoken out on moral issues and worked to protect church privileges. In the case of Chile, bishops, bereft of grassroots support and facing two consecutive agnostic socialist presidents, continue to prioritize the Church's corporate interests and its moral agenda.

"On the other hand," she writes, "where religious pluralism is high and the Church must be attentive to the possibility of defection, *but* where Catholic religious and lay activists lead a dense network of civic and political associations that are reasonably autonomous from the control of religious authorities, its base has more potential leverage over its alliances and priorities.

"Finally, where the Church maintains a near religious monopoly and its networks traverse a robust associational life, the Church is better able to mobilize civil society for its ambitious programmatic agenda that aligns with politically progressive parties on the impact of market reform and social conservatives on the right on moral issues."

In Brazil, where there is a densely organized

civil society with intense religious competition and a left-leaning Catholic electorate, the national Episcopate is constrained from straying too far from its social justice commitments.

Brazilian bishops have promoted indigenous rights, redress for landless peasants, programmatic political parties, and they have urged Catholics to vote for candidates committed to the poor and the Church's social doctrine.

"Unlike in Argentina and Chile, the Mexican hierarchy not only exhorted Mexicans to vote, and not to sell their votes, but it also instructed them to be well informed about the positions of candidates and parties on various economic, social, and moral questions of the day, and that their Christian faith obligated them to work for a just society," writes Hagopian.



Frances Hagopian and Daniel Levine at the 2005 "Contemporary Catholicism, Religious Pluralism, and Democracy in Latin America" conference.

"But unlike in Brazil, it also reminded them that, in conscience, Catholic citizens should not vote for politicians that do not respect the dignity of human life, marriage, the family, and the true common good."

Levine: Challenges and Opportunities

DANIEL H. LEVINE, who participated in the Contemporary Catholicism conference, will be a visiting fellow during spring 2007 at the Kellogg Institute. Levine, the James Orin Murfin Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan and one of the leading scholars of religion in Latin America, will work on a project titled "New Dynamics of Religion, Society, and Politics in Latin America."

A visiting fellow of the Institute in 1988, Levine plans to continue work on the project that will explore the theoretical and comparative implications of the convergence of pluralism, movements, and rights, and research the long-term implications these developments may hold for the relation of religion to the culture and practice of democracy.

In a paper presented at the conference, Levine gave an insight into his perspective on the new

era of religious pluralism.

"The long-term erosion of Catholicism's religious and cultural monopoly in Latin America—a process that is just now building momentum—is relevant to a wide range of issues from censorship, education, and subsidies to religious representation in politics," observed Levine. "It also impacts the public image of religion and has a clear feedback effect on the internal life of the community of faith, whatever its particular social and political interest or commitments.

"Finding ways to capture this reality, in all its richness, is a central challenge and opportunity for any future study."

Levine points to the balance of opportunity and challenges facing the Church.

"With the restoration of democratic politics across the continent, churches and religious leaders have lost (and sometimes abandoned) their openly political roles.

"To the extent to which political parties and a 'normal political life' have regained strength and presence, new social movements, and in general the range of groups in civil society with some link to the churches, have lost resources, members, and effectiveness. It has been common to see activists either withdraw or move into specifically political groups or government positions, and for groups to divide on partisan political ground."

He notes that perhaps the greatest contribution of the Church is the important role it played in negotiating

the end game of authoritarian regimes and brokering a truce, or an end of violence and guerrilla warfare. The Church has also worked to smooth the transitions to democracy.

"The legacy of these actions is not wholly neutral," said Levine. "The active involvement of church people and networks in the promotion and defense of human rights is testimony to the introduction of a vocabulary of rights into religious discourse that has had important legitimating effects on the discourse of rights and equality in social and political life more broadly."

Fitzpatrick Behrens: Maryknoll in Guatemala

SUSAN FITZPATRICK BEHRENS, a visiting fellow at the Institute in the 2005–06 academic year, has researched the history of Maryknoll sisters in Guatemala and Peru. An assistant professor of history at California State University, Northridge, Fitzpatrick Behrens is completing a book on her original research. The results of her research will also appear in a forthcoming Kellogg Working Paper.

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Projects & Partnerships

De Leon-Arias Returns to Notre Dame to Strengthen TIES

About the time ADRIAN DE LEON-ARIAS was finishing his PhD in economics at Notre Dame, both sides of the US-Mexico border were anxious about the impact of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

On the US side, many feared that manufacturing jobs would flood into Mexico; less well known were the fears of Mexico's rural agricultural producers who felt wholly unprepared for the new free trade zone.

Nearly 12 years after first arriving at Notre Dame, de Leon-Arias has been putting his expertise with the "dismal science" to work

through an extraordinary partnership that promises to help rural Mexican farmers compete in the marketplace.

Known as US–Mexico Training, Internships, Exchanges, and Scholarships (TIES), this project brings together the Kellogg Institute, Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business, and the Universidad de Guadalajara, where de Leon-Arias is the dean of the school's college of business.

As part of the TIES project, faculty from the Universidad de Guadalajara spend time as guest scholars at the Kellogg Institute, and Notre Dame faculty teach modules to MBA students in Guadalajara. Notre Dame MBA students and selected undergraduate students sponsored by the Kellogg Institute also join their Mexican counterparts in summer internships to develop business plans and provide consulting services to small and medium-sized agricultural producers in the Mexican states of Jalisco and Michoacán.

During the 2005–06 academic year, de Leon-Arias returned to Notre Dame as guest scholar at the Kellogg Institute along with his wife, AIDA SERGOVIA, a professor of Universidad de Guadalajara, who also works on TIES.

"Mexican producers need help in areas such as production, prices, international trade, productivity and social aid programs," said de Leon-Arias. "But, above all, they need to develop entrepreneurial skills to enter global markets.

"The student interns have helped Mexican producers streamline operations and explore global markets for avocados and limes, among other specialty crops," said de Leon-Arias.

"With this small-scale program, we surely cannot solve all the problems in Mexican agriculture.

"But by searching for new methods and approaches and identifying better tools and practices, we can help individual producers in rural Mexico develop needed entrepreneurial skills."

Supported by a three-year grant from the United States Agency for International Development, the Notre Dame–Universidad de Guadalajara TIES project is co-directed by de Leon-Arias, Kellogg Faculty Fellow JUAN RIVERA, and Kellogg Associate Director SHARON SCHIERLING.

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In tracing the work of the Maryknoll sisters in Latin America, Fitzpatrick Behrens looks at one of the critical ways the Church expressed liberation theology and its long-term implications.

She studied the diaries of Maryknoll sisters who were invited to Guatemala to open a school for the children of the elite in 1958. The school, Colegio Monte María, educated a generation of girls and instilled in them a social and political awareness that can still be felt today.

One of the most prominent graduates was HELEN MACK CHANG, a Guatemalan activist who has worked to break the impunity enjoyed by the country's military and to bring justice for her slain sister. Monte María graduates also include Guatemala's first lady and journalists Rita Roesch and Tina Fernandez, who have been outspoken supporters of human rights, social justice, and women's rights.

"These women attribute their social concern and engagement to their education at Colegio Monte María."

For many of the sisters, opening a school for the elite was an assignment far from what they had imagined and it didn't take long for the Colegio to be dubbed "the Maryknoll Hilton" for its plush facilities.

"The missionaries were assigned not to save the poor as they had anticipated, but to save the rich from having to ship their little girls off to the United States to learn English and to protect them from 'communist' influence," writes Fitzpatrick Behrens in the magazine *Americas*.

Three of the sisters set out to assess the needs of the indigenous communities in Jacaltenango, a remote community in the Department of Huehuetenango. They channeled their privileged students into teacher-training programs in Huehuetenango, started a Junior Red Cross, and had the students volunteer in hospitals.

By 1967, relations between Guatemala's ruling elite and the Maryknoll sisters was growing tense. Several priests and sisters were linked to leftist guerrillas, and subsequently expelled from the country. While the school remained open, the residue of its association with left-wing causes continues to earn it the reputation of being "subversive," Fitzpatrick Behrens writes.

As Levine, among others, has noted, much of the inspiration of liberation theology now finds itself expressed through myriad nongovernmental organizations and indigenous rights groups, and for the most part they are no longer associated with the Church.

"In many respects, what we have is the Church and its activists transformed into civil society organizations that are carrying out much

of the work once done by the Church," said Fitzpatrick Behrens.

Gustavo Gutiérrez: 'New Expressions'

In reflecting on the contribution of liberation theology in the Church and its prognosis in this pluralistic environment, Faculty Fellow GUSTAVO GUTIÉRREZ, one of the seminal thinkers on liberation theology and the author of *A Theology of Liberation*, gave the following assessment in an interview with the magazine *America*.

"Certainly, it is true that many important events have taken place over the past decades and that the political climate is very different from that of the '60s and '70s. But the situation of the poor has not changed fundamentally. As long as there is a group of Christians trying to be faithful in these circumstances, a group trying to follow Christ among the poor, we will find something like liberation theology," said Gutiérrez.

"Even though it is common to refer to liberation theology in the singular, we are witnessing several new expressions of this theology in different contexts and continents—North America, Central and South America, Africa, and Asia. Each of these theologies has a particular point of view, but they also have much in common, particularly a concern for the poor and excluded."