

A SUGGESTED POLICY FOR-LATIN AMERICAN WORK IN THE U.S.

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Just as democracies differ from place to place and people to people, so do Catholicisms. In our hemisphere we witness two large bodies of Christians: Latin-Americans (170 million) and North Americans (50 million). Each has its strength and weakness. In the past there has been no close tie between these two but the picture is swiftly changing. One reason: the presence of some five million Latin Americans within the United States. They are as yet largely unintegrated into U.S. Catholicism. This state of non-integration is manifestly cultural but also religious. Yet we must be one; if we are not, we contradict the very symbol and purpose of Christianity.

One is not a Latin American precisely as an individual but as a member of his group. To integrate him to us does not involve confrontation or alliance (the components of integration) but some sort of modified absorption, at best. To integrate them with us does mean true union. It, therefore, must be group with group.

The result of such a union would be a new entity, a tertium quid, a marriage. A true confrontation and alliance of Latin America with the present North American Catholicism should produce a new American Catholicism.

A confrontation of personalities with an unsatisfactory purpose can result in matching weakness with weakness, thus producing a new entity but an unsatisfactory one, a bad marriage, e.g., teenagers

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marrying for thrills. A valid, holy union demands an accurate knowledge of strong and weak points in the components and proper purpose! What should the new entity look like? Christ came to unite all men and thus all of creation into one-- not by force or propoganda but by love - love in its fullest sense of emptying self in order to give oneself to others. He thus became the First -born of the new creatures. He gathered to Himself a company of men to further that work of unity and sent it out into the world on the day when He sent His Spirit, the fullness of His love, to energize this company. Pentecost marked the first of the harvesting. The Last Day will see the completion of the Harvest, on which all who will, will be One.

The Church then is the company of men who freely elect in His Name and by the power of His Spirit to live and work (this means to love) so that all may be one. This company -- this gathering of men-- the Church is a true union -- both human and divine and like all true unions must find expression both in form and in actions. The form then will be a structure, which must be essentially similar to the original company set up by the First-born. It must be founded, therefore, on Peter and the Apostles. Further structuring will depend on time and circumstances -- parishes, groups, Cardinalate, etc. The divine human group has its own Inner Law which too, must find expression in the Law. Finally, expression must come in the form of action lest the union be sterile or artificial. Expression in action will be always symbolic (though real). Towards the group it is expressed in Liturgy -- especially the Sacraments, the ceremonies of love and loyalty within the group. To the others, the expression of unity in action will be Charity -- real, effective but symbolic of

the innermost desire to die to self and live for others.

The gathered ones -- the Church -- as it works towards the last day, encounters two perennial temptations -- the danger of being worldly. The Church must be in the world and for the world but because it exists for the world, it must very often be against the world. The Church is tempted "to make herself at home in the world, to regard its worldly successes as the coming of the Kingdom, to be intent only on making itself secure and powerful and free from opposition and persecution; to involve itself with some particular economic or social system, with some form of government or pattern of society or thought."

The danger of being churchy. Yet the Church must not live for itself alone, leaving the world to be the world. It has to be the leaven in the world. It must not make itself at home within its own walls -- to become the goal instead of only the way -- to regard its own organization as an end in itself. Like Christ, the gathered ones must be the Way, not the End.

The Church then must always be like the Apostolic Community -- a gathering of men in the world, often against the world but always for the world. A group, therefore, neither churchy nor worldly. A group with its own Spirit and Law -- with its own expression of loyalty to the group and to the cause -- with its own inimitable Face to the world, that of Charity. Each successive age of Christianity has attempted to reincarnate that original community -- always succeeding in part, because of the Promise of its Founder and the Presence of His Spirit -- but always failing in part because men are

men and the Old Man (of selfishness) is not yet completely dead.

We who have been called by God to this group and who have answered, face this task of reincarnating the Church, of ever making it new. Each challenge properly met will bring us closer to our goal of being the Way, the Truth and the Life to the world. The most recent, and perhaps most important challenge to the "company" in North America, has been the coming of the Latin Americans. They come, however, not as strangers, nor even as cousins (Protestants) but as brothers from a Christian community of their own -- one that is at once very different and still very much the same. Basically they share the same commitment as we -- to live and love so as to unite the world in Christ. To plan on having two groups here -- Latin American Catholics and North American Catholics -- is to deny the very purpose of our group, unity. To demand their complete adaptation to us would only be conscionable if we were to claim to be the "perfect" expression of the Christian Community. Since we are certainly not that, why can we not perfect ourselves by this challenge, through this union?

Thoughtful men see in the Latin American Catholicism certain strengths; the ideal of charity, the dignity of the individual, the importance of family and further Christian (e.g., compadrazco) relationships, inner qualities of joy and freer expression of emotion, They also see definite weakness: lack of organization, of education, of respect for law, justice and certain natural virtues, such as honesty, and truthfulness. One doesn't have to be an anthropological

expert to see that the Latin American Catholic's strengths correspond in great measure to the North American Catholic's weaknesses and vice versa, the great qualities of North American Catholicism correspond greatly to the defects of Latin American Catholicism. The proposal of a true marriage then is not only a necessity if we are to preserve our unity and therefore our Catholicism, but it will likely produce a congregation much more in conformity to the original model and prototype.

It is all very well to say all this or to write it down on paper, but it is quite another to accomplish it. We marriage brokers must work it out in action and for this action we need a concrete set of principles and a plan of action:

1. Those concerned with this marriage must have a profound, intimate knowledge of both congregations. This knowledge must be critical as well as sympathetic.

2. There is a famous adage that goes: "People integrate out of a position of strength, not of weakness." Lamentably Latin Americans in this country are not well organized. In such a condition of disorganization, true integration is impossible. We, therefore, must devote ourselves to the organization of the Latin Americans as an indispensable step towards integration. Such organization, far from being divisive, is absolutely necessary for the "marriage".

3. The "gathered ones" are those who freely commit themselves to the cause of Christ-- the unity of men in Christ thru His Spirit. Primary attention therefore must be given to those who are most capable of such commitment, namely adults. Emphasis must be switched from concentration on children to that on adults.

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4. Since commitment is the term of our training, and not academic learning, we must choose those methods that more aptly produce commitment: Cursillos, Retreats, discussion groups, etc., and play down, if not abandon entirely, methods like rote learning of catechism, preaching not of the word but of systematic theology.

5. Since the dynamic of Christianity is self-extension (thru death to self-like for others- sacrificial love) and since the Church is not to be churchy but rather the Light and the Way for the "others", it follows that we should concentrate on those who, by their very nature and position, can best carry that Light and be the Way for the world -- men. But we must first de-feminize our Catholicism (a weakness in ours -- and an even greater weakness in Latin American Catholicism). We can do this by intense concentration on men and also very importantly by preaching the Sacraments in a masculine manner. First of all, the Sacrament of the Church, namely a sharing of the noble cause of unity with Christ Our Brother -- a commitment to love by sharing Christ's work -- not a direct love affair with Christ which is quite unmanly. Secondly, the Seven Sacraments: opportunities to give rather than to receive.

6. We must carefully train ourselves and all those involved in this marriage to the notion that the Church is the Way, not the End. Christianity means therefore to be in the world, not of its spirit, but for the world. Consequently, it means that the new creatures, according to their abilities, way of life, etc., must become involved in many different works and movements by which the world is being propelled by the Spirit to unity. We must hold that it is as important to organize a labor union as it is to organize a parish, that it is

just as important to be a politician, as it is to be a priest. If then the Church is not the End, then still less are its means of commitment and sanctification the End (the Mass, the Sacraments). They are the means by which Christians derive the power to illuminate and lead other men.

7. Every true union must find adequate expression of itself:

A) In Structure: every Christian group we form, every parish in which we work must be primarily communities -- Communities of love and service to others, and not merely juridical entities of service stations.

B) In Law: every Christian group must be conscious of the Inner Law of the group: "He who loves his brother fulfills the Law!" Christ did not say, "If you keep my Commandments, you will love me!" He said just to the contrary.

C) In Liturgy: every cult group must express itself in symbolic worship. That ceremony must be meaningful -- truly expressive of the group's being, desire and mystery. Both then in language and in form it must be native, that is, expressive of the group. Dynamically, a specific group (a church) becomes Universal (Church) only thru the liturgy (the Eucharistic service). The dynamic of liturgy then is from the singular to the universal. The liturgy should cause universality, not presuppose it. It follows then that the liturgy of the New Church, with due concern for the universal action of its Founder, will be expressive in language and in form of the specific community. Anything less would make the liturgy out to be magical rites instead of divine rites.

D) The final stage of the Word of God is Christ. That Word is now spoken to the world thru Christ Extended, the Church. What does it say to the world? Love, Unity, Charity, Respect, Cooperation?

Or Aloofness, Division, Law, Power, Education? The Church, even the smallest group, must cry aloud the Word Love! Until the world can look at us and see immediately and primarily Charity for all, we shall have failed to incarnate Christ well here on earth and we shall have hidden the Light under the bushel.

Furthermore, this basic quality of love and thus of unity should make for Christians many alliances with persons who, perhaps, do not dwell in the fullness of light, but who work for love and unity in the world. On the other hand, it should put us at odds with all those, even those (sad to say) within our own Church, who would divide man from man, race from race, country from country, under whatever pretext.

8. Those of us who are priests must realize that we do not fully constitute the Church, nor do we exhaust its priesthood. We are primarily preachers of the Word and Liturgists. There are many other mediator roles, both in the ecclesiastical and temporal order, which belong more properly to the lay priesthood. By gradually and prudently giving up these extraneous roles, we shall allow laymen to be truly men in the cause of Christ - aggressive and responsible -- we shall allow them to exercise their priesthood. A great part of our time should be spent in training these men and encouraging them, not only to be apostolic and priestly, but to act like apostles and priests.

9. Because we, the new creatures, dwell in the light and share the Faith, we above all should be known for our optimism and joy. We, above all, should reorganize that, though the Adversary is still present, yet men all over the world are desiring and looking for

unity -- that the world ^{now} is a better place than it ever was, precisely because of the Spirit of Truth and Love who dwells in us.

We should also be famous for our confidence and our humility. Confident that we are approaching the Final Day of Harvest -- humility to recognize that if the divine thrust among men toward unity is not moving fast enough, it is not because people are not good or, at the very least, wish to be good -- but because we do not have enough Faith, Faith in the Word of God so we preach our own -- Faith in the Spirit of Love so we use force -- Faith in the Christian Community, the Church, so we place first institutions like schools -- Faith in Christ who said, "Do not fear, I have conquered". So we are insecure, fear to risk ourselves and hide for protection.

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