

A LATINO PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: MAPPING THE ROAD AHEAD

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[The author uses the pastoral circle or “see-judge-act” practical theological method to review the status of Hispanic/Latino ministry. He takes note of new research findings, while stressing the importance of an integrating framework for shaping the Catholic Church’s response to the multiple challenges presented by the Latino/a presence. Paul VI’s Evangelii nuntiandi provides the needed framework with its stress on inculturation, liberation, and interreligious dialogue. Sections are then devoted to the challenges of popular religion, youth, the flight to other religions, multiculturalism, and pluralism. Finally, he names several practical implications and lays out a map suggesting where this may be heading.]

THE TRANSFORMATION OF U.S. Catholicism from a community of predominantly European ancestry to one of Latin American origin is now well underway. Essayist Gregory Rodríguez has written about the “Mexicanization” of American Catholicism.¹ In many U.S. church quarters today just as in civil society at large, there is more awareness and even acceptance of this ecclesial and societal sea change brought about by immigration in general and by Latin American immigration in particular. The U.S. Census for 2000 confirmed the predictions of an earlier decade to the effect that Latinos/as would become the largest U.S. minority. That census also confirmed what observers had been noting throughout the decade of the 1990s, namely, the significant presence of Latinos/as in virtually every part of the United States. That presence is no longer a merely regional

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¹ Gregory Rodríguez, “A Church, Changing,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 8 March 2002. It would be more correct to say “Hispanicization” or “Latinization” of the U.S. Church. Fully two-thirds of U.S. Latinos/as are of Mexican origin, but virtually all of Latin America is represented in the wider population.

matter, but a relentless, national trend dramatically affecting such unlikely places as North Carolina, Iowa, and Alaska.

There are several other relatively new and significant trends as well. The Latino/a population, for instance, is more diverse than ever before in terms of national origin, level of assimilation, English-Spanish language proficiency, and, most important of all, generation.² Latinos/as no longer live predominantly in barrios, inner cities, and urban centers. Slightly more than half live in suburbs.³ The majority are no longer immigrants but rather native U.S. born, and they are younger than ever before. Some Latinos/as at least have experienced upward mobility. They have more small businesses, more professionals, CEOs, and even millionaires than ever before. The political importance of Latinos/as is now taken for granted: Latino/a voters can decide the outcome of elections in several major states such as California, Texas, Florida, and New York.

This data provides much of the context for other articles in this issue of *Theological Studies*. Gary Riebe-Estrella, for example, takes a hard look at the fact that the Latino/a population is notably youthful. He draws some key, long-awaited pastoral conclusions about this important variable. Current data accordingly shows that Latinas have made significant advances in terms of levels of participation and leadership in all walks of life both in the Church and in the world of education, business, the professions, and the public square. Yet there are dramatic gaps in the picture. The lens of gender, as Ada María Isasi-Díaz's and Jeanette Rodríguez's contributions to this issue of *Theological Studies* demonstrate, has come into its own with regard to Hispanic women. Latinas engage in the articulation of their *proyecto histórico*, their vision of the fullness of life, as Isasi-Díaz informs us. Rodríguez evokes the spiritual power of the life-giving orientation of Latinas to community, struggle, faith, and ritual. Roberto Goizueta draws a picture of where a truly Latino/a Catholicism comes from and where it is going, that is, a new American Catholicism rooted more in the dense, hybrid religious and cultural experience of the Americas and not that of Europe. Ana María Pineda reflects on the prolific expressiveness of the Latinos/as, their distinctive, strong orientation toward art. She shows how the abundant material productions of this spiritually inspired art constitute a true *locus theologicus*.

As a practical theologian, I began to look at the unfolding Latino/a drama several years ago in *The Second Wave*. Things were different, per-

² See Sylvia A. Marotta and Jorge G. García, "Latinos in the United States in 2000," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25, no. 1 (February 2003) 13–34.

³ Fifty-four percent of all Latinos now reside in the suburbs according to Roberto Suro et al., *Latino Growth in Metropolitan America: Changing Patterns, New Locations* (Washington: Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy and the Pew Hispanic Center, 2001) 7.

haps easier, back then. In that work I used a simple pastoral-theological tool, the “see-judge-act” method also called the pastoral circle, that goes back to the pioneering work of Cardinal Joseph Cardijn and the Young Catholic Workers of the early decades of the 20th century.⁴ That methodology is reflected in the stress given to scrutinizing the “signs of the times” in the thought of Vatican II as well as in contemporary Catholic social teaching. For the Vatican II generation of Catholics like myself, the spirit of that method is evoked by the oft quoted opening lines of *Gaudium et spes*: “The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.”⁵

Joe Holland and Peter Henriot summarized the key elements of social analysis as a pastoral methodology in what they call the pastoral circle. Its key elements are historical, structural, value laden, non-dogmatic, and action oriented. Particularly in Latin America, this method stressed the importance of the analysis of reality and pastoral planning and was supported by liberation theologians as well as by many bishops. A whole generation of Latino/a Catholic leaders adapted the “see-judge-act” method for the process of national *encuentros*, gatherings of Latino/a Catholic leadership, that ran from 1972 to 1986. These events were sponsored by the U.S. bishops and produced the most authoritative church teaching on U.S. Latino/a Catholicism of those decades. Today those findings and orientations require considerable revision in light of many changes as reflected in the bishops’ latest instruction titled *Encuentro and Mission*.⁶

REVISITING THE SECOND WAVE

In view of these developments, I wish to revisit my earlier project of providing a practical theological framework for Hispanic ministry.⁷ I then

⁴ Joe Holland and Peter Henriot articulated this methodology in *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983) 7–30.

⁵ *Gaudium et spes*, no.1. Translation from *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Austin Flannery, rev. inclusive language ed. (Northport, N.Y.: Costello, 1996).

⁶ Perhaps the most incisive assessment of the status of Latinos in the U.S. Catholic Church in the decade of the 1970s and 1980s is Joseph Fitzpatrick’s “A Survey of Literature on Hispanic Ministry,” in *Strangers and Aliens No Longer*, ed. Eugene F. Hemrick (Washington.: USCCB, 1993) 63–87. For a thoughtful assessment of the *National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry*, the fruit of the *encuentro* process, see Michael Connors, “The National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry,” in *Incultured Pastoral Planning: The U.S. Hispanic Experience* (Rome: Gregorian University, 2001) 50–74.

⁷ There are other more richly elaborated practical theologies, Roman Catholic and Protestant, that provide a sophisticated basis for Hispanic ministry today. Of special note are the following: Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehen-*

highlight key issues that affect that ministry in light of ongoing needs and new developments. In *The Second Wave* I tried to give an overview of the Hispanic reality of California, then and now the place with the largest Hispanic population. Using the pastoral circle, my book began with a synthesis of social science findings on the U.S. Hispanic population in general. The second chapter synthesized pertinent historical data underlying the distinctiveness of Hispanic Catholicism. The audience I had in mind for this work was not Hispanics but non-Hispanics who find themselves in ministry confronted by seemingly strange attitudes and customs that usually have important historical underpinnings about which they may have little understanding.⁸ The third chapter returned to the analysis of current reality, but this time focused on the factual pastoral situation. I went about describing in a somewhat ethnographic way and explaining what was actually happening in parishes, dioceses, youth ministry, and key movements such as the Cursillo or the Charismatic Renewal. The fourth chapter got to the heart of the “judging” phase of pastoral method. In it I unpacked the Church’s concept of evangelization of culture as presented in Pope Paul VI’s postsynodal apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975).

The concept of evangelization, as I use it, is understood to be an implicit methodology by which the practical theological task can be approached. This means, on the one hand, taking very seriously the Church’s turn toward the gospel message of Christ and its encounter with culture in the anthropological sense. On the other hand, this means linking faith to the promotion of justice, transformative action, as Catholic social teaching and liberation theology stress. The final chapter suggested strategies whereby the pastoral priorities that emerge from the interface of the Hispanic re-

sive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); Casiano Floristán, *Teología Práctica* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1991); Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology to Come* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001). The streamlined pastoral circle approach used in this article as well as in *The Second Wave* is in harmony with these contemporary practical theologies in many respects, especially in the complete acceptance of the need for correlation, dialogue, proclamation, and a clear ecclesial vision.

⁸ One of the more constant features of Hispanic ministry in the United States is the preponderance on non-Hispanics in leadership positions starting with the priest but including diocesan directors, parish coordinators, etc. For instance, the Committee for Applied Research on the Apostolate (CARA) reports that only four percent of trained lay ecclesial ministers are Hispanic, while only five percent of the priests in the U.S.A. are Hispanic. See the report of Ken Johnson-Mondragon in *En Marcha!* (Washington: Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs of the USCCB, Winter/Spring 2003) 13.

ality with the contemporary Church's identity and mission (i.e. the evangelization of culture) can be concretized.

In my estimation, the most serious flaw in pastoral theological method in the spirit of Vatican II has been a certain arbitrariness in regard to the norms and elements of the Catholic tradition actually invoked for the purpose of assessing or "judging" the reality at hand. There has been a lack of a clear and compelling vision. Perhaps a source of this attitude is found in the admission by Holland and Henriot that the approach they take to the pastoral method as social analysis is "non-dogmatic, i.e. drawing upon a variety of perspectives and 'schools' of analysis."⁹ Today more than two decades later, one can see the limitations of such a "non-dogmatic" approach. It was fashionable, for instance, to apply biblically based themes, even central ones such as the Exodus theme of liberation, to specific situations such as the oppression and structural violence typical of Latino/a contexts in the U.S. and elsewhere. Despite the good intentions of the proponents, the biblical focus on liberation was used to sanction all types of practical pastoral activities, particularly "conscientization," community organizing, and other forms of empowering the marginal and encouraging them to become subjects rather than objects of history.

This practical theological task, however, was often pursued in an undifferentiated, diffuse way that made it difficult to distinguish a Christian vision of Church and society from secular ones. In the post-Vatican II period of liberation theology Christian responses to the reality of oppression in or outside the Church seemed more informed, on the one hand, by a soft leftist ideology or, on the other, a crusty restorationism. More importantly, the lack of a sufficiently grounded and refined appeal to Christian sources, whether biblical, traditional, or magisterial, led to the production of pastoral plans and actions that remained too general, overarching or repetitive and not sufficiently targeted and specific. For theologically inspired pastoral action to be adequate what is required is attention to reality at the micro level of persons, family, community, and locality as well as the macro level of nation, continent, or "developing world." It also requires a more explicit grounding in a Christian vision of things, lest pastoral practice lose its distinctive faith dimension and relevance to real people.¹⁰ Paul Lakeland, for instance, pleads for a constructive postmodern

⁹ Holland and Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* 30.

¹⁰ As I and others have noted elsewhere, during the dramatic period of liberation movements and theology in Latin America (1965–1990) huge numbers of the poor in that continent voted with their feet and choose to identify with charismatic, Pentecostal or Evangelical forms of Christianity. One possible explanation for this is the clear religious identity and distinctiveness of these religious expressions, something they often did not see in socially and politically progressive Catholicism

theological apologetics as a pressing theological need.¹¹ Somewhat along the same lines liberation theologian José Comblin critiques liberation theology:

The greatest reproach that can be made against liberation theology is that it has not devoted enough attention to the true drama of human persons, to their destiny, their vocation, and consequently to the ground of the issue of freedom. . . . It does not come out clearly enough in their writings. This lack has made it possible for their followers or hasty activists to spread a superficial notion of Christianity that reduces it to a strategy of political or social struggle.¹²

THEN AND NOW

In reflecting on the soundness of the relatively simple methodology pursued in *The Second Wave* I still believe it has much in its favor. It seems that pastoral ministry still continues to lack a clear and convincing focus. One learns in establishing a business and pursuing strategic planning that a clear mission statement makes all the difference. From the mission flow goals and objectives. So, in pastoral theology, a clear statement of the mission is fundamental. It seemed to me that the rich, nuanced concept of evangelization as expressed in *Evangelii nuntiandi* constitutes just such a foundation. So evangelization became the lens by which the pastoral reality in my book was assessed. Paul VI's approach and subsequently that of John Paul II—the “new evangelization”—are still arguably the most ecclesially sanctioned, illuminating and practical visions at hand for what is supposed to be happening in the life of Christian communities today. The rich concept of evangelization provides good criteria for assessing how to respond practically and pastorally to the ongoing challenges and opportunities facing the People of God, not only with regard to the U.S. Hispanic presence, but across the board. The stress on evangelization provides a foundation based on the doctrine of the incarnation which informs a great deal of missiology today. Pastoral theology similarly requires today a more explicit theological foundation and evangelization provides one.

Timothy Matovina has noted a fundamental gap between what interests Latino/a Catholics and what interests the mainstream U.S. Catholics. Euroamerican Catholics tend to look inwardly at issues like clericalism, dis-

or Protestantism. See Allan Figueroa Deck, “The Challenge of Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity to Hispanic Catholicism,” in *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the United States*, ed. Jay P. Dolan and Allan Figueroa Deck (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1994) 427–28.

¹¹ Paul Lakeland, *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997) 88

¹² José Comblin, *Called for Freedom: The Changing Context of Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1998) 197.

sent from church teaching, matters revolving around sexual orientation, accountability, the exercise of episcopal authority, celibacy, and women's ordination issues. These matters are regularly viewed from the angle of liberal/conservative polarizations. Hispanics are somewhere else. They are concerned with the nitty-gritty realities of jobs, making ends meet, raising children, and avoiding violence in our society. They are concerned about the credibility of the Church's leadership in pressing social, economic, and public policy areas such as the living wage, unionization drives, immigration, access to education, and the human development of their huge numbers of young people. These are different agendas indeed.¹³

Matovina rightly observes that the reaction given by Hispanics to the priestly abuse scandals is notably low-key. It is not that the people condone the abuse or the irresponsibility of some bishops in not properly dealing with these scandals. Rather, the difference in reaction between Euroamericans and Latinos/as is due to the fact that Latinos/as, having lived under the fist of Constantinianism, have been well aware of the potential and actual abusiveness of the clergy for centuries. Latino/a culture long ago shed any pretensions of innocence about that. Nor is the culture sympathetic to any kind of Puritanism. In this contrast, perhaps, one can intuit how the Latino/a presence represents an interesting new ingredient for the U.S. Catholic Church and for the famous "melting pot."

THE ACIDS OF POSTMODERNITY?

Susan Sontag in a recent article in the *Los Angeles Times Book Review* makes one more particularly cogent assertion of a postmodern view of reality. Her words stand in sharp contrast to the call I am making here for a bold proclamation of a Christian vision, something desperately required for effective pastoral ministry today: "The modern way of seeing is to see in fragments. To see reality in the light of certain unifying ideas has the undeniable advantage of giving shape and form to our experience, but they are misleading, demagogic, always in the long run untrue. They deny the infinite variety and complexity of the real."¹⁴ Sontag's reference to "variety and complexity" reminds one of the postmodern rhetoric of diversity and

¹³ Timothy Matovina, "A Fundamental Gap," *America* 188 (March 17, 2003) 6–8. Writing several years ago for the symposium on conservative and liberal American Catholics, I attempted to show how Latino/a Catholics do not easily fit into liberal-conservative characterizations. See Allan Figueroa Deck, "A Pox on Both Your Houses: A View of Catholic Conservative-Liberal Polarities from the Hispanic Margin," in *Being Right: Conservative Catholics in America*, ed. Mary Jo Weaver and R. Scott Appleby (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1995).

¹⁴ Susan Sontag, "On Photography," *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, 27 July 2003, 16.

multiculturalism that has simply captured the thought and imagination of many people in both the academy and the Church over the past two decades. Sociologist of religion John A. Coleman in a perceptive piece published in *Origins* has reminded us about the inadequacy of the discourse on multiculturalism in many Catholic pastoral contexts today. Coleman refers to this as “sentimental inclusive rhetorics which in fact do not honor cultural difference.”¹⁵ Coleman echoes something that missiologist Robert Schreiter noted about the reality of worldwide migrations for which societies have not yet devised any clear plans or policies regarding how such diverse groups might live together. Francis Mannion, in an earlier critique, laid out some of the pitfalls in what he calls the soft multiculturalism that pastoral agents and thinkers have sometimes adopted uncritically.¹⁶ While the Church can certainly find in the prevailing trends and ideologies of secular culture many helpful, even necessary lessons, there is no substitute for a vision of the present informed by a theological understanding of Christian identity. That is what the Church’s contemporary approach to evangelization provides. That has been what I argue is lacking in the formulation of a practical theological vision for the challenges of Latino/a ministry today.¹⁷

¹⁵ John A. Coleman, “Pastoral Strategies for Multicultural Parishes,” *Origins* 31 (January 10, 2002) 497.

¹⁶ M. Francis Mannion, “Evangelization and American Ethnicity,” in *Catholicity and the New Evangelization*, ed. Anthony J. Mastroeni (Corpus Christi: Proceedings from the Seventeenth Convention of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, 1994). Mannion describes “soft multiculturalism” as follows: “. . . an approach that regards ethnic Catholicism as culturally interesting and worth preserving for the expressive variety it provides, yet has no profound stake in the spiritual values ethnic cultures bring to Catholicism. Mainstream American Catholicism assumes the general cultural-liking for ethnicity, but at a fairly romantic level. It pays lip service to cultural diversity and, in general, only looks kindly on ethnic expressions that support a liberal, middle-class ecclesial agenda. Soft multiculturalism is prone to the celebration of ethnic diversity in the church, yet exhibits a lack of real commitment to or conviction about the crucial necessity, both for church and society, of the conservation and advancement of the cultural and religious values of ethnic communities.”

¹⁷ Joseph A. Komonchak has noticed many tensions in the overall approach to theology during and after Vatican II. He contrasts a theology of correlation that stresses openness and dialogue with what he calls a theology of manifestation or an epiphanic theology that stresses proclamation and what Joseph Ratzinger refers to as “the positivism of faith.” In my view, this distinction is relevant to practical theology as well. I would like to suggest that it is not an either/or, but a both/and situation. Practical theology needs to be correlational, in continuous dialogue with its ever changing contexts. But it must be epiphanic too: inspired by a vision of the good, the true, and the beautiful that takes one beyond the confines of cultural mediations. See Joseph A. Komonchak, “Dealing with Diversity and Disagree-

WHAT IS EVANGELIZATION?

The most basic sources for understanding the central role played by the Church's contemporary view of evangelization are three: *Gaudium et spes* (nos. 56 ff.), Paul VI's *Evangelii nuntiandi*, and John Paul II's *Ecclesia in America*. These documents define evangelization as an ongoing process by which the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed. But it hardly ends there. The conversion process stands on three legs: inculturation, liberation, and ecumenical/interreligious dialogue. Elsewhere, I have argued that the Church's teaching on evangelization has simply not been received, that lip service is given to it but ultimately church leaders including the laity are not exactly united behind this vision.¹⁸

Inculturation

Inculturation refers to the appeal that the gospel message makes to the core values and meaning at the heart of a person's and an entire people's way of life.¹⁹ This process often begins in the hearts of individuals but must eventually include broader circles of family, community, and ultimately the culture itself. The target of evangelization, in other words, is not just individuals but entire cultures. Faith has not become deep and authentic until it penetrates the many levels of value and meaning, the symbols, rituals, and metanarratives of a people. Inculturation, moreover, is not a one-way street: cultures shed light upon, bring new perspectives to, and make palatable the truths of the gospel.²⁰ This ability to find truth in what is other, as well as this openness and receptivity, are at the heart of Catholic tradition. In history this occurs in the way Christianity, particularly in its Western and Eastern Orthodox expressions, negotiates, absorbs, and/or substitutes for the most sacred symbols of the people it encounters along the way.²¹

ment: Vatican II and Beyond," *Fifth Annual Lecture of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative* (New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 2003) 14.

¹⁸ See my chapter "Evangelization as Conceptual Framework for the Church's Mission: The Case of U.S. Hispanics," forthcoming in a collection tentatively entitled *Evangelizing America*, ed. Thomas P. Rausch (Paulist, 2004).

¹⁹ Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* (New York: Paulist, 1998). Gallagher lays out in a most cogent manner the nature of the encounter between faith and culture. He provides a fundamental practical theological grounding for ministry today, one closely linked to the Church's teaching on evangelization.

²⁰ Gerald A. Arbuckle has written extensively about the theory and practice of inculturation. See *Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for the Pastoral Worker* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1990).

²¹ I say "absorbs" in the present because the process is really not over. This is so

Liberation

Liberation is a constitutive dimension of evangelization, that is, of the Church's mission because authentic conversion undergone by persons and entire cultures has tangible results in the personal call to freedom as well as in culture and in the attainment of social, economic, and political justice. The linkage between evangelization and transformative action is boldly asserted in *Justice in the World* (the 1971 statement of the International Synod of Bishops) and in *Evangelii nuntiandi*.²² This means that the conversion began in and through the encounter with Jesus Christ has broad repercussions in the public domain. Political participation is not an optional activity for committed Christians, since to abstain from participating according to one's ability is to fail in love of neighbor and to deny in practice a fundamental gospel imperative. Matters of public policy such as access to food, shelter, medical attention, education, human and civil rights profoundly affect the well-being of one's neighbor. To manifest true charity for all is not enough. To fight for justice, especially for the poor and marginal of the earth, is also a gospel imperative and a matter of prophetic identity for Catholics.

Catholic social teaching's failure to reach the laity in the pew has much to do with the failure to make explicit the link between faith and justice. This is a major challenge for practical theology. Catholic social teaching, as many have said before, is a "well-kept secret" precisely because the connection between faith and justice, evangelization and liberation, has largely been denied *in practice*, often ignored or benignly neglected in preaching, in catechesis, and in Catholic education and theological discourse itself.

Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue

The third leg on which the Church's understanding of evangelization stands is ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. The realization that ecumenical

because inculturation means life and continuity for the Christian tradition. In this connection the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship issued the *Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy* (2001), no doubt in an effort to promote order in an admittedly messy process. One of the main reasons for this is the reality of ongoing mingling of symbols and rituals, what anthropologists call "syncretism" among the Latin American Catholics (in North and South America and the Caribbean) who account for more than a third of all Roman Catholics in the world.

²² We are familiar with the oft-quoted assertion of the 1971 International Synod of Bishops in their document titled *Justice in the World*: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel." See David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992) 289.

menism and interreligious dialogue is an essential component of Christian identity today is arguably even less appreciated in practice than is action on behalf of justice. Dialogue in the thought of Vatican II considered that Christians in their dealing with “others” presume that meaning and truth can be found in the heart and discourse of all people of good will. Consequently, an essential quality of Christian life is a genuine desire to share in the religious experience of others. The challenge of pluralism today revolves around how that sharing can take place in such a way that everyone’s identity in the dialogue process is truly respected.²³ The Church in its magisterial teaching on evangelization uses the term “interreligious dialogue.” Behind the phrase is a struggle to find a way for committed Christians to deal respectfully with otherness in a world characterized by growing pluralism in the form of multilingualism, multiculturalism, and the free market of religions. This matter is crucial for Hispanics, too, even though they are not often seen as participants in this dialogue. Yet, they too are deeply affected by the anomie that comes from migration and the double dose of Paul Ricoeur’s famous acids. Latino/a immigrants and their young families are plunged into the heart of modernity even as that world transmutes into postmodernity.

THE NEW AMERICANS ACCORDING TO THREE SCHOLARS

First, the pioneering social science analyses of medical sociologist David Hayes-Bautista are quite illuminating and suggestive. They provide input from social science that any creative pastoral outreach to Latinos/as today must take into account. In his latest study the UCLA researcher describes *la nueva California* that is the homeland of the nation’s largest Latino/a population. His research focuses on California which accounts for almost one-third of the nation’s Latino/a population. Hayes-Bautista’s research over the past 15 years has been inspired by his conviction that fellow researchers, academics, social activists, and politicians have repeatedly reinforced the portrayal of Latinos/as as victims. For various reasons it has been politically correct to stress the underclass analogy: poverty, lack of educational attainment, lack of medical attention, and so forth. Dwelling on these realities can become counterproductive, encouraging a victim’s complex that disempowers people. Hayes-Bautista does not deny that Latinos/as suffer serious social, economic, and political marginality. What concerns him, however, is the failure to find and highlight the positive strengths of Latinos/as, their gifts and distinctiveness.

Hayes-Bautista focuses on three fundamental social indicators: health, work, and family formation. As a medical sociologist he applied the con-

²³ See *Unitatis redintegratio* no. 4, and *Nostra aetate* no. 2.

cept of “epidemiological paradox” to his remarkable research findings: Latinos/as live at least four years longer than the average middle-class Euroamerican. The birth weight of Hispanic babies is almost the same as that for middle-class Euroamericans despite the fact that prenatal care is much less accessible to Latinas than to the Euroamerican middle class. The infant mortality rate for Hispanics is lower than that of Whites and African Americans. Compared to Whites or African Americans, Latinos/as have lower incidences of cancer and heart disease in California.

Hispanic participation in the work force is prodigious. For as long as records have been kept in California, Hispanics have the highest levels of participation in the work force of any racial/ethnic group. This has led to the coy observation that some Americans tout the Protestant work ethic and the Hispanic Catholics put it into practice! The data on family formation is also quite revealing. As Hayes-Bautista puts it: “Latinos are more likely to form family units than any other racial/ethnic group in California when family is defined as consisting of the conventional couple with children.”²⁴

In an effort to understand the sources and meaning of these somewhat paradoxical findings Hayes-Bautista has developed what he calls the concept of Latino/a civil society. He describes that society as being less individualistic, more family oriented and communitarian than the prevailing Euroamerican one. He sees religion and spirituality as playing a crucial role in people’s lives and believes that future study is needed to establish more clearly how Latino/a spirituality accounts for at least some of the paradoxes his research has uncovered. He suggests that the coming Latino/a majority in California will create a *nueva California*. Insofar as this trend is also a national one, he suggests that the Hispanic presence may also presage a *nuevo Estados Unidos*, with “new Americans.”

A second scholar, Virgilio Elizondo, has captured the spirit of the Hispanic contribution to U.S. culture in much of his writing and public speaking. He struggled to articulate the nature of the process that has been unfolding in the Hispanic homelands of the Southwest, Texas and California, and now throughout the nation:

This new synthesis is easy to talk about, but it never takes place easily. There is first a deep and profound loneliness, the loneliness of not even being able to conceptualize and verbalize the reasons for the social alienation . . . The inner self will be suppressed into an almost total silence. Finally, through struggle and suffering a new identity will begin to emerge and the self will be able to shout out, “I am.” This

²⁴ Single parent households present a serious problem for Hispanics; nonetheless, Hispanics are found living in homes with mother and father in rates as high or higher than Euroamericans and Asians. See David Hayes-Bautista, *No Longer A Minority* (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Research Center Publications, 1992) 17.

new identity does not eliminate either the original culture of the parents or the culture of the new country. On the contrary, it enriches both by opening up each to the possibilities of the other.²⁵

Third, Richard Rodríguez, a most evocative essayist, using the tools of a true person of letters, contemplates the emerging demographic profile of the United States. He focuses on the dual dynamics of the Americanization of Hispanics and the Hispanicization of the Americans. He deftly applies the metaphor of color poetically to evoke the nature and import of this new reality: Latinos/as are coloring the identity of Americans who have traditionally preferred to describe themselves in terms of black and white. Brown is now the color on the ascendancy. Rodríguez uses this to talk about dramatic and subtle changes in the very quality of life, values, pursuits, and way of being in the crucible of U.S. society and Church today.²⁶

One might ask whether the same observations, a fortiori, could not be made regarding the churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church, in the United States. The “new Catholics” are and increasingly will be Hispanic. Taking the suggestions and intuitions of these writers and researchers seriously, and keeping in mind the many findings about the Latino/a presence noted thus far, what are the critical pastoral issues facing the Church?

KEY ISSUES FOR PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Lay Ecclesial Leadership and Ministry²⁷

While the lack of adequate numbers of ecclesial ministers of any kind—priests, deacons, religious men and women, and laity—is a serious matter for the entire U.S. Church, it is particularly acute in the case of Hispanics. Even at this late date there persists in some quarters the attitude, sometimes explicit but often implicit, that the current situation is an aberration that temporarily requires laity to assume roles of ecclesial leadership. The ideal is to return to “the good old days” when Father assumed all the important leadership roles. Such a view flies in the face of John Paul II’s

²⁵ Virgilio P. Elizondo, *The Future Is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet* (Bloomington, Ind.: Meyer-Stone, 1988) 100.

²⁶ Richard Rodríguez, *Brown: The Last Discovery of America* (New York: Viking, 2002).

²⁷ For a theologically grounded understanding of lay ecclesial ministry, see Zeni Fox, *New Ecclesial Ministry: Lay Professionals Serving the Church* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1997). The discussion needs to include the particular circumstances of the Hispanics who struggle to meet the often unrealistic requirements of existing educational protocols regarding lay ecclesial ministers. See also *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Question*, A Report of the Subcommittee on Lay Ministry, Committee on the Laity (Washington: USCCB, 1999).

observation: "The renewal of the Church in America will not be possible without the active presence of the laity. Therefore they are largely responsible for the future of the Church."²⁸

In dioceses and parishes with large Hispanic populations the majority of ministers in positions of leadership such as priests and ministry directors are not Hispanic. Diocesan, parish, or university based lay formation/leadership programs of any kind for Latinos/as are growing but still woefully inadequate. One might ask in this connection what resources are applied to lay ministry formation. It would be a fascinating, worthwhile exercise in preliminary, pastoral planning to look at the budgets of Catholic dioceses, parishes, schools of all levels, religious congregations of men and women, and other Catholic institutions to determine how much money is devoted to the formation of lay ministers, coworkers, and partners. This would be one meaningful way to discover how focused these institutions really are on evangelization, the Church's mission and identity.

Underlying this serious ministerial inadequacy is the persistence of a vertical, priest and religious centered vision of ecclesial leadership. The ministerial structure that results from this clerical paradigm is simply unable as a practical matter to respond to the real population, the huge numbers of baptized Hispanics, whose faith will never develop without the benefit of a vibrant local community of faith. Such a community requires leadership and service in the form of ministers of many kinds, including the priest, but by no means limited to him. Another way to say this is to observe that a Church totally focussed on its mission and identity, that is, on evangelization, requires a much more open, differentiated, and flexible ministerial structure.

The historical and systematic theologians of Church, priesthood, and ministry can argue about the basis in Scripture and tradition for this or that approach or arrangement. The Vatican may set down the acceptable doctrinal parameters regarding these much disputed matters. But it is undeniable that our current approach leads to serious practical inadequacies. The Church is unable to truly attend to its members adequately, and, as a result: (1) ministers from other Christian denominations are filling the gap, and (2) significant numbers of Hispanic Catholics lose even their distinctive cultural Catholic values and fade away into the unchurched, secular North American milieu. In the case of Hispanics the movement away from Catholicism is now well documented.

While there is no one, simple explanation for this phenomenon, certainly common sense suggests that many Hispanics would remain in the Catholic Church if it had a ministerial structure adequate to the challenge. Currently it lacks a sufficient number of people, authorized ministers, to receive,

²⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* (Washington: USCCB, 1999) no. 44.

nurture, and develop the faith of Hispanics. In an age of modernization, cultural shocks, urbanization, and so many other dramatic changes, more ministerial attention not less is demanded. From a Hispanic point of view, therefore, the reconfiguration of ministry is an especially urgent practical task.

Popular Religion

The writings of many Latino/a theologians have significantly contributed to the awareness in the academy and within pastoral contexts about the central importance for effective Hispanic ministry of the people's faith and popular religiosity.²⁹ Yet, it must be observed that Catholic leadership in dioceses, parishes, and schools continues to reflect the late modern sensibilities of the Vatican II generation. In the effort to dialogue with the world, which 40 years ago meant the Enlightenment world, this generation tended to buy into several of the concerns of liberal Protestantism. Langdon Gilkey, writing more than 25 years ago, correctly assessed the situation in his much-neglected but important work titled *Catholicism Confronts Modernity*:

Related essentially to the bourgeois middle-class worlds of Europe, Britain and America, and in the last two to the "Wasp" worlds of small towns and suburbs, Protestantism seems, despite its conservative and neo-conservative theologies of transcendence, to have been so engulfed in that world *as merely to reproduce the individualistic, quantitative, moralistic, non-emotional, and in many respects naturalistic, bourgeois world in ecclesiastical form.*³⁰

From a Latino/a point of view, the mainstream U.S. Catholic Church seems not unlike the Protestant one described by Gilkey. In response to the deadening influence of this Atlantic American bourgeois modernity Gilkey suggests that Roman Catholicism has several strengths that his Protestantism does not. Some of these are the strengths that echo ones found in Latino/a Catholicism:

Catholicism has had a continuing experience, unequalled in other forms of Western Christianity, of the presence of God and grace mediated through symbols to the entire course of human life . . . transcendent mystery impinging continually on human existence through a wide variety or range of symbols—material, sensuous,

²⁹ See Orlando O. Espín, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1997). Espín provides the most systematic view of Latino popular religion currently available in this volume and in other writings of his. Virgilio P. Elizondo was the first to stress the basic importance of popular religion for an adequate practical theological understanding of Latino Catholicism. Many Latino/a theologians continue to pursue this rich vein.

³⁰ Langdon Gilkey, *Catholicism Confronts Modernity* (New York: Seabury, 1975) 14.

aesthetic, active, verbal, and intellectual . . . often almost magical in character and within rites and practices often openly superstitious in their forms.³¹

Gilkey expresses a fear that Roman Catholic leadership in education, pastoral formation, catechesis as well as in the Catholic theological academy itself may fail to appreciate the strengths of the Catholic tradition and unwittingly go down the path of liberal Protestantism. I see the discomfort with Latino/a popular religion and worship as a manifestation of what Gilkey is saying in *U.S. Catholicism* in the decades after Vatican II. This showed itself in the impetus to proceed with renewal that took the form of post-Tridentine standardization of practices and beliefs. This trend produced priests, catechists, teachers, and theologians driven by the need to purify the faith and its practice not from heresy, but from the accretions of anomalous forms of devotion that irritated Protestants and offended a certain antiseptic middle-class bias. Even mainstream American Catholic piety came under duress, while the more exotic forms of non-Western popular Catholicism like the Hispanic became more unacceptable than ever. Vatican II reformers saw their task as purifying the Catholic faith from all the unnecessary baggage of the past, especially the multiplication of symbolic, ritual practices that emerged through a process of an untidy religious syncretism.

As if that were not enough, other influential leaders of a liberationist persuasion tended either to jettison the people's religion or drastically to redeem it from its heavily narcotic function. A strong, socially oriented Catholic renewal sought to "conscienticize" Hispanic Catholics, in order to make them aware of the sources of injustice and act to bring about real social change. The models of Hispanic ministry that prevailed in the last two or three decades of the 20th century were informed by the imperatives of renewal or liberation. These tended to be antagonistic toward popular Catholicism. A third model, traditionalism often in a quasi national church setting, sought to replicate the old customs over and over again and in this sense was not antagonistic to the people's religion. Nevertheless, this model showed little concern for the dynamics of the encounter with modernization and the mainstream culture. Consequently, it was and is inadequate for immigrant people and their children seeking help in the process of integration.

Another factor powerfully influencing the tone and texture of pastoral practice of recent times is the growing professionalization of ministry in the Church. This led to a situation in which lay leaders became more educated but sometimes less conversant with or respectful toward the people's ways. The lack of a general educational background has not allowed many His-

³¹ *Ibid.* 20.

panics to pursue college-level (not to speak of graduate-level) theological or pastoral studies. As a result the leadership of catechetical programs, diocesan offices, and schools of ministry are not Hispanic and often quite removed from the life worlds of the Hispanic faithful. Training programs have curricula that reflect Euroamerican preferences that either ignore or diminish the people's Catholicism. A similar process sometimes occurs in seminaries. Hopeful Hispanic vocations to the ministerial priesthood or the religious life pass through the drawn-out formation process and become less rather than more capable of relating to their own people. This has taken its toll on the ability of parishes, schools, and other Catholic institutions to work with the people's faith instead of ignore or even oppose it.

Sensitivity to Hispanics requires exposure to the people, knowledge about their history and way of being. It also means that one must appreciate the role of symbol, ritual, and narrative in their lives. The experience of a relatively rigid and highly univocal, standardized U.S. Catholicism must concede more than a little to the deeply expressive, graphic, polyvalent, and anomalous religiosity of the people. This has been no small leap for Catholics schooled in mainstream theology and pastoral studies in the decades after Vatican II. The clash continues in the area of esthetic taste, for example, in the liturgical norms that invoke simplicity and clarity when in fact the people prefer exuberance and variety.³²

The Flight to Other Churches

For more than 20 years the news media have been reporting the flight of Latinos/as from the Roman Catholic Church to other Christian denominations.³³ This trend is true for both the United States and Latin America

³² Mark R. Francis and Arturo J. Pérez-Rodríguez, *Primero Dios: Hispanic Liturgical Resource* (Chicago: Liturgy Training, 1997); also *Misa, Mesa y Musa: Liturgy in the U.S. Hispanic Church*, ed. Kenneth G. Davis (Schiller Park, Ill.: World Library, 1997). These authors make the fundamental point that the starting point for the liturgical inculturation of Hispanic Catholicism must be popular religion. Liturgical theology and familiarity with the official norms constitute an important second moment. See Mark R. Francis and Arturo J. Pérez-Rodríguez, *Primero Dios* 1-3.

³³ There is an extensive bibliography on the flight of Hispanics to other denominations. A perceptive analysis of the phenomenon in Latin America was written by M. D. Litonjua, "Pentecostalism in Latin America," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 7 (May 2000) 26-48; also Edward L. Cleary and Hannah W. Stewart-Gambino, *Power, Politics and Pentecostals in Latin America* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997). For an analysis of the several causes for the flight in the United States, see Allan Figueroa Deck, "The Challenge of Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity to Hispanic Catholicism," in *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the U.S.: Issues and Concerns*, ed. Jay P. Dolan and Allan Figueroa Deck (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1994) 409-39.

itself. The result is that for the first time in history one cannot presume that persons of Latin American origin are Roman Catholic. There are critical masses of Protestant (particularly Evangelical and Pentecostal) Hispanics virtually wherever Latin Americans can be found. While there is no one cause for this historic development, there are, in my view, two underlying reasons. The first is simple enough and has been discussed already: the Roman Catholic Church is not adequately structured to minister effectively to such a large population. In the context of the dramatic movement of Hispanics from the countryside to the urban centers, across borders of nations and from premodernity to modernity and postmodernity, the Catholic Church has continued to trust in its post-Tridentine ministerial structure. Whatever be one's ecclesiology, view of hierarchy and ministerial roles, prerogatives, distinctions, and so forth, one thing is clear: the system we have is not responding and as a result the Church is losing membership. In order to serve the Hispanic Catholic populations of North and South America there need to be more ministers, whether priests, deacons, catechists, teachers, administrators, and so forth. We must ask why our ministerial structure is not responding.

A second source of the movement away from Catholicism is the discomfort with and outright hostility toward popular religion among many church leaders. This, too, I have already discussed. The religion of the popular masses in Latin America is characterized by: (1) a strong sense of God's transcendence or otherness, with a corresponding orientation toward the sacred and mysterious; (2) a generous acceptance of the reality of miracles; (3) a strong bias toward mediations of all kinds such as sacraments and sacramentals, symbols, images, rituals, and sacred stories; (4) a profoundly affective orientation, one that places a premium on the expression of emotions and passions. The serene, orderly, rationalistic religion of the middle class in the United States is simply different from the hybrid and sensuous Catholicism of Latinos/as.

Evangelical Christians and Pentecostals have ironically often shown a greater affinity for these Latino/a religious sensibilities than have mainstream U.S. Roman Catholics. In Latin America the Roman Catholic Church has struggled to find ways to relate to the people in a way that stresses continuity between the rich if anomalous Catholicism of the people's past and the requirements of normative Catholicism in the spirit of Vatican II.

Multiculturalism

The Church's pastoral response to the challenges of Hispanic ministry has not always been well served by the ideology of multiculturalism as it has unfolded in the U.S. over the last two decades. The documents of the

Roman magisterium tend to avoid the word “multicultural.” They favor the concept of inculturation and evangelization of culture which other sources render as contextualization. Of course, the word multicultural is useful to speak about the reality of the interfacing of several distinct cultures. Often, however, it is used in such a way as to obscure the serious pastoral need to relate specifically to each and every culture, not merely create some generalized atmosphere of tolerance among diverse cultural, racial, and language groups. It also bypasses the serious matter of leadership development. In many multicultural situations the outside culture does not easily achieve a role of leadership. Instead leadership remains in the hands of the insiders.³⁴

The extraordinary success of Catholicism in the United States is directly related to the early adaptation of the national parish as the de facto preferred approach for pastoral effectiveness with immigrants who have accounted for most of the U.S. Church’s growth over the years. After World War II the bishops backed away from this long-standing policy as Catholic communities mainstreamed and the need to speak in various languages besides English subsided. When the second wave of immigrants—Hispanic and Asian—arrived a different approach was taken. There really was not much of a choice, since there were few priests capable of assuming leadership in these new communities. Newcomers were put in existing parishes that became more and more multicultural. Understandably, bishops wanted to avoid some of the pitfalls of the national parish with its tendency toward ethnocentrism and independence from diocesan supervision.³⁵

John Coleman notes five basic ways in which the multicultural approach is inadequate: (1) Merging cultural/language groups with a larger congregation too soon has a negative affect on the strength of their religious commitments. (2) Successful immigrant parishes are not only places of worship but also social centers where health, social, and material needs are addressed. (3) Prayer and worship should not normally be multicultural or bilingual because a people prefer to pray in their mother tongue. (4) If church space is used by diverse cultural groups the issue of how to arrange and adorn this space are critical. Immigrant people especially need a sense of their own turf. There are elements of design and esthetics proper to each culture. A multicultural setting frustrates this need or denies it to them. (5) Leadership training is a sine qua non for effective pastoral ministries for

³⁴ One of the more substantive reflections on multiculturalism and its impact on the U.S. Catholic Church is found in William Cenkner, *The Multicultural Church: A New Landscape in U.S. Theologies* (New York: Paulist, 1996).

³⁵ Joseph Fitzpatrick assesses the pros and cons of the national parish and its relevance to Hispanic ministry in “A Survey of Literature on Hispanic Ministry,” *Strangers and Aliens No Longer* 66–68.

Hispanics. A multicultural context often prescinds from this urgent need because there are other qualified non-Hispanic leaders available.³⁶

Spotlight on Youth

Dean Hoge and colleagues produced an important social science analysis of Catholic young adults that draws five key conclusions about Latino/a young adults. First, as one might expect, popular devotions and spirituality in the form of prayer are more important to Latinos/as than to any other cohort in the study. Second, Latinos/as have more friends in their parish communities than any other cohort studied and they actually think more positively about their parishes than any other group. Third, Latinos/as accept the claims to truth made by the Church more readily than other groups. In this sense they continue to be rooted more in the Catholic tradition as they have known it. Fourth, they are also more convinced that social justice issues like closing the gap between the rich and the poor and caring for the environment are important to Catholics.³⁷ The researchers also note what Riebe-Estrella observes in this issue of *Theological Studies* regarding the growing preference of Latinos/as for English. But this does not mean that they are simply assimilating and can now forget their language and culture. Rather, the lesson to be learned is that English is an appropriate language for Hispanic ministry as well as Spanish.³⁸

These findings echo some of the points already made here or in other articles in this issue. From all of this, what conclusions can be made regarding future directions for Hispanic ministry?

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The practical response made to the challenge of the Hispanic presence is obviously a crucial matter for the vitality of the Church in the United States. One could argue that it is *the* central issue certainly from the point of view of demographics. What is at stake here is not a part of the U.S. Church, but its entirety. A practical theological vision must respond to the reality of the whole, not just a part. Ultimately, it is not a question about the evangelization of Hispanics; it is about the evangelization of U.S. culture and society across the board. In what follows I will summarize the

³⁶ John A. Coleman, "Pastoral Strategies for Multicultural Parishes" 498.

³⁷ Dean R. Hoge, William D. Dinges, Mary Johnson, and Juan L. González, Jr., *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choice* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2001) 118–119. In my view this study integrates data on Latinos/as in an unusually thorough manner.

³⁸ Hoge and his colleagues cite surveys by Gregory Rodríguez and others to show that "within ten years of arrival 76.3% of immigrants speak English with high proficiency" (Hoge, *Young Adult Catholics* 117).

more salient points and end with a best-case scenario, a utopian vision, as it were, of where a practical theology focused on the Hispanic presence may be taking us.

As I have argued, the situation requires a credible ecclesial vision, one provided by the concept of evangelization and the new evangelization. This vision, at least in theory, has become central to the official Church's way of looking at the reality of the Church in the modern world including that of the Americas, North and South. For various reasons, church leaders have so far failed to communicate a clear sense of the mission, one that is received and put into practice. The Euroamerican Church is traumatized and paralyzed by the sexual abuse scandals, legal battles, and financial crises. Concomitantly, Hispanic Catholics continue to emerge in every section of the country. They are ripe for evangelization as the apostolic movements in the Church like the *Cursillo*, the Charismatic Renewal, Marriage Encounter, and the Neo-Catechumenate know very well. Other Christian denominations, moreover, have shown much creativity and spunk in responding to this *kairos* moment. Catholic parishes, nevertheless, are generally not in an evangelizing mode.³⁹ They reflect the suburban, middle class and establishment mind-sets that resist outreach to newcomers. Until leadership takes this malaise in hand, Hispanic ministry will continue to be characterized by a certain lack of urgency, half-measures, and holding actions. This is a sign, moreover, of a generalized apostolic mediocrity affecting the entire U.S. Church.

At the heart of the problem, of course, is a pastoral imagination held captive too long by an outmoded clerical paradigm. This must give way to other practical ministerial structures, if the U.S. Church is to have the mobility, diversity, and energy it needs to respond to the unique opportunity offered it by the human windfall of immigrants and their youthfulness. Interestingly enough, telltale signs of the future are already emerging. For instance, the permanent diaconate continues to grow and the Hispanic part of it is very significant. The prospect of a permanent commitment to service in the Church as a married person is very appealing to Latinos/as. In parishes all over the nation laity, especially women, are assuming roles of leadership in all aspects of the parish except those strictly limited to the priest. For the first time in the history of the Western Church laywomen and laymen are becoming the professional theological class. These are "signs of the times" that augur hopeful, future developments. One can either fight and resist them or support them in the search for a renewed, vigorous pastoral praxis. Concretely, the Church's understanding of its mission requires that emphasis be placed on training and capacity building

³⁹ Avery Dulles, "John Paul II and the New Evangelization," *America* 166 (Feb. 1, 1992) 52.

of laity for many tasks of service *ad intra* in the Church as well as leadership *ad extra* in the world of commerce, the professions, labor, business, and the public square. This, of course, will not happen without a massive reallocation of resources, human and financial, on the part of parishes, dioceses, religious congregations, Catholic schools, and other institutions.

The polarizations in the contemporary Church, liberal and conservative, lead to an anomie that demands a response that is both vigorous and respectful of the range of sensibilities actually present among the people of God. The concept of evangelization, as I have tried to show, provides a way to bridge ideological divides. The teaching on evangelization can be seen as a synthesis of Vatican II's call for a theology of correlation that accordingly gives great importance to dialogue with cultures, including those of modernity and postmodernity. It honors ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. Yet the evangelization of cultures asserts the Christian proclamation, the gospel, with conviction and in terms of a clear mission and vision.

Hispanic Catholicism is uniquely positioned to respond to a more comprehensive, less polarized and ideologically driven Catholic imagination of the third millennium's world Church. This emergent Catholicism, caught between Canada and Mexico, as it were, is hybrid in its birth and seeks a more felicitous balance between a Mediterranean tolerance for ambiguity and a Nordic drive for coherence. Strongly oriented to an affective, symbolic, and ritual search for meaning rather than a dry, rational-cognitive, or fundamentalist one, Latino/a Catholicism offers some fascinating possibilities precisely in the context of a postmodern world characterized by a desperate search for meaning. In years to come the formation of ministers in the Church, preaching, catechesis, and Catholic education must free themselves from the straitjacket of Western bourgeois religion. This means creating many relatively small communities of faith in which prayer, ritual, and faith-sharing in community are practiced with greater ease, affect, and naturalness than in the somewhat staid, inhibited environments of Catholic parishes today. This means linking institutional religion and the visible Church with personal spirituality and community in a more intentional way, rather than allowing postmodernity's drive toward fragmentation to win the day. Latino/a Catholicism is poised for the battle.

Familiarity with more than one language and culture will be deeply prized in the Church to come. Pastoral praxis will be less univocal, more differentiated. It will value the need for ongoing analysis of reality, theological reflection and revision of programs. A one-size-fits-all mentality will give way to a healthy sense of diversity of means. Ministers will be available who match the vast range of gender, culture, social class, styles, languages, sexual orientation, and backgrounds of God's people.

The Hispanic presence also means that issues of social justice become centerstage. The churches understanding of evangelization in unison with

Catholic social teaching makes action for justice an essential element in the proclamation of God's word in Jesus Christ. The strong middle-class bias of many U.S. Catholics today with its drive toward privatization of religion and the dichotomization of faith from justice will be challenged to change. Attention to the reality of the poor and marginal people of this earth, an option for the poor, will be a natural and unavoidable consequence of true Christian discipleship. This may take the form of more Church-based community organizations like those of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) or the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO).

The Hispanic presence will require Catholic leaders to adopt a much more differentiated and creative approach to ministry. The parish as an instrument for evangelization will be seen as inadequate in light of the need to take the gospel to many spaces often not touched by the parish: the workplace, youth, rural areas, inner cities, the professions, science, industry, and business. Catholic schools, colleges, and universities will see the need to return once again to their original purpose which often was the education of immigrant and working-class people, not the pursuit of success in the marketplace by serving mainly the educational needs of middle-class and upper-middle-class people. Since Latinos/as continue to experience upward mobility and acculturation, an effective practical theology must focus on what it means to be middle class and Catholic. This must be done in such a way that the Catholic and Hispanic sense of solidarity and community is not swallowed up by the relentless individualism of U.S. culture.

CONCLUSION

These reflections lead to the conclusion that *cultural discernment* will become a practical theological skill more prized than ever before. While affirming the good, the true and the beautiful in each and every culture including the Euroamerican, pastoral ministry will evangelize culture by stressing gospel-based values that critique the dehumanizing tendencies of every culture including the Euroamerican and Hispanic. Practical theology will tend then to take the Church beyond the confines of this or that culturally based ministry. In the name of a Christian vision of each and every human person, the evils of materialism, consumerism, and individualism will be denounced. Other negative cultural patterns and structural sins and injustices will be identified. God's countervailing reign of justice, love, and peace will be proclaimed and enacted in the Christian community's sacramental life, prayer, and social action, that is, in deeds more than words.