

Irish Priests and Mexicans in Arizona:
The Diocese of Tucson, 1945-1970

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the encounter of a large cadre of 103 Roman Catholic priests from Ireland and their Mexican parishioners. Scholars have not explored this rich historical juncture. This is the first study to do so. Primary and secondary sources, as well as numerous oral history interviews provide the evidence that supports the thesis that the Irish priests and the Mexican people shared something of a common consciousness, resulting from similar histories, worldviews, and cultural values. This counters the prevailing scholarly opinion which excoriates Euroamerican churchmen of that time for misunderstanding and neglecting their Hispanic flock. Standing apart in this respect, most priests from Ireland—unlike clergy from other backgrounds—were sympathetic to folk traditions and experienced a synergy with Mexican people which enabled them to adapt and learn from Hispanic communities.

Yet for all that Irish priests and Mexicans shared in common, these pastors failed to see or at least address the social, economic, and ecclesiastical discrimination which Mexicans daily experienced or challenge the systems which kept them subservient. Paradoxically, these clergy accepted Mexican people, but they also accepted the racist structures which marginalized them.

This historical moment is unique for two reasons. In the mid-twentieth century Irish-born priests were ubiquitous and constituted the largest number of Catholic missionaries in the world. Today there are scarcely enough priests to supply the parishes of Ireland. Similarly, in the mid-twentieth century *Mexicanos* and Mexican Americans were almost without exception Catholic. Today this can no longer be taken for granted. These shifts presage the end of an era for the Church in Arizona. Nationally, they correspond to the denouement of long-standing U.S. Irish ecclesiastical establishment and herald the ascendancy of an Hispanic Catholic Church.

In reconstructing this history salient themes emerge: ethnicity, religion (official/popular), power relations, prejudice/discrimination, and the discovery of common ground amid differences. This matrix gives rise to a complex crisscrossing of trajectories of Catholics and Protestants (in society), Irish and Mexican Catholics (in the church), priest and parishioners (in the parish). It holds lessons for the future.

DEDICATION

Andrew

A Stór Mo Chroí

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I am grateful to Mary Bell Palombo, Jungian therapist and sage. When I was wondering whether to pursue the Ph.D. program, she'd smile and say, “It's a perfect fit for you?” Once after her death, when the road ahead seemed long and hard, she came to me in a dream and said, “Don't worry, John. You're going to finish.”

Thanks to my nephew Matt Cunningham who had his court reporter transcribe my taped personal interviews, thereby saving me tons of work. I appreciate the enthusiasm of my siblings, who couldn't wait to read my latest installments hot off the printer.

Researching and writing this dissertation has made me keenly aware of the passage of time. In a given moment it has often appeared to me that nothing is changing. But a project like this required me to take stock of decades gone by and made me realize the inexorable movement of time and of history's role in recording it. Most of the Irish pastors, once so prominent in the

Catholic Church in Arizona, are deceased. Four died in the course of my research. I want to thank those I interviewed for the wealth of information they provided, as they reminisced and told their stories. Thanks also to the Irish nuns I interviewed. The more these priests and sisters shared their recollections, the more driven I was to record their legacy. I fondly remember the many who have died, and I wish good health and long life to those who are still with us. *Sláinte!*

Muchas gracias to the Mexican people I consulted and interviewed for this project. I came to admire and cherish their culture when I was pastor in Tolleson, Arizona. There they taught me their ways and their language. How can I forget the 3rd of February each year when I was awakened at dawn by their songs and guitars in a *mañitas* serenade outside my window for my birthday? Or how can I fail to recall their many kindnesses to me, as when time and again they came to my door with plates of tortillas and pots of chili, and the conversation and *cervezas* we enjoyed renovating the church and grounds of Blessed Sacrament Parish, and the *fiestas* we celebrated?

Of course, there would be no story for me to tell apart from older stories—mythical or historical—which serve as a matrix, and are much like a family tree with one limb branching off another. From the days of yore stories were told about Jesus the Galilean preacher, his Aztec mother *La Señora de Guadalupe*, and the world's most celebrated missionary, Patrick. From these branched a myriad of others. Working on this dissertation has made me realize more vividly how these stories connect. For me the strongest link in this epic genealogy was my beloved parents, Jim Cunningham and Delia McNicholas, two immigrants with a dream. The memory of my father's hard work and determination and my mother's undying faith and compassion inspired me to achieve this goal.

To all my family, friends and supporters, benefactors and mentors, especially to the forerunners who have gone before us, love and gratitude. *Vaya con Dios.*

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Where history tends to be associated with imposition from the outside—by the state, teachers, religious institutions—memory is associated with the stories of a personal/communal past. Within the life of each person histories vie with stories, teachers vie with grandmothers, received information vies with lived experience.¹

INTRODUCTION

We won't see them anymore. They were a distinct group that has all but vanished. But a few decades ago they were so numerous and influential that many agreed—the Irish priests ran the Roman Catholic Church in Arizona. Long before they achieved such prominence, however, they began their unassuming ministry in mining towns, barrios, and cotton fields among predominantly Mexican congregations. This meeting and occasional partnership of priests and people, Irishmen and Mexicans, marks a unique moment in American Southwest church history. It provides a rich location from which to study salient themes and multifaceted perspectives such as immigrants, ethnicity, cultural encounter, ecclesiologies (official religion vs. popular folk religion). This project fills in a gap in our knowledge. For this story (from this perspective) has never been told before and its telling preserves a unique moment in history that may otherwise be forgotten.

But this project also reveals a blind spot among the Irish pastors that probably should not surprise us. Human consciousness experiences breakthroughs at particular historical junctures, prior to which much is overlooked that is later seen through new perspectives/lenses. Research shows that the Irish priests felt strong ties with and responded compassionately to the Mexican people in their care. On the other hand, though not oblivious to the systemic ethnic, political, economic, religious, and social marginalization of these same people, they failed to address it. Certainly, they knew of it, but in a vague way that, in the main, precluded articulation and initiative on their part to rectify.

¹ Lucy R. Lippard, ed, *Distant Relations: Irish, Mexican and Chicano Art and Critical Writing* (Culver City, CA: Smart Art Press, 1995), 19.

This lack of recognition and action with religious institutions contrasts with the earlier Social Gospel Movement in the United States. From its beginning Christianity counselled charity to the less fortunate. What made the social gospel different was that its aim went beyond the performance of the usual one-to-one charity or almsgiving, by instead issuing a call for systemic change of structures and institutions which in large part created poverty and need in the first place. It was radical because it proposed going to the roots of the problem, seeking to eliminate the cause and not merely treat the symptoms of social ills suffered by people who fell through the cracks, so to speak, in society. However, Roman Catholic priests who shared and advocated the concerns of the Social Gospel in most cases did not extend these concerns to the specific situation and needs of Hispanic Catholics in the West.

The Catholic Church in Arizona in the mid-twentieth century, however, was far from the Social Gospel Movement of the late-nineteenth. Irish Catholics' own history of social, economic, and political disenfranchisement generally meant that the priests from Ireland brought with them a remarkable empathy for the dis-enfranchised Mexicans they served, but clearly they were not revolutionaries envisaging a revamped social order. They were men of the church who sought to do good within the parish structures and obey the bishop's orders. It would not have occurred to them to go beyond day to day charity and demand lasting, radical social change.

One exception among my informants is Msgr. O'Keefe who, as a young priest from Ireland, worked to unionize the Mexican miners of Morenci, who received half the pay of "white" miners and were excluded from all management positions. Others, like Fr. McCready (also from Ireland), came in a more limited way within their parishes to recognize and stop racist/racialist schemes/policies that often had the religious and social sanction of the Church. One such policy was that of perpetuating ethnic segregation and hierarchies by the building of new churches for whites and leaving the old one for Mexicans.

In the main, however, I am drawn to the paradox of the Irish clergy, who knew and loved the Mexican people and their culture, felt a bond of faith with them, yet failed to see or at least failed to address the larger reality of their social, ethnic, economic, and political marginalization. I want to shine a light on their relationship but also to complicate a too facile view of it.

Whatever we call it, this blindness, or disconnect, or selective vision is a complex matter bound up with power dynamics, prevailing ideology, and utilitarian concerns. Examples are ubiquitous in the broader American society. An egregious example is provided in Hampton Sides' account of Kit Carson, "who described himself as an Indian fighter not an Indian killer." Sides goes on to note that fueled by the ideology of Manifest Destiny, "Carson did not hate Indians, certainly not in any sort of abstract racial sense. He was no Custer, no Sheridan, no Andrew Jackson. If he had killed Native Americans, he had also befriended them, loved them, buried them, even married them. Through much of his life, he lived more like an Indian than a white man."² Hence the paradox of this illiterate trapper, soldier, and scout who knew the Native Americans intimately, married two of them and, without blinking an eye, thought nothing of slaughtering them.

History is replete with examples of masters who showed kindness to their slaves but who would not for a moment entertain the eradication slavery. This held true within the Catholic Church in America. About this, Emily Clark has chronicled the work of Ursuline nuns in New Orleans and the irony of how they participated in the system of slavery and failed to ever speak against it. The autonomous lifestyle of the nuns flew in the face of antebellum Protestant patriarchal expectations of womanhood. But as Clark points out, "Their own status as slaveholders made the Ursulines doubly confounding."³ She refers to them as "missionaries to the enslaved," religious women who never questioned the anomaly of their ideology or practice.

Many groups, namely, the dominant Protestant white culture and within the church the French and Spanish clergy, as well as Anglo Catholics, felt anything but a bond with the Mexicans in the American Southwest. I argue that the Irish priests in Arizona did. They went further than the rest, perhaps as far as they could go, given the climate of the times. But all of them together, in the mid-twentieth century breathed the same air of acceptance of established, in-place systems of racial, social, economic, and political stratification and subjugation. The Irish

² Hampton Sides, *Blood and Thunder: An Epic of the American West* (New York: Anchor Books, 2006), 11.

³ Emily Clark, *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727-1834* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 5.

priests too seem to have been blinded by this ideology. This is the shadow cast by a story of otherwise considerable light.

Most scholars agree that the treatment of Hispanic people in the U.S. by the official church in the mid-twentieth century demonstrated neglect and paternalism, if not what we would contemporaneously describe as outright racism. However, I argue that one encounter challenges this widely held view: that of the Irish priests and their Hispanic parishioners in Arizona. Irish priests were unique because they had one foot in the official ecclesiastical world and the other in the tradition of popular religion (religion necessarily sensitized to social, economic, and other necessities). This tradition and its history distinguished them from the majority of other American priests who hailed from a quite different experience. To understand this we must explore the background from which the Irish priests hailed.

* * *

This dissertation focuses on the encounter of Irish priests and Mexicans in the Diocese of Tucson, 1945-1970. I will begin by defining terms. By Irish priests I mean Roman Catholic clergy who were born and educated in Ireland and who came here to serve the church in Arizona. I use the term Mexicans to include people born in Mexico as well as their descendants born in the United States. In most cases I use Mexican rather than Mexican American for this latter group, insofar as this is how they saw themselves and this is how they were seen by most members of the dominant Anglo culture.⁴ Where context or self-identification demand, I use the term Mexican Americans to denote those descendants who were born in the United States.

For a time frame, I have chosen 1945 as an approximate date for my starting point. This allows me to focus on the post-war period of rapid population growth in Arizona and gives one a strong living sample. Fr. Neil McHugh was ordained in Ireland for the Diocese of Tucson the previous year. But he was unable to report for duty until 1946, that is, after the end of the Second World War when the ocean had been cleared of mines. So I split the difference and start with 1945. Hailing from County Donegal, McHugh sailed to New York and arrived by train in Tucson,

⁴ David G. Guterriez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 7.

the first mid-twentieth century Irish priest in Arizona.⁵ Including him, a total of 103 priests from Ireland ministered in Arizona. Fifty five of them were ordained for the Tucson Diocese on a permanent basis. The other forty eight came on a temporary basis and ministered in Arizona for varying lengths of time. The canonical term for the former group is *incardinated*, that is to say, they were priests permanently attached to the Diocese of Tucson. The latter group were guests, as it were, temporarily working in the diocese but with ties to the religious order to which they belonged or to a diocese other than Tucson.

McHugh came to a state whose population was approximately 500,000, with the cities of Phoenix and Tucson less than 100,000 each.⁶ But Arizona's population was about to experience a rising tide of phenomenal growth. I round out my end point to 1970, which immediately follows the creation of the Diocese of Phoenix with the installation of its first bishop, Most Rev. Edward A. McCarthy, on 2 December 1969.

1970 is a turning point, not only because the new Phoenix Diocese began to take its first steps, but because it heralds a decade that saw a shift in race consciousness in the U.S. and a gradual understanding of the church's need to listen and redress the grievances of the marginalized within its midst. 1970 saw Mexican American Rev. Patrick Flores of Texas ordained as the first U.S. Hispanic Catholic bishop. 1972 was the year of the First National Hispanic Encuentro, an unprecedented church gathering attended by bishops, priests, and laity, which saw calls for greater participation of the Spanish-speaking in leadership and decision-making roles at all levels within the Catholic Church and for the establishment of structures for ministry to be implemented. At the root of these changes lay the shift in thinking and policy ushered in by the recently concluded Second Vatican Council with its world-engaging focus, calling for enculturation of ethnic diversity in the church, increased lay empowerment, and dialogue among religions.

⁵ The first priest from Ireland in Arizona was Father Michael Murphy, who upon arrival was sent by Bishop Salpointe in October 1877, to establish a Catholic church in Prescott. He died of consumption two months later on 6 December 1877, at the age of 37, and is buried in Citizens' Cemetery. Diocesan records in Tucson record three other Irish priests who came to Arizona in the early twentieth century. I give their names and dates in the Appendix A.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/37778803v2p3ch2.pdf>, accessed, 19 March 2015.

At approximately the same time, inspired by the American Civil Rights movement, the “Troubles” resumed in Northern Ireland. A youthful Bernadette Devlin’s civil disobedience set off a popular campaign by Catholics which demanded power sharing in the province’s Protestant government and the democratization of institutions such as the police force, city and county councils, and so forth. I provide more background to this in Chapter Two. Likewise, coming into the 1970’s, the consciousness of Mexican Americans was awakened by Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement, channeled through the resistance, boycotts, and strikes led by one of their own, Cesar Chavez. The consciousness of many Mexican youth also experienced a new self-perception with the Chicano movement galvanizing a sense of brown pride. All of this impelled the white (mostly Irish-descent) hierarchy of the Catholic Church in America to take note and respond, which they did through a number of church policy statements manifesting a growing sensitivity to the plight of the ethnic/racial minorities within the American church.

Broadly speaking, my project is located in the field of American religious history. Kevin Schultz and Paul Harvey join a growing chorus of religion scholars in claiming that “[r]eligion is everywhere in history, but nowhere in mainstream historiography.”⁷ Indeed, as with so much of the development on the American historical landscape, one’s vision is limited if the presence and influence of religion is overlooked. This is certainly true in terms of the history of the modern American Southwest and Arizona.

This study is influenced by the new directions in social history, shaped largely by postmodern critique. As such it is local and focused on ordinary people, a microstory, if you will. Yet it is one nested in larger contexts. Specifically, this study aims to make a contribution to the history of the Catholic Church in Arizona. Beyond that it will contribute to the history of Catholicism in America and to the broader field of American religious history. It is significant because it shines a light on the encounter of two groups—in some ways typical and in others unique—and of certain social factors that were both seen and unseen in a particular context presently unstudied.

⁷ Kevin M. Schultz and Paul Harvey, “Everywhere and Nowhere: Recent Trends in American Religious History and Historiography.” *Journal of the Academy of Religion*, vol. 78, (Issue 1, 2010), 129.

Specifically, my research contributes to the field of borderland studies along less familiar axes. Catherine Albanese has written extensively about religion and boundaries. She notes, “Religion cannot be defined very easily because it thrives both within and outside of boundaries. It crosses the boundaries that definitions want to set because, paradoxically, it, too, concerns boundaries. The boundaries of religion, however, are different from the logical boundaries of good definitions.”⁸

This dissertation looks at various boundaries which separate and define but which are also permeable and invite crossing over. Boundaries divide camps and establish contrasting polarities such as: white—non-white, Catholic—Protestant, insiders—outsiders, Irish—Mexican, material—spiritual, official—folkloric. Borderlands scholars have written about the challenges Mexicans faced and the tactics they employed in crossing boundaries. What I hope to elucidate are the surprising ways Arizona’s Irish clergy crossed certain boundaries, as well as others they did not cross in their interface with Mexican people.

In conventional Catholic thinking the female counterpart of priests are religious sisters or nuns. These women likewise feature in the story I want to tell, so I touch briefly upon the communities of women religious who also came from Ireland to work in Arizona. First were the Sisters of Mercy, who founded St. Joseph’s Hospital in Phoenix in 1892. Coming over half a century later, the two most prominent orders were the Presentation Sisters and the Sisters of Loreto. For decades the two latter congregations staffed elementary schools and ran religious education programs: the Presentation sisters in Mesa and Globe and the Loreto nuns in Phoenix, Flagstaff, and Prescott.

Likewise, today these sisters mark the end of an era. Alongside and perhaps even more precipitously than the current decline of priests, we are witnessing what some have called the passing away of religious teaching orders, even of nuns in general. These dedicated women in many cases lit the spark in children, which enabled them to go on to become active contributors to church and society, and in the case of some to motivate them through education to break out

⁸ Catherine L. Albanese, *America Religion and Religions*, 4th edition (Belmont, CA: Thompson-Wadsworth, 2007), 2-3.

of the cycle of poverty. They are part of this project, and I quote them throughout. However, though I am sensitive to gendered aspects of American religious historiography, my treatment of the sisters from Ireland occurs at the end of my dissertation. This is in no way to downplay them but to ensure that my primary focus is on the priests from Ireland.

We think we know the story of American Catholicism. Typically, it is a tale of immigrants gradually becoming assimilated and Americanized. But this picture leaves many people out. Jay Dolan, perhaps the foremost authority on American Catholicism, writes that “Catholics entered the 1950’s confident about their place in American society.”⁹ For many this was no doubt true, but not for all. It certainly was not the case for Mexicans in Arizona, who experienced unabashed discrimination up to the late 1960’s when the Civil Rights movement gradually led to a change of laws and, in some cases, a change of hearts. Furthermore, this lumping together of American Catholics under the label of an immigrant church, overlooks the historical experience of Mexican Catholics whose faith heritage goes back three hundred years, making it twice as old as the European Catholic immigrant presence. So the familiar “church of immigrants” and Americanization models do not fit many of the people I will be studying. A growing number of scholars likewise recognize that this perspective does not do justice to the experience of Mexican Catholics, who should be seen less as immigrants than as “a conquered people,”¹⁰ whose faith was rooted in this land long before the American nation came to be.¹¹ Immigrants cross borders, but for the original Mexicans in the American Southwest, the border crossed them.

What is more, my research helps balance the dominant focus on immigrants arriving on the American east coast. As George Sanchez points out, “Public mythology . . . still reveres Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty and looks toward Europe. . . . The fact that the American

⁹ Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 417.

¹⁰ Anthony M. Stevens Arroyo, “The Emergence of a Social Identity among Latino Catholics: An Appraisal,” in *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the U.S.: Issues and Concerns*, eds. Jay P. Dolan and Allan Figueroa Deck. S.J. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 120.

¹¹ Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens, “Latino Youth and the Church,” in *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the U.S.: Issues and Concerns*, eds. Jay P. Dolan and Allan Figueroa Deck. S.J. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 296.

Southwest has been the locus of one of the most profound and complex interactions between variant cultures in American history is repeatedly overlooked.”¹²

Literature Review

Generally, in the field of U.S. borderlands study, most attention has been given to the border states of Texas, California, and New Mexico, with Arizona a distant fourth. Last of the contiguous states to be admitted to the Union, Arizona or the “Baby State,”¹³ as it was called, with its formidable terrain and searing temperatures, was a natural deterrent to human settlement from the days when it was part of New Spain, and then Mexico, and later still as a U.S. territory and state.

Accounts of Mexicans in the American Southwest, such as Timothy Matovina’s, *Guadalupe and Her Faithful: Latino Catholics in San Antonio, from Colonial Origins to the Present*, and Roberto Trevino’s *The Church in the Barrio: Mexican American Ethno-Catholicism in Houston*, have made welcome contributions to local histories, but do not pertain to Arizona or primarily to Mexican Catholics’ relationship to clergy.

More specifically, works chronicling the story of Arizona Mexicans have explored salient ethnic, economic, political, and cultural features of this community, but have not concentrated on religiosity as I intend to. Thomas Sheridan’s *Los Tucsonenses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1854-1941*, is an excellent local history, but religion is not the focus. Eric Meeks’ *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona*, is a rich account of the role of race and its fluid construction, but religion features only tangentially. Similarly, dissertations such as Christine Marin’s *Always a Struggle: Mexican Americans in Miami, Arizona, 1909-1951*, and Pete Dimas’, *Perspectives on Progress and a Mexican American Community’s Struggle for Existence*, which focus on local Mexican communities are not primarily concerned with religion.

¹² George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 13.

¹³ “Defining Arizona,” *The Arizona Republic*, 9 September 2011. This nick name preceded that of the “Grand Canyon State” to denote Arizona as the newest (14 February 2012) of the contiguous forty-eight states.

The best account of a strongly religious element in the story of an Arizona Mexican community is Linda Gordon's *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*. But this story takes us back to the dawn of the twentieth century, decades before my timeframe.

Much has been written about the Irish in America and to a lesser degree about Irish priests—ubiquitous throughout the English speaking world—who followed and served the far-flung Irish diaspora in England, Scotland, Australia, Canada, and the United States. Half a century ago, Ireland was imagined by her native sons and daughters as “the centre not of a worldly empire, as in the case of Britain, but of a spiritual empire spread throughout the world.”¹⁴ When it comes to Irish priests, we usually read about their ministry in Irish immigrant communities. David Emmons' study entitled, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925*, touches upon the influence of the church and the clergy in the lives of Irish immigrant workers in Butte, Montana, but it is not his main focus. Far less has been written about Irish priests' service to minority populations and virtually nothing has been published about their work with the Mexican people in Arizona.

As regards Irish priests in Arizona, published material is thin. There have been several articles of a testimonial nature saluting Arizona's Irish-born clergy. A case in point is entitled “Priestly Tales: The stories of clerics who left misty, green Ireland to serve in dry, dusty Arizona.”¹⁵ Diocesan newspapers occasionally published others like “Jewels of the Emerald Isle: Monsignors McMahon, O'Grady reflect on a century of priestly ministry.”¹⁶ Newspapers sometimes announced the retirement of local pastors after long and illustrious careers, such as, “Monsignor O'Keefe retires after 37 years in Yuma.”¹⁷ These latter, innocent reports are edifying to read but their effect is to put a lid on tensions surfacing, by presenting an uncritical, whitewashed narrative rather than encourage scholars in historiographical research.

Worthwhile histories of priests in America include Michael Pasquier's *Fathers on the Frontier: French Missionaries and the Roman Catholic Priesthood in the United States, 1789-*

¹⁴ D. Vincent Twomey, *The End of Irish Catholicism* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2003), 26.

¹⁵ Margaret Regan, article in *Tucson Weekly* (an alternative Tucson newspaper), 16 March 2006.

¹⁶ Gina Keating, article in the *Catholic Sun* (newspaper of the Diocese of Phoenix), 19 June 2008.

¹⁷ Matt Maxson, article in *YumaSun.com*, 29 May 2010.

1870. More useful for its focus on Irish clergy is William Smith's important study, *Irish Priests in the United States: A Vanishing Subculture*. At the time of its publication in 2004, Smith estimated that there were 1250 priests from Ireland serving in the United States. Smith's focus, however, is to provide an overview of Irish clergy in the American church, without concentrating on any one state in particular. So too the study, "International Priests in American History," includes a section entitled, "The Coming of the Irish." But the scope of this study is wide-angled and general. Like Smith's, it too does not take an in depth look at the Irish priests of Arizona. Hence my project is both unique and needed.

My dissertation will contribute to the historical record in two ways. First of all, there is a lacuna of research on this topic. My study is the first to focus on Irish priests, who came in large numbers to minister in Arizona—beginning with Neil McHugh from Donegal, assigned to the rocky, dusty mining town of Morenci. Secondly, little has been written about mid-twentieth century Mexicans as Catholics living in Arizona. To be sure, I have found no research on the interaction of this particular group of priests and Mexican parishioners together. It appears that for too long in popular accounts, no problem has surfaced, no question was raised, that would invite scholarly inquiry.

My aim is to fill in the gaps in the modern history of Mexican Catholics in Arizona by focusing on this particular place and time and the unique encounter that transpired. This study will enhance our understanding of broader issues of religion and ethnicity by examining the interaction of these parishioners with their Irish priests. As many scholars have noted, religion is one of the pivotal factors in ethnic identity. This study explores not only experiences, attitudes, and roles which played out in the interface of two ethnic groups (the Irish priests are more accurately a subgroup), but the additional aspect of uneven power relations in terms of ethnic Mexicans interacting with pastoral leaders of their faith who were from Ireland. Both of these groups, of course, were situated as minorities in a dominant Protestant culture. So what we have here is a complex crisscrossing of trajectories of white and non-whites (if Mexicans can be considered "non-white"), Catholics and Protestants (in society), Irish and Mexican Catholics (in the church), priest and parishioners (in the parish).

Nothing to date has been written about this particular topic. My study concerns people who achieved much in an historical context which will never be repeated. Thus, I write about a situation that we will never see again—and this for two reasons. It has been decades since the last Irish priest came to Arizona. Indeed, the well of vocations in Ireland has all but dried up.¹⁸ The church there is now pressed to find sufficient clergy to minister to the domestic flock. Gone are the days when priests from Ireland were to be found everywhere throughout the English-speaking world. “Irish priests are becoming an endangered species, and very few men are joining the seminary in Ireland these days.”¹⁹ When I was doing research in Ireland I was told by a popular former bar owner and current undertaker in the town of Kiltimagh, “There’s two things you won’t see in Ireland in twenty years: a priest and a publican.”²⁰ He meant the priest because of the acute vocations crisis, and the publican because of the rising cost of drink. As regards priests in Ireland, Brendan Hoban in his book entitled, *Who Will Break the Bread for Us?*, claims that this prediction is soon to be a reality.

Furthermore, within the timeframe of my study, the vast majority of Mexicans in the American Southwest were Catholic. In those days Catholicism was such an integral part of Mexican identity as to be almost taken for granted. Mario Garcia quotes a Mexican American woman several generations in this country who put it this way: “Catholicism defined us as much as our surname defined us.”²¹ As for Mexicans today, however, we can no longer assume that they are Catholics, as was overwhelmingly the case in the middle of the last century. Today there are large numbers who belong to various Evangelical and, specifically, Pentecostal churches.²²

But times have changed and the future trajectory of the nation—as is becoming increasingly obvious—belongs to people of color, and in no small part to Hispanics, who account

¹⁸ Mary Kenny, *Goodbye to Catholic Ireland: How the Irish Lost the Civilization They Had Created* (Springfield, IL: Templegate Press, 2000), 34.

¹⁹ Kenneth Hayes, “Irish priests will disappear: Leading clergyman reveals fears that Irish priests are a dying breed.” IrishCentral.com. Published 3 July 2009. Accessed 26 March 2015. <http://www.irishcentral.com/news/Irish-Priests-will-disappear-49874767.html#ixzz25inLy00>.

²⁰ John McHugh, Personal Interview by author. County Mayo, Ireland, 1 August 2014.

²¹ Mario Garcia, “The Chicano Southwest: Catholicism and Its Meaning,” *U.S. Catholic Historian*, vol. 18, no. 4 (2000), 13.

²² Arlene M. Sanchez Walsh, *Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 2.

for the increase of Catholics in this country. According to the 2010 census they had replaced blacks as the largest ethnic group by growing in numbers to 48.4 million, of which almost 32 million are Mexican.²³ Mexico is the birthplace of 29% (or 11.7 million) of all immigrants in the United States.²⁴ These facts, like the biblical handwriting on the wall, portend where the future of the Catholic Church in America lies. As Mario Garcia succinctly puts it, “We need to understand southwestern Catholicism because it is the future of the Church in this country.”²⁵

Methodology

My research will be qualitative rather than quantitative. I will rely a great deal on primary sources such as church bulletins, diocesan communications, parish commemorative booklets, dissertations, letters, and manuscript collections, but my main source of information comes from a rich mining of personal oral history. My secondary sources in books, articles, newspapers and periodicals will serve as tools for analysis and theoreticcal understanding as offered by scholarly writing. My aim is to highlight people’s stories, to recapture their memories and showcase their understanding. I am guided by something Georg Iggers said: “[H]istory deals with particulars, not generalizations, its aim is to ‘understand,’ not to ‘explain.’”²⁶ I am also inspired by David Montejano’s award winning, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. His account is thorough and lively and, as much as possible, highlights the telling of the story through subjects in their own voices, which is also my aim.

Since the 1960’s there has been a shift in the Humanities toward an emphasis on cultural diversity and pluralism, on the experience of ordinary people left out of the dominant narrative. Presently, Religious Studies emphasizes *lived religion*, as opposed to institutional and theoretical accounts. We see this in the work of Robert Orsi and Thomas Tweed among others.

²³ See *Pew Hispanic Center*. Published 29 August 2014. Accessed 26 March 2015. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2014/04/29/statistical-portrait-of-hispanics-in-the-united-states-2012/>.

²⁴ “From Germany to Mexico: How America’s source of immigrants has changed over a century.” *Pew Research Center*. Accessed 6 June 2014. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/05/27/a-shift-from-germany-to-mexico-for-americas-immigrants/>.

²⁵ Garcia, “The Chicano Southwest,” 19.

²⁶ Georrg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), 4.

Oral history has emerged as a singularly important approach in that it not only takes seriously the dimension of lived experience, but allows us to access it through ordinary women and men speaking in their own voice. As Donald Ritchie describes it, “[Oral history] collects spoken memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interviews.”²⁷ This ongoing work both corrects and expands the historical record. In terms of my dissertation project, this method has proven to be particularly valuable in accessing attitudes regarding religious faith. “By encouraging interviewees to reflect on their beliefs and motivations, scholars can explore the nature of personal faith, the connection between faith and behavior, and the role of religion in historical events.”²⁸ It is in this spirit, and to honor the people whose stories have yet to be told, that I am engaged in this project.

As Jan Vansina, a pioneer in oral history, wrote, “The utterance is transitory, but the memories are not.”²⁹ Time changes everything. Old towns once so proud are no more. “[I feel] sad [that the real Morenci is gone,]” shared a woman who was born there. “You can’t tell your kids, “Look this [is] where I lived. Look this [is] where I went to school. Look this [is] where we had all the fun going up the mountains and this and that. You can’t go show them all that stuff.”³⁰ One of the threads that humanizes us and runs through our lives conferring meaning and identity is memory. The past is real in the minds of those who experienced it. As long as it is remembered it lives.

One of the unique features of this research are the personal interviews, which constitute a data sample that I drew on in my research. I find them invaluable since, unlike texts which are permanent, human subjects are not. Several people I interviewed have since died and most are advanced in years. So I am grateful that while there was still time I was able to capture their recollections for the historical record.

²⁷ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 1.

²⁸ Tracy E. K’Meyer, “I Just Felt Called . . .”: Oral History and the Meaning of Faith in American Religious History, *Journal of American History*, vol. 86, no. 2 (September 1999), 724.

²⁹ Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition As History* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), xi.

³⁰ Josephine Martinez Granado, quoted from notes in personal interview with Elena Diaz Borjkquist, Tucson, AZ, 11 January 2013.

As regards my data sample, I aimed for a broad approach that would include many voices from different sectors. I had three pools of informants: priests/former priests, religious sisters, Mexicans/others who were long time Arizona residents whose recollections could contribute to my project. For the clergy point of view, beginning with priests from Ireland who served in Arizona, I interviewed twelve priests and three former priests, as well as two priest scholars living in Ireland not associated with Arizona. I also interviewed two Mexican American priests, one retired and one a former priest.

For the Mexican perspective, I organized my interviews in five ways, that is to say that I had five approaches in tapping the individuals I interviewed. 1.) I received likely leads of parishioners still living given to me by the Irish priests who knew them when they came from Ireland. 2.) Author Elena Diaz-Borjquist, who had interviewed several Mexican people now deceased for her own oral history project, shared with me what they had told her that was germane to my work. 3.) Other prospects were suggested by scholars. Chris Marin, long time archivist for Arizona State University, who had written her dissertation on the Mexicans of Globe, AZ where she was born and raised, provided me with several valuable contacts, as did Professor Alberto Rios who shared his personal story and scholarly background. 4.) For the perspective of activism and civil rights I called on Pete Garcia, past president of Chicanos por la Causa, who detailed the struggles of Mexicans in Phoenix and gave me names of people to contact. 5.) I wrote a blurb to all parishes of the Tucson Diocese where the Irish priests told me they had been stationed. I had meager success with this and do not know if the current pastors included my request in their parish bulletins. I also ran ads in *The Catholic Sun* and *The New Vision*, the official newspapers of the Dioceses of Phoenix and Tucson respectively. This yielded results and several people contacted me and agreed to be interviewed. Several years ago I did put an ad in *The Irish Times* and *The Irish Independent*, which garnered a negligible response.

Thinking back, I wish I had utilized local Spanish-language media, for example, newspapers such as Phoenix's *La Voz* and Tucson's *Arizona Bilingual*. If I were doing this research again, I would have placed an ad on the state's various Spanish-speaking radio

stations, as well as in local English newspapers such as *The Arizona Republic* and *The Arizona Daily Star*.

In laying out this dissertation I struggled with where I should include the Irish nuns, who were contemporaries and fellow workers with the priests from Ireland and who likewise made a great contribution to the church in Arizona. I quote them throughout but I decided to highlight them as a group at the end of Chapter Five.

Related Themes, Issues, and Questions

Since the focus of this project is the encounter of Irish priests and Mexicans in Arizona, a related question to my research is: What exactly is Mexican Catholicism? Through most of the last century, the church hierarchy and most Anglo Catholics looked askance at Mexican piety as “superstitious, weak, and not truly Catholic.”³¹ For the most part scholars regard the “official” Catholicism of the institutional church as separate and different from the piety of “popular” Catholicism, the style often associated with Mexican people in the Southwest. Robert Orsi, however, disputes this dichotomy between “official” and “popular.” In his important work, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, he argues that this terminology is unhelpful, pointing out that “the designation of *popular religion* in relation to American religion was, among other things, a code for Catholic-like ritual and devotional practices, deemed inappropriate and even incomprehensible on the religious landscape of the United States.”³²

We also need to explore what is meant by Irish Catholicism, especially as it shaped the clerics about whom I write. My research indicates that Irish priests, because of their own historical and devotional background, had an enhanced understanding and appreciation of where their Mexican parishioners were coming from. Due to a similar historical experience of oppression and discrimination, Irish priests, I maintain, could appreciate the latter viewpoint in a

³¹ Kristi Nabhan-Warren, *The Virgin of El Barrio: Marian Apparitions, Catholic Evangelizing, and Mexican American Activism* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 10.

³² Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), xvii.

way other clergy could not. Curiously, most Mexican people who I interviewed told me that they would prefer priests from Ireland, most of whom did not speak Spanish, to priests from Spain who did. I was curious to find out what lay behind this claim.

Through interviews I have conducted, it is clear that most of the Irish priests felt an affinity for the marginalized Mexican parishioners whom they encountered in Arizona. I probe the reasons for this in Chapter Two and tangentially in Chapter Three. Most of them also made a choice to accept the Mexican people as they were and adapted their ecclesiology and pastoral style accordingly. These new priests who hailed from the edge of Europe six thousand miles away, rather than bend the Mexican people to their ways, found common cause with them and in many instances let themselves be changed by this encounter. And yet the paradox was that for all their acceptance and friendship with Mexican people, most also unconsciously accepted their social marginalization and its consequences without demanding systemic change.

Born in 1932, Msgr. Mike O'Grady, regretted that he was not older and more mature when, at the age twenty-four, he arrived in Morenci, Arizona, his first assignment, where he served four years. He shares, "Nobody told us to respect the culture of the other people, because we were bringing Irish Catholicism. . . .And at the time I didn't realize ministry was a two-way street and that we would learn from them as much as they would learn from us. I was learning it, but I was not aware that I was learning it. . . .Even yet I find myself learning from the Mexicans."³³

My research probes several dynamic intersections of the Irish priests in a new land among their Mexican parishioners. Reporting to their first assignments, these priests were young, typically twenty-four years of age at ordination. They had been theologically trained but had no pastoral experience to speak of. Arriving in Arizona they were brand new in this country, that is, they came directly here from seminary without having served in other dioceses. The Mexican people they encountered were of all ages, many of them immigrants like themselves and

³³ Msgr. Michael O'Grady, Personal Interview by author. County Clare, Ireland, 21 June 2012.

some from families who had lived in Arizona for generations. Without exception, ministry among the Mexicans was the first stop for the Irish priests. It was their initiation on several fronts.

This fact is significant. For it is in this context that the newly ordained from Ireland had their first experience as priests in the midst of sociological and ecclesial expectations, transitions, and adaptations. Most of them saw their first assignments as particularly formative and opportune moments in their vocational development. Consequently, in this sense, the Mexican people were their teachers. As O'Grady recalls, "They taught me far more than they ever learned from me."³⁴ Some chose to stay many years in Mexican parishes, a few sought to quickly "advance" to more cosmopolitan areas, and most seemed content to serve wherever they were needed. As Fr. Tom O'Dea expressed their encounter with the Mexicans, "I think they loved us because we spoke the same language and we connected."³⁵ And by that he didn't mean Spanish.

Mario Garcia writes of "a Mexican border culture, neither completely Mexican nor American, but one revealing contrasting attractions and pressures between both cultures."³⁶ To use Robin Cohen's term, they are in a *diaspora* situation.³⁷ Their psychic identity is one of *in-betweenness*. My subjects—priests from Ireland and, even more so, Arizona Mexicans—are border people. They share this in common. Both groups I interviewed loved America, followed its laws, and sought to contribute to its society. But Mexicans in Arizona at that time, even if their family had been here for generations, still regarded themselves as Mexicans. As Robin Cohen would say, they felt a strong connection with their ancestral homeland and a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time.³⁸ Similarly, most of the Irish priests saw themselves as Irish, regardless of how old they were or how long they had lived and worked in the United States. Of the Irish priests I interviewed, the one exception to this was Msgr. Tom Hever who

³⁴ O'Grady Interview.

³⁵ Rev. Thomas O'Dea, Interview by author. County Clare, Ireland, 21 June 2012.

³⁶ Mario Garcia, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 231.

³⁷ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: Routledge Press, 1997), ix.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 180.

said, "After all these years I see myself as American."³⁹ As a Mexican American priest said of them, "You can take the boy out of the bog, but you can't take the bog out of the boy."⁴⁰

Another way to think about this study recalls something Catherine Albanese said, "What we know about various religions suggests that they arose to deal with boundaries."⁴¹ I've always been interested in borders and boundaries, as that domain where culture and religion creatively erupt in imaginative alternatives and rich possibilities. In this space of tension, ambiguity, and conflict, people who constitute a social minority reinvent themselves to survive, negotiate the way forward in light of where they have been, juggle old and new, exert wit and will, in determining who they shall now be.

Where I Am Coming From

In my own case, the outsider/insider perspectives are not poles apart. Though not fully an insider, neither am I a total outsider. For I feel closely related to both groups of this study. I was born in Arizona but my parents came from County Mayo, Ireland. Over the years I felt close to the Irish priests who were familiar guests in our home. Likewise, I grew up with Mexican neighbors, classmates, and friends.

My father, who drove a hoist for the streets department helped to create the Phoenix Municipal Workers' Union, when Barry Goldwater was on the city council. He felt common cause with the underdog and did not like people being treated unfairly. When a neighbor who lived behind our alley got wind that a Mexican family was about to move into the house next door to ours, he went door to door up and down the street with a petition to stop them and keep the neighborhood "from going to the dogs." This was not uncommon in Phoenix in 1945. When the bigoted neighbor landed up at our house, he apprised my father of the situation, namely, that a *Mexican* family by the name of *Martinez* was looking to buy the house next door. My father, who could think fast on his feet, said coolly, "Oh, no, Mr. Federson, you've got it wrong. They're *not*

³⁹ Msgr. Thomas Hever, Personal Interview by author. Scottsdale, AZ, 4 April 2012.

⁴⁰ Rev. Gilbert Padilla, Personal Interview by author. Tucson, AZ, 16 August 2012.

⁴¹ Catherine Albanese, *America Religion and Religions*, fourth edition (Belmont, CA: Thompson-Wadsworth, 2007), 3.

Mexican. The name is Mar-tin-ez (accenting the third syllable). They're Italians from New Jersey." And that was as far as the petition went.

The Mexican family moved in beside us. Ms. Martinez, sharp and respectable, claimed they were Spanish, while her aged mother from Mexico (who lived with them) insisted, "Yo soy *Apache!*" In no time the Martinezes became close neighbors and good friends of the Cunninghams. Bonnie, Marvin, and June Yvonne couldn't get enough of my mother's boiled roast beef and cabbage. And my siblings, Noreene, Jimmy, Maggie, and Eddie scarfed down the Martinez's enchiladas and burritos and homemade tortillas.

As a scholar trained in Americanist studies, I suggest that my topic highlights salient themes of contemporary scholarship: ethnicity and religion, immigrants, lived religion, social roles and power dynamics, and most of all unique contributions to oral history. I argue that, due to a compatibility of temperaments, religious sensibility, historical experience, and shared worldviews, the encounter of Irish priests and Mexicans in Arizona was more often than not a salutary one in large part and—from what informants shared with me—was sometimes mutually beneficial to both groups. This runs counter, however, to a prevailing narrative of established scholarly research in which church authorities, for the most part, misunderstood and neglected their Mexican parishioners, either through blatant ethnic prejudice or paternalistic attempts to "Americanize" them. Most scholars agree that Mexican Catholics in the Southwest as a whole were typically treated as a stepchild of the Catholic Church in America, "a basement church,"⁴² as one Hispanic scholar aptly phrased it, or as another said, "an obligation of and a burden to the Catholic Church—the Mexican problem."⁴³

What I believe my research will show is that the relationship of the Roman Catholic Church during 1945-1970 is more complex. It is foolish to homogenize a group of 103 men. What emerges from my interviews, however, are certain models—or as Jung would say archetypes—around which the character of many of these priests coalesce, namely,

⁴² Stevens Arroyo, "Emergence of Social Identity," 105.

⁴³ Robert Trevino, "Mexican Americans and Religion." *Texas State Historical Association*. Published 15 June 2010. Accessed 26 March 2015. <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pqmqcf>.

servant/saint, fundraiser/builder, politico/activist. This is often how they describe one another and how their parishioners profess to remember them. I believe the strength of this dissertation lies less in its theoretical presentation and more in the vivid and compelling recollections shared by my informants.

My interviews were warm and friendly. Gathering data and hearing informants share their personal recollection drew me in, making me feel close to them. Later, I found myself standing back, assuming more distance, as I had to sift through these reports, analyze, and interpret them.

Organization

In the following chapter I focus on shared influences and historical parallels that exist between the Irish and Mexican people. These conjunctions are numerous and often take forms we may not readily suspect. Half a world apart, they nonetheless share extensive common ground which can be called a special relationship.

Chapter Two examines the Irish priests' background in Ireland during the 40's, 50's and 60's, especially the religious culture of home and seminary. Ireland is both a new and an ancient country. "Modern" Ireland was shaped in large part by centuries of colonial oppression, the Great Famine of the mid-1840's, and the subsequent abnegation of the old Gaelic culture, the devotional revolution in Irish Catholicism beginning in 1850, and the near monopoly of the church on Irish life for most of the twentieth century. Here I will delve deeper into similarities with the Mexican experience and mindset.

In Chapter Three I will explore the new "race" called *mestizos*. Thirty years ago, Virgilio Elizondo wrote of "two great invasions and conquests: the Spanish and the Anglo-American," and the resulting phenomenon of *mestizaje*.⁴⁴ This historic blending has relevance to my research, given the racial prejudice and discrimination to which Mexican people have for so long been subjected. To understand Mexican religiosity one must grasp something of its progenitor:

⁴⁴ Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 5.

Spanish Catholicism and its historical interface with indigenous religion and culture. This sixteenth century blending of blood and culture was the first *mestizaje*. But it is the second, more recent one of the past century that I am most interested in, namely, the cultural blending and adaptation that developed in the U.S. borderlands. As Garcia notes, “Catholicism in the Southwest . . . represents a blending of influences and a creative process of working out a new Catholic experience but one still guided by the past.”⁴⁵ If the first conquest/socialization/assimilation could be called *Hispanicization*, the second effort/attempt—for Mexicans who had lost their vast northern frontier and found themselves in the newly annexed American Southwest—was *Americanization*. The latter program was imposed on Mexicans in the U.S. by the dominant culture. Both the original Hispanicization and the later Americanization have been roundly critiqued by Mexican and Mexican American scholars in the 1960’s with the advent of the Chicano movement.

Here I will also explore what has been called *lived religion*, a domain popularized by the research of Robert Orsi, David Hall, and others. If anything has characterized the Mexican Catholic experience in the U.S. in its broader context, it has been tension surrounding official/institutional religion and its counterpart of popular or folk religion, as the latter continued to be operative in the lived individual and corporate religious and cultural experiences of Catholic Mexicans. I aim to probe this tension and how it played out in the interaction of Irish priests and Mexican parishioners.

Chapter Four will track the emergence of the Catholic Church in Arizona. I will begin with the shift in ecclesiastical jurisdiction which accompanied new political realignments created by Mexico’s cession of its northern territories with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 and the Gadsden Purchase in 1853. The replacement of Mexican clergy with the coming of French bishops and priests to the Southwest represented not only a personnel change but a significant shift in church culture and people’s related local religious customs. Mexican Catholics, who had

⁴⁵ Garcia, “Chicano Southwest,” 19.

lived in the area for generations, not only had to come to grips with a new national border but also with church officials seen as unsympathetic outsiders. The laity of the borderlands had to grapple with a U.S. church which had sanctioned their occupation and annexation, and aligned with the government in promoting a new agenda: Americanization.

Chapter Five will zero in on the primary focus of my project, the Irish priests. I will explore how they were different from their American counterparts and how Anglo Catholics perceived their Mexican co-religionists. I seek to understand the nature of the encounter of my subjects: how are the Irish priests remembered by those who knew them, as well as what did the surviving dozen or so Irish priests profess to learn or take away from the interaction with Mexican people in their care? In studying this relationship, I seek to avoid the binary judgments of praise or condemnation. There is a middle range of human attitudes and behavior, a more subtle register, where this relationship actually played out. I am taken by questions of why my Mexican informants told me that they preferred priests from Ireland (most with little proficiency in Spanish) to those from Spain (who were fluent), and questions like this. I end this chapter by highlighting the background, experience and contribution of the Irish sisters in Arizona.

Having dwelt on the past my Conclusion deals with what can be learned for the future. In major ways the Catholic Church in America for most of the twentieth century belonged to the Irish, particularly as regards its hierarchy and clergy. But in the twenty-first century there is no question that the future of the U.S. Catholic church lies with the ascendancy of Hispanics. Between these two major historical movements, my study shines a light on one particular pivot point. It is that moment just before the high tide of entrenched Irish dominance in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States and in Arizona begins to recede and the Hispanic presence and power within the same church begins to be felt.

I believe there is an Irish-Mexican thing, an affinity, an attraction, a spiritual connection between the cultures, and it goes deeper than Carlos Murphy restaurant chains or potato-skin nachos, or even the allegation that Irish and Mexicans both like to drink.¹

Chapter One

A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

It was a Sunday morning in 1846 in the Texas bush country. The rapid pops of rifle fire sporadically broke the silence and the occasional smell of gunpowder wafted in the breeze. To the south in the distance, faintly, church bells rang, summoning the faithful to Mass. Some young recruits in the U.S. Army felt stirred by the sound, for it brought back memories of Sunday mornings in Ireland. The question they asked themselves was, "What are we doing here?" And the answer came, "We should be over there fighting with them." They made a resolution. That night under cover of darkness forty-eight Irish-born troops fled through the brush to join the other side, at least so the story goes. By 1847, there were over two hundred of them.

These men—deserters to the United States, heroes to Mexico—came to be known by the Mexicans as *Los San Patricios* (Those of St. Patrick). Sometimes they were referred to as *Los Colorados* because many were redheads. They were a contingent of Irish immigrant conscripts in the U.S. Army, who defected to Mexico during the Mexican-American War. David Lloyd in his book, *Ireland After History*, and Michael Hogan in his work, *The Irish Soldiers of Mexico*, cite a complex of factors, but both maintain that the main reason for their desertion was a shared faith with the Mexicans and their sympathy for the Mexican cause.

Like Ireland, Mexico was a Catholic country that had been invaded by a Protestant power. From the outset of the war many Irish empathized with the Mexicans. Frequently, Irish

¹ Julie Reynolds, "The Irish-Mexican Thing," *El Andar: A Latino Magazine for the New Millennium*, Published March, 1996. Accessed 26 March 2015. <http://www.elandar.com/back/www-march96/andar/feature/feature.htm>.

soldiers in the U.S. Army were themselves objects of prejudice and abuse from Protestant officers and their fellow troops. Early on in this new land they learned that the British-American dominant culture was not particularly fond of Irish Catholics. In the 1830's and 1840's the political movement called the Know Nothing Party had whipped up rabid anti-Catholic sentiment resulting in the torching of churches, convents, and schools, as well as sometimes deadly attacks on Catholics.

Such was the political climate in the United States that Ralph Waldo Emerson, a leading intellectual and writer of his time, had no qualms voicing America's prevailing racism: "I think it cannot be maintained by any candid person that the African race have ever occupied or do promise ever to occupy any very high place in the human family. The Irish cannot; the American Indian cannot; the Chinese cannot. Before the energy of the Caucasian race all the other races have quailed and done obeisance."²

Reacting to this animosity and drawn to their co-religionists, scores of Irish-born conscripts deserted their U.S. military posts to join the ranks of the Mexican army. They called themselves the St. Patrick's Brigade. Their leader, a crack artilleryman named John Riley, hailed from Clifden, County Galway, in the heart of Ireland's Gaelic-speaking region. They were like many of Ireland's rebels, "emotional, impulsive, and full of bravado. But they were also full of courage that had no bounds."³ At the Battle of Churubusco in 1847, when the Mexicans had raised the white flag of surrender, the *San Patricios* three times pulled it down, vowing to fight on. When ammunitions were spent, they continued to fight with only bayonets. Following the battle scores of these men were captured. Some were branded with the letter D for deserter and fifty-four were executed.⁴ One writer calls it, "the largest hanging affair in North American history."⁵ Others were killed in battles elsewhere and several survived, married Mexican women, and

² Ralph Waldo Emmerson, cited in, Luke Gibbons, "Unapproved Roads: Post-Colonialism and Irish Identity," in *Distant Relations: Chicano Irish Mexican Art and Critical Writing*, ed. Trisha Ziff (New York: Smart Art Press, 1995), 63.

³ Juan Robert Peron, "The Irish in Mexico," *Sonora del Norte Press*. Published 29 May 2014. Accessed 26 March 2015. <https://sonoranorte.wordpress.com/2014/03/29/history-los-irlandeses-en-mexico-the-irish-in-mexico/>.

⁴ Michael Hogan, *The Irish Soldiers of Mexico* (Guadalajara, Mexico: Fondo Editorial Universitario, 1997), 220.

⁵ Peron, "Irish in Mexico."

settled in Mexico. Today, they are celebrated as patriots of Mexico, their names memorialized in a monument in Mexico City's Plaza Independencia dedicated to: *Los San Patricios*. Near Mexico City in Churubusco, their monument reads: "In Memory of the Irish Soldiers of the Heroic Battalion of San Patricios Who Gave Their Lives for the Mexican Cause during the Unjust North American Invasion of 1847."⁶

For ethnic groups originating half a world apart, there are striking convergences in worldview between Irish and Mexican people. We see this in their attitude toward death and the spirit world, their music and celebratory impulse, the male tradition of drinking and fighting, the prominence of mothers and grandmothers as spiritual guides, their Virgin-centered religion, and farther back their ancient earth-honoring pre-Christian religious traditions. Indeed, Mexican American playwright, Luis Valdez, has said that "the Irish are the Mexicans of Europe."⁷

As a native Arizonan, I grew up with the Mexicans and the Irish priests. As I embarked on this project I focused my attention on these two groups with whom I was familiar. But what surprised me was the common ground they shared, the links and ties between them that I came to discover. It became clear to me that indeed they shared "a special relationship." I was amazed to find that others had taken note of this as well. Trisha Ziff in the title of her edited volume tellingly refers to the Irish and Mexicans as *Distant Relations*. Writing about the Irish and Mexicans, Juan Roberto Peron notes that "solidarity with the Irish became a long tradition in Mexico along with friendship that still exists today."⁸ The words once penned by John Riley, leader of *Los San Patricios*, are also remembered and cherished in Mexico today: "A more hospitable and friendly people than the Mexican there exists not on the face of the earth . . . especially to an Irishman and a Catholic."⁹

On a recent trip to Buenos Aires I had gone to the famous necropolis of La Recoleta Cemetery with its impressive aboveground tombs. Not far from where Eva Peron was laid to rest,

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Luis Valdez, cited in Reynolds, "The Irish-Mexican Thing." <http://www.elandar.com/back/www-march96/andar/feature/feature.htm>.

⁸ Peron.

⁹ Michael Hogan, "The Soldiers of St. Patrick." *Taco News*. Published 17 March 2014. Accessed 20 March 2015. <http://www.newstaco.com/2014/03/17/the-soldiers-of-st-patrick/>.

I was surprised to behold the tomb of a famous Irishman. Translating the bronze inscription from Spanish it reads: Admiral William Brown, Father of the Argentine Navy, Foxford, Co. Mayo, Ireland, 1777-1857. His monument is a single Corinthian column, painted green (I was told) for his Irish origins. I was struck to see that his birthplace was a few miles from where my father was born. Indeed, today there is a small museum to Admiral Brown adjacent to the Foxford woolen mills, where my father worked for a while as a young man.

Besides Brown there were other famous Irishmen who are celebrated in Latin America's struggle for independence. Born in Co. Sligo, Ambrose O'Higgins, became Governor of Chile and Viceroy of Peru. But it is his famous son, Bernardo, who is heralded in the annuals of history for his role in securing Peru's national independence from Spain and is celebrated as the Liberator of Chile. Besides these illustrious leaders, over two thousand Irishmen crossed an ocean and fought in Simon Bolivar's army for the liberation of much of South America.¹⁰

In my research I came across the rich academic website of the Society for Irish Latin American Studies. This is a forum of scholars on both sides of the Atlantic celebrating what the website calls a "special relationship" of Ireland and Latin American countries. Another surprise was to discover the Mexican American online magazine, *El Andar* and its lead article of March 1996, which highlights the "special relationship." About this relationship Patrick Goggins, coordinator of San Francisco's Irish Mexican Association and president of the Irish Literary and Historical Society, remarks, "It goes back to ancient times." He points out, "In both cultures, music and poetry flourished. The fundamentals of the arts have coursed through our histories."¹¹ Perhaps the Mexican American playwright, Luis Valdez—considered the father of Chicano theater in the United States—put it most succinctly when he said, "The Irish are the Mexicans of Europe."¹²

¹⁰ Raymundo Murray. "Ireland and Latin America." *Society for Irish Latin American Studies*. Published 30 August 2005. Accessed 26 March 2015. <http://www.irlandeses.org/murrayintro.htm>.

¹¹ Pat Goggins, quoted in "Irish-Mexican Thing." <http://elandar.com/back/www-march96/andar/andar.htm>.

¹² Luis Valdez, cited in Reynolds, "Irish-Mexican Thing," <http://elandar.com/back/www-march96/andar/andar.htm>.

All of this impelled me to look more broadly for points of connection that might exist specifically between the Irish priests and the Mexican people. But what most convinced me of this special relationship came from the interviews I conducted and the testimony of the Irish priests and Mexicans themselves. In this chapter I gather together what I believe are sites of common ground, shared influences, mutual parallels between the two groups. In subsequent chapters I explore why this is so.

Irish American Michael Hogan lived and taught for many years in Guadalajara, Mexico. He notes that it was commonplace in the United States in the 1840's to negatively compare the Mexicans and the Irish to Anglo Americans. He cites the following commonalities shared by the Irish and Mexicans. They were predominantly Catholic. Temperamentally and culturally they not compatible with "the Yankee values of thrift, conservatism, and laissez-faire capitalism, and preferred song, worship and fiestas to material values."¹³ The basis of this solidarity was not lost on contemporary commentators who pointed out that they had more in common with each other than with Protestant Americans.

In her essay entitled, "Distant Relations," Lucy Lippard zeros in on the special relationship, noting, "[T]he real common ground is the retention of a mixed, still powerful, and often romanticized identity that is layered beneath the surfaces of modernity and internationalism—an identity manipulated as often in popular as in 'high' culture."¹⁴

When we first think about Mexico and Ireland, to be sure, many differences initially strike us. However, as we study these two regions and their cultures in depth a vast common ground emerges. According to Lippard, both blend an indigenous and Catholic spirituality. Both share a preoccupation with death and rebirth. In both a poor but vigorous rural culture has and continues to change. Both countries saw resistance and bloodshed in the face of the occupation of their traditional homelands and live with the memory of inconclusive revolutions.¹⁵ Anti-Irish and anti-

¹³ Michael Hogan, *Irish Soldiers of Mexico*, 240.

¹⁴ Lippard, "Introduction: Distant Relations," 16.

¹⁵ The partition of Ireland in 1922 is obvious. In the case of Mexico there have been periodic Indian revolts like those more recently around Chiapas against the government that are evidence of unresolved territorial issues within Mexico itself.

Mexican prejudice and violence have scarred their collective experience. Beneath the surfaces of modernity and internationalism, both peoples retain complex, powerful, and often romanticized attachments to the past. Class has played a paramount role of their common histories, dictating social inclusion or marginalization as the case may be. Both represent what Lippard calls “hybrid states” in terms of their “reinventions” internally and generationally, personified by the two Irelands and the two Mexicos. The two Irelands need no explanation. The two Mexicos were once one. Aztlan of Mexican myth parallels the personified woman or Mother Ireland of lore. Aztlan is the imagined paradise of Mexican imagination, a place in “El Norte,” the northern lands forcibly seized by strangers.

Both Mexicans and Irish in the diaspora are connected by what Robin Cohen calls “their people’s yearning for their respective homelands.”¹⁶ Today the term diaspora is used rather than migration. The latter denotes a move to another region and the need to remake one’s life in another context. The former involves movement but also entails a continued connection to one’s homeland, either real or imaginary, and a sense of identification and solidarity with co-ethnics elsewhere. Before the 1960’s the term diaspora was primarily used in classic Christian and Jewish contexts. Around the 1950’s and ‘60’s it was also extended to include African experiences. In the 1990’s it came to apply to transnationalism.

Anthropologists today speak of traveling cultures. That is to say, culture is no longer seen as a characteristic but a practice. Culture is no longer tied to place, but to a process whereby people remake themselves continuously. In modernist thought identity was conceived of as stable, unified, and autonomous. In the postmodern era we speak of multiple, crisscrossing identities constantly under revision. And yet we all must speak from some place. Culture today is theorized in terms of hybridity, ethnicity, community, multiculturalism.

* * *

Many scholars today excoriate the institutional Catholic Church for its condescending attitudes and outright neglect of its brown members in the mid-twentieth century. Bishops and

¹⁶ Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 6.

clergy receive poor marks for their lack of sensitivity to their Mexican flock, who for all practical purposes were invisible to them. But this assessment, which I do not doubt is true, appears somewhat at odds with what I have gleaned from interviews with the last of the Irish priests in Arizona and from various Mexican people who recalled their ministry among them. What scholars like Orlando Espin maintain regarding American ecclesiastical neglect of its brown flock is for the most part accurate, but perhaps not at all times and places. Typically, the waves of European immigrants landing upon these shores were eager to assimilate in the land of opportunity, to be respected, and to make their mark in America. But one thing which I believe makes the Irish different is sharing a similar historical experience with the Mexicans.

Destitute Irish Catholics coming to America hailed from a revolutionary background and knew first hand oppression and discrimination in the Old Country. Many of their clubs and associations were founded for the purpose of raising funds and engaging in political action to win Ireland's independence. Some, climbing the American social ladder, forgot their roots, but many remembered and celebrated their identity proudly as an "underclass of rebels," oppressed primarily because of their Catholic faith. As Luke Gibbons writes, "What the immigrant Irish brought with them from the homeland were not the habits of authority fostered by the colonizer but, in fact, a bitter legacy of servitude and ignominy akin to that experienced by native and African Americans."¹⁷

Christine Kinealy, gives us another illustration of liberal, egalitarian thinking, this time coming from the quarter of Irish leadership.¹⁸ Leading up to the Civil War, the attitude of many of the Irish in America towards slavery was similar to that of American Catholics in general. Kinealy maintains that many perceived the cause of abolition as too radical, with its leaders often supporting women's rights and other social reforms. In light of this, these immigrants could appear ungrateful and unpatriotic to the country that had taken them in. Furthermore, in the case

¹⁷ Luke Gibbons, "Unapproved Roads: Post-Colonialism and Irish Identity," in *Distant Relations: Chicano Irish Mexican Art and Critical Writing*, Trisha Ziff, ed. (New York: Smart Art Press, 1995), 61.

¹⁸ Christine Kinealy, "The Liberator: Daniel O'Connell and Anti-Slavery" *History Today*. Published 12 December 2015. Accessed 26 March 2015. <http://www.historytoday.com/christine-kinealy/liberator-daniel-o%E2%80%99connell-and-anti-slavery>.

of the immigrants, they feared that masses of emancipated slaves would take their jobs. But there was another current running through Irish consciousness which urged empathy and action, as a natural response, on behalf of the oppressed.

In 1841, “An Address of the People of Ireland to Their Countrymen and Countrywomen in America” was given to the American Anti-Slavery Society, who distributed it widely. It was the work of two Irish Protestant democrats, but most significantly, it was strongly endorsed by two Irish Catholic signatories of international reputation. Daniel O’Connell and Father Mathew. The latter was leader of the Irish Temperance Movement and the former was Ireland’s heralded Catholic Emancipator.

Kinealy writes,

The anti-slavery movement had previously been associated with middle-class Protestants, but O’Connell’s involvement introduced the slave question to a mass movement whose backbone was formed from illiterate, Catholic peasants. The comparison between the misery of the Irish poor and of American slaves struck O’Connell, who described the latter as being “the saddest people the sun sees.” [V]isiting Ireland in 1845, Frederick Douglass was appalled by the poverty of the Irish people, likening their condition to that of the most degraded American slaves.¹⁹

O’Connell’s political savvy and golden oratory won back the right of Catholics to run for office and serve in the British Parliament (after a centuries-long ban under the Penal Laws). Celebrated in his lifetime as “the voice of the Irish,” he remains perhaps the most outstanding statesman in Irish history. Facing political and religious pressure to muffle his critique of slavery, O’Connell pointed out the common ground of injustice shared by Catholics in Ireland and American black slaves. The *Boston Globe* refused to publish the liberatory address, regarding it as unsolicited interference in another country’s politics. The Irish-born Bishop of New York, John Hughes, admired O’Connell, yet believed that support for abolition would jeopardize the livelihood of poorer immigrants and could result in an anti-Irish backlash. Nonetheless, Daniel O’Connell won the highest of praise from the freed slave and famous abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, for his steadfast proclamation of the right of all to be free.

¹⁹ Kinealy, “The Liberator.” <http://www.historytoday.com/christine-kinealy/liberator-daniel-o%E2%80%99connell-and-anti-slavery>.

I cite the above examples—the first of ordinary men in arms, the second of recognized leaders—to show a strain in the Irish temperament which displayed a natural sympathy for the underdog. In Chapter Four, when I focus on the Irish priests in Arizona, I will highlight examples of these clergymen, who were not only well received by their Mexican parishioners, but in a couple of cases actively empowered them. Responding to Espin’s critique I would agree that many Irish once settled in America became bourgeois in their attitudes, but certainly not all. The Irish soldiers who defected to the Mexican cause were an example of this and renowned Irish leaders who forged the spirit of nineteenth century Ireland are another. And the priests from Ireland who came to Arizona are another, albeit in a limited way.

Historically, many Irish have felt an affinity for the underdog, which often spurred them to act on such a one’s behalf. In response to the claim that Irish missionaries were sometimes seen as nobility in the countries to which they went, Mary Kenny disagrees and suggests what is more likely. “The Irish missionaries, having come from a background of subjection to a greater power, could identify more with ordinary people than their British or French masters.”²⁰ This empathy was often in evidence among the Irish priests in their dealings with the Mexicans in Arizona.

Yet there is a marked difference between what the priests I interviewed see today and what they and their confreres saw or were able to grasp half a century ago. Underlying the story I want to tell is a prevailing blindness, as regards systems of injustice which consigned Mexicans to social marginalization—even in the church.

Spiritually, Linguistically, Culturally

Describing the pervasive nature of Mexican spirituality, Professor Alberto Rios, who was born and raised in the border town of Nogales, Arizona, said, “When you left church, you did church. . . .God was mentioned in every other sentence in the Mexican household. It was just brought into the language.”²¹ Graciela Graf is Venezuelan by birth but came to Arizona years ago. She concurred with these assessments, telling me, “With the Mexican people . . . their faith

²⁰ Kenny, “Goodbye,” 105.

²¹ Dr. Alberto Rios. Personal Interview by author. Tempe, AZ. 30 August 2012.

is like a natural, in-born, something that they were born with. And it's such a big part of their society, that it just envelops them—not the men, the women.”²²

One of the Irish nuns, Sr. Dymphna Doran, described this aspect of Mexican faith and how it parallels Irish spirituality.

It seems like a very simple faith, but a very strong faith. It's very similar to the Irish as far as their connection with the spiritual. They are almost like talking to the saints, you know. They are right beside them. It's very much akin to our own spirituality—the presence of the angels and saints and the spiritual life around us. In Ireland they talk about the “thin places,” you know, where heaven and earth are kind of meeting. And we would say: *Is giorra cabhair De na an doras*. It means: The help of God is nearer than the door. There's no such big divide between what is here on earth and what's in heaven, the spiritual heaven. And I think that's the same thing for the Mexican people.²³

A Mexican American, Eugene Benton, recalled growing up in Tucson, “There were a couple of men that were very much involved with the church and they were seen by the other men as good guys, but not really manly, because they went to church all the time.”²⁴ This differs from the Irish experience, where men as well as women were church going. Yet even in Ireland today, it is not uncommon to see a group of men gathered near the back door of small town churches, present at mass, but on the fringe, as it were. When asked, their penchant is for a “quick mass.” From my personal observation based on numerous trips to Ireland, I surmise that this is so they can be first out the door, many heading to the pub for a pint with their mates, as a weekly ritual.

Lupe Woodsen, whose mother came from Sonora, Mexico, relates, “The spiritual outlook in the Mexican is less of questioning. You know, you don't question everything. You just know. It's your belief and you know.”²⁵ Here too, a parallel exists with Catholic Ireland, which in modern times was not marked by a strong intellectual or theological tradition, as was the case in Germany and France, for example. One is hard pressed to find a notable Irish theologian in the modern era. The Irish priests who came to Arizona were pastors, not theologians. They rolled up their sleeves and did the work of the church, but, in the main, were not known for critical thinking or

²² Graciela Graf. Personal Interview by author. Sun Lakes, AZ. 25 May 2012.

²³ Sr. Dymphna Doran, I.B.V.M., Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ. 23 September 2012.

²⁴ Eugene Benton. Personal Interview by author. Tucson, AZ. 16 August 2012.

²⁵ Lupe Woodsen. Personal Interview by author. Tempe, AZ. 20 October 2012.

questioning. A former missionary and seminary professor, Fr. Vincent Twomey, explains it this way, "I think Irish Catholicism is very pragmatic. The Irish intelligence has become very pragmatic because of the poverty and the struggle to survive."²⁶

These various historical considerations with regard to Mexicans have peculiar parallels with the Irish, a point frequently noted by my informants. Mexican Catholics in Arizona are most distinguished by these same features, namely, their spirituality which arises from their worldview and attitudes toward life and faith, their religiosity or style of religious expression, and their ethnic makeup which historically, in large part, has been bound up with their social placement and economic status. There are marked resonances that occur in the Irish Catholic experience, from which hail the priests and nuns of my study.

The similarity of worldviews is telling, as Francisco Alarcon puts it, "You see, we're both connected to an earth-worshipping tradition. When you are a conquered people for many centuries, like Mexicans, you have a spiritual way of resisting. Mexicans really believe in miracles, daily miracles, just as the Irish still believe in faeries. For us and the Irish, the past is present, it's alive."²⁷

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's work on *habitus* provides a lens through which we can understand the "givenness" of norms and inclinations that unconsciously inform thinking and guide behavior. *Habitus* is his term for how this happens. His theory seeks to explain how enduring dispositions, trained capacities, and structured proclivities of feeling, thought, and action guide us. These are dispositions which are shaped by past events and structures and, in turn, shape current practices and structures. But most importantly they condition our very perceptions of these. In this sense habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously, as he says, "without any deliberate pursuit of coherence . . . without any conscious concentration."²⁸ Hence we can explore aspects common to the *habitus* of the Irish and the Mexicans which to them were second

²⁶ Rev. Vincent Twomey. Personal Interview by author. Maynooth, Ireland. 4 July 2012.

²⁷ Francisco X. Alarcon, cited in Reynolds, "Irish-Mexican Thing." <http://elandar.com/back/www-march96/andar/feature/feature.htm>.

²⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984) 170.

nature. It includes those repetitive, unconscious cultural practices which de Certeau's made clear in his *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

Arizona native, Frank Barrios, whose aunt from Mexico married a man from Ireland, elaborates on how a mutual compatibility between the Mexicans and the Irish played out in his family.

Wakes are another good example. A Mexican wake, they would pray all night, with the body inside the house, the same way the Irish did. The men would get drunk in the back room, the women would be praying the rosary all night. And the Irish and the Mexican cultures were unbelievably similar. The only thing they had in common was the Catholic faith, and yet the two cultures were an ocean apart. And what you will find is when many the Irish came here, they purposely chose Mexican women to marry. I can give you umpteen examples of that. My aunt married an Irishman. Even though the language was different, they found it was almost like being back in Ireland because of the cultural beliefs. And they found themselves very united.²⁹

Barrios went on to conjecture about this correspondence of temperament and culture, "And you might argue, was it Catholicism? But Catholicism doesn't tell you not to go to Mass." He pointed out that most Mexican men do not go to Mass, and continued, "It doesn't tell you that the wake should be a drunken brawl in one room and a prayer vigil all night in the other. But I can tell you their beliefs were so similar."³⁰ Many have noted how Irish traditions have direct parallels to the Mexican fiesta, with its music, dancing, eating and drinking and, not infrequently, brawling.

Fr. Hennessy cites what he calls the *manaña* spirit—a laid back, unhurried response to life—characteristic of both the Irish and Mexicans. He states,

I think they [Irish priests] have shown an empathy, compassion, a sense of humor. I think you can get some people and they're all pissed off about Hispanics and their *laisser-faire manaña* ways. One time in Ireland I was driving somewhere out in the country and all the cars became backed up and here there were two farmers in the middle of the road having a chat. And there were about fifty cars on either side of them. So there was *manaña*. You know, the man who made time, made plenty of it.³¹

* * *

²⁹ Frank Barrios, Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 4 February 2013.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Rev. Joseph Hennessy, Personal Interview by author. Sun Lakes, AZ, 1 November 2012.

In a paper entitled “Magical Realism in the 20th Century,” Alberto Rios calls attention to the valence of language which sets Spanish speakers apart from their Anglo neighbors. He calls language “a blueprint for culture,” which not only expresses needs and facts, but reveals the play of imagination. “In English,” he remarks, “if I drop a bottle, I would say [I], capitalized-I, me, I, [dropped] then move to whatever’s at the end-of-the-sentence [the bottle]. This is rugged individualism in its smallest incarnation: ‘I dropped the bottle.’” However, rendering the same moment in Spanish, the difference appears almost magical.

If I drop the bottle, I would say, “se me cayó la botella,” or (*wait, don’t look at me!*) “the bottle, it fell from me!” We were both there! I might have done it but the bottle might have done it, too! I didn’t do it—at least not by myself! . . . We did it together. We were partners to the moment. This suggests the possibility of an inherent life in things. It suggests that we are not in control of the universe. This is not rugged individualism. It’s what I would call *rugged pluralism*: we’re in it together.³²

He elaborates by noting that the latter shows an engagement with the world, as if it too were “alive and interacting with me.” He refers to “this idea of an inherent life in things,” which is amplified by the lively gendering of nouns. “[W]hen my *el ojo* [eye] sees her *la pierna* [leg], they go off together in spite of the two of us who remain sitting here. . . .The world is suddenly fertile in this imagination, and everything is going on all the time with or without us.” His observations of linguistic structures underscore the dynamism of the Latin mind and more specifically the spontaneity of Mexican culture and worldview—the magic of life as surprise. We see at work here the vital underpinnings of community, a lens on life, as it were, through which the Spanish speaker sees—as Rios puts it—not a rugged individualism but a rugged pluralism. He cites Spanish as illustrative of magical realism, which he maintains “shows us our shared world in a way different from what we’re used to.”³³

Most of the Irish priests who came to Arizona and ministered in Mexican communities did not speak Spanish, even after being here some years. But behind the English they spoke was a residue of old Gaelic culture and the Irish language. This ancient language harkens back to the

³² Dr. Alberto Rios, “Magical Realism in the 21st Century.” (Paper presented at the annual meeting of Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference. Ripton, VT. 20 August, 2010).

³³ *Ibid.*

Druids with their marks etched in trees and stones called Ogham. For the Irish, English was a later imposed language which neutered the earlier, vitalistic, magical (in the sense we have been discussing) mother tongue. As Professor Rios points out, “[A]nybody growing up in Ireland would have come into being—they would have been still affected by primal Irish ideas that the world was up to something. I think they would have had that wavelength even if they came in speaking English.”³⁴

Here we have another connection between the Irish clergy and their Spanish-speaking parishioners. Only a few of the Irish priests spoke Spanish. But neither did they exactly speak the King’s English. For their brogue betrayed a Celtic mind at work. Many of these priests were a mere half a century removed from the old Gaelic Ireland, which continued to imbue their thinking and attitudes toward life. Most of them grew up in English-speaking homes, but all of them were influenced by the Gaelic expressions of their parents and elders they would have known. Aphorisms and sayings, verses of poetry and songs in Irish were a staple of their upbringing. These expressions, memorized and recited over and over again formed a kind of second cultural tongue and a corresponding mentality behind it. Though much smaller than the English lexicon at their command, these Irish expressions coalesced around core concepts, called forth the ancient wisdom of their people, and gave voice to a fundamental outlook on life. Thus they were more were more powerful.

Hailed as the greatest English-speaking novelist of the twentieth century, Irish writer James Joyce, in his first heavily autobiographical novel commented on this felt alienation from a people’s mother tongue. His sentiments could readily apply to the Mexicans in the U.S. In the character of his alter ego, Stephen Dedalus, he shares an encounter with an Englishman, about which he writes, “The language we are speaking is his before it is mine. . . .His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language.”³⁵

³⁴ Rios Interview.

³⁵ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man* (New York: Time, Inc., 1964), 209.

The linguistic program of Anglicization imposed by English colonizers on the Irish people, has a direct parallel with the Mexicans in the United States, who likewise were persecuted and stigmatized for not speaking English and thus giving evidence of their Americanization.

* * *

On the similarities between Mexicans and Irish people, Fr. Joe Hennessy from County Cork and former pastor in Tolleson (a small Mexican parish west of Phoenix) told me how much he had benefited from his sabbatical at the Mexican American Cultural Center in San Antonio, Texas where he discussed with Virgil Elizondo, the director of MACC, the similarity between an Irish village and a Mexican parish. “The only thing that’s different is the language and the color [of skin],” he said. “Nothing else is different. Both the Irish and the Hispanic are matriarchal societies—tremendous love-hate relationship with their mothers, tremendous love-hate relationship with the church. At communion time in Tolleson you would see the *viajitas* bring the little children up to the church to catechize them—same thing in Ireland. Or there’d be a gathering of people, next thing a fiesta would break out—same thing in Ireland.”³⁶

Fr. Hennessy went on to cite further common ground. “The Irish priests,” he said were comfortable with their [Mexicans’] poverty because many of us Irish guys came not from rich, but from poor backgrounds. We were accepting and able to reach out in empathy to them. If we were not then we would be like so many of the Hispanic priests, who were so cruel and hard on their own people.”³⁷

In 1959, Fr. Tot O’Dea’s first assignment, was to the mission of Santa Margarita, a barrio between Tempe and Mesa, Arizona. “I took to it like a duck to water,” he recalls. He goes on to describe how Mexicans were like the Irish and cites the affinity he felt toward them.

We have both been colonized by abusive powers. They lived under Spain. We were severely victimized here [in Ireland]. And the culture is still shame-based, you know, through that experience. And that’s part of our inferiority, if you like, as a race. We have been shamed. . . . I think they [the Mexicans] loved us because we spoke their language and we connected, you know. It was of the heart. . . . I have an old girlfriend there in Santa Margarita. She is in her 80’s now, I would say. And she calls me at least once a month to find out what I am doing.³⁸

³⁶ Hennessy Interview.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ O’Dea Interview.

When Fr. O’Dea remarked that the Irish spoke the Mexicans’ language, he did not mean Spanish. Rather, he meant the language of the heart, of empathy, a kind of shared understanding.

The Mexican experience of oppression and discrimination, not unlike the centuries-long subjugation of Irish Catholics, made the priests from Ireland feel a connection to the Mexican people with whom they lived and worked. Former priest, Eamon Barden, observes, “We were used to hardship. And generally the Irish guys I think dug in and worked hard. Guys like McMahon would be up tarring roofs and all of that. But also on an emotional level, there was an ability to connect with the ordinary person, because most of us grew up in very poor circumstances.”³⁹

Pat Colleary is another former priest who worked many years in Arizona. Now retired in County Mayo, Ireland, he lives by the spirituality of the Twelve Steps, grows his own vegetables, and has become an avid cyclist. In our interview he underscored the Irish priests’ empathy for the downtrodden. “The Irish priests were willing to go into the Mexican parishes and were able to adapt to them. We come out of a poverty story ourselves as well as subjection to England, like the Mexican who is so often treated as a second class citizen. And the kind of servitude they experience, I saw first-hand in Buckeye.”⁴⁰

Msgr. Mike O’Grady, shares a humorous anecdote from his four years serving in the parish of Morenci. It took place in the town’s segregated cinema, as he explains,

The Mexicans sat in one part of the theater and the Anglos sat in another. The Mexicans couldn’t buy candy in the theater store. And that’s when I got to see their humor. There was one gal named Nora Gonzales, and Nora was very pale, not brown at all. So they’d send Nora in. She could pass. And then when they’d get the candy, they’d be waving it in the air saying, “We’ve got the candy!”⁴¹

This anecdote offers a small illustration of what Michel de Certeau calls “the trickery of the weak.” He observes, “Power is bound by its very visibility. In contrast, trickery is possible for the weak, and often it is his only possibility, as a ‘last resort.’”⁴² To trick the powerful is a learned

³⁹ Eamon Barden, Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 28 October 2012.

⁴⁰ Pat Colleary, Personal Interview by author. County Mayo, Ireland, 1 July 2012.

⁴¹ O’Grady Interview.

⁴² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 37.

survival tactic for the subjugated, something both the Irish and the Mexicans mastered to their advantage. As de Certeau and others have pointed out: where there is power, there is resistance. Fr. Hennessy illustrates how this worked for oppressed Irish Catholics during the era of the Penal Laws.

When the English came and tried to destroy our culture, that's where *aisling* poetry comes from—the dream poetry of Ireland. They could no longer describe Ireland in that poetry, so they made her into a woman. This poetry of love and yearning was not about a woman, but surreptitiously about Ireland. . . . This was the origin of Irish dancing, where they don't move from the waist up. Because at gatherings the English soldiers were passing by, and they would see the Irish moving—the window sills were so high—they would see them just moving around, but they wouldn't see them dancing. That's why it's from the hips down, it's all in the foot work, because the Irish dancing was forbidden.⁴³

The Irish priests readily found common ground, even shared customs, with the Mexican people in Arizona. Fr. John Cullinan was born in Co. Tyrone in 1922 and ordained in 1946. I interviewed him not long before he died. He told me about a wedding custom among the Mexicans that he first saw in Morenci and that brought back memories of home.

I remember they drove from the church up and down the town, honking their horns. And the pastor said something nasty about Mexicans making noise, and I said, "Gee, that's what they do at home in Tyrone." I thought it was wonderful, it sounded so much like home, because in Ireland, especially in Tyrone, after a wedding they drive through every little village on the way to the wedding reception and they honk the horns all the way. The pastor who was very Hungarian-Texan, and very anti, he didn't approve.⁴⁴

Similarly, Father O'Carroll cites a connection with the Mexican wedding custom of the *arras*. These are imitation gold coins in a miniature chest, which the groom places in the bride's hand as a pledge of his material support.

I thought the box of gold coins was so traditional because when my father and mother were getting married, my father gave my mother a silver crown with Queen Victoria on it and a half sovereign, a little tiny gold coin, a little bit bigger than a dime. My mother had it made into a signet ring. But it's part of the Irish tradition, especially in Donegal, that the husband at the wedding ceremony gives a gold and silver coin, where here the Mexican husband gave little gold coins to his wife.⁴⁵

⁴³ Hennessy Interview.

⁴⁴ Rev. John Cullinan, Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 14 April 2013.

⁴⁵ Rev. Eugene O'Carroll, Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 14 April 2013.

As for cultural differences, O'Carroll humorously told of a skill performed by men in Ireland, but which was seen strictly as women's work in Arizona.

I remember one lady in particular, Mrs. Todachini, and she was a great weaver and she had woven a blanket that won first prize at the Seattle World Fair. And I was sitting out in her backyard watching her weave. And I was telling her, the men in Donegal weave. And she thought, "Men weave?" To a Navaho woman the idea . . . But I said, "Donegal tweed"—which is the most expensive tweed in Europe basically other than the Harris Tweed from Scotland—I said, "It's woven by men." And I was describing to her, because it was exactly the same basic principles, except hers is more hand-done. The Donegal tweed is a little bit more mechanical because he has five pedals or six pedals, and he steps on the pedals and he works the warp and the woof and whatever forward. She was intrigued—"Men weave!"⁴⁶

Another experience both Irish Catholics and Mexican people historically have in common was in undergoing a process aimed at forcibly altering their identity to suit the agenda of a dominant power. In the case of the Irish the imposed program was *Anglicization*, that is, making the Irish English. "'Becoming English' was not based on an inevitable process of assimilation but on acquiring a perception of the inferiority of Irishness compared with Englishness."⁴⁷ This parallels the common Anglo American construction of Spanish-speaking Mexican Americans in the U.S. as alien, foreign, or un-American, in addition to their presumed inferiority. The decline of the native Irish language among the middle class in nineteenth-century Ireland was symptomatic of rejection of old ways and customs and the embrace of a new order—"Protestantism, progressiveness, Britishness, liberty of conscience and a superior outlook were its hallmarks."⁴⁸ This linguistic program has a direct parallel with the experience of Mexicans in the United States, who likewise were pressured, stigmatized, and persecuted for not speaking English and thereby giving evidence of their Americanization. Never mind that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildalgo ensured Mexicans in the United States the right to speak Spanish.

⁴⁶ O'Carroll interview.

⁴⁷ Mary J. Hickman, "Differences, Boundaries, Community: The Irish in Britain," in *Distant Relations: Irish, Mexican and Chicano Art and Critical Writing*, Trisha Ziff, ed. (Culver City, CA: Smart Art Press, 1995), 47.

⁴⁸ D. George Boyce, *Ireland: 1828-1923, From Ascendancy to Democracy* (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 3.

Ethnic Faith

Another clear example of shared common ground between the Irish and Mexicans had to do with the conflation of ethnicity and faith. Granting the fact that some Irish, a distinct minority, were Protestants, and that present-day Mexicans are not all Catholics, as they were overwhelmingly in previous decades—it can be said that in both cases in mid-twentieth century America: to be Irish or Mexican was to be Catholic.

“Take an average Irishman,” the celebrated Dominican preacher, Father Thomas Burke, said in 1872, “—I don’t care where you find him—and you will find him all over the earth, and any casual observer will at once come to the conclusion, ‘Oh, he is an Irishman, he is a Catholic!’ The two go together.”⁴⁹ This twinning of ethnicity and religion parallels the Mexican experience, as a Mexican American woman in New Mexico summed it up, “Catholicism defined us as much as our surname defined us.”⁵⁰ David Emmons writing about the Irish community in Butte, Montana writes, “Catholicism was a definitional part of Irish nationalism; the Irish wore their faith like a badge.”⁵¹ This fusion of nationality and religion parallels the melding of Catholicism with Mexican identity.

This calls to mind Benedict Anderson’s classic account of the history of nationalism, *Imagined Communities*, where he posits that nations are, in fact, “imagined communities.”⁵² Actual communities are constituted by people through their daily face-to-face interactions. But nation or nationality, according to Anderson, is an imagined construct which cuts across and transcends all other identities within a territory—such as religion, language, or ethnicity—in claiming people’s ultimate allegiance. Only here the identity component that is both shared and imagined is that of religious faith in tandem with national identity. The two are intertwined.

⁴⁹ Rev. Thomas Burke, cited in Emmet Larkin, *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 83.

⁵⁰ Garcia, “Chicano Southwest,” 13.

⁵¹ David M. Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 200.

⁵² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Press, Revised Edition, 2006), 6-7.

There are also similarities between rebel priest leaders who became folk heroes to their respective countries. Fr. Miguel Hidalgo, heralded as the Father of Mexico, initiated Mexico's War of Independence in 1810 with his speech, "The Cry of Delores," and its famous "El Grito." Similarly, in the fabled 1798 Uprising in Ireland, the rebel leader in the southeast was Fr. John Murphy, commemorated in songs like "Boolavogue" and—what was to become President Kennedy's favorite—"The Boys of Wexford." Both priests were executed and their heads held aloft as a warning to other traitors. But both men of the cloth set an example that inspired the dream of freedom in their countrymen and women.

A key feature of Mexican and Irish Catholic history has been the experience of systemic prejudice and discrimination both in their respective homelands and in America. This operated on a racial or ethnic level as well as on a religious one. In Chapter Three I cite the experience of Mexicans or *mestizos* in Spanish-dominated Mexico and especially in their encounter with the dominant culture—white and Protestant—in the United States. Similarly, Irish Catholics were the objects of centuries of colonization and marginalization with its prejudicial effects carrying over to meet them when they immigrated to the United States.

We see the same stock projection of undesirable traits applied to Irish Catholics in Ireland and confronting them upon their arrival in the United States—laziness, stupidity, animality—driving the same prejudice against Mexicans in the American Southwest. "We were Europe's Indians," notes one commentator. "The first people called savage were the Irish."⁵³ The adjectives frequently used to describe the two groups are identical. America was an English derivative society, where anti-Irish prejudice on the part of the English simply carried over to the new country. As Michael Hogan points out, "The Irishman like the Mexican was considered lazy, loud, undisciplined, ignorant, dangerous, unfit for self-government or for a leadership role in the army."⁵⁴ In short, both minorities were seen as uncivilized, perhaps even as subhuman. Some English elites referred to Irish peasants at the time of the great Famine as the "underclass." The

⁵³ Chris Matthews, cited in Reynolds, "Irish Mexican Thing." <http://elandar.com/back/www-march96/andar/feature/feature.htm>.

⁵⁴ Michael Hogan, *Irish Soldiers of Mexico*, 99.

term underclass perfectly describes what many considered the Mexicans in the United States prior to the Civil Rights Movement.

In our discussion about similarities between the Irish and the Mexicans, Fr. Tot O'Dea observed, "I think culturally there was a great affinity." He went on to cite a historical parallel.

I think we have both been colonized by abusive powers. They had Spain over them and later the Americans in the Southwest. We were victimized severely here. And our culture is still shame-based, you know, through that experience. And that's part of our inferiority, if you like as a race. We have been shamed. We still carry that damn burden, you know. It's a toxic thing. I think we are coming out of it, but slowly.⁵⁵

The searing experience of prejudice and discrimination is perhaps the most obvious link in the Irish-Mexican connection. I offer many examples in later chapters from both perspectives. But here I cite the experience of Frank Barrios, who as a child—before he knew anything about prevailing social attitudes concerned with race and religion—for the first time was made aware of the denigration which accompanied his being different. Frank identifies himself as a Phoenix native, three quarters Mexican and a quarter Austrian. "I did not look Hispanic," he said. "I was a curly haired, blond haired little kid, but my last name was Barrios. When my mother brought me to register at St. Mary's School, she was told, 'He can't come here because of his Hispanic last name. He has to go to Immaculate Heart [the Mexican parish].'"

He went on to share some of the discrimination he faced growing up in Phoenix in the 1940's.

There were groups beating up people. And I remember a bunch of kids came to me and said, "What is your name?" And of course if I had answered the right way, I would have got beat up. And so I said, "My name is Jones." And of course when I got home my father castigated me really strongly about never denying who you are. But I kept from getting beat up that particular time.⁵⁶

Barrios relates that he experienced prejudice not only in terms of race but religion as well.

I remember playing with a bunch of kids, mostly Anglo kids, Protestant kids, I assume. And the little girl said let's go to my house and play. So we all went to her house. She was from Texas. And we all walked into her house. She said, "Oh, you can't come into our house. My mother doesn't allow Mexicans in our house. So I turned around and came home. And I was maybe seven, eight years old."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ O'Dea Interview.

⁵⁶ Barrios Interview.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Shared Influences and Differences

The influences that shape both Mexican and Irish people are in the end almost identical, as seen when we compare the appraisals of two authors. In one case we learn that “[the] Mexican American family [is] deeply rooted in and draws on commitments to *familia* (family), *fe* (faith), and *comunidad* (community).”⁵⁸ As regards the other, we read, “The influences that play upon the life of a person of Irish descent who is a Catholic are three: the influence of the Church; the influence of his family; the influence of his own inherited temperament.”⁵⁹

For generations the Irish and Mexican people have often sought solace and refuge in their faith. The institutional Catholic Church has been both a source of inspiration—for those who have suffered under the yoke of oppression, discrimination, and violence—and at times an uncaring and neglectful mother. Along with their shared faith, these two cultures—separated by an ocean, half way around the world from each other, and with distinctly different histories—have nonetheless developed similar defense mechanisms.

The Irish and the Mexicans are sociable people who counter-posed the hardships of daily life with music, drink, and conversation. The Irish are well known for their readiness to celebrate, for their warmth of character, and passion. The same qualities apply equally to Mexicans. Arizona’s Irish priests and nuns in the main came from poor farms. Most Arizona Mexicans likewise hailed from poverty and came to America, like the Irish, in search of a better life.

There is indeed much in common between the Irish priests and their Mexican parishioners in Arizona. At the same time, there are striking differences between these groups. Educationally, the clergy were far ahead of most Mexican people they encountered. Economically, the priests were far better off, holding secure positions in their parishes. Though their salaries were not near equal to their counterparts in Protestant churches, nonetheless, their food, lodging, and transportation were provided along with a salary. Most Mexican people did not

⁵⁸ Nabhan-Warren, *Virgin of El Barrio*, 6.

⁵⁹ Margaret Culkin Banning, “There Is Still Hope,” *The Vanishing Irish: The Enigma of the Modern World*, John A. O’Brien, ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1953), 126.

have these benefits or enjoy this financial security. In the recollection of the Irish priests, the majority of the Mexicans were poor.

This dissertation fairly extensively explores the social marginalization and discrimination experienced by Mexican and Irish people historically. However, among the Irish clergy I interviewed, the experience of blatant prejudice and discrimination directed toward themselves was practically nonexistent. Consequently, in this regard, they were far removed from the typical Mexican's experience in the United States. As Irish-born Fr. Ledwith confirmed when asked whether he had experienced discrimination as an immigrant from Ireland, he said, "Are you kidding, if you're Irish in America, you're in."⁶⁰

On the other hand (and I might add, by way of exception), Fr. Hennessy spoke of feeling prejudice directed against him. "I have seen tremendous racism," he said. "And even up until very recently there was a meeting among the clergy and something came up and I said, 'Well, this is the way I was formed in Ireland.' And one guy said, 'Well, that's the Irish for you,'—a racist comment, and everybody laughed."⁶¹ Sr. Raphael answered that she did not feel she had experienced any prejudice, however, she did share, "I think probably the hardest thing for me is when people would make fun of my accent. . . . You know, when people try to take off the Irish accent, I didn't like that. I considered that a kind of a put down."⁶²

Another difference in terms of social context was that Mexicans pride themselves on family relationships. Alongside their faith, my Mexican informants shared how important their families were and how they cherished having them near. The Irish priests (and sisters for that matter) were geographically far removed from their families and loved ones back home. They were "alone" in Arizona in a way the Mexicans I spoke with never felt they were. According to Fr. Tom Hever this factor motivated Irish priests to reach out to their parishioners to fill this void: "We didn't have family, so they were our family. We went around more visiting families and visiting people more, connecting with them. So that was a big, big thing for the Irish priests."⁶³

⁶⁰ Rev. Harry Ledwith, Personal Interview by author. Tucson, AZ. 19 September 2014.

⁶¹ Hennessy Interview.

⁶² Sr. Raphael Quinn, I.B.V.M., Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 23 September 2012.

⁶³ Hever Interview.

A fact of great significance to this project is that all the Irish priests upon coming to the Diocese of Tucson were first assigned to Mexican parishes or to churches with a high percentage of Mexican people, usually in small towns in outlying areas. I argue that these initial assignments were crucial to the ministerial development and character formation of these young Irishmen—new in the United States and just beginning their ministry. Many of them made note of this fact, confirming Msgr. O’Grady’s estimation: “I learned far more from the Mexican people that I ever taught them.”⁶⁴

In the desert and mountains of Arizona, priests from Ireland received their on-the-job training, as it were. Here they were broken in as priests in the novel, rich milieu of the Mexican culture. This encounter was their bridge from seminary theory to priestly practice, their path from farm and village to the cultural pluralism of America. Their pivotal partnership with the Mexican people orientated them and set them on their future course. In this unlikely context, in a new land far from home, strangeness gave way to welcome as *Mexicanos* embraced Paddy as *Padre*. As the Irish priests who are still living unanimously agree: it was a gift.

But the question remains as to why the priests from Ireland did not expend their energy to eradicate Mexican social and economic marginalization. When asked about this, Fr. Ledwith replied, “They were raised and trained along the lines of: Don’t cause waves. Their idea was being kind to people one to one, not speaking out against an unjust system. They would want to keep the bishop far away and not come across his radar screen.”⁶⁵

In summary, what emerges from my research is the fact that the priests from Ireland were accepting of the Mexican people, their attitudes, and customs—indeed, even more than other priests were. But this acceptance worked two ways. By all accounts they seemed to be accepting of the Mexicans they worked with in Arizona. But it is also clear that by and large they accepted the social system which kept them subservient as second-class citizens.

⁶⁴ O’Grady Interview.

⁶⁵ Ledwith Interview.

***If the Irish had to sit in the back of the bus sometime in the past,
and now being Irish means just having fun at funerals,
then there is hope for all groups facing discrimination now.***⁶⁶

Chapter Two

IRISH BACKGROUND

In the Ireland of the mid-twentieth century the tenor of people's religious attitudes was marked by a certain harshness, especially when it came to illicit sex. Girls who got pregnant were seen as a disgrace to their family and a shame on their village. Many were sent away to England to have their babies in secrecy. And some landed in the Magdalene laundries. Recently a film entitled *The Magdalene Laundries* was produced which documents the abuse which took place in these institutions. Magdalene, after Mary Magdalene (widely believed to have been a reformed prostitute) indicated "young fallen women." And laundries, since they were run by the nuns as a business in which thousands of unfortunate young women were forced to work in the name of rehabilitation.

Usually, these unfortunate girls had gotten pregnant outside of marriage. Sometimes, though, a girl was handed over simply from being considered too flirtatious or high spirited. But the cruelest aspect of this dark chapter was that it was the girls' own parents in most cases who handed their daughters over into this hellish life. Here their babies were farmed out for a good price to adoptive couples and the young mothers sometimes spent years doing "penance" for their sin, and in some cases their whole lives. Today, in the wake of these scandals Irish people have recoiled and struggle to take stock of how this could happen in a Christian country and in church run agencies.

Paradoxically, alongside this hard edged Irish mentality and accepted rigid morality, there was also kinder, more understanding view of human behavior. Suicide has long been presented

⁶⁶ Mary Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Ethnic Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 162.

as the ultimate sin, in that it appears to signal one's ultimate denial of faith and despair of God's grace. But in this area most Irish rendered a more compassionate judgment. Msgr. Mike O'Grady illustrates.

In my time growing up in County Clare it happened—not too frequently, but it happened—than some poor person would take his own life. Now this was condemned by the church and one who committed suicide was not given a Christian funeral and they couldn't be buried in consecrated ground. So you can imagine what this would mean to a parent who lost a child this way. The death was tragic enough, but to have the church refuse to bless the body compounded their grief. So doctors would put down, the cause was death by misadventure. Everyone knew what this meant, but it softened the blow of suicide and got around the church's strictures. That's what they put down: death by misadventure.⁶⁷

Fr. Vincent Twomey is a Divine Word missionary who spent several years in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands teaching in mission schools. He then returned to Germany for advanced theological studies under illustrious professors, like Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, culminating in his doctorate. For decades he taught moral theology at St. Patrick's in Maynooth, the national seminary of Ireland. He is presently retired and devotes himself to writing. Walking into his office I met an affable senior gentleman who wore a crown of white hair and a warm smile. He offered me tea and biscuits. He answered my questions and then he shared a revealing anecdote.

There is a wonderful story told to me by an English deacon who was a convert [to Catholicism]. And he asked some of the former Anglican ministers who had converted what was it that started them on their road to Rome. And one told him this story, which I think would have suited the Irish Catholic mentality. In England, most Catholics would have been Irish or of Irish extraction, you know. And he said, "When I was living in this magnificent mansion and I looked out the door, I used to notice him leaving on a Saturday and Sunday evening, that obviously he lived as a parish priest, an Irish Catholic priest." It didn't have much to do with him, but he noticed that people used to come and do a vigil around the house, you know. So he said to Dick Devlin who was Catholic and who knew him, "What do you do on a Saturday evening or a Sunday morning around the parish priest's house?" He said, "Reverend, all Irish priests have a bit of a problem, you know. And on Saturdays he has to hear confessions. And on Sundays he has to say mass for us, you know. So we have to keep him off the drink for those two days."⁶⁸

⁶⁷ O'Grady Interview.

⁶⁸ Twomey Interview.

Thus, illicit sex brought condemnation and shame, but when it came to suicide and what the Irish call “the curse of the drink,” there was accommodation of human frailty. But this story also illustrates the affection and regard Irish Catholics had for the sacred nature of the priesthood. The point being: human weakness does not invalidate sacral office, even a broken priest is still a priest. This is profoundly Catholic understanding and peculiarly Irish.

From reports on the behavior of priests in Ireland covering the first half of the nineteenth century, historian Emmet Larkin claims, “The principal vices among the clergy were drunkenness, women, and avarice.” He points out that this was the order of importance for bishops seeking to impose order on their priests. However, as far as the laity were concerned, “Among a land-hungry and poverty-stricken peasantry avarice was the deadliest of sins, while lust and drunkenness were viewed with a more understanding, even if disapproving, eye.”⁶⁹

Gaelic Ireland

Not unlike the Mexican experience, pre-Christian influences were strong and persistent among the Irish particularly before the Famine (1845-1849). As the Aztec goddess *Tonantzin* became La Virgen de Guadalupe, similarly the Celtic goddess Brigid became St. Brigid, second only to Mary and Patrick in Ireland’s pantheon of saints. In both cases a primordial goddess was co-opted and became her country’s foremost female saint. In Ireland the earlier pagan celebration of the summer solstice was translated into the eve of St. John’s Day, the 23rd June. Its ancient element of fire was retained, so that to this day all over Ireland on that night bonfires blaze, marking the solstice and the birth of John the Baptist. Even E.U. regulations have not put a stop to it. Today’s Halloween has roots in the Druid New Year, the festival of spirits called Samhain, November 1, as does the May pole and festivities surrounding May Day, harkening back to the Druidic spring rites of Bealtaine.

Ireland’s ancient Druidic religion honored the earth and nature in all its manifestations, prompting Carl Jung to call the ancient Celts, “the Native Americans of Europe.” Belief in the

⁶⁹ Larkin, *Historical Dimensions*, 64.

spirits was strong among teens and common people. The old Irish spoke of magical “thin places.” These were charmed locations such as fairy trees, holy wells, standing stones, and special times such as the midpoints between the annual solstices and equinoxes: Samhain (Nov 1), Imbolc (Feb 1), Bealtaine (May 1), Lughnasa (Aug 1). At “thin places” the membrane separating the living from the spirits of the dead was at its most permeable. And the spirits could as readily cross over into the human world as humans might fall into the spirit realm. At these places and times there was little or no separation between worlds. Commenting on Ireland’s strong links to its Druid past, Fr. Hennessy observes,

There’s still the Druid in each of us—the wonderful connection between what you encounter in nature and what goes on inside. . . . That’s why when Ireland was converted, there were no martyrs. Because they were able to take the culture and the religious practice of the Druids—they could see the similarity—and all they did was throw holy water on it. That’s why there’s an emphasis now on the old Celtic ways within Christian spirituality and their connection with Native American spirituality.”⁷⁰

Another carryover from pagan times into pre-Famine Ireland was the wild abandon of “pattern days” (popular, local agricultural festivals or the merriment associated with pilgrimages), with their dancing, music, frolic, and games—and which an increasingly critical clergy maintained had come to epitomize superstition and excess. As Patrick Corish reports, “One pilgrim said he came ‘to do what the others do and to see the women,’ and indeed the pattern seems to have been one of the principal local occasions for matchmaking.”⁷¹ These occasions of revelry must be understood as an outlet for the mass of people steeped in poverty, deprived, lacking education and opportunities to socialize together. However, they proved most intractable to the clergy’s attempts to prohibit them and priests stopped attending after the 1780’s. “Something older than Trent, even older than Christianity, was still rooted in the Irish countryside.”⁷²

Another social/religious high point were wakes, which celebrated life in the face of death and, in many cases, represented a merciful release from a harsh existence. A generation after the Famine the bishops imposed Tridentine reforms, which required the sacraments of baptism

⁷⁰ Hennessy Interview.

⁷¹ Patrick Corish, *The Irish Catholic Experience: A Historical Survey* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985), 136.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 117.

and marriage to be performed in the parish church or at least in a chapel. However, the third great rite of passage remained largely in the home: the waking of the dead. Wakes featured “fronsy-fronsy” or brutal tricks and sexual wake games. Historian Patrick Corish describes “the lewd obscene dancing, excessive drinking, broken heads and drunken quarrels, the keening or howling of mourners accompanying the funeral, pausing regularly at ritual heaps of stones to say a prayer and raise the ‘howl’ again.”⁷³ At the heart of these bawdy brawls, of course, lies an affirmation of life in the face of death.

Some of these funeral customs continue almost up to the present day, according to Nora Rooney, my mother’s youngest sister. She shared with me some of what the Irish call *pisreogs* or superstitious sayings or practices. For instance, she remembers as a girl, “When someone would die in the house, they’d rest the coffin on two chairs for the wake. Then when it was time to carry the coffin to church, they’d put the two chairs outside the door and turn them upside down. When the family came back home they’d take the chairs back into the house.” As the procession would make its way through the town, Nora said, “Window shades would be pulled and doors shut out of respect for the dead and also because they didn’t want the spirit to get in.” She went on to say that “if you were on a bicycle or in a car and a funeral procession was passing, you’d stop and take three steps following the corpse and then go on about your business.”⁷⁴

Church leaders, however, felt roused to respond to the superstitions and excesses of these practices. Just prior to the Famine, the Capuchin Father Mathew enrolled some three million people, half the adult population of Ireland, in his crusade eliciting pledges from people not to drink. Even today in Ireland, it is not uncommon to see some individuals wear a Sacred Heart pin on the lapel of their jackets identifying them as pioneers, that is, persons who have taken the pledge never to drink alcohol. The Second Synod of Maynooth in 1875, called for an end to the excesses of wakes and for the funeral mass to be transferred to a church. But there was little success in altering the former custom in a land where “the practice of having sacraments in the

⁷³ Ibid., 121.

⁷⁴ Nora Rooney, Personal Interview by author. County Mayo, Ireland, 1 August 2014.

home . . . had been the Celtic norm.⁷⁵ Lawrence Taylor references the perspective of Norbert Elias to argue that these transformations pressed by the clergy could be considered an aspect of the “civilizing process,” with the Church acting in this instance as a regime. He writes, “Following Elias’ model we would expect the changing settings and comportment of death rituals to contribute to the psychological construction of a new ‘civilized’ self.”⁷⁶

Many have noted that these Irish traditions have direct parallels to the irrepressible exuberance of the Mexican fiesta, with its music, dancing, eating, and drinking and, not infrequently, brawling. But as Fr. Vincent Twomey remarks, “And yet it seems undeniable that there was a marked change of atmosphere between the beginning and the end of the nineteenth century, in particular in urban areas.”⁷⁷

The Gaelic Church has always been somewhat different from the Roman Church. For one thing it was much more egalitarian. Irish clergy tended to view themselves as part of the community, rather than representatives of the aristocracy. Besides this trait there was also Ireland’s history of a long subjugation by the English. Irish priests and bishops in general were closer to the poor because they had suffered along with them. Priests also served as trusted advocates of the poor.

As Fr. Brendan Hoban explains,

With Catholic Emancipation in 1829, Catholics could vote. When they had problems with the landlords, the priest would go with them to the polling station and stand beside them while they cast their vote, sometimes all day long, to ensure that the landlord wasn’t exerting pressure on them to vote in a particular way. The priest was their protector. He was kind of an advisor, a spiritual director, a political supporter. And they depended on the priest as the only one with the status that could stand up to the landlord. But the priest was oppressive as well. He told you what to do. His word was law. The whole sexual thing was so strict.⁷⁸

Harold Abramson maintains that Irish Catholicism was different from that of France, Spain, or Italy, where there was no foreign power imposing its religion and the church hierarchy

⁷⁵ Timothy Joyce, *Celtic Christianity: A Sacred Tradition, a Vision of Hope* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 115.

⁷⁶ Lawrence Taylor, “The Uses of Death in Europe,” *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 62, no. 4, (October 1989), 180.

⁷⁷ Twomey, *End of Irish Catholicism*, 75-76.

⁷⁸ Rev. Brendan Hoban, Personal Interview by author. County Mayo, Ireland, 15 June 2012.

was part of the aristocracy. In the case of Ireland he suggests, Irish religious and national identity intertwined. More to the topic at hand, he cites a parallel between Ireland and Mexico:

In Mexico, the leadership in the political struggle for independence came at first from local village priests, close to the pressing social problems of the population. In this, as far as the role of the local village priest was concerned, the Mexican struggle was similar to the Irish. . . . In Spanish America, it was the religiously homogeneous society which was in competition with itself; there was no alien religio-cultural scapegoat, real or imagined.”⁷⁹

Brian Fallon notes that “the Catholic Church in Ireland was essentially a people’s church.”⁸⁰ He explains that its clergy was drawn from families of small farmers and small-town shopkeepers. Priests were representative of the people and experienced a sense of closeness to them, for the most part, sharing as they did, the same outlook and values.

In the main, priests from Ireland who came to Arizona strongly identified with the desires of their parishioners toward personal liberty and economic opportunities. They bonded with the people. Fr. Twomey notes, “[T]here was and still is a genuine pastoral sense among the Irish priests. Who does a funeral better than an Irish priest, especially an Irish secular priest? Care for the sick takes up a lot of their time. Visiting the sick at home, in hospital, they are very faithful to that. Going to the wake and being there with the family—that’s a very old kind of tradition. That model of priest would be very attractive.”⁸¹ To understand why this was so, we need to explore the background of Irish Catholicism that shaped these men.

Oppression

Ireland’s involvement with England began when Adrian IV (the only English pope) gave the country as a fief in 1155 to the English monarch Henry II. But the real oppression began following Henry VIII’s break from the Church of Rome in the sixteenth century. The Cromwellian Settlement beginning in 1654, saw the severest, most barbaric savaging of the Irish. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Irish prisoners were frequently sold as slaves by their

⁷⁹ Harold J. Abramson, “Ethnic Diversity within Catholicism: A Comparative Analysis of Contemporary and Historical Religion,” *Journal of Social History*, vol. 4, no. 4 (Summer 1971), 377.

⁸⁰ Brian Fallon, *An Age of Innocence: Irish Culture, 1930-1960* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, Ltd., 1998), 189.

⁸¹ Twomey Interview.

English masters. Many have heard the story of how Ireland suffered under English oppression. What is not so well known is that what took place in Ireland appears to have been something of a charter experiment that gained traction in the New World. For what was done to Catholics in Ireland provided something of a template for future models of colonialization. Kathleen Brown argues that there are parallels between the justification the English used to subjugate the Gaelic-Irish and the Native American Indians. First she cites how the precedent was set in Ireland.

Sir Humphrey Gilbert and the earl of Essex used reports of Irish barbarism to rationalize the extreme measures taken by the English to secure their compounds and settlements. Along with advocates of new English political dominance—William Herbert and Edmund Spencer among them—Gilbert and Essex constructed a category of savage who lacked the essentials of human civility and could thus be conquered without restraint. Gaelic savagery thus justified the belief that Gaelic people could be subdued only by force, a policy to which England turned with increasing frequency as aristocratic desires for military glory discouraged more peaceful methods.⁸²

Then she notes how it was carried over and applied in British America.

During the early years of the seventeenth century, English adventurers took from their Irish encounter a moral pairing—uncontrollable savage and submissive laborer—that shaped future colonization efforts among “barbaric” peoples. . . . Nor surprisingly, the concept of barbarism provided a justification for subjugating Indians similar to that used by Gilbert and Essex in Ireland. . . . Descriptions of native submission, moreover, communicated English progress in “civilizing” savage others.⁸³

England’s chief aim behind what has been called the Penal Laws (in effect from the late sixteenth century until the removal of the last vestige in the early twentieth century), were enacted to preserve power and property in Protestant hands. But they also enforced severe religious curtailments. According to statesman Edmund Burke, they were “a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man.”⁸⁴

⁸² Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches & Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 36.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸⁴ “The Penal Laws,” http://www.praoh.org/history/Articles/PenalLaws5_08.pdf, accessed, 6 May 2014.

During the early years when these laws were most fiercely applied, the practice of Catholicism was made illegal in Ireland. A sizeable bounty was riding on the heads of Catholic clergy—ten pounds for a bishop and five for a priest. Priests were executed and hunted relentlessly. An English statute extended to Ireland in 1585, declared a priest guilty of treason simply by being in the country. Most clergy left for continental Europe, but some went underground, “hiding in bogs, forests and mountains.”⁸⁵ Young men who aspired to the priesthood had to make their way to France, Belgium, or Spain in order to undertake their theological studies. There they would remain for the duration until as newly ordained priests some chose to return, smuggled back into Ireland for a harrowing ministry.

[A]t the very worst period of the penal code, there is the testimony of Bishop MacMahon of Clogher in 1714 which indicates a great devotion to the Mass. He gives graphic accounts of Mass at night, Mass with the priest’s face veiled, or Mass said by the priest alone in a room with the congregation outside, so that if interrogated they could truthfully say they did not know who the priest was. He speaks too of people kneeling to pray at a time when they knew Mass was beginning somewhere else.⁸⁶

The influence of French seminary instructors, mainly Sulpicians (from the Order of St. Sulpice), on generations of Irish priests is the subject of much commentary with regard to the prevalence of Jansenism. This was a strain of fervent theological thought and rigorous religious practice particularly rife in the Catholic Church in France. It derives its name and came into vogue after the death of the Dutch theologian, Cornelius Jansen in 1638.

Jansenism represents an expression of an age-old contest between piety and the pursuit of a rational, philosophical theology. Within European Catholicism it is a continuation of the intense contention between Augustinianism and Thomism, as regards consequences of the Fall upon the human will, human reason, and upon issues of salvation. According to Jansenism, the Fall resulted in a catastrophe for human beings, rendering them incapable of choosing the good without election by God and his unmerited grace. Jansenists agreed that we were corrupted in the Fall by our reliance on the flesh and enslavement to the senses and that this was a chief locus of sin. This rigorist doctrine was eventually condemned by the Catholic Church for its

⁸⁵ Corish, *Irish Catholic Experience*, 112.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 132.

Calvinist-like extremism. Nonetheless, the shadow of Jansenism, or something akin to it, lurked in the church and in the corners of many a Catholic's mind.

Patrick Corish points out that Jansenism, though it may have played a part in the theological formation and mentality of Irish priests, was not a primary factor. Rather, he argues that the English speaking spirituality which would leave its mark on Irish Catholicism—what he calls an “anxious severity”—was not strictly speaking Jansenistic but “must rather be traced to the devotional reading available in English.”⁸⁷ The source of this, he claims was Richard Challoner (1691-1781), Vicar Apostolic of the London district and the most popular Catholic spiritual writer read by the Irish at this time. Challoner and other popular authors were of the Jesuit and Salesian schools of spirituality. (Jesuits were the main opponents of Jansenism). Nonetheless, Bishop Challoner lived and worked in the grim era of the Penal Laws in London, which itself was enough to squeeze the optimism out of a Catholic's outlook. Corish concludes, “One must be very cautious in applying the term ‘Jansenistic’ to the severe and anxious strain which undoubtedly developed in middle-class Catholic spirituality in the eighteenth century.”⁸⁸

With the church banned from the public square during the Penal times, religious practice was maintained in the home. And as Mary Kenny points out, “Whatever becomes practiced in the home becomes feminized.”⁸⁹ Excluding the gory depictions of the Crucified seen everywhere in Mexico, there is a parallel between the sensuousness of Irish and Mexican devotional iconography and mood.

While Catholicism insisted on the ascetic, it nevertheless underlined the flesh . . . in its images of suckling Madonnas, the afflicted naked Jesus Christ, or the masculine beauty of a Michelangelo sculpture. And then there were the exclamatory prayers, perfumed as incense, sharp as the red hot charcoals. . . . “O most adorable, precious and infinitely tender Heart pierced for the love of me, pierce my heart with the love of thee. . . . Sacred Heart, I put my trust in Thee, In flame my heart with Thy love, O Wisdom of the Sacred Heart consume me in Thy fire.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Ibid., 131.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 131.

⁸⁹ Kenny, *Goodbye*, 53

⁹⁰ Ibid, 46.

The Devotional Revolution

What many today commonly associate as Irish Catholicism does not go back to St. Patrick. Rather, it originates in Ireland's version of the Counter-Reformation, that is, a religious regime implemented in the post-famine era, roughly since 1850, which historian Emmet Larkin calls it the Devotional Revolution. By way of comparison it is worth noting that both Mexico and Ireland were late in the church's Tridentine reform. Following in the wake of what some refer to as "Ireland's Holocaust," *an gorta mór*, or the Great Famine of 1845-1849, this project represented a reinvention of the institutional church in Ireland. Larkin marks this period as beginning with the First Synod of Thurles (1850) and ending with the Second Synod of Maynooth (1875). He makes the claim, "No factor, then, was more important in the moral and social improvement of the Irish people either at home or abroad in the nineteenth century than the devotional revolution between 1850 and 1875; yet no aspect of recent Irish history has received less attention."⁹¹

Previously subject to oppression, the church emerged in the later 19th century as the most powerful institution in the country, with the bishops playing a key role. Through the Devotional Revolution they "extended its hegemony through a concerted attack on the local communal aspects of religion in favor of those which stress individual salvation."⁹²

Larkin argues that the Devotional Revolution led a much higher percentage of the Catholic population in Ireland to comply with the canonical requirements for religious practice than any other part of Europe (with the possible exception of Poland) until the late-20th century. For all its faults, Larkin suggests that the church provided an impoverished and oppressed people with consolation, hope, discipline, and cultural and national identity. It also offered them social, medical and educational services when the state was indifferent to their poverty and ignorance.

Indeed, this was a revolution spearheaded by one of Ireland's most significant churchmen, Paul Cullen. He has been described as "[t]he passionate Ultramontanist who came

⁹¹ Larkin, *Historical Dimensions*, 85.

⁹² Lawrence J. Taylor, "The Healing Mass: Fields and Regimes of Irish Catholicism," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* (No. 71, 1990), 96.

to Ireland as papal delegate at mid-century and became the first Irish cardinal in 1866, [who] has been viewed chiefly as the prelate who enabled the emergent modern Irish Church to be consolidated by his encouraging the priests to establish order among themselves and thus to increase their own political power and influence.”⁹³ J.J. Lee, Professor of Irish Studies and History at New York University, cites Cullen’s “close personal friendship” with Pope Pius IX and goes so far as to name him “the dominant figure in Irish Catholicism in the generation after the famine who became in some respects virtually a parallel pope for the English speaking world in the appointment of bishops.”⁹⁴ Due to Archbishop Cullen, after 1860, people ceased calling priests Mister and instead began addressing them as Father. As Larkin puts it, “While the bishops were being corporatized, the clergy were being professionalized and the laity devotionalized.”⁹⁵

Cullen took his theological studies in Rome and, while still in minor orders, caught the eye of Pope Pius IX, who spoke to him about affairs in Ireland. In 1850, he returned to Ireland as Archbishop of Armagh and Papal Delegate, and in 1852 he became Archbishop of Dublin. As part of his aim to reinvigorate the Irish church, Cullen imported an Italian style religiosity, of which Larkin provides a detailed picture.

The new devotions were mainly of Roman origin and included the rosary, forty hours, perpetual adoration, novenas, blessed altars, *Via Crucis*, benediction, vespers, devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the Immaculate Conception, jubilees, triduums, pilgrimages, shrines, processions and retreats . . . and included sodalities, confraternities, such as the various purgatorian societies, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and Peter’s Pence, as well as temperance and altar societies. . . . These were reinforced by the use of devotional tools and aids: beads, scapulars, medals, missals, prayer books, catechisms, holy pictures, and *Angus Dei*.⁹⁶

Cullen belatedly brought the sixteenth century reforms of the Council of Trent to a church cut off by persecution from the main currents of Catholicism. In tandem with these innovations,

⁹³ Desmond Bowen, *Paul Cardinal Cullen and the Shaping of Modern Irish Catholicism* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1983), viii.

⁹⁴ J. J. Lee, “Ireland’s Catholic Future,” *America The National Catholic Review*. Published 10 May 2013. Accessed 22 March 2015. <http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/irelands-catholic-future>.

⁹⁵ Emmet Larkin, *The Making of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1850-1860* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980), 488.

⁹⁶ Larkin, *Historical Dimensions*, 77-78.

from Cullen's time to the end of the century, a massive architectural project was underway throughout Ireland. Over two thousand new churches and exquisite cathedrals were erected throughout the land. With the horrors of the Famine behind them, Cardinal Cullen sought to engender a new-found pride in Irish Catholicism.

One of the aims of the Devotional Revolution was to set Irish Catholics further apart from the Protestant English. Ireland came to be referred to as "holy Ireland" opposed (in the twentieth century) to "pagan England." Before the Famine, scholars speak of Gaelic Ireland. Irish was the language of the vast majority of the people, especially throughout the countryside. The English government made a concerted effort to eradicate the people's native tongue, but with little success beyond the Pale. After the catastrophe of the Famine, however, old Gaelic Ireland was in its death throes as a fading oral culture.

Heidigger said, "Language is the house of being. In this house man [sic] dwells." Twomey, in citing this dictum goes on to explain, "The result of the adoption of the English language (and the decline of Irish) by a largely impoverished nation was to make Irishmen and women in effect culturally rootless, exiles in their own country."⁹⁷ Irish was the language primarily of the poor, while English was the tongue of the future, a harbinger of an economically better life. One spoke English to succeed, to speak Irish was indicative of ignorance. Brian Fallon, one of Ireland's foremost journalists, writes, "Gaelic literature and culture, among the oldest in Europe, dwindled into little more than a folk tradition, just as Irish Catholicism had been largely dispossessed and became more and more the creed of the uneducated and the semi-ignorant."⁹⁸

The Easter Rising of 1916, marked the symbolic denouement of England's domination of Ireland. Behind the revolution and the resistance associated with it burned the ardent dream of liberty. But also driving it was the demand for equitable land redistribution. What emerged in Ireland was not a theocracy or a Roman Catholic democracy, but in Fallon's words, "a Western

⁹⁷ Twomey, *End of Irish Catholicism*, 52.

⁹⁸ Fallon, *Age of Innocence*, 27.

European democracy with a Catholic outlook.”⁹⁹ An overwhelming majority of 70%, voted for independence from England in the all-Ireland plebiscite of 1919. This in turn confounded the worst fears of many of the Protestant minority concentrated in six northeastern counties. Feeling their “way of life” threatened, they demanded the partition of the country into the two Irelands we have today. The historical irony is that a disproportionate number of Protestant Anglo-Irish spearheaded the drive for independence in the first place. We might take note here of playwright Brendan Behan’s definition of an Anglo-Irishman as “a Protestant with a horse.”¹⁰⁰

Whether it be language, religion, political independence, or some other factor, Sean de Freine insists that there was something distinctive that constituted Irishness all along. He notes,

Although lacking a single political rallying point for centuries, the sense of national solidarity was so strong that Irish nationality survived despite disruption and oppression. Had some such national essence not already existed, it is unlikely that political nationalism could have created a sense of nationality in nineteenth-century Ireland, having regard to the inertia then so evident in Irish life, and to the weakening effects of emigration.¹⁰¹

Brian Fallon writing about this cultural loss claims that “the Irish were virtually disinherited from their ancient culture or ‘dispossessed’ as Thomas Kinsella chooses to put it.”¹⁰² He translates an old verse from Gaelic which captures the pathos of this forfeiture.

*My people’s way is failing fast
The sea no longer a guarding wall.*

JanMohamed and Lloyd observe, “In minority discourse, the abstract philosophical questions of essence and ethics are transformed into questions of practice; the only meaningful response to the question of ‘What is or ought to be?’ has to be the question, ‘What is to be done?’”¹⁰³ But as the old language was receding the faith was advancing. Larkin maintains that for those Irish who knew they were Irish the realization dawned that they were losing their identity, and he argues that this was a major reason for their becoming practicing Catholics.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 190.

¹⁰⁰ Brendan Behan, cited in Fallon, *Age of Innocence*, 33.

¹⁰¹ Sean de Freine, *The Great Silence: A Study of the Relationship between Language and Nationality* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1978), 51.

¹⁰² Fallon, 27.

¹⁰³ Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd, *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 16.

Corish concurs by noting, “The fact was that as the Irish lost one identity they found another, and the new identity was Catholicism.”¹⁰⁴

As Benedict Anderson claims, nations are communities that have imagined themselves into existence. At the dawn of the twentieth century, Ireland was a case in point as it experienced the promising Gaelic Revival. Behind it lay idealized versions of a pure and distant past pressed into the service of modern political aims. The compelling story at the heart of the movement was of reawakening: an ancient people was rising from centuries-long slumber to reclaim self-government, language, culture, sport (the Gaelic Athletic Association).

But as Anderson notes, restoring vernacular languages was a key aim of this nationalism-as-reawakening. The most vital factor in securing its success in Europe, he argues, was the pre-existence of vernacular newspapers, pamphlets, advertisements, all the paraphernalia of what he calls “print-capitalism”. But here the Irish language revival foundered, principally because printed Irish never had the chance to become a medium of commercial culture in the eighteenth century.

The Easter Rising of 1916 was the most successful act of national re-imagining possible, for it was the catalyst behind the invention of the modern nation of Ireland. It embodied the dream which captured the imagination. But it was Catholicism that was to be the glue holding the new nation together.

Following the civil war in 1922, with the establishment of the Irish Free State, much thought was given to the question of what constitutes Irish identity. Among some, including many of Ireland’s literati and members of the Gaelic League, the push was to promote the Irish language as central to Irish identity. For most, however, it was Catholicism that carried the soul of the nation. Brian Fallon remarks, “In spite of all its crudities, ugliness and blind spots, Irish Catholicism enshrined something which went back in time and penetrated deep into the national and racial psyche, linking men and

¹⁰⁴ Corish, 214.

women to previous centuries and reconciling them to the trials and threats of the present.”¹⁰⁵

Kevin Williams highlights the pervasive religious climate in Ireland, writing, “The embeddedness of religion in Irish culture means that an encounter with religion is not something that can normally be avoided.”¹⁰⁶ This was certainly true for James Joyce and many other Irish writers of renown. Though they may have rejected Catholicism and even left Catholic Ireland to embrace an artistic exile, they, nonetheless, grappled with the religious influences and questions, spending no small amounts of energy and ink trying to resolve their relationship to religion.

Hence, the faith was recognized in the earlier Irish Constitution (pre-1937 version, not the current one) as holding a “special position” in Irish society. Fr. Tom Cahalane, who I interviewed in Tucson, observed, “I think Irish patriotism and Roman Catholicism were in one mix together. And as I look back, it was sometimes difficult to distinguish one from the other—you know, a common brand.”¹⁰⁷ Yet the irony is that emerging from the Irish literary renaissance, which was a major engine fueling Irish nationalism, most of its leadership and inspiration came from Protestant, not Catholic, Ireland.¹⁰⁸

With faith emerging as the defining factor, what this transformation of Irishness came to mean was that, allowing for the odd exception, Cardinal Cullen’s project had one far-reaching effect: on the popular level Irish and Catholic became synonymous. In addition to politics, now more than ever before, the real difference between the Irish and the English came to be religion. Mary Douglas cites precedents for this kind of differentiation, as she points out, “The ‘ethical’ religion of the ancient Hebrews, which stood in contrast to the ‘magical’ religion of their tribal neighbors, paralleled Protestant views of the contrast between the ethical focus of the Reformed churches and the magical style of Catholicism so given to “mumbo jumbo” and ‘meaningless

¹⁰⁵ Fallon, *Age of Innocence*, 24.

¹⁰⁶ Kevin Williams, “Catholicism and Civic Identity in Ireland: Mapping Some Changes in Public Policy,” in *Irish and Catholic?: Towards an understanding or indentity*, Louise Fuller, John Littleton, and Eamon Maher, eds. (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 2006), 237.

¹⁰⁷ Msgr. Thomas Cahalane, Personal Interview by author, Tucson, AZ, 11 January 2012.

¹⁰⁸ Kenny, *Goodbye*, 21.

ritual.”¹⁰⁹ A former priest from Ireland resonates with this criticism by observing, “Some people love ritual because it saves them from having to think.”¹¹⁰

Like a pattern manifest on different levels, this major polarity which Douglas points out in religious world views is replicated in smaller more localized ways within Catholicism itself. In chapter four we will see how Anglo Catholics encountering Mexican Catholicism in the American Southwest (siding with the Protestants) disparaged it as superstitious, even fanatical. Similarly, the Catholicism put in place by the Irish bishops and Maynooth clergy in the latter nineteenth century viewed older forms of the same faith as ignorant, faulty, and excessive. In both cases the newer official versions of the religion could be characterized by a more ethical, rational trajectory which set itself as normative over older, more “magical” forms of the religion declared to be defective. Max Weber and others have written about this process. It is a complex phenomenon which reflects the broader cultural values of the European Enlightenment, as well as the need for church leaders to assert hierarchical control in the face of popular belief and practice, one kind of religious authority (charisma) contending with another.

Applying this distinction more specifically, Douglas shows how the Catholic Irish resisted absorption into the greater English culture.

Fasting and abstinence assured Irish Catholics of their identity no matter where they were. The Friday abstinence rituals of the “bog Irish” in London are similar to the refusal to eat pork in traditional Jewish communities, and both practices can be explained in terms of social factors. Both communities are relatively closed groups intent on maintaining their minority identity in the face of a powerful majority that has open rather than closed forms of organization and espouses universal values rather than particular customs.¹¹¹

Beyond dietary habits, others have noted a parallel between the Irish and the Jews in terms of the identification of race with faith. Twomey suggests that when the Irish lost their language, paradoxically, they experienced the need to see themselves as a race apart. He recalls, “[G]rowing up in the Ireland of the 1940’s and 1950’s, I was certainly aware that part of our self-identity as Irish Catholics was to see ourselves as ‘Christian Jews,’ God’s chosen people,

¹⁰⁹ Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Routledge Press, 1996), 40.

¹¹⁰ Terry Lynch, Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 21 October 2012.

¹¹¹ Douglas, 40.

materially weak but spiritually strong, spread diaspora-like throughout the world, ever loyal to the faith of our fathers.”¹¹²

Ireland’s Spiritual Empire

With this renewed sense of confidence in Irish Catholicism, the church under Cardinal Cullen turned its gaze outward and heeded the call to missionary engagement. The goal was to make a mark in that vast empire “where the sun never set,” with the aim that “Irish Catholics would convert the world empire of Protestant England to the Catholic faith.”¹¹³ As we have seen, in earlier times Spain and Portugal, under the mandate of the *Patronato Real*, were charged with evangelization of the New World. In the early eighteenth century, this work was taken over by the Propagation of the Faith based in France. Now it was Ireland’s turn to take up this task. “Irish Catholicism became in the nineteenth century a worldwide phenomenon in the English speaking world.”¹¹⁴

Having failed to convert the vast majority of Irish Catholics, and with the closure of seminaries in France following the revolution there, “the British government finally saw the advantage of a strong Catholic Church which might achieve, if not the conversion then at least the ‘embourgeoisement’ and/or pacification of the peasantry.”¹¹⁵ In other words, a bargain was struck between the government and the church that more dignity and freedom would be granted to religious institutions with the provision that the church hierarchy would join forces with the British to suppress militant Irish nationalism. The church could rise from the humiliation of the Penal Times to bask in prestige, if it pledged to tamp down insurrection within its ranks. For church leaders this was seen as an opportunity, but from the viewpoint of many in the pews—it was a betrayal. This arrangement was harbinger of things to come in the twentieth century, when

¹¹² Twomey, *End of Irish Catholicism*, 26. He goes on to note that the term *diaspora*, first applied to Jews living outside the Holy Land, has come to be commonly used for the millions of Irish living abroad.

¹¹³ Corish, 195.

¹¹⁴ Larkin, *Historical Dimensions*, 9.

¹¹⁵ Taylor, 98.

in a free Ireland church and state were virtually wedded and James Joyce could remark, "Oh Ireland, land that I love, where Christ and Ceasar are hand in glove."¹¹⁶

Thus the Irish bishops were allowed to establish St. Patrick's Seminary at Maynooth near Dublin in 1795. Fifty years later, it had a mission in India. From Maynooth originated the Columban Fathers who served in Nigeria, Kenya, and other African countries, as well as the St. Patrick Missionary Society, called the Kiltegan Fathers, who ministered in China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, and when China was closed went into Burma. But Maynooth was to be Ireland's national seminary focused on the education of priests for the domestic church.

To meet the needs of foreign missions, Fr. John Hand in 1842 established All Hallows Seminary in Dublin. With the Famine and the onslaught of massive emigration, however, some 5,000 of its new priests began to follow the Irish Diaspora to America, Canada, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Soon a string of seminaries sprang up to foster the formation of diocesan priests desiring to go abroad: St. Patrick's, Carlow; St. Patrick's, Thurles; St. Peter's, Wexford; St. John's, Waterford; St. Kieran's, Kilkenny. In addition to these, there were seminaries run by religious orders, most of whose alumni remained in Ireland, and other missionary orders, such as the Holy Ghost Fathers, who went forth to the foreign missions particularly to Africa and Asia.

Patrick Corish notes a correspondence between the British Empire and an Irish spiritual empire which took hold within it.

Britain might have a worldwide empire, but there was an Irish world-Empire too, with even wider bounds, the empire of the Catholic faith. The Irish had been emigrating in numbers before the Famine, but after it the tide became a flood. It transformed Catholicism in England and Scotland. It built the church round a solid Irish core in the United States of America. The church in the British empire was almost altogether Irish, particularly in Australia. To all these churches Ireland sent a supply of priests.¹¹⁷

Typically, following secondary school at age eighteen, a candidate entered major seminary where he would study philosophy for three years and theology for four. Prior to 1966, these courses were taught in Latin. One priest who attended Maynooth shares, "We didn't get

¹¹⁶ Quoted in the Irish Writers Calendar, 2012.

¹¹⁷ Corish, 215.

out of the confines of the seminary until Christmas. And you only got to Dublin, for example, if you had a medical problem or you needed to go to the dentist or something like that.”¹¹⁸ The rules were strict. Being caught in another student’s room was grounds for dismissal. Contact with women was almost non-existent.

In the pre-conciliar years before Pope John XXIII’s *aggiornamento* of the early 1960’s, the model for seminary life was one of removal from the world. This was not solely an Irish agenda, but rather reflects the spirit and structure of Catholic seminaries everywhere at that time. As one who went through the system summed it up, “The Catholic Church was on autopilot.”¹¹⁹ Regarding the preaching in Irish churches in the mid-twentieth century, Corish renders a judgment on the mediocrity of the “basic intellectual pabulum of the average Irish priest.” He suggests that “it may be safely concluded that his Sunday preaching was essentially an extension of the catechism.”¹²⁰

Nevertheless, most Irish priests I interviewed felt that they received a good education in their respective seminaries. Scripture appears to have been the weakest subject. But overall the theological grounding was solid, with a series of oral exams in which the student had to come prepared with answers to questions and able to articulate what he had learned.

Fr. Liam Leahy, one of two last remaining Irish pastors in Tucson recalls, “As I look back forty years after leaving Ireland, we had a very distinct identity. We were an island separated from England, Scotland, and Wales, and the Continent of Europe. And it was very unique. Insular. Guarded.”¹²¹ Fallon agrees with this assessment noting that “Ireland in the 1950’s was an ‘insular’ country.” He remarks that to many visitors Ireland was “different.” He goes on to explain, “The quality of ‘Irishness’ was unmistakable, so much so that some felt it to be claustrophobic and even repellent, while others romanticized it as an escape from the pressures of modernity.”¹²²

¹¹⁸ Hoban Interview.

¹¹⁹ Lynch Interview.

¹²⁰ Corish, 210.

¹²¹ Rev. Liam Leahy, Personal Interview by author. Tucson, AZ, 11 January 2013.

¹²² Fallon, *Age of Innocence*, 29.

Mary Kenny, however, would take exception to this appraisal. "Irish Catholicism," she argues, "could be narrow-minded in the defence of the faith, but that is not the same as being insular."¹²³ She is correct when we consider that the vast Irish missionary enterprise gave Ireland a window to the world. In most cases, young recruits in seminaries and convents, who had never been more than a hundred miles from home, thought nothing of embarking ten thousand miles in the missionary cause. In the universal church, this small island country was major world player.

Nor was missionary outreach only a man's affair. Various orders of religious women also sprang up and set their sights on ministry beyond Ireland. Three of them found their way to Arizona. In order of appearance, they were: the Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of Loreto, and the Presentation Sisters. Commenting on the ubiquitous presence of Irish missionaries, Mary Kenny, writes, "When I went to Beijing in 1995 for the UN women's conference, I attended a Mass for Catholic women from everywhere in the globe. Nearly all the women from the Third World present had at one or another time been taught by an Irish sister or priest. That was 'Ireland's Spiritual Empire.'"¹²⁴

The Devotional Revolution (1850-1875) shaped modern Irish Catholicism up to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). It was in large part an effort to implement reforms mandated by the earlier Council of Trent. Dublin Sociologist Tom Inglis cites this shift as an example of what Norbert Elias called "a civilizing process" and of what the French refer to as *mentalité*. Irish Anthropologist Lawrence Taylor claims that the Devotional Revolution exemplifies, from a Weberian perspective, the transition from "magical" to "ethical" religious belief and practice brought about by Maynooth-trained diocesan clergy, which in turn ensured their domination. He posits that it is a classic example of the routinization of charisma. He points out, "The weekly Mass became the central ritual in a religious field dominated by a discourse and iconography which affirmed the power of the Church as institution."¹²⁵

¹²³ Kenny, *Goodbye*, 119.

¹²⁴ Kenny, *Goodbye*, 11.

¹²⁵ Taylor, 99.

Another aspect of the nineteenth century reinvention of Irish Catholicism has to do with the broader historical context of the Victorian Era in which it took place. About this era, Fallon states, “Sexual puritanism and repression permeated both private and public life.”¹²⁶ Taylor maintains that models of middle class civility provided by the clergy at this time gave great attention to bodily self-control. He writes, “For the middle class or aspiring middle class Irish Catholic, the church offered a model for respectability not unlike the English one.” But he notes a difference in the case of middle class Irish Catholic Victorian society in terms of its “adding to the standard Victorian world view an idiom of opposition to the British which extolled the virtues of an oppressed Catholic peasantry even as it praised the growth of a Catholic world empire.”¹²⁷ In this Tridentine Church—symbolized by the sixteenth-century creation of the dark, anonymous confessional box—the emphasis was on saving one’s soul. In this Victorian era, with its acute class consciousness, the standard was social respectability.¹²⁸ Sex and shame were the preoccupations.

Probing the Irish Psyche

Diving deep into a psychoanalysis of the Irish character, psychiatrist Garrett O’Connor speaks of “post-colonial stress disorder” and highlights “malignant shame” as inbred factors adversely affecting the Irish. Born in Ireland, he has practiced for decades in the U.S. He shares how he initially came to discover and diagnose this malaise within himself.

At school, the Irish history I was taught was robbery of our lands by plantations of English colonists, deliberate impoverishment of Irish Catholics through the Penal Laws, and near elimination of the Irish peasantry by planned neglect and forced emigration during the Famine. Despite this knowledge, I had by the age of eight developed a conviction that England was a source of higher (and better) authority on nearly all matters except Catholicism. In my early teens I came to believe that everything Irish (including myself) was in some way defective or second- rate in comparison to England.”¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Fallon, 21.

¹²⁷ Taylor, 99.

¹²⁸ For an expanded treatment of the issues and themes of this time, see Michel Foucault’s three volumes, *The History of Human Sexuality*.

¹²⁹ Garrett O’Connor, “Recognizing and Healing Malignant Shame: A Statement about the Urgent Need for Psychological and Spiritual Recovery from the Effects of Colonialism in Ireland,” in *Distant Relations: Chicano Irish Mexican Art and Critical Writing*, Trisha Ziff, ed. (New York: Smart Art Press, 1992), 128.

From his work with hundreds of patients, were either Irish-born or had Irish parents, Dr. Garret found that this syndrome almost universally characterized them. Based on so many cases he extrapolates, "The core of the problem for any post-colonial population is a widespread conviction of cultural inferiority [or] internalized shame."¹³⁰ His analysis expands on a broader cultural level what many are more familiar with in family relations, namely, that abusive parents traumatize their children in large part by shaming them, thereby emotionally scarring them for life. According to O'Connor's theory much the same mechanisms are at work as regards post-colonial populations, who likewise have been traumatized and shamed and bear the effects of generations of imperialism and abuse.

JanMohamed and Lloyd explore the strategies of domination and the harm borne by minority cultures. They refer to "institutional forgetting" to which minorities are subjected as a means of controlling their memory and history. They emphasize the need for "archival work as a form of counter-memory [in reconstituting] the critical articulation of minority discourse."¹³¹ They go on to claim,

"Becoming minor" is not a question of essence (as the stereotypes of minorities in dominant ideology would want us to believe) but a question of position: a subject position that in the final analysis can be defined only in "political" terms—that is, in terms of the effects of economic exploitation, political disenfranchisement, social manipulation, and ideological domination on the cultural formation of minority subjects and discourses.¹³²

In his essay on malignant shame, O'Connor references the conclusions of Irish psychiatrist Anthony Clare, who while recognizing the "extraordinary vigour and vitality of so much of Irish life," describes the Irish mind as being "enveloped and to an extent suffocated in an English mental embrace." Clare maintains that this has come about in "a culture [that is] heavily impregnated by an emphasis on physical control, original sin, cultural inferiority and psychological defensiveness."¹³³

¹³⁰ Ibid., 127.

¹³¹ JanMohamed and Lloyd, *Nature and Context*, 6.

¹³² Ibid., 9.

¹³³ Anthony Clare, cited in O'Connor, "Recognizing and Healing," 130.

O'Connor puts forth his findings and fleshes out a map of the Irish psyche in the following observation.

The paradoxical and contradictory construction of the "Irish Catholic Character" is itself a clue to history. Humour, courage, loyalty and tenderness co-exist with pessimism, envy, duplicity and spite. A strong urge to resist authority is tempered by a stronger need to appease it. A constant need for approval is frustrated by a chronic fear of judgment. A deep devotion to suffering for its own sake is supported by a firm belief in tragedy as a virtue.¹³⁴

He maintains that on the national stage the upshot of this Augustinian/Jansenistic mentality led to "suppression of feelings, repression of sexuality, and the devaluation of women's and children's rights."¹³⁵ O'Connor goes on to comment on the devastation of the Famine (1845-1849), what some have referred to it as Ireland's Holocaust, in which 1.2 million people died within five years. As if this natural calamity—the blight of the potato crop—was not enough, a subjugated people were also accused by their overlords of bringing this catastrophe upon themselves. Politicians and churchmen pontificated that this was God's judgment on the suborders of society. Irish Catholics were often labeled a social subclass. In the logic of the dominators, the Famine befell the Irish peasantry because of their laziness, stupidity, and superstitious beliefs.

Sir Charles Trevelyan, who served as treasury secretary of England with oversight for dealing with the Irish Famine revealed his genocidal sentiments when he wrote in 1848, "The great evil with which we have to contend is not the physical evil of the famine but the moral evil of the selfish, perverse and turbulent character of the people."¹³⁶

The popular English writer, Charles Kingsley, after visiting Ireland in 1860, in a letter to his wife, shares his rabidly anti-Irish racist views quite matter of factly:

I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I believe that there are not only many more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful, if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure are as white as ours.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Garrett O'Connor, "Recognizing and Healing," 131.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹³⁶ Charles Trevelyan, cited in Garrett O'Connor, "Recognizing and Healing," 133.

¹³⁷ Charles Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley: His letters and memories of his life*, ed., F. E. Kingsley (London: Macmillan, Ltd., 1894), 111-112. Accessed, 3 June 2014.
https://openlibrary.org/books/OL23285794M/Charles_Kingsley_his_letters_and_memories_of_his_life

In 1862, the popular English magazine *Punch*, published an anonymous article entitled, “The Missing Link” dehumanizing immigrant Irish laborers in England.

A creature manifestly between the Gorilla and the Negro is to be met with in some of the lowest districts in London and Liverpool by adventurous explorers. It comes from Ireland, whence it has contrived to migrate: it belongs in fact to a tribe of Irish savages: the lowest species of the Irish Yahoo. When conversing with its kind it talks a sort of gibberish. It is, moreover, a climbing animal and may sometimes be seen ascending a ladder laden with a hod of bricks.¹³⁸

Also appearing in *Punch* the same year was a letter to the editor entitled: “An Offer to the South,” which expresses the utter contempt with which some English people viewed their Irish neighbors. “Recent scenes in Ireland compel *Mr. Punch* to make a proposal to the Americans. Will they make a swap and give us the niggers in exchange for the Irish peasantry? We’ll throw in something valuable to make the bargain a fair one. –Come, Davis”¹³⁹ (The name no doubt refers to Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy.)

It has been said that Nature caused the blight on the potato crop but England caused the Famine. David Emmons puts it another way: “[T]he Famine was a symptom, not the cause of Ireland’s miseries. . . . There is a tragedy in every chapter of Ireland’s past, but the years from 1845 to 1849 serve as a kind of historical ideogram, the graphic symbol of a suffering people.”¹⁴⁰ But this watershed event involved, as David Emmons goes on to relate, “huge numbers of people and it profoundly affected both Ireland and the United States.” It produced a subsequent hemorrhage of emigration in which two million people left for America within a decade and in the following half century another 3.7 million sailed away “for what they hoped would be less unforgiving lands.”¹⁴¹

The classic song from the Irish folk-rock group, the Pogues, sings of the immigrant experience with pride. The refrain, as croaked by Shane MacGowan is particularly trenchant.

*Thousands are sailing
Across the western ocean
To a land of opportunity*

¹³⁸ Cited in Maureen O’Connor, *The Female and the Species: The Animal in Irish Women’s Writing* (Berne, Switzerland: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2010), 11.

¹³⁹ *Punch*, 12 July 1862, p. 19.

¹⁴⁰ Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 2.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

*That some of them will never see
Fortune prevailing
Their bellies full
Their spirits free
They'll break the chains of poverty
And they'll dance.*

On the wings of hope, steady streams of the destitute and dispossessed—if they survived the ocean crossing aboard the so-called “coffin ships”—poured into American ports (and other destinations in the English-speaking world) bringing with them “the austere, authoritarian survival ideology of 19th-century Irish Catholicism, as well as the usual colonial stigmata of second-class citizenship and low self-esteem.”¹⁴² Here they were met with horrible slum conditions in which to live and an impenetrable wall of racial prejudice and religious discrimination. Desperate for work, Irish immigrants encountered renewed rejection in the so-called land of opportunity, as expressed in this not untypical message: “Woman wanted to do general housework—English, Scotch, Welsh, German or any country or color except Irish.”¹⁴³

Commenting on what the Irish found in the new land of America, historian Cecil Woodham-Smith writes,

The Irish were the most unfortunate of immigrants and the poorest, they took the longest to become genuinely assimilated, they waited the longest before the opportunities the United States offers were freely available to them. The struggle of the Irish in the New World is not a romantic story of liberty and success, but the story of a bitter struggle, as bitter, as painful, though not as long drawn out, as the struggle by which the Irish at last won the right to be a nation.¹⁴⁴

What O'Connor calls malignant cultural shame appears to breed a certain confusion or heightened ambivalence over one's perceived identity. Times have changed, but even today a strange pattern plays out in London and major cities in Britain, where for generations millions of Irish have come to find work. Almost ritualistically on weekends these immigrants flock to neighborhood Irish pubs to sing rebel songs that damn England and toast the Republic. Yet England is the source of their livelihood, and many of these working Irish have no intention of

¹⁴² Garrett O'Connor, “Recognizing and Healing,” 136.

¹⁴³ Advertisement in *the Boston Daily*, Sunday, 11 May 1853.

¹⁴⁴ Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger* (New York: New American Library, 1962), 266.

ever returning to live in Ireland. Many seem caught in the middle of a love/hate relationship with their imagined oppressor (more imagined today than real).

The Mexican experience, especially in the United States, registers somewhat similar attitudes. As Eric Meeks noted, some Mexicans in the Southwest self-identified as Spanish (emphasizing European ties), implicitly interiorizing the racism of the dominant white culture in rejecting the undesirable element of Mexican (mestizo, that is, mixed with Indian) heritage. In the 1960's, however, self-perceptions flipped with the rise of Chicano activism and the opposite was true. Many Mexican youth embraced their people's indigenous heritage and disowned their Spanish genes. For post-colonial groups the question of self-perception and identity, of definition and conscious appropriation, is fraught with profound implications. The first President of Ireland Douglas Hyde, himself a Protestant, had this to say, "The Irish had to imitate England in all things, while apparently hating them at the same time!"¹⁴⁵

O'Conner points out that in the terrible times of the past, the church did save the masses of Irish people from perhaps total annihilation, but at a high cost. The Catholic Church after 1850 may have unwittingly given the Irish certain survival tools, but it also bequeathed them an unsettling neurosis. He describes an inherited spiritual landscape as bleak as an Irish winter.

Original sin, sexual repression and eternal damnation were incorporated into a grim theology of fear that led Irish Catholics to believe they had been born bad, were inclined toward evil and deserved punishment for their sins. This bleak spiritual philosophy, which evolved in the harsh climate of famine and colonialism, would later become the foundation for 20th century Irish Catholicism and has remained so to this day, despite the changes of Vatican II and the many departures from tradition by courageous clergy at every level of Church organization.¹⁴⁶

Family Systems therapist Monica McGoldrick details her take on the Irish makeup. Her insightful appraisal is worth quoting at length.

The Irish are a people of many paradoxes. While having a tremendous flair for bravado, they may inwardly assume that anything that goes wrong is the result of their sins. They are dreamers but also pragmatic, hard workers. They transformed themselves from rural peasants in Ireland into die-hard city dwellers in the United States. They are good-humored, charming, hospitable, and

¹⁴⁵ Douglas Hyde, "The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland," speech to the National Literary Society, Dublin, 25 March 1892. Cited in, Bruce Stewart, "On the Necessity of De-Hideifying Irish Cultural Criticism," *New Hibernia Review*, vol. 4, no.1, (Spring 2000), 23-44.

¹⁴⁶ Garrett O'Connor, "Recognizing and Healing," 137.

gregarious, but often avoid intimacy. They love a good time, which includes teasing, verbal word play, and sparring, yet are drawn to tragedy. Although always joking, they seem to struggle continuously against loneliness, depression, and silence, believing intensely that life will break your heart one day. Although they are known for fighting against all odds, the Irish have also had a strong sense of human powerlessness. As a legacy of their heritage, perhaps they have placed great value on conformity, compliance, and respectability, and yet they tend toward eccentricity. Their history is full of rebels and fighters. They have supported liberal democracy but also an authoritarian religion. They often feel profound shame about, and responsibility for, what goes wrong, yet they characteristically deny or project blame outward. They are typically clannish and place great stock in loyalty to their own, yet they often cut off relationships totally.¹⁴⁷

German writer Heinrich Böll offers a fascinating comparison between the Irish and the Germans when it comes to their respective attitudes toward things going wrong.

When something happens to you in Germany, when you miss a train, break a leg, go bankrupt, we say: it couldn't have been any worse.; whatever happens is always the worst. With the Irish it is almost the opposite: if you break a leg, miss a train, go bankrupt they say: it could be worse. Instead of breaking a leg you might have broken your neck, instead of a train you might have missed heaven, and instead of going bankrupt you might have lost your peace of mind. And if you should die, well, you are rid of all your troubles, for to every penitent sinner the way is open to Heaven. . . .With us it seems to me, our sense of humor and imagination desert us; in Ireland that is just when they come into play.¹⁴⁸

Fr. Vincent Twomey, professor emeritus at Maynooth, observes, "The main characteristic of Irish Catholicism at the beginning of the twentieth century was angelism, namely, a disdain for this world in favor of the next. Then Catholics in Ireland could not feel at home in the here and now, neither could they celebrate life in the present."¹⁴⁹

Tom Inglis, writes of his repressed Irish Catholic childhood:

I was brought up in an ethical regime that emerged from a culture of death and self-sacrifice. There were crucifixes everywhere to remind us of Christ's suffering and death. The body was a source of awkwardness, guilt, shame and embarrassment. It was something to be hidden rather than admired and adorned. It was a society of guilt, secrecy, darkness and oppression. To have "bad" thoughts was a sin. To take pleasure in them was a mortal sin. Being concerned with oneself, particularly one's body, looks and beauty, was seen as the path to self-obsession. It was not just vain, it was profane. To look sexually attractive, to be erotic, to be sexually stimulated, to gaze at another longingly,

¹⁴⁷ Monica McGoldrick, "Irish Families," in *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*, 3rd ed., Monica McGoldrick, Joe Giordano, and Nydia Gracia-Preto, eds. (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 595.

¹⁴⁸ Heinrich Böll, "Irish Journal, 1967," cited in McGoldrick, "Irish Families," 320.

¹⁴⁹ Twomey, *End of Irish Catholicism*, 75.

were all seen as sinful. It was a deeply repressive society in which the sexually disobedient and deviant were humiliated, demoralized and often incarcerated.¹⁵⁰

He goes on to point out that Ireland was particularly affected by Victorian repression.

It was part and parcel of growing up in Catholic Ireland in the 1950's. There has always been a strong element of self-denial and penitential practice in Irish Catholicism. It had a strong influence on Irish culture and the personalities to which it gave rise. Of course the Irish were not unique; elements of Victorian emotional detachment and prudery were to be found in other Western cultures. It is just that in Ireland they seemed to have survived much longer into the twentieth century and to have penetrated further into our bodies and souls.¹⁵¹

Tucson pastor Fr. Liam Leahy, confirms this viewpoint and shares his experience.

I had a terrible time, struggle, with the whole sexual awakening process, because of coming from a very sheltered, protected environment. Nothing was discussed. You know, everything was like hush, hush. I think it was Jansenistic. . . . Somehow any discussion or topic on sex was somehow bad, even in the seminary. One of my classmates described the seminary experience as—I hope I can remember what he said—“an exercise in arrested development.” Keep everything under wraps. So I had to struggle with that, like, everything is more open in this country.¹⁵²

One of Ireland's foremost literary critics, Brian Fallon, renders a devastating judgment on the quality of priests in Ireland in the mid-twentieth century.

Intellectually, they were often naïve—an admiration for G. K. Chesterton, for instance, was equated with mental sophistication, and the bulk of them regarded modern thought, literature and art as predominately “pagan” (a favourite word of the period), dangerous, and subversive, part of the corrosive modernism which was eating away at the foundation of the whole Christian world.¹⁵³

Others, like Patrick Corish, point out the drawbacks of the Irish seminaries.

[D]iscipline of the seminaries was being progressively tightened, with the aim of producing a docile and disciplined priesthood. It is at least arguable that in the end this went too far, and that the regime was better fitted to producing monks than priests who were to be active in parishes. . . . [There is a consensus that] their intellectual formation was “narrow.”¹⁵⁴

A former seminary professor at Maynooth, the late Fr. P. J. Brophy, also faults the system.

¹⁵⁰ Tom Inglis, *Global Ireland: Same Difference (Global Realities)* (New York: Routledge Press, 2007), 250.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵² Leahy Interview.

¹⁵³ Fallon, *Age of Innocence*, 190.

¹⁵⁴ Corish, *Irish Catholic Expeperienc*, 230.

The Irish seminary as an institution has been a hard master, including stern attitudes of authority and emphasizing obedience to the point of neglecting normal personal development. The virtue of uniformity of conduct was extolled to the point of denying individuality. This military style had no support in the gospel nor in the early church. It is the product of a besieged garrison and has no longer any relevance.¹⁵⁵

Keep in mind, much of the criticism leveled at Irish seminaries can be applied to the church at large at this time—an institution detached from “the world,” triumphalistic, we could even say, smug in the certainty of its position and teachings. “We weren’t brought up to question. That doesn’t mean we didn’t, just that we felt guilty for even thinking of doing so.”¹⁵⁶ The fundamentals of religious education in the early and mid-twentieth century were to be found in Butler’s Catechism, published by Bishop Butler in 1875 and revised in 1902. It became known as the Maynooth Catechism. Its question and answer format was memorized by students through rote learning. Texts like this had a major influence in the formation of Irish priests and laity for almost two hundred years. John McDonagh provides an anecdote from catechism class in the 1920’s, as an indictment against this method of memorization devoid of comprehension. He describes

a woman’s confusion as a seven year old child, when she had to rote learn that there were “seven deadly or capital sins, namely: Pride; Covetousness; Lust; Anger; Gluttony; Envy and Sloth.” She was puzzled by this as she counted eight sins, since she was under the impression that “namely” was a deadly sin. To a child of seven none of these sins made any sense and so the catechism cultivated parrotism where “namely” was as deadly as covetousness or sloth.¹⁵⁷

Much of mid-twentieth century Catholic practice in Ireland was perfunctory. On many trips there I have heard people comment approvingly about this or that priest because “he says a fast Mass.” Many were quite put out if the liturgy went more than forty minutes. The Sunday obligation seemed to come down to: show your face and get out quick. This mindless, legalistic mentality must have rubbed off on Fr. Cornelius Cahalane, one of the Irish priests in Arizona. He

¹⁵⁵ P. J. Brophy, “Irish Missionaries,” *The Furrow*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Maynooth: St. Patrick’s College, January 1952), 24.

¹⁵⁶ Paula Murphy, “Trinities of Transition: Catholicism in the Novels and Plays of Dermot Bolger” in *Irish and Catholic?*, eds., Fuller, Littleton, Maher, 178.

¹⁵⁷ Quoted by John McDonagh, “Mulcahy taught us God’: Catholicism and Survival in the Poetry of Brendan Kennelly,” in *Irish and Catholic?*, eds., Fuller, Littleton, and Maher, 131-132.

had the reputation for saying “the fastest Mass in the West.” His Sunday record was twenty minutes!—and this in a day when only the priest could distribute communion.

He was the older cousin of Fr. Tom Cahalane, presently a pastor in Tucson. Both came from County Cork and both could not have been more dissimilar. The older Cahalane not only said a fast Mass but apparently lived a fast life, barely surviving when he sped off a highway and suffered numerous broken bones and severe facial lacerations. He seemed to burn out quickly after that. In contrast, the younger Cahalane is calm, thoughtful, not driven by the clock but relishing the moment. I immediately picked this up when I went to interview him at his Tucson parish. He is the only Irish priest in Arizona who went back to school and earned a university degree, (with the exception of John F. Burns and Alan Malone who became canon lawyers). He told me that he wanted to understand himself and other people on a deeper level, so he took advantage of the University of Arizona down the street. With a Masters in Counselling he has taken great strides toward this goal. His priest cousin lived fast and died young, “without much understanding.”

On a more positive note, Mary Kenny comments that “Catholicism in Ireland was so marked by the traditions of the mother and of femininity that women seemed to feel at ease with it.” She cites several women’s reactions to priests. Joyce Collins born into a Protestant medical family at the end of the nineteenth century writes about a “shy looking priest and his bashful ways,” and concludes that he had “a kind of cheerful holiness, a quality I have since marked in nearly all priests, a winning refinement.” A cradle Catholic and friend of W. B. Yeats, the writer Katharine Tynan, “described the Irish priesthood in terms of kindness, culture, gentleness and the hospitality of country priests in the early years of the century.” For a fierce critic of the clergy, however, “these womanly indulgences were precisely what made the Irish priests lazy, idle, lax in enforcing morals—unlike the energetic Protestant Evangelicals—and far too prone to the Sunday amusements of hurling, football, coursing, rabbit-hunting and cycling.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Kenny, 51-52.

Long time Prime Minister Eamon DeValera (once under a death sentence for anti-British activities) repeatedly left no doubt as to how he perceived Irishness. In his 1935 St. Patrick's Day message broadcast to the United States, he said, "Since the coming of St. Patrick fifteen hundred years ago, Ireland has been a Christian and a Catholic nation. All the ruthless attempts made through the centuries to force her from this allegiance have not shaken her faith. She remains a Catholic nation."¹⁵⁹

In 1952, when Dr. James Devane, writing in *Rosary Magazine*, exuded, "Ireland is the most Catholic country in the world,"¹⁶⁰—it rang true in fact and in sentiment. Brian Fallon captures the prevailing ethos when he writes, "The Catholic Church in Ireland seemed an immovable, massive, broad-based monolith. . . .It had a certain fundamentalist quality rather like the religiosity of the American Mid-West—a Rosary Belt, it might be called, instead of a Bible Belt."¹⁶¹

The twentieth century saw two symbolic high points for institutional Irish Catholicism: the Eucharistic Congress in 1932, which some have called its zenith, and the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1979, which was perhaps its last hurrah. The Dublin Eucharistic Congress commemorated the 1500th anniversary of St. Patrick's arrival on his evangelizing mission to Ireland. One million people were on hand to celebrate the triumphant occasion. Writing about it, the English writer, G.K. Chesterton, reflected on the faith of Ireland.

Her religion has always been poetic, popular and, above all, domestic. Nobody who knows anything of her population will think there was ever any special danger that her Deity would be only a definition. He was always so intimate as rather to resemble, in a pagan parallel, a household god or a family ghost. Ireland was filled with the specially human spirit of Christianity, especially in the sense of the pathetic, the sensitive, and the great moral emotions that attach to memory.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ *The Irish Press*, 18 March 1935, 2.

¹⁶⁰ James Devane, cited in Louise Fuller, "New Ireland and the Undoing of the Catholic Legacy: Looking back to the Future," in *Irish and Catholic?*, eds. Fuller, Littleton, and Maher, 72.

¹⁶¹ Fallon, *Age of Innocence*, 197.

¹⁶² G. K. Chesterton, *Christendom in Dublin* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1933), 68.

As for the papal visit, commentators cite it as the last high tide of Irish Catholicism, which soon afterward began its decline due to increasing secularization, the economic boom of the Celtic Tiger years, and the scandal of widespread clerical sexual abuse.

The Church in Ireland, and to a degree the heavily Irish-flavored Church in America, has been called dogmatic, moralistic, inflexible, and authoritarian. As Fallon observes, “The native vitality of Irish religion seems to have been swallowed up in an almost slavish obedience to Rome . . . on overriding conformity and mediocrity. A decision to go almost always with the ‘safe’ man and the orthodox mentality.”¹⁶³ Yet all of these characteristics should be understood in the light of history, as the Church provided stability and inspiration for a conquered people whose leadership, in its aristocracy, had been defeated, impoverished, and exiled. Even Fallon, however, sees a redeeming light amid his criticism, as he points out, “Under all the sentimental popular religiosity and the dogmatism and myopia of unimaginative clerics, there was a pure underground stream of something which can only be called ‘soul’.”¹⁶⁴

The stern moralism and piety were perhaps best exemplified by Cardinal Paul Cullen, the Catholic primate who brought the reforms of the sixteenth century Council of Trent to post-Famine Ireland three centuries later, and native Irishman John Hughes, who as Archbishop of New York, led an impoverished Famine-refugee immigrant population dogged by nativist hostility. The clerically imposed discipline associated with these men led a downtrodden people from impoverishment and misery to economic and social advancement and political power in both Ireland and America.

Father Twomey noted the lack of seriousness with which the Irish priests approached theology, many of them looking upon it (in his words) as “a hurdle to be overcome before ordination”. The belated imposition of Tridentine discipline and the cultural ascendancy of Victorian puritanism left the Irish Church, according to him, “with a legalistic moral theology, a highly centralized authoritarian institution, and a sentimental spirituality,” which made them little inclined to articulately engage and contest with modern opponents, or think out the implications of

¹⁶³ Fallon, *Age of Innocence*, 196.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 194.

Vatican II reforms. Or as Professor Kevin Whelan, in a lecture on the Famine, claims that in its aftermath the Irish became more “puritanical, celibate, and docile.”¹⁶⁵ What they both suggest is that the Irish—priests and people—were bound to a heritage of conformity. As Fr. Twomey put it, “The religion of the heart has lost out to what Yeats called ‘the dead hand of decorum.’”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Kevin Whelan, *Forum on the Irish Famine*, Boston College, 10 December 1996, cited in Timothy Joyce, 117.

¹⁶⁶ Twomey, 77.

*When I go to the hospital to anoint a Mexican who is dying,
I have to step over twenty-five little kids to get to the bed.
When an Anglo dies, she may be all alone.¹⁶⁷*

Chapter Three

MEXICAN RELIGIOSITY

If we imagine Catholic religious expression along a scale of degrees, an English Catholic and a Mexican Catholic are at the opposite ends, while an Irish Catholic is somewhere in the middle, but closer to the latter. At least this is how Fr. Gene O'Carroll explained it to me. Many of my informants commented on the high level of affectivity or emotional responsiveness of the Mexican people when it comes to their faith. Sr. Augustine Dempsey confirms this. She was near eighty years of age when I interviewed her. With the closing of her school in New Orleans, she came in her later years to Arizona. Affectionately called Gus by the other sisters, Sr. Augustine drew a contrast between the religiosity of Mexicans and that of Irishmen. She shares that the Mexican

would be much more emotional and exaggerated. You know, like praying out loud. An Irishman would always be quiet. Occasionally, we would find a poor old Mexican fellow inside there with hands stretched out or lying on the church floor praying out loud. This happened a few times—different fellows. Now an Irishman would never do that. No, he'd go and sit in the last pew and pray to himself, quietly.¹⁶⁸

Her recollection conveys the exuberant tone and demonstrative character of the Mexican religious spirit, in contrast to the equally deep, but quiet and inconspicuous piety of the Irish. Mexican Catholicism exhibits an intensity sometimes marked by great effort. I saw this when I visited Mexico City several years ago. As I came into the broad cobbled-stone plaza leading up to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, I observed some people slowly, painfully approaching the shrine on their knees. Another example I recall derives from the Cursillo movement, which began in Spain in the late 1940's and was brought to Arizona by Claretian Father Alfonso Duran

¹⁶⁷ Ledwith Interview.

¹⁶⁸ Sr. Augustine Dempsey, I.B.V.M. Personal Interview by author. Flagstaff, AZ, 8 October 2012.

in 1959. The Cursillo, or “short course” in Christianity, is an intensive three-day experience, which aims at the spiritual renewal of Catholic laity, enduring and lived out in what is called “the fourth day.”¹⁶⁹ It had a major impact among the Mexican Catholics I have studied. I frequently observed *cursillistas* during extended prayer—in a most dramatic fashion—kneeling before the crucifix, their arms outstretched.

Sr. Dymphna Doran, a teacher at Ss. Simon and Jude Cathedral School in Phoenix cites further distinct qualities of the spirituality of Mexican people. She notes, “They have a very tangible kind of religion. They touch statues . . . they are tactile in their way of expression. When I would be in Santa Rosa, and after mass, some little old lady, she touched the Stations of the Cross and then she touched my clothes—like we are a holy saint too.”¹⁷⁰

Presentation Sister Leonie Bracken shares her experience of the Mexican people she met in Arizona, “They love a more fiesta-type of religion. . . . They love dancing, music, color. I admired their great warmth and their love of family, and also their willingness to serve and to break bread with you.”¹⁷¹ Sr. Raphael Quinn, long-time principal of the cathedral school in Phoenix points out similarities between Mexican and Irish religiosity. “I think it’s easy to identify with the Hispanic community. They have a strong spirituality and a sense of humility. Their religion is also very devotional. And that would have been very much a part of our Irish tradition too: Corpus Christi processions, May processions [honoring Mary].”¹⁷²

She notes the commonality between the devotedness of the Mexicans and the Irish, but draws a contrast between the ardent observance of Mexicans with that of less fervent Anglo parishioners.

We have perpetual adoration here now and it’s mostly Hispanics that are there. You see the Mexican families bringing their children to church, and blessing their children, and teaching them the little traditions which I think is really important. For me growing up in Ireland, in my family, the Eucharist, Sunday Mass was very, very important. Holy Week was like huge in my family—Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday. It’s just the same for the Mexicans. Whereas with the Anglos now—it was a shock when I came here—like there would be very

¹⁶⁹ “The Cursillo Movement.” Accessed 26 March 2015. <http://www.phoenixcursillo.com>.

¹⁷⁰ Doran Interview.

¹⁷¹ Sr. Leonie Bracken, P.B.V.M. Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 31 March 2012.

¹⁷² Quinn Interview.

few of them in church. They'd be off camping. It was like Spring Break, so you just took off. But not the Mexicans.¹⁷³

There were differences within the one religion as understood and practiced by the Irish priests, on the one hand, and the Mexicans, on the other. The Irish clergy were trained in the scholastic philosophy and theology of Thomas Aquinas and the clerical, triumphalistic ecclesiology of the Council of Trent. One of my first interviews was with the late Fr. John Cullinan. He retired as a pastor a few years previously and lived in an apartment in the senior living facility run by the Protestant Church of the Beatitudes. When I went to see him, he commented on this difference, saying, "Well, we had a little more education, you know. So we'd have theology. They didn't seem to worry about theology. They had their own ideas of God and were very, very simple. The mass wouldn't mean a lot to them, but if they had a procession and something that involved them and would touch them emotionally . . ."¹⁷⁴

The Irish Sisters of Loretto have served Flagstaff Catholics since the 1950's. In 1928, Lady of Guadalupe Church was built of local volcanic stone. One of their members, Sr. Liz Carey, relays the story of how Mexican parishioners, "wanted their little church so badly that they gathered up the stones themselves. . . .People here still remember—those who were younger children at that time—carrying the stones."¹⁷⁵

Many of my informants praised the simplicity of Mexican people. For some, however, their simple ways and simple understanding was a drawback. Former priest, Terry Lynch, from County Cavan, remarks, "I don't mind doing simple things, but is that why I have to do all of this, giving up having a wife and children just so I can bless candles? You know what I mean? These people don't want to just light a candle, they need it blessed personally by the priest. And they will come to your door numerous times a day and they want the candle blessed."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Cullinan Interview.

¹⁷⁵ Sr. Elizabeth Carey, I.B.V.M. Personal Interview by author. Flagstaff, AZ, 8 October 2012.

¹⁷⁶ Lynch Interview.

Fr. Gil Padilla is a retired Mexican American priest in Tucson. He notes, “There was some prejudice [among the Irish clergy] against the Mexicans, because the Mexicans are notoriously poor church supporters. Hispanics believe the church is rich, it’s a rich organization like the government. It’s got all the money it needs. . . .The Anglos would be treated better because they had more bucks.”¹⁷⁷

The weight of scholarship faults the official Catholic Church for the way it treated its Hispanic members in the mid-20th Century. Many scholars cite a record of neglect, if not a thinly concealed racism. The thrust of my dissertation is to look at two groups within the church, Irish clergy and Mexican parishioners, and explore how they saw each other and interacted together. My research reveals that, for the most part, theirs was a sanguine and mutually enriching encounter. From the many personal oral interviews I conducted, I heard certain words used time and again on the part of Irish clergy and Irish nuns to describe the temperament, ethos, and spirituality of the Mexican people with whom they worked. Similarly, I found the same was true of my Mexican informants in describing their memories of Irish priests. This chapter is about Mexicans: the influences that shaped their religiosity, how Mexican Catholics saw themselves, and how the Irish priests and nuns in Arizona saw them, as well as the factors that influenced these perspectives. In the exchanges that the subjects of my research shared with me, the statement of Geertz seemed to ring true, when he said that our experience of understanding other cultures is “more grasping a proverb, catching an illusion, seeing a joke, than it is like achieving communion.”¹⁷⁸

Formative Influences

To understand Mexican religiosity one must go back centuries. Whereas modern cultures, imbued with the notion of progress, look forward to “the latest and the fastest,” traditional

¹⁷⁷ Padilla Interview.

¹⁷⁸ Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 70.

cultures looked to the wisdom of the past. For reasons I will demonstrate, in Mexican culture, in the American Southwest in the mid-20th century, tradition was paramount.

We are a deeply religious people. Religious expressions are inter-laced throughout our language and culture; religious themes appear throughout our novels, songs, and art work; religious imagery is the most common persistent language—whether English, Spanish, Nahuatl, Cholo, Pocho, Mayan, or otherwise. For us, religion is not just a Sunday observance but everyday life.¹⁷⁹

Eduardo Fernandez concurs, “The Mexicans have always been an extremely religious people.”¹⁸⁰ The roots of their religious fervor harken back both to their indigenous forebears, as well as to the religious zealotry of their Spanish ancestors, brought to bear in the conquest of Mexico. Fernandez points out several features of native cultures prior to their conquest early in the 16th Century in what came to be called Mexico.

First, the populations of this land were not monolithic. Among them were different tribes, cultures, languages, and political entities. Upon his arrival in 1519, with a band of 508 soldiers, Hernan Cortez exploited these differences and rivalries to his advantage by using smaller alienated Indian tribes against the dominant Aztecs.¹⁸¹ Second, Meso-American civilization was advanced. With a 3,000 year history, it was highly complex and had produced highly developed writings, technology, and other innovations. Third, the pre-Columbian people of Mexico were tenacious in their religious beliefs. As Fernandez observes, “One of the most demoralizing factors of the conquest for them was to have their religious systems destroyed.”¹⁸²

And yet with the launching of the evangelization project, the Spanish missionaries strove in part to communicate the new faith in terms of religious notions already familiar to the Indians. According to missionaries’ reports, the Native peoples, in turn, found much in the Christian message to be compatible with their understanding. Nor was this merely a unilateral influence. As noted by Osvaldo Prado, “[S]cholarship has in general underplayed the impact that indigenous

¹⁷⁹ Orlando O. Espin and Miguel H. Diaz, eds., *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999), 49.

¹⁸⁰ Eduardo C. Fernandez, *Mexican-American Catholics* (New York: Paulist Press, 2007), 2.

¹⁸¹ I use the term “Indian” advisedly, but that is the term used in the colonial period and sometimes today.

¹⁸² Fernandez, *Mexican-American Catholics*, 7.

cultures had on missionary thinking."¹⁸³ Native cultural understandings of divinity and Catholic theology together created a hybrid mix of indigenous religion within the larger imposed Catholic framework. The classic example of this is the figure of La Virgen de Guadalupe, formerly worshipped as Tonantzin (our true Mother). The temple of the Aztec goddess on the hill of Tepayac outside Mexico City was destroyed by the Spanish. But following an apparition on the same site in 1531, it appears that she was taken over, renamed, and venerated as the Mother of Jesus in Aztec visage.¹⁸⁴

Like the Irish, the Mexicans were a conquered people. Both had to learn how to creatively appropriate the dominant system in order to survive. About this Michel de Certeau writes:

[T]he spectacular victory of Spanish colonization over the indigenous Indian cultures was diverted from its intended aims by the use made of it; even when they were subjected, indeed even when they accepted their subjection, the Indians often used the laws, practices, and representations that were imposed on them by force or by fascination to ends other than those of their conquerors; they made something else out of them; they subverted them from within. . . . They remained other within the system which they assimilated and which assimilated them externally.¹⁸⁵

With the conquest in 1521 of the Aztec imperial capital, Tenochtitlan, we can definitively mark the origins of Mexican Catholicism. The Spaniards renamed the city, Mexico, and the vast territory (from the Isthmus of Panama to modern-day Denver) over which they expanded, New Spain. A devout Catholic, Cortez, the Conqueror, petitioned the King of Spain to send regular clergy rather than secular priests to minister to the Indians of Mexico. His reasoning was that secular clergy, not vowed to poverty, would live lavishly, whereas the mendicant friars (Franciscans, Dominicans and, later, Augustinians) would live modestly, more in the manner of the conquered peoples, and thus be in a better position to minister to their indigenous flock. The

¹⁸³ Osvaldo F. Prado, *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism: Nahua Rituals and Christian Sacraments in Sixteenth Century Mexico* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 16.

¹⁸⁴ Orlando O. Espin, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997). 151.

¹⁸⁵ de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 31-32.

result was that twelve Franciscans—the first missionaries from Spain—were dispatched for this purpose.¹⁸⁶

The brand of Catholicism preached by the missionaries was peculiar for a number of reasons. Europe's southwestern peninsula was removed and far less engaged in the issues and debates raging in northern Europe at the time of the Protestant Reformation. Christianity in Spain continued for the most part as it had for centuries, imbued with the devotional fervor and mindset of the Middle Ages. It was slow to implement the decrees of the Council of Trent, which concluded in 1560, and whose purpose was to revamp the Catholic Church in response to the Reformation. It is worth noting that the evangelization of this territory was by and large completed before Trent. Consequently, the Catholicism exported to Mexico and New Spain was the older Medieval Catholicism, which Orlando Espin calls Western Christianity and not the newly fashioned Tridentine Roman Catholicism. "Spain was still a medieval nation, and many of the institutions she brought to the new world, like many of the men who established them, were also medieval."¹⁸⁷

This is relevant because the character of Medieval Christianity was imbued with emotionality. It was more "popular" in nature, communicating the faith to non-practitioners through image, enactment and festivals. On the other hand, Tridentine Catholicism—fashioned in large part as an apologetic to Protestant attack—sought to reeducate and redirect the devotion of the faithful toward a more systematic intellectual understanding of their faith. Erroneous theological conceptions and excesses of former times were to be corrected. Ideally, Tridentine Catholics, especially those fortunate enough to have been Jesuit trained, were catechized to defend their faith, whereas those formed in the older Medieval model *felt* their religion more in terms of a simpler, direct spiritual experience.

In addition to this distinction another historical factor greatly influenced Spanish Catholicism, giving it a particularly zealous edge. Long before the conquest of Mexico another

¹⁸⁶ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, vol. 1 (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 454.

¹⁸⁷ Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 97.

conquest powerfully shaped the faith, character, and identity of Spaniards. For eight hundred years Christians in Spain had been at various times fired by the dream of *Reconquista*, that is, the retaking of those areas of Iberia under Muslim control. The initial conquest occurred between 711 and 718, when Muslim armies of the Umayyad Caliphate advanced up from North Africa through Gibraltar, swept three quarters of the Iberian Peninsula, and laid claim to the Christian Visigothic Kingdom of Hispania. They renamed it in Arabic *al-Andalus*.

The Christian dream of reconquering the land took on special urgency in the tenth and eleventh centuries, romantically heralded in epic sagas such as *El Cid* and *The Song of Roland*. The figure of the Virgin Mary, in particular, was enlisted as patroness of the *Reconquista*. Not surprisingly, she would emerge again as the premiere symbol in the evangelization of Mexico under the title of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, and still later in galvanizing homeland patriotism in Mexican wars for independence.

The tipping point, however, came late in the fifteenth century, when in order to achieve a united kingdom in the Iberian Peninsula, the monarchs of Aragon and Castile married and enacted their program to forge a united Spain. In 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella—their Catholic Majesties (as they were styled)—ordered Jews to convert to Catholicism or leave Spain. Soon afterward a similar decree handed the same ultimatum to Moors, Spanish Muslims. Centuries remarkable for their religious tolerance gave way to enforced uniformity. The old order, whereby Iberia had been one of the most religiously tolerant and diverse regions of Europe—with Christians, Jews, and Muslims peacefully living and working together and even intermarrying—was over. As one scholar put it, “Religious deviancy was no longer to be tolerated as it had been before.”¹⁸⁸

The evangelistic brand of the early Spanish missionaries and settlers was further influenced by the fact that most of them hailed from southern Spain, the heartland of the Moors who held out the longest against the Christian Reconquest. When Spaniards from this region arrived on the shores of the New World, they were intensely religious, many of them fanatical.

¹⁸⁸ Karen Armstrong, commentary in *Christianity: The Second Thousand Years, Part 3*. Documentary produced by Filmroos, Inc. for A&E Television Networks, 2000.

One scholar observes the irony: “Hernan Cortez was a deeply devout Christian, who went to mass and received communion every day, but who was also a thief and a murderer.”¹⁸⁹ Such was the extreme character of their Catholicism. “The *Reconquista* helped to create the equally contradictory Spanish national character displayed throughout colonial Latin America: vicious intolerance and heroic generosity, deep and sincere commitment to Christianity and quick disregard for some very basic Christian values.”¹⁹⁰

A third feature impacting Spanish colonial Catholicism stemmed from an arrangement made by the pope with the Spanish and Portuguese monarchs called the *Patronato Real*. The Holy See hereby relinquished church governance in the Americas to Portugal with regard to Brazil, and to Spain with regard to the remaining western territory. In the latter case, this unprecedented move was in recognition of Spain’s championing of the church during the long *Reconquista*. Through this arrangement the Vatican ceded to the Spanish monarch the appointment of bishops and the structuring and oversight of the church in newly acquired Spanish-controlled lands. The marriage of church and state was complete—“Spain was the defender of the Faith.”¹⁹¹

Evangelistic efforts in New Spain aimed at establishing the church’s presence on three fronts: 1) erection of missions to serve the Indian population, 2) appointment of chaplains to serve military garrisons (such was the origin of the *presidio* of Tucson), and 3) creation of parishes to meet the needs of Mexicans.

Represented by the ever-present sword and cross together, from the outset the motives of Spaniards in the Americas were mixed. “Civil and sacred interests were intertwined in a system so thorough and so complex as scarcely to be separated, so permanent and pervasive that organic union escapes any but a careful observer.”¹⁹² Highlighting this unholy alliance of church and state, Prado claims, “Cortes became a powerful if equivocal symbol of the Spanish

¹⁸⁹ Justo L. Gonzalez, commentary in *Christianity: The Second Thousand Years*. Documentary produced by A&E Television Networks, 2000.

¹⁹⁰ Espin, *Faith of the People*, 51.

¹⁹¹ Paz, *Labyrinth*, 97.

¹⁹² W. Eugene Shiels, *King and Church: The Rise and Fall of the Patronato Real* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1961), 9.

presence in Mexican lands: as either an inspired crusader with a sacred mission or an agent of destruction.”¹⁹³ With his aim to capture Tenochtitlan, capital of the Aztec empire, Cortez advanced, destroying as he went the idols of various tribes. However, he refrained from doing this in the case of the Tlascalans, whose crucial alliance he sought against the Aztecs. “Thus, an odd combination of political expediency and fanatical zeal set the tone for Spanish religious policies in Mexico.”¹⁹⁴

Spain’s rise to power came as a direct result of regaining the Iberian Peninsula from Muslim rule. In return for having driven out the Moors, the pope granted the Spanish Crown authority over the Church within its domain, effectively making it the arm of the State. The result of this merging of ecclesial responsibility under governmental oversight meant that missionary priests, such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits, represented the Spanish Crown as much as they did the Church. The *encomienda* system with its large landholdings was imposed, and Indians were granted as servants to Spanish *encomenderos*, in a kind of virtual slavery. In turn, the Spaniards were charged to protect the natives and teach them the Christian faith. Yet the system, joining as it did economic and religious goals, was rife with abuses.

As Moises Sandoval points out, “[O]ppression went beyond economic exploitation.”¹⁹⁵ Evangelization represented a frontal attack on indigenous beliefs and practices. Religious artefacts and symbols were confiscated or destroyed. Gathering places for ritual ceremonies were closed or defaced. Corporal punishment was brought to bear on the recalcitrant. The goal was to inculcate respect for Spanish political systems and legal authority through the imposition of this new religious regime. As Jennifer Hughes explains, “The program of the missionaries sought to persuade the Indians to abandon not only their religion but their culture as well.”¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Pardo, *Origins of Mexican Catholicism*, 4.

¹⁹⁴ Gonzalez, *Story of Christianity*, 454

¹⁹⁵ Moises Sandoval, *On the Move: A History of the Hispanic Church in the United States* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 24.

¹⁹⁶ Jennifer Schepher Hughes, *Biography of a Mexican Crucifix: Lived Religion and Local Faith from the Conquest to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.

Also concurring on the radical nature of Spanish evangelization of the native peoples, Edwin Gaustad remarks, “Christianity represented a repudiation of all ancestral ways.”¹⁹⁷

In terms of the evangelization of the indigenous peoples of Mexico, there is no question but that the idea of the Christian God was used by the Spanish to justify the conquest. The might of this God had given them the victory. Like the people, the gods of the Aztecs had also been vanquished. But as with any effort of evangelization, the people to be converted could only accept those ideas or doctrines they could relate to experientially. And what the conquered people of Mexico could most relate to was the idea of a suffering God. Not surprisingly the crucifix became the great emblem of their faith.¹⁹⁸

Santos Vega, who received his doctorate from Arizona State University, has published several articles on Mexican history. Over coffee in his Tempe home he put it to me succinctly, “The main difference between the Mexican Catholic and the Anglo Catholic is the Anglo Catholic will emphasize resurrection and the Mexican Catholic faith will emphasize the suffering of Christ.”¹⁹⁹

This ethos of a suffering God for a vanquished people was reinforced later through Mexican experience of disenfranchisement and discrimination, especially in my subject area—the former Mexican frontier, now the American Southwest. In Chapter Four I will comment on the similarity of the experience of Catholics in Ireland, which likewise paralleled in many ways this saga of subjugation, oppression, and religious persecution.

Along with other colonizing powers of the time, the Spanish shared a conviction of superiority in their encounter with the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Theirs was the epitome of civilization, theirs the true faith, theirs the highest cultural attainment. These Europeans were Christians who saw themselves by nature superior to the “heathens” they encountered. The latter were seen as barbaric and their religion (if they had any) was dismissed as devil worship. The encounter was anything but a dialogue or an exchange among equals,

¹⁹⁷ Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 2002), 19.

¹⁹⁸ Hughes, *Biography*, 7.

¹⁹⁹ Santos Vega, Personal Interview by author. Tempe, AZ, 26 January 2013.

rather, it was one of bloody conquest. Indigenous people had two options: liquidation or imposed conversion.

We might pause to reflect here on the meaning and goal of coercion in the spread of religion. Max Weber noted that some religions are “emissary” traditions. That is, they are missionary in their thrust to proclaim and advance their message. This is the case with Christianity and Islam and less so with Buddhism. As one scholar remarks, “[T]he issue is not so much a question of force as it is a question of whether a religious tradition that has a special message for which it claims universal significance has a right to try to persuade people of its truth. The answer has to be yes, so long as the persuasion does not interfere with personal freedom.”²⁰⁰ But, historically speaking, the nod to personal freedom was, more often than not, a fiction.

A stipulation called the *Requerimiento* was a formal promulgation read by Spanish troops upon subduing native villages in regions they conquered. It ordered that if the Indians accept the Christian faith it would go well with them, but if not

we shall powerfully enter into your country, and shall make war against you in all ways and manners that we can, and shall subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church and of their highness; we shall take you, and your wives, and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such shall sell and dispose of them as their highnesses may command; and we shall take away your goods, and shall do you all mischief and damage that we can, as to vassals who do not obey, and refuse to receive their lord, and resist and contradict him; and we protest that the deaths and losses which shall accrue from this are your fault, and not that of their highness, or ours, nor of these cavaliers who come with us.²⁰¹

The survival instinct is a compelling urge in times of defeat. Not surprisingly, those native peoples who were not killed by European weapons or diseases overwhelmingly entered the Christian fold.

²⁰⁰ Richard E. Wentz, *Religion in the New World: The Shaping of Religious Traditions in the United States* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 31.

²⁰¹ Wilcomb, Washburn, ed., “El Requerimiento,” in *The Indian and the White Man* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1964), 307-308.

Race

It was more than faith that fueled the divisions riving late 15th Century Spain. We must now consider another major fact of the Mexican experience. This other key factor which was to impact the development of Mexican Catholicism was blood.

According to the Crown, religion was tied to ethnicity when it came to determining who was a true Spaniard. Adherents of the three Abrahamic faiths in general had experienced centuries of harmony in Iberia. But as the *Reconquista* drew on and gained intensity, many Christians began entertaining the idea of religious identity as a gauge of civic authenticity and loyalty. Religious orthodoxy eventually came to testify to *limpieza de sangre*, that is, the purity of one's blood. "The obsession with 'purity of blood' (and the presumption that it existed in nature) began, in Western Europe, at least in post-*reconquista* Spain. The expulsion of the Jews and the Moors was supposed to have purged Iberia of inferior inhabitants and to have left an untainted Iberian race."²⁰² This, incidentally, is the early harbinger of racially pitched anti-Semitism later seen in the Holocaust. The dilemma for Moors and Jews in Spain was no longer religious (though the single governmental solution, conversion, was). Now these minorities had to grapple with a construction of "otherness" along racial lines (a peculiarly modern twist to age-old antipathies).

The Spanish brought this notion of racial purity to bear in their organization of Mexican society. Unlike the English colonists who early on immigrated with their families to America, maintaining a sharper distinction from the indigenous peoples, the pattern among the Spanish was that of single soldiers and adventurers who settled in the Americas and either married or begat children with native women. This blending or *mestizaje* gave rise to the *mestizo* or mixed race, Mexico's chief ethnic trademark. At the same time notions surrounding *mestizaje* perpetuated the myth of whiteness, that is, those less mixed, who had lighter skin, were more pure than darker people. Racialized hierarchies "have consistently consigned 'non-white'

²⁰² Federic Raphael, Book Review of *The Invention of the Jewish People* by Shlomo Sand. *Truth Dig*. Published 24 February 2010. Accessed 26 March 2015. <http://inventionofthejewishpeople.com/2010/02/federic-raphael-reviews-shlomo-sand%E2%80%99s-the-invention-of-the-jewish-people-for-truthdig/>.

populations to the lowest rung of the social ladder.”²⁰³ Thus, a spectrum of racial purity held sway, and as colonial society grew a well-defined caste system developed.

At the top were the *peninsulares* or *gachupines*. These were elite Spaniards, aristocrats of noble birth, who held the highest posts in government and the church. They dominated the social and political life until late in the eighteenth century. Next came the *criollos*, those born in Mexico of Spanish parents. While only a few rose above a secondary level, many others managed to prosper by becoming landowners and merchants. A growing number came to enjoy lives of leisure thanks to the toil of Indians who turned their farms, ranches, mines and commercial ventures into productive enterprises. Anyone with a drop of Indian blood was demoted to the mestizo castes. These formed a middle category of mixed race (Spanish and Indian), while Indians with no Spanish blood comprised the bottom of the social pyramid. One’s racial caste was declared and assigned for life by the priest performing a child’s baptism. As for Mexican priests, only *criollos* qualified since *mestizos*, for at least two centuries, were considered unfit for Holy Orders.²⁰⁴ As Homi Bhabha observes, “The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin.”²⁰⁵

In writing about Mexican American identity, Laura Gomez points out that in the [American] Southwest Mexicans experienced what she calls “a double colonization.” Her term shines light on the fact that there were echoes of the older racial order of Spanish-Mexican for later Mexicans negotiating their identity vis-a-vis Euro-Americans.²⁰⁶ The thinking and practice of Euro-Americans drew on the already existing template for placing Mexican Americans in the racial categories of New Spain. Joan Moore reminds us of a dual dynamic at work in the construction of identity. “One conceptualizes identity within the group (endogenous) but may also have an identity imposed by others (exogenous).”²⁰⁷ Many scholars today agree that the

²⁰³ Ali Rattansi, “Just Framing: Ethnicities and Racisms in a ‘Postmodern’ Framework,” in *Social Postmodernism*, eds. L. Nicholson and S. Seidman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 254.

²⁰⁴ Espin, *Faith of the People*, 85.

²⁰⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge Press, 1994), 101.

²⁰⁶ Laura E. Gomez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 47.

²⁰⁷ Joan Moore, “‘Hispanic/Latino’ Imposed Label or Real Identity?” *Latino Studies Journal*, vol. 1, no 2, (May, 1990), 36.

construct of race is an imposed category on the part of a hegemonic social group, or to put it another way, “‘race situations’ exist when so defined by public policy.”²⁰⁸

Much has been written about the role of race with regard to Mexican identity. Neither white nor black, neither fully Spanish nor completely Indian, Mexicans in America occupied an in-between position in terms of race, something more like, off-white, to use Laura Gomez’ term. “Mexican Americans, as a group, have continued to be off-white, neither definitively white nor definitively non-white.”²⁰⁹

The “color line” (to borrow W. E. B. DuBois’ term) was something of a sliding scale. That is to say, some groups who were once seen as not white came over time to be accepted as white. Noel Ignatiev explores the question of who is white and who is non-white with regard to the Irish. He maintains that Irish Catholics were not considered white by their English overlords, as a way of subjugating and stigmatizing them. Even in the early years, Irish immigrants in America were still regarded as “not white,” and only gradually became “white” when they began to climb the socio-economic ladder.

Luke Gibbons asks us to think about this in terms of practical necessity and the story of Ireland’s oppression. He points out, “The need to define themselves as white presented itself as an urgent imperative to the degraded Irish who arrived in the United States after the Famine, if they were not to be reduced to servitude once more.”²¹⁰ The color hierarchy assigns a higher status to the most wretched “white” person over the most exalted “non-white.” Hence, white always outranks non-white and off-white. As Theodore Allen puts it, “The hallmark of racial oppression [is the reduction of] all members of the oppressed group to one undifferentiated social status, a status beneath that of any member of any social class.”²¹¹

Some suggest that the self-identifier *Hispanic* serves to preserve ties to the Mexican past and preserves a sense of exotic flavor—like salsa—while not surrendering a claim to whiteness.

²⁰⁸ David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 4.

²⁰⁹ Gomez, *Manifest Destinies*, 149.

²¹⁰ Gibbons, “Unapproved Roads,” in *Distant Relations*, 62.

²¹¹ Theodore W. Allen, cited in Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge Press, 2009), 2.

“The history of Mexican Americans in the southwest is thus more than the history of their ‘becoming’ Mexican American or; for many, especially those of the middle class, it is also the history of their becoming White.”²¹² The desire to achieve higher social rank through altered “color” perception, drove some Mexican Americans to call themselves Spanish. By claiming a European heritage, they distanced themselves from new waves of immigrants from Mexico who were often of darker skin, poor, illiterate, and unable to speak English.²¹³ Nobody wanted to be at the bottom of non-whiteness. “Choosing the Caucasian option, as had the Irish before them, enabled some Mexican Americans to forge White racial identities that were constructed, as Toni Morrison has accurately observed, ‘on the backs of blacks.’”²¹⁴

David Montejano eloquently elucidates this pattern of how race in the American Southwest was mediated by economic status. Mexican farmworkers and seasonal pickers with meager means were definitely non-white; their poverty “darkened” them. Whereas, those Mexicans who owned property or ran a business, who, in other words, had wherewithal, were regarded as white. As he succinctly puts it, “money whitens.”²¹⁵ Later, in the 1960’s, Mexican American activists who called themselves *Chicanos* rejected whiteness altogether and sought instead to reclaim their Indian heritage as a form of ethnic pride and brown empowerment.

Montejano’s point is well taken for it highlights an element that is almost ubiquitous in the torturous construction of race, namely, class. Bhabha calls our attention to the ambivalent use of “different” used in the service of class. Being “different” from those who are designated “different” makes one the same. Thus, it can happen that a professional, a writer, or a student of color is declared “different” and not like the others. This kind of class or status enables him or her to be categorized as *the same* by the dominant white culture. Deemed “different” from the others, they

²¹² Neil Foley, “Becoming Hispanic: Mexican Americans and the Faustian Pact with Whiteness,” *Reflexiones 1997: New Directions in Mexican American Studies*, ed. Neil Foley (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 53.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

²¹⁴ Foley, “Becoming Hispanic,” 55.

²¹⁵ Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans*, 314.

are claimed as one of *us*.²¹⁶ As Bhabha point outs, “Class identity is autoreferential surmounting other instances of social difference.”²¹⁷

As feminists point out there are various tiers of discrimination which people can be subjected to. Race or color is one; another is gender. Gloria Anzaldua has written extensively on the metaphor of borderlands or what she calls *la frontera*. For her the term captures the consciousness of *chicana* women. She notes the double colonization inflicted on her people first in the Spanish conquest and then in the U.S. invasion of Mexico. But she draws our attention to the unique consciousness that characterizes *chicanas*. This is a consciousness that does not accept notions of ethnic or cultural purity or the dominant culture’s model of oppositional polarities. Rather, the *chicana* weaves a tapestry of many strands of complex reality and human identities. We can compare Anzaldua’s insights surrounding borderlands consciousness with the “double consciousness,” which W. E. B. DuBois maintained characterized socially marginalized blacks. But as one Hispanic writer points out, “Anzaldua’s proposal goes far beyond dualistic understandings of consciousness.”²¹⁸ The definitive quality of *mestiza* consciousness, according to Anzaldua is “a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity.”²¹⁹

The Spanish term *mestizaje* is used to express the intermixture of Spanish and native populations. Unlike English colonizers who settled in North America largely as family units, the Spanish (as well as French and Portuguese) settlers in the Americas were mainly comprised of men who married into and had families with the indigenous peoples. The resulting offspring of this mixed ancestry are referred to as *mestizos* who became Mexico’s dominant population. Descendants of strictly Spanish parentage, a minority of the population, are called *criollos*.

Much has been written about the historical significance of *mestizaje*. It found an eloquent interpreter in the first half of the twentieth-century Mexican philosopher and politician Jose Vasconcelos. Father of the modern Brown Pride movement his philosophy of *indigenismo*

²¹⁶ Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 64.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 318.

²¹⁸ Claudia Milian, “Breaking into the Borderlands: Double Consciousness, Latina and Latino Misplacements” (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 2001), 33-79.

²¹⁹ Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 79.

celebrates *mestizo* roots and reality as the emergence of *la raza cosmica* (the cosmic race).²²⁰

Vasconcelos critiques the English who “married only whites and exterminated the natives. . . . [which thus] demonstrates their limitations [and] decadence.” But he extolls the process of *mestizaje* as serving “the ultimate purpose of history, which is to achieve the fusion of peoples and cultures.” For Vasconcelos *mestizos* are the cutting edge of civilization and represent “the formation of a new race.” He exudes, “We are tomorrow’s people.”²²¹ But not all saw *mestizaje* as a strength. Many on the outside viewed such mixture as a perversion. “To the Texas sheriff and the average White person in America, however, race mixing was a menace to the purity of the Nordic race that, unchecked, would lead to the demise of White civilization.”²²²

Nor are all scholars sanguine in their estimation of what the *mestizaje* of Spanish and native peoples of Mexico represents. Noting the travail through which Latinos in the United States have emerged—whether it be traced back to the rape of their ancestors by the conquistadores, the exploitation of the *ecomienda* on which they were forced to work, the violence of the African slave trade, or the illegal seizure of their land by the United States in the nineteenth century, or their victimization in political and economic struggles in other lands—Orlando Espin insists, “in *all* cases, the Latino cultural communities are here as the result of vanquishment, of having become the losing victims of someone else’s victory.”²²³

Whereas Vasconcelos sings the glories of *mestizaje*, Espin and others do not want us to forget the underlying tragedy. The latter scholars cite this as a primary reason for the accent on the suffering of Jesus and the sorrows of his mother prevalent in Mexican religiosity.

The Mexican venerates a bleeding and humiliated Christ, a Christ who has been beaten by the soldiers and humiliated by the judges, because he sees in him a transfigured image of his own identity. And this brings to mind Chauhtemoc, the young Aztec emperor, who was dethroned, tortured and murdered by Cortez.²²⁴

²²⁰ José Vasconcelos, “The Cosmic Race,” in *Prophets Denied Honor: An Anthology on the Hispanic Church in the United States*, ed. Antonio M. Stevens Arroyo (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980), 34-35.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

²²² Foley, “Becoming Hispanic,” 57.

²²³ Espin, *Faith of the People*, 21.

²²⁴ Paz, *Labyrinth*, 83.

Alongside this emphasis, however, they note the spirit of rebellion and hope in the Mexican psyche.

Paralleling Joan Moore's idea of a "double colonization," Virgil Elizondo speaks of a "double *mestizaje*." He argues that this came about from two invasions of Mexico: the initial one by Cortez and the second by the United States in 1848. The first saw a mixing of Spanish and indigenous peoples with the Spaniards imposing their culture and religion upon the Native population. The second *mestizaje*, more cultural in nature, saw Mexicans pressured to shed much of their cultural roots, traditions, and practices in the face of U.S. dominance.²²⁵

Taking Vasconcelos' celebration of the new race of *Mestizaje* further, Virgil Elizondo has written that the *mestizo* experience and identity actually gives us insight into Jesus, who he maintains should be understood as a *mestizo* himself. He points out that Galilean Jews were regarded by Judeans as a somewhat mixed breed in that they hailed from the former northern kingdom of Israel which was conquered by Assyria in 721 BCE, and was subsequently a region peculiar for its mixed cultures.

Whether it be the Jews, the Mexicans, or the Irish, the eminent scholar, Homi Bhabha, shares a key insight with us: "[I]t is from those who have suffered the sentence of history—subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement—that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking."²²⁶

Official and Popular Religion

With its rich historical roots Mexican spirituality resembles a quilt-like patchwork of different colors and textures, ideas and themes. But central to it is the realization articulated by Carlos Fuentes. "Not only Catholicism, but something more like a deep sense of the sacred, a

²²⁵ For a detailed discussion of Elizondo's double *mestizaje*, see, Nestor Medina, "Mestizaje, a Theological Reading of Culture and Faith: Reflections on Virgil Elizondo's Theological Method," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology*.

²²⁶ Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 246.

recognition that the world is holy . . . is probably the oldest and deepest certitude of the Amerindian world.”²²⁷ A priest who studied Mexican farm workers in California remarked on the pre-Columbian roots of their spirituality, especially their innate ability to contemplate, by concluding, “They know they are in the presence of the holy.”²²⁸ One theologian goes so far as to maintain that Hispanic spirituality owes more to “indigenous cultural elements than [to] official Roman Catholic worship patterns.” He claims that their vision “is intuitive rather than rational, open to nature instead of blinded by ego, communitarian rather than individualistic, in which all that is visible symbolized a greater reality on whom everyone depends.”²²⁹ In Chapter Five we will explore the marked parallel with the pre-Christian background of Irish Catholics and the influence of their Druidic roots.

Whether they are immigrants from Mexico or their descendants, ethnic Mexicans are the largest population of Hispanic origin living in the United States, accounting for nearly two-thirds (64.9%) of the U.S. Hispanic population in 2010.²³⁰ They typify what can be said of American Hispanic spirituality in general, which Gilberto Cavazos-Gonzales describes as: relational, emotional, festive, Christocentric, and transcendent. He maintains that this spirituality represents a form of popular Catholicism and goes on to explain, “‘Popular’ does not mean in the order of preference but rather that it comes from and belongs to the people. It is by being part of the people that the individual is cultivated, ‘traditioned’ if you will.”²³¹ Regarding these people who are subjects of my research, Professor Eric Meeks described their brand of religion as “Sonoran Catholicism or Folk Catholicism . . . exemplified in the different kinds of practices they have for

²²⁷ Carlos Fuentes, *The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Press, 1992), 346-347.

²²⁸ Daniel Gerard Groody, *Corazon y Conversion: Mexican Immigration, Christian Spirituality, and Human Transformation*. (Ph.D. diss., Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, CA, 2000), 143.

²²⁹ Juan Schobinger, cited in Moises Sandoval, *On the Move: A History of the Hispanic Church in the United States*, 4.

²³⁰ Seth Motel and Eileen Patten, “Hispanics of Mexican Origin in the United States, 2010,” *Pew Center Hispanic Research*. Accessed 15 January 2013. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/06/27/hispanics-of-mexican-origin-in-the-united-states-2010/>

²³¹ Gilberto Cavazos-Gonzalez, “Spirituality,” *Hispanic American Religious Cultures*, vol. 2, ed. Miguel A. De La Torre (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Press, 2009), 758.

blessing of the saints . . . the *curanderos* and the importance of the *compadrazgo* [the bond of *compadres* forged between parents and their children's godparents]."²³²

For a religious tradition to be real, to be relevant, and to be able to compel allegiance it must resonate with people's experience. Hence, a divergence can exist between a hierarchical expression (the official version) and that of a particular group within the same church. As regards the Catholic Faith, we can make a distinction between Tradition with a capital "T" and traditions with a small "t". Much of the debate over Mexican religiosity, I maintain, has to do with this distinction. As Antonio Stevens Arroyo notes, "Their [Hispanics'] tradition-transmitted religion has become more important to them than the model of church that comes from non-Hispano experience."²³³

Set against the backdrop of the much longer debate over the meaning of culture, the discussion of the difference and meaning of "official" versus "popular" religion exercises many scholars in the field of religious studies today. Most reject the older two-tier descriptive model, which privileges the former as normative and the later as derivative at best. It has been suggested that we are better served by the term local rather than popular, because popular religions "are tied to a specific place and a historical constituency."²³⁴ The study of every religion must be contextualized, but to label certain religious expressions local appears to downplay the many other influences that are extraneous to locale. This is especially true with regard to the Mexican experience. Scholar Eamon Duffy eschews the terms official and popular religion and proposes calling the latter "traditional."²³⁵ This reflects the role of handed down beliefs and practices over generations even back to pre-Christian times. Yet the official church, too, is traditional, handing down customs and beliefs going back to the distant past.

²³² Dr. Eric Meeks, Personal Interview by author. Flagstaff, Arizona, 30 September 2012.

²³³ Stevens Arroyo, "Prologue," in *Prophets Denied Honor*, 3.

²³⁴ William A. Christian, Jr., *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 178.

²³⁵ Eamon Duffy, *Stripping the Altars: Traditional Religion in England circa 1400 to circa 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

Scholars like Harvey Cox incline toward an understanding of popular religion as the “faith of those groups which have been least integrated into the premises of modern society.”²³⁶ But there are ample examples of persons who are well-integrated into society, yet cling to beliefs and practices regarded as superstitious by the official church. Another classification, namely, that of religion “as lived” or “as practiced,” likewise, only goes so far, in that all religions are lived and practiced. So the terms themselves are problematic and inadequate.

Adding to the difficulty is the common penchant to view these dyads—whatever we mean by “official” and especially whatever we mean by “popular”—monolithically, as if they constitute communities or viewpoints cohering in an imagined unity. Individuals’ different perspectives, expectations, and motivations, in turn, constellate different experiences. Considering the “popular” level, Irish anthropologist, Lawrence Taylor, notes that people at the same event bring to it what he calls their own “fields of religious experience.” He writes, “Thus, at any given religious occasion, ethnographic exploration might discern, not only different ‘degrees’ of belief, but also distinct ‘fields’ of religious experience—interpretive frameworks shared by groups within the assembled crowd.”²³⁷ On the “official” level he cites the politics of “religious regimes” competing with one in the attempt to shape the devotional lives of the people.

Perhaps we should imagine these descriptive polarities in terms of two modes or spaces. One could be called the church of the sanctuary and the other the church of the vestibule. The former clearly is the domain of the clergy, of official preaching and pronouncements, while the latter belongs to the laity. The vestibule is an in-between space, where people come in from the outside, but before they enter the formal church area. Here news is shared, prayer requests are put up on the bulletin board, and a fellowship is fostered among the faithful, which easily crosses the boundaries of established church domain to include home and neighborhood. Ultimately, it is here that the people live. Their faith and how it is expressed arises from their needs, aspirations, and particular circumstances, such as social marginalization.

²³⁶ Harvey Cox, *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology* (New York: Touchstone, Simon and Schuster, 1984), 240.

²³⁷ Taylor, “Healing Mass,” 96.

Instead of drawing too sharp a dichotomy, we should think, rather, in terms of a continuum. Sometimes the Church meets the needs of the people, sometimes it does not. It seems obvious that popular religion arises because it meets the people's needs. However, sometimes it does not meet their needs either, as in the case of *santitos* who anger their devotees by not answering their requests. But usually popular devotion finds a way to hold both together. For instance, there are many examples in Mexico of shrines set up honoring a local *curandero* not approved of by the Church, yet, more often than not, somewhere included in the display will be the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, along with some other saints recognized by the church. So this official-popular polarity can be understood not as a matter of either/or, but rather of both/and.

However, even here there may be limits. At the time of this writing, there have been many reports and articles written about the increasingly popular cult of *Santa Muerte* (Holy or Saint Death). This personification features a human skeleton with a scythe in its hand. First male, it later morphed into "the bony lady" clad in lace and pink silk. The new cult appears to emanate from Mexico's prisons and from its notorious narco-culture. Nevertheless, it is also embraced by many who consider themselves devout Catholics. The Vatican is scrambling to respond to this new devotion.²³⁸

Orlando Espin, a leader in the study of Hispanic popular Catholicism, does not see the popular-official poles of religion as necessarily hostile to one another. But he does think that they often misunderstand one another, which sets up clashes. He maintains that this is largely due to the official church's indifference and disdain toward popular religiosity and the exercise of clerical power over the powerless.

He finds validation for popular forms of Mexican religious expression at the heart of the Tradition (a term he capitalizes), namely, in the perennial doctrine of the *sensus fidelium*. In modern times church leaders have narrowly defined the source of ecclesial teaching authority, the Magisterium, as subsisting in the pope and the college of bishops. Almost alone in the 19th

²³⁸ See R. Andrew Chesnut, *Devoted to Death: Santa Muerte, the Skeleton Saint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Century, Cardinal John Henry Newman invoked the more ancient tradition, which he called the church's three-fold *Magisteria*: hierarchy, theologians, and people together.

The tradition of the Apostles, committed to the whole Church in its various constituents and functions per *modum unius*, manifests itself variously at various times: sometimes by the mouth of the episcopacy, sometimes by the doctors, sometimes by the people, sometimes by liturgies, rites, ceremonies, and customs, by events, disputes, movements, and all those other phenomena which are comprised under the name of history. It follows that none of these channels of tradition may be treated with disrespect.²³⁹

In 1964, by redefining the church as “The People of God,” the Second Vatican Council corrected the virtual marginalization of the faithful. The Council prefers the term *sensus fidei*, sense of faith, but explicitly includes the faithful in this sense: “Thanks to a supernatural sense of the faith which characterizes the People as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when, ‘from the bishops down to the last member of the laity’, it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals” (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 12).²⁴⁰

Espin celebrates this sense or intuition, as an established, recognized, authentic source of discerning and expressing the Catholic faith. He argues that “popular religion can be theologically understood as a cultural expression of the *sensus fidelium*. . . . [A]s important as the written texts of Tradition (or, in fact, more important) is the *living witness and faith* of the Christian people.”²⁴¹

Cristian Parker, a Chilean sociologist of religion, states, “Popular religion is the religion of life, rather than the religion of ethics or reason. . . . It is an alternative to an Enlightenment rationality and the kind of rationalized faith that is the product of rationality”²⁴² The term “alternative” points not only to another option or variety, but can also convey the attitude of resistance. As Espin makes clear, whatever we mean by popular religion, it is frequently the religion of the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized. He shows that, from the outset, the

²³⁹ John Henry Newman, *The Rambler*, vol. 1 (London: Central Publishing Office, 1859), 205.

²⁴⁰ “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.” Accessed 26 March 2015.
http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

²⁴¹ Espin, *Faith of the People*, 64-65.

²⁴² Cristian Parker, *Popular Religion and Modernization in Latin America: A Different Kind of Logic* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 109-110.

religion of mestizos, natives and slaves was different from that of the Spanish and criollo elites. This difference reflects their resistance, which, he claims, is all the “more meaningful for the affirmation and survival of their identity as a people”²⁴³ Mario Garcia, highlighting the independence and agency which popular religion gives the common people, points out, “Popular religion is that aspect of Catholicism that is more under the control of the people themselves rather than the clergy.”²⁴⁴

Bishop Ricardo Ramirez believes that popular religion constitutes a unique interpretive lens. He writes, “Popular religion or *religiosidad popular*, is a racial or ethnic group’s collective interpretation of the sacred. It is an integrative world-view that includes all dimensions of life: magical, symbolic, imaginative, mystical, farcical, theatrical, political, and communal.”²⁴⁵

Joe Briceno is a former Mexican American priest of the Phoenix Diocese. He has an intellectual bent and during his ministry often complained about priests who pandered to Mexican devotionalism instead of educating and challenging the people to a more enlightened understanding of their faith. At his home where I interviewed him, he had this to say.

I’ve come to understand that even the thinking that I was bought up in—the official view, let’s say, in the Catholic church—that it’s a map, it’s an attempt, it’s an effort to try to—in an intelligent way and in a logical way—explain how the Divine, how God works in this world. I used to have a negative outlook on popular religiosity. But I see that that too is nothing more than an effort on a more personal, maybe not sophisticated, level of trying to come to terms with who God is, who I am, what is the relationship? It’s all of value. I wouldn’t privilege the official over the popular religion, and much less now.²⁴⁶

One example of a popular expression has to do with how healing is accessed. Brett Henderson has written about the folk tradition of *curandismo*, which has been a feature of Mexican culture going back to pre-colonial times. It involves the healing arts and practices of a *curandero/a*, “including herbal remedies, *limpias*, massage, midwifery, the breaking of curses,

²⁴³ Espin, *Faith of the People*, 58.

²⁴⁴ Garcia, “Chicano Southwest,” 20.

²⁴⁵ Ricardo Ramirez, C.S.B., *Faith Expressions of Hispanics in the Southwest* (San Antonio: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1990), 6-7.

²⁴⁶ Joseph Briceno. Personal Interview by Author. Phoenix, AZ. 5 October 2012.

and counseling.”²⁴⁷ This gifted healer bears similarity to the seventh son of a seventh son and to old Irish beliefs in his inherited healing powers.

Not infrequently some healers rejected by the official church hierarchy, nonetheless, won the devotion and popular acclaim of the people. In our Tucson interview, Elena Diaz BJORQUIST told me,

My grandmother was a *curandera*. She was also a *partera* [midwife]. . . . But the most famous around here was Teresa Urrea. She was a healer. [She] was thrown out of Mexico by Portillo Diaz. So she and her father came to the United States. And then she travelled with a medicine company and toured all over the country. . . . She was excommunicated, of course. The people followed her and believed that she was a saint.”²⁴⁸

Behind the role and work of *curandismo* lies a unique worldview. Dr. Alberto Rios is a professor of English at Arizona State University. I found that he had so much to say about the Mexican mentality and the Irish priests that he graciously agreed to let me interview him on two separate occasions. He points out that Latin America has different ideas about medicine. Whereas Euroamericans want to use science, the Latin American will say, “I want to use what works.” Regardless of whether the folk remedies work or not, he goes on to remark, “You can’t underestimate the psychology of efficacy. I think that’s a very important thing—to believe the world is helping me. It’s like saying, the world wants to help me and I want to be helped.”²⁴⁹

More broadly, Mexican people embrace a relational spirituality which emerges from the community, more specifically from the family, and within the family from older women. These women are the primary transmitters of a faith which embraces Jesus, Mary, the saints, and spirits of the dead. In this religious understanding relationships matter more than doctrine, action more than liturgy. Hence, community, *la familia*, matters more than creeds. Such a faith—charged with emotion—is deeply felt, heart-centered, and demonstrative. It expresses not a matter of thinking so much as a way of being, of living and feeling. Trinidad and Augustina Rodriguez are an elderly couple who lived almost all their lives in Arizona. They began picking cotton in the

²⁴⁷ Brett Henderson, *Healing borders: Transcultural expressions of Mexican-American folk healing*. (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 2010), 1.

²⁴⁸ Elena Diaz BJORQUIST. Personal Interview by author. Tucson, Arizona, 11 January 2013.

²⁴⁹ Rios Interview.

1930's. After his service in World War II, Trinidad returned and took a job as foreman of the field workers near Casa Grande, Arizona. I visited them in their home, where as far as the eye can see there is nothing but cotton fields. They told me, "We used to celebrate everything. . . . Navidad, Las Posadas, Semana Santa, the Virgin Mary's birth, San Isidoro de Sevilla, El Dia de los Muertos, oh, so many things."²⁵⁰

As anthropologist Clifford Geertz maintained, culture is "a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men [sic] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life".²⁵¹ His definition applies to religious culture as well, for it too is inherited, communicates and orients a community toward a certain understanding and worldview.

Popular or Folk Religion

Robert Orsi, renowned for his work on *lived* religion, also emphasizes the centrality and power of community. Religion, in his estimation, is less about constructing meanings, formal ideas, or morality, but rather engages people in creating a network of relationships. In his opinion the overly analytical and objective bent of the modern study of religion leaves out much of people's qualitative religious experiences. Drawing on his own Italian Catholic immigrant family background, his writing sheds light on this sense of a spiritual community. Much of what he has to say can be directly applied to the Arizona Mexicans I have studied. They too hold dear relationships with sacred figures and are conscious of vital connections, between "heaven and earth"—to use his phrase.²⁵² For them, the meaning lies in the relationships.

Several of my Mexican informants, when referring to their faith and their spirituality, used the expression: "It was in the air we breathed." *Flor y canto* (flower and song) is a phrase frequently used by Mexican writers to connote beauty and truth. These symbols express the

²⁵⁰ Trinidad and Augustina Rodriguez, Personal Interview by author. Stanfield, Arizona, 6 August 2012.

²⁵¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.

²⁵² See Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

gusto and spontaneity of Mexican spirituality that erupts in *fiesta*—that is, the celebration of life with flowers, food, song, and dance. Arizona Irish priest Fr. Tom O’Dea is known by the nickname Tot. It suits him—a man who celebrates simplicity and revels in childlike spontaneity. These were the qualities he highlights when talking about the Mexican people: “I loved their culture, their spirituality, their laughter . . . they were like a bunch of kids.”²⁵³ Mexican informants consistently underscored cherished family bonds. A Mexican American woman in Tucson put it this way, “Personally, I feel Hispanics have a keen sense of family. They seem to be more openly devoted to one another, especially toward elders.”²⁵⁴

Nonetheless, as people who have experienced oppression and discrimination on either side of the border, Mexican spirituality readily identifies with the Passion of Christ and with the suffering aspect of life in general. Santos Vega summed it up, “My mother told us what my grandmother told her: you have to carry your cross. And that was the belief that I grew up with.”²⁵⁵

Related to my research is the question: What exactly is Mexican Catholicism? Through most of the last century, the church hierarchy and most Anglo Catholics looked askance at Mexican piety as “superstitious, weak, and not truly Catholic.”²⁵⁶ Scholars noted a distinction with regard to what constitutes “official” religion versus “popular” religion. For the most part they regard as separate and different the “official” Catholicism of the institutional church from the piety of “popular” Catholicism, the style often associated with Mexican people in the Southwest. P. M. Jones writes, “Most historians would sum up popular religion as an unholy mixture of paganism, peasant magic, and half-baked Christian doctrine.”²⁵⁷ Robert Orsi, however, disputes this dichotomy between “official” and “popular.” In his seminal work, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, he argues that this terminology is unhelpful, that “the designation of *popular religion* in relation to American religion was, among other things, a code for Catholic-like ritual and devotional

²⁵³ O’Dea Interview.

²⁵⁴ Delma Ariza, Personal Interview by author. Tucson, AZ, 16 August 2012.

²⁵⁵ Vega Interview.

²⁵⁶ Nabhan-Warren, *Virgin of El Barrio*, 10.

²⁵⁷ P. M. Jones, cited in Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810-1821* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 513.

practices, deemed inappropriate and even incomprehensible on the religious landscape of the United States.”²⁵⁸

But Mexicans in the American Southwest were doubly disdained as far as their brand of religiosity was concerned. Not only did white Protestants deem Mexican religious ways inferior and borderline fanatical,²⁵⁹ but Mexicans also experienced prejudice, if not scorn, from their fellow co-religionists. Economically better off and educationally better equipped, white Catholics held sway when it came to the institutional church’s attention and approval. And a kind of quiet, accepted racism existed in the Catholic Church of Arizona which led to the establishment of break-off parishes— some exclusively for Mexicans, some exclusively for Anglos, but designed to segregate these two groups of Catholics—in Phoenix, Tucson, Flagstaff, and Bisbee, as well as designated areas within some churches to keep white Catholics and Mexican Catholics separate. I will discuss this segregation of congregations in Chapter Three. As for the place of the generally poor Mexicans in the church, Tucson’s Msgr. Cahalane recalls, “They were almost invisible from the entire mix of the Catholic population in the Diocese of Tucson.”²⁶⁰

My research indicates that Irish priests, because of their own historical and devotional background could understand and appreciate their Mexican parishioners’ historical experience of oppression and discrimination. Not only this, but as Msgr. O’Grady shares, “Most of us came from poor backgrounds, mainly small farms.”²⁶¹ Curiously, most Mexican people who I interviewed told me that they preferred priests from Ireland, most of whom did not speak Spanish, to priests from Spain who did. Lupe Woodsen remarks,

I think people were more comfortable with the Irish priests than they were with the Spanish, because the Spanish priests were very critical of everything you did, whereas the Irish priests were a lot more welcoming, a lot more celebratory I remember the Spanish priests scolding us: sit up straight, don’t put your foot on the kneeler, and all that stuff. But I don’t remember the Irish priests being this way.²⁶²

As Fr. Harry Ledwith, Tucson priest and native of County Longford put it, “The Spanish

²⁵⁸ Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street*, xvii.

²⁵⁹ This is strikingly brought out in Linda Gordon’s, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*.

²⁶⁰ Cahalane Interview.

²⁶¹ O’Grady Interview.

²⁶² Woodsen Interview.

priest thinks he's a king." He went on to add, "They gave up women so they could rule them."²⁶³

Through interviews I have conducted, it is clear that most of the Irish priests felt a personal connection with the Mexican character which they encountered in Arizona. Most of them also made a choice to accept the Mexican people as they were and adapted their ecclesiology and pastoral style accordingly.

Mexicans on the Frontier

Mexico's northern frontier, what we today call the southwestern United States, was weak and sparsely populated in the first half of the nineteenth century. Following the Mexican War, when Mexico lost half its territory to the United States, there were only approximately 80,000 Mexicans living in the borderlands. The hold of the church on the people who lived there was tenuous. By 1846, in the territory comprising today's states of California and New Mexico, there were only sixteen priests and none in Arizona.²⁶⁴

In the next chapter I explore the shift that occurred under the new ecclesiastical arrangement put in place following the Mexican American War. Suffice it to say that in this new American-controlled church of the Southwest, Mexicans and Mexican Americans had no institutional voice of any kind. Their time-honored religious traditions came to be marginalized, even denigrated, by many Euroamerican clergy and laity. Most scholars agree that only with the rise of liberation movements in the 1960's, specifically the Chicano movement, have Mexican American Catholics begun to receive long over-due representation in the U.S. Catholic Church.

According to Moises Sandoval, however, the basic reality is the same as before:

Hispanics ... remain a people apart. They continue to cling to their culture and maintain at least some of their religious traditions. There is "social distance" between them and the institutional Church. For some it is a vague discomfort of not feeling at home. For others, it is the perception that the clergy are not interested in them. Moreover, Hispanics in the main have no role in ministry: episcopal, clerical, religious or lay. They are the objects of ministry rather than its agents.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ Ledwith Interview.

²⁶⁴ Alberto L. Pulido, "Mexican American Catholicism in the Southwest: The Transformation of a Popular Religion," in *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies: Emerging Themes in Mexican American Research*, vol. 4., ed. Juan R. Garcia. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 106.

²⁶⁵ Sandoval, *On the Move*, 131.

Gabriela Arredondo maintains that *Mexicanos* turned inward to re-create “a ‘fragile *Mexicanidad*’ . . . a ‘feeling of common peoplehood’ based on their memories of a Mexican homeland in order to shield themselves from vestiges of discrimination.”²⁶⁶

This chapter has tracked the unfolding religious character of the Mexican people. Theirs is a story of boundless creativity, yet one historically fraught with tensions arising from injustices they suffered. Their experience has been one of exclusion, of being at the bottom of someone else’s hierarchy. These tensions played out in terms of religion and race, with marked ramifications for social and economic placement. Knowing this background enables us to better understand the discriminatory climate in America and in the U.S. Catholic Church in in which Mexicans and Mexican Americans lived at the time of which I am writing. It brings us to a place in time which is itself the end of an era. It is the historical moment just before major shifts will occur following the Civil Rights Movement and the Second Vatican Council. But before much was about to change, not much had changed.

²⁶⁶ Gabriela Arredondo, “What! The Mexicans, Americans? Race and Ethnicity, Mexicans in Chicago, 1916-1939” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2003), xi.

From us have been stolen our lands, our language, our culture, our customs, our history, and our way of religious expression. We have also been victims of oppression, discrimination, semi-slavery. We have been poorly paid for our work; we have lived in housing worse than that of monkeys in a zoo; we have not been admitted to some schools.²⁶⁷

Because they were poor, they were invisible.²⁶⁸

Chapter Four

ARIZONA

Skies were overcast and a heavy rain fell, but the dedication of St. Mary's Church in the heart of Phoenix happily went forward. Bishop Henri Granjon came from Tucson to officiate, "assisted by practically all the priests of the diocese."²⁶⁹ Arizona's first governor, George W. P. Hunt was in attendance, along with the attorney general and other dignitaries. By all accounts it was an historic milestone both for the city and the Catholic community.

The city of Phoenix was incorporated in 1881. That same year St. Mary's Parish was founded and began in a small church made of adobe. It had a sizeable number of Mexican parishioners, but "in the adobe church they sat on the floor during services while Anglos sat in pews."²⁷⁰ St. Mary's was the first and only Roman Catholic parish in Phoenix and in the surrounding Salt River Valley until 1924. Since 1895, it has been staffed by the Franciscan Friars. In 1901, taking into consideration the summer heat, a basement church was built. And through subsequent years, Phoenix Catholics cherished the dream of completing it with an upper church, a worthy testimony to their faith. This was what everybody had gathered to celebrate on that morning of 12 February 1915. For Mexican parishioners, however, their joy at this much anticipated event would be short-lived.

Soon after completion of the sanctuary, Mexican parishioners were notified that the upper church would not be available to them except for weddings and funerals. Instead, they were told

²⁶⁷ Archbishop Flores, cited in Sandoval, *On the Move*, 100.

²⁶⁸ Cahalane Interview.

²⁶⁹ *Arizona Republican*, 12 February 1915.

²⁷⁰ Julie Corley, "100 Years: The Franciscans and St. Mary's Basilica," *Centennial Commemorative Booklet*, 1995, 34.

to attend Sunday mass in the basement, while whites only worshipped in the new church. Recalling Montejano's remark—money whitens—it is reported that, "A few wealthy Mexican families attended services upstairs."²⁷¹ If a few Mexicans of means were allowed to cross the color barrier, the majority of Mexican parishioners, who could not pass for white, pushed to have even one of several scheduled Sunday masses in the new church for them. All liturgies were conducted in Latin, but the homily was given in the vernacular. The pastor, Rev. Novatus Benzing, O.F.M.—whose native language was German but who was fluent in Spanish—would not budge: English sermons would be given upstairs and Spanish in the basement. It is reported that he met parishioners at the door and barked the command: "Mexicanos abajo! All Mexicans downstairs!"²⁷²

Recoiling at the imposed segregation, Mexicans (except the rich few) never attended any service in the upstairs church. Declaring war on the pastor, a group formed the Mexican Catholic Society. Dismayed by their treatment, they wrote to Bishop Granjon asking for permission to form a new parish where they would not be treated as second-class Catholics. Thirteen years later, just five blocks east of St. Mary's, Immaculate Heart of Mary Church opened its doors. It was to be Phoenix's only national parish, that is, one designated for a particular ethnic group. The new parish was staffed by Claretians from Spain. "And so the decision was made to bring in the Claretian priests who were from Spain and separate the Catholics in Arizona. The Claretians would take care of the Mexicans, the Franciscans would take care of the Anglos."²⁷³

The segregation of St. Mary's congregation appears to have come about as a demand from Anglo parishioners who were threatening to withhold contributions. Phoenix native Frank Barrios relates,

Fr. Benzing was very capable. He always knew how to make St. Mary's stay out of debt. But he was very harsh, abrupt, and so typical German. Succeeding him as pastor of St. Mary's was a bi-lingual Franciscan, Fr. Fernando Ortiz. He was the first man born in Arizona to become a Catholic priest. He lasted two years. Some white parishioners wrote to the bishop saying, "When are you going to send us a pastor instead of this Mexican?"²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Ibid., 33.

²⁷² Ibid., 36.

²⁷³ Barrios Interview.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

This episode of Mexicans being consigned to the basement is the most egregious example of how the discriminatory attitudes of the larger society against Mexican people were reflected within the church community as well. Nor was this discrimination exceptional to St. Mary's; it also played out in several other parishes in the Diocese of Tucson. In larger Arizona towns ecclesiastical segregation became almost the norm.

St. Augustine in Tucson was a primarily Mexican community. Even though it was the cathedral parish, a new church, All Saints, was built for Anglos five blocks away. In Flagstaff, Nativity Parish was for Anglos, Our Lady of Guadalupe was for Mexicans. In Bisbee, Sacred Heart Church was for Mexicans, St. Patrick for Anglos. In Prescott, whites attended Sacred Heart, while Mexicans worshipped in Immaculate Heart.

This pervasive racial prejudice is captured in a typical announcement in the Diocese of Tucson's official newspaper listing baptisms performed on the same day at St. Mary's Church in Phoenix:

Herbert Edward Clark, son of Harold M. Clark and Ursula Weber Clark
baptized on Sunday, September 27.

Manuela Catherine Rideau, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony B. Rideau
(colored) was baptized on Sunday, September 27.

On Sunday, September 27, twelve Mexican babies were baptized in St.
Mary's Lower Church.²⁷⁵

Annual parish events like the bishop's visit to confer the sacrament of confirmation on the children were frequently celebrated in a way that underscored racial separateness. For example, the local newspaper records that in 1932, (not unlike his predecessors), Bishop Gercke confirmed in Miami, Arizona, Mexican children on one day and Anglo children on another.²⁷⁶

All the informants I interviewed, including priests, religious, and laity, noted without exception the discrimination to which Mexicans—whether immigrants or citizens—were subjected to in Arizona well into the twentieth century. The experience of discrimination emerges as the most salient feature of their social life in this country and by far their greatest hurdle to success. But their mistreatment within the church community was often their most painful. "Among the

²⁷⁵ *The Catholic Observer*, Diocese of Tucson official newspaper, 3 October 1925.

²⁷⁶ "Gercke to Visit Here," *Arizona Silver Belt* (Globe, Arizona), 14 October 1932.

biggest disillusionments for the Hispanics during this era was the lack of support from the Roman Catholic Church.”²⁷⁷

When asked if the church at this time effectively served the Mexican people, an Irish monsignor, replied, “No. Absolutely not.” When asked why, he went on, “I think they were almost kind of invisible. They were almost invisible from the entire mix of the Catholic population in the Diocese of Tucson. They really weren’t on a high priority list in when it came to church leadership responding to their ministerial needs. I think the reason was they were poor. They were marginal.”²⁷⁸

I want to probe deeper into this issue of discrimination which almost universally marked the Mexican experience in America and in the American Catholic Church. All agree that it was a fact and indeed a prevalent experience in mid-twentieth century society as well as within the Catholic Church. Yet a prong of my thesis maintains that priests from Ireland who ministered in Arizona for the most part bonded with these people, whom so many held in disdain. However, all the Irish priests I interviewed said that looking back, Mexican people were targets of blatant discrimination. But if they saw that this was the case in the 1950’s and 1960’s, they also did nothing about it. I am convinced that these priests, along with the church hierarchy and the dominant culture in general, only gradually came to see the pervasive injustice done to Mexicans decades later, that is, around the 1970’s. And this was due in large part to the national civil rights movement. So we must continue to explore this topic.

Mexicans in Arizona lived and worked in three principal areas: urban barrios, agricultural work camps set up to facilitate field labor, and various outlying mining communities.

Barrios, Mining Towns, and Cotton Fields

An Arizona correspondent describing the newly incorporated city of Phoenix for a San Diego newspaper observed, “The Indian is now a nuisance and the Sonoran [Mexican] a decided annoyance, but both are sure to disappear before civilization ‘as snow before the noonday

²⁷⁷ Fernandez, *Mexican-American Catholics*, 25.

²⁷⁸ Cahalane Interview.

sun.”²⁷⁹ Early in the twentieth century, Tucson had a larger more lively Mexican community than did Phoenix. Phoenix’s Chamber of Commerce 1920 city directory presented itself as being “a modern town of forty thousand people and the best kind of people, too. A very small percentage of Mexicans, negroes or foreigners.”²⁸⁰ But throughout the state discrimination was the order of the day.

Fr. Hennessy remembers the discrimination Mexicans encountered in “the Valley of the Sun,”

I recall how in Mesa thirty or forty years ago, there were some funeral parlors which wouldn’t bury Mexicans. There was no swimming pool in Mesa for the Hispanics. They had to go swim in the canal. In Phoenix, there were Anglo schools and there were Hispanic schools. Carver was for the black kids. And you had Phoenix Tech, which was the technical school where the Mexicans went. And then the white kids went to Phoenix Union.²⁸¹

Historian Thomas Sheridan goes on to point out, “The ‘separate but equal doctrine’ was not supposed to apply to Mexicans, but towns like Flagstaff, Ajo, Douglas, Miami, Clifton, Superior, Safford, Duncan, Glendale, and Tolleson were still segregating Mexican students in the early 1950’s. *Brown vs. Board of Education* was therefore a triumph for Mexicans as well as blacks.”²⁸²

Arizona’s greatest growth took place in the 1950’s. Describing this period, Sheridan points,

Mexicans faced fewer legal barriers than African Americans, but their struggle was compounded by Arizona’s proximity to Mexico and the continuous influx of Mexican nationals into the state. Many Anglos did not distinguish between Mexican citizens and Mexican immigrants even though some Mexican families had lived in Arizona for six or seven generations. Both were stereotyped as stoop labor. . . .Being born and raised in the United States was no guarantee of civil liberties when your skin was brown and you spoke Spanish.²⁸³

Segregation in cities held sway more by way of custom than law, more through unspoken housing covenants than written codes. But it was no less real for that. Frank Barrios remembers,

²⁷⁹ *San Diego Union*, 5 March 1872.

²⁸⁰ Cited in Thomas E. Sheridan, *Arizona: A History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 241.

²⁸¹ Hennessy Interview.

²⁸² Sheridan, *Arizona*, 285.

²⁸³ *Ibid*,

“In the area now called the Garfield neighborhood there were middle class, rich Mexican families. The poor Mexicans were in the barrios. They said they didn’t dare go north of Van Buren, because they would come down on them with both feet.”²⁸⁴

Even though most Arizona Mexicans resided in urban settings, many of them report their experience of living in a small enclave, a limited ethnic neighborhood, or barrio, whether it be in a city or a town. I met Pete Garcia, a long time activist and leader and recently retired president and CEO of the Phoenix chapter of Chicanos por la Causa, for breakfast one morning in Tempe. He shares his experience of discrimination growing up as a Mexican American in Phoenix not many decades ago.

I really never saw white kids until I went to Phoenix Union [high school]. And there was like an unwritten rule that you just didn’t go past Van Buren. I mean, we weren’t allowed in certain theaters. You know, the Fox Theater, we had to sit upstairs. We couldn’t go to the Vista Theater, where the Valley Bank is now. We couldn’t go to the Paramount; the Paramount was totally restricted. . . . I think television changed a lot of it. You saw a restaurant on TV. You saw the blacks starting sit-ins. I used to go with my mother when I was a kid to Woolworth’s, and I always wanted to sit in one of those round stools. And she used to say, “We don’t eat over there. Come on.” But we never sat there.²⁸⁵

It is noteworthy that Garcia credits television and exposure it provided of the struggle for civil rights occurring among the nation’s blacks for raising his consciousness as regards the inequities his own people suffered in Phoenix. He spoke of this dawning recognition in terms of waking up.

In boom years of the 1950’s, with new companies relocating in Phoenix, it was not uncommon for many of them like Motorola to hire whites only. According to African American political activist Lincoln Ragsdale, “Phoenix was just like Mississippi. People were just as bigoted. They had segregation. They had signs in many places, ‘Mexicans and Negroes, not welcome.’”²⁸⁶

The single greatest spur to Arizona’s economy was mining. Here too Mexicans experienced sharp lines of social discrimination where communities were divided into “white

²⁸⁴ Barrios Interview.

²⁸⁵ Pete Garcia, Personal Interview by author. Tempe, AZ, 2 January 2013.

²⁸⁶ Lincoln Ragsdale, cited in Sheridan, *Arizona*, 283.

men's' and 'Mexican' camps. . . .The copper towns may have been ethnic melting pots for Europeans, but the boundaries between Anglos and Mexicans remained strong."²⁸⁷ In the mines a reduced pay scale for Mexican workers was a given. Towns like Clifton and Morenci came to life as "Wild West" boomtowns employing thousands of Mexican immigrant workers. But as the mines became big business, racial walls hardened and whiteness became a mark of superiority.

In 1883, the name Morenci was given to a mining camp about 200 miles southeast of Phoenix. This site was to become the largest copper mining operation in North America and second largest in the world.²⁸⁸ In 1899, the original Holy Cross Church was built there as a mission to serve the needs of an increasing number of Mexican miners. It stood on AC Hill, northeast of the later location. Like several of the Irish priests in Arizona, late Fr. John Cullinan began his ministry there. Speaking softly, he recalled, "The old church was bombed a couple of times by anti-Catholics just before World War I. Later the church was moved to east plant site. The stained glass windows in the church were classic imported from Paris. And they are still there in Morenci, beautiful, beautiful stained glass windows of French quality stained glass."²⁸⁹

Elena Diaz Bjorkquist, a native of Morenci, Arizona, is currently a writer, artist, Chautauqua performer, and speaker, and lives with her husband in Tucson. Her oral history project, begun in 2001, preserved the recollections of ten Mexican-Americans who lived in Morenci during the Depression and World War II, before the old town was demolished and its residents relocated. She calls it "a tour of my memories of Morenci, the copper mining town in Arizona where I grew up. Morenci is gone, it only exists in the minds of people like me."²⁹⁰ I met her at a Tucson Starbuck's, eager to hear her speak about growing up as a Mexican American in a mining town and her memories of Irish priests she knew.

She told me that in the early 1950's the present church was built and the windows were incorporated into it. "In an interview I conducted with Fr. Neil McHugh in 1953, he recalled how

²⁸⁷ Sheridan, *Arizona*, 170.

²⁸⁸ <http://www.mining-technology.com/projects/morenci/>.

²⁸⁹ Cullinan Interview.

²⁹⁰ Diaz Borjkquist Interview.

the lumber to build the first church was brought up the hill to Morenci on burros. He himself carried on his back the lumber that was used in the construction of the church tower.”²⁹¹

In 1921, the Phelps Dodge Corporation became the sole owner of the entire mining district. In 1966, old Morenci was destroyed by the corporation to make way for a new open pit mine. The people who had lived there for generations, mainly Mexican Americans, were forced to abandon their homes.

One of the town’s native residents shares her recollections: “I didn’t like Morenci being destroyed because there were so many memories. But that property belongs to PD [Phelps Dodge]. Our houses were ours, but not the ground. We had to pay a lease every years in order to have a house there. We had a hard time but we had a beautiful life there in Morenci. People visited. They shared what they had.”²⁹²

Even before the old town was demolished, there was always the fear that people might have to move out of their homes. Mexican workers lived in old houses, many of them built around 1900. Since Phelps Dodge owned the ground beneath them, the company gave residents thirty days’ notice to move out.

Fr. O’Carroll remembers Morenci well. He relates that one aspect of company control involved paying workers in script, which could be used in the company store. In this way the company sought to control heavy drinking. He recalled one time seeing the parish housekeeper talking with a man at the kitchen door. The priest asked, “What’s going on?” She told him that

she was buying five dollar script for \$4.00. [The man] was a wino and winos only got paid in script. The company controlled morality. You couldn’t use the script to buy alcohol in the company store. You could only use dollars. So then he would sell his script, short change himself, five dollars for four. If they had a number of tickets for drunk driving or drinking on the job, the company would bring them back to script only.²⁹³

“It was the most segregated town west of the Mississippi,” according to Father O’Carroll, who goes on to explain.

It was divided into management (Anglos), then you had Mexicans, and then way over in the east plant site you had the Navahos. They brought in the Navahos

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Maria Mannelli Ponce, from notes quoted in Diaz Borjkquist Interview.

²⁹³ O’Carroll Interview.

during World War II, and the Navahos had stayed and continued mining. Then in lower plant site there was an area where [people who were considered] problems—blacks, drunks, problems lived—and these were wooden boxes. They were poorly equipped with evaporative coolers. They were flat-roofed.²⁹⁴

The 1950 census set Morenci's population at 6541.²⁹⁵ For a small town it had a significant mixture. According to another resident there were "Anglos, Chinese, Italians, and a few Spaniards, and us Mexicans. Oh, yeah, Morenci was segregated."²⁹⁶ Among themselves the Mexicans spoke Spanish, but most were bi-lingual. In numbers they comprised about one half of the town. Some of the elderly were from Mexico, but most were first and second generation Mexican-Americans.

After many years Msgr. O'Grady still keeps in touch with Irene Lizarraga and Vina Rodela. On his lead I went to interview them. Both women are octogenarians who were born and raised in the mining town of Morenci, Arizona, where their husbands worked for many years. In later years they moved to neighboring Clifton, Arizona. They shared with me their experience of discrimination when they were school girls growing up. Mrs. Lizarraga recalls, "The Anglos lived in Stargo, and they were bused. We had to walk. Snow or no snow, we walked. And the Anglos were bused. . . .At home we spoke all Spanish. But at school we would get scolded if we talked Spanish."²⁹⁷ Her neighbor and friend, Mrs. Rodela, adds,

They wouldn't let you talk Spanish when I was going to school. They wouldn't let you talk Spanish in the schools. In the swimming pools there were signs all over: No Spanish Spoken Here. Everywhere you went—the schools, the swimming pools. If you went to the movies, you had to go upstairs. You couldn't go to the concession stand and buy anything there. In Morenci, the place where all the Mexican people were able to live was called Tortilla Flat. For all the others it was Stargo, and Plantside, and it was *El Nombres* in Fairplay. And my sister was married to a white guy. And when he went to ask for a house—his name was Alcorn and he was white—so they gave him a house in Fairplay. And then when my sister went to get the key a couple days later, they wouldn't give her that house because she was Mexican. So they had to move her to the section where the Mexicans lived.²⁹⁸

Tucson's Msgr. Tom Cahalane recalls:

²⁹⁴ O'Carroll Interview.

²⁹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau,

<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/37778803v2p3ch2.pdf>

²⁹⁶ Natividad Diaz Herrera, from notes quoted in Diaz Borjkquist Interview. ²⁹⁷

Irene Lizarraga, Personal Interview by author, Clifton, AZ 28 March 2012. ²⁹⁸

Vina Rodela, Personal Interview by author, Clifton, AZ, 28 March 2012.

I would say in my experience of the mining towns in San Manuel, Mammoth, and Oracle there was a very big division between Anglo and Mexican. Very big division. I would say prejudice and bias pretty much expressed the dynamics and relationships in those towns. . . .Mexicans were paid less. The company representatives were all white. They had the power and control, and basically kept the pecking order in place.²⁹⁹

Santos Vega and I met over coffee in his home to talk about a novel he wrote entitled, *The Worm in My Tomato*. It is based on his own experience of the repatriation of his family by the U.S. government following immigration policies during the Great Depression in 1932. With the Depression putting a severe strain on the whole country, many white Americans found a scapegoat in ethnic minorities and blamed them for taking jobs away from white workers. The ensuing legislation called for the immediate deportation of Mexicans.

As Vega points out, in many cases no distinction was made between the nationals and Mexicans who were citizens. His mother and her children were all United States citizens. His father was a Mexican national who had worked in the United States for thirty-eight years. It is an inspiring story of how the family stayed together and overcame many obstacles and ordeals. It highlights a double injustice: the bigotry resulting in forced repatriation and the unfair policies caused by the Mexican Government which plunged them into destitution in Mexico, until they finally managed to return to their hometown of Miami, Arizona in 1938. As Vega pointed out, their family's suffering and hardship was echoed in the experience of thousands of Mexican repatriates in the 1930's.³⁰⁰

Dr. Vega went on to elaborate the lack of fairness he personally experienced when he was a youngster growing up in Arizona.

We were all U.S. citizens. My mother was a third generation U.S. citizen. I am a fourth generation U.S. citizen. And my grandmother was born in Clifton, Arizona in 1880. In the mining towns there was a lot of prejudice. I went to a segregated school. We had Bullion Plaza Elementary School, which still stands today, not used as a school anymore. It serves as the Miami, Arizona Museum. I attended school there and graduated in '47. When the Mexicans went to the Catholic Church, they sat in the pews on the left side and the Anglos on the right. We used the same building but different sides. We had discrimination in the theaters. We could only sit up in the balcony. At first we couldn't go to the same theater. We had to go to another one called the Lyric Theater. And then when they allowed Mexicans in the theater, they had to sit in the balcony. . . . We came

²⁹⁹ Cahalane Interview.

³⁰⁰ Santos C. Vega, *The Worm in My Tomato*, (Phoenix, Abrazo Enterprises), 2007.

together in high school, and sports played a very important part in unifying the kids. The schools were not integrated at the elementary level until I think later on in 1958, after *Brown vs. Board of Education*.³⁰¹

Mexicans who were field workers were probably the poorest of the poor. Fr. Willy Waldron told me riveting stories of when he was a new priest assigned to Casa Grande and personally witnessed the terrible conditions they endured.

In the early '50's, we had the bracero movement, where the farmers recruited temporary workers in Mexico and housed them. They mostly picked cotton and helped with some of the other crops. They followed the harvest in Arizona and Texas and California. . . .All the families would go out to pick cotton and they brought their babies with them. Their babies got dehydrated as they laid out there. And we had a lot of emergency baptisms during the cotton picking season and a lot of funerals of babies. We had a cemetery in Casa Grande. You will find acres and acres of dead babies that are buried there that died from the heat. And I remember we used to have maybe fifteen, twenty baby funerals every cotton picking season. Some died of exposure, dehydration. Others, when their milk turned sour, it caused them to get diarrhea and then they died. We'd be called to go to the doctor's office, which was in the parish, and we'd baptize them there. . . .The working conditions were terrible. I remember I had to go visit a couple. They had a cabin constructed with planks. And there was air space between the boards. And the wife's dress was blowing as the freezing air came through the wall boards inside the shack.³⁰²

Color in a Bigoted Society

The fact of skin color set most Mexicans apart as targets of discrimination on the part of whites. Professor Rios shares the unlikely meeting of his parents. His father, a Mexican American flier stationed in Britain during World War II, met and fell in love with an English girl. After the war they married and settled in his hometown on the border, Nogales, Arizona. While in boot camp in San Antonio, his father went off base once where he encountered

signs that said: NO DOGS OR MEXICANS ALLOWED. So my father would repeatedly say to me, "Son, whatever you do, don't go to Texas." Then I came home one time—I think it was Thanksgiving—I took my father aside and I said, "You know, I went to Texas." And he said, "I knew you would. And I said, "And, you know, I had a good time." And he said, "I knew you would." And then he did something—this is something I will never forget—it still gives me goose bumps. He brought his finger to his face and he tapped his skin and he said, "It's never going to be the same for you"—because I was light. He was quite dark. And he was right.³⁰³

³⁰¹ Vega Interview. His point about sports as a domain where segregation was partially overcome is highlighted in Christine Marin's Ph.D. dissertation.

³⁰² Rev. William Waldron, Personal Interview by author, Sun City, AZ, 19 May 2012.

³⁰³ Rios Interview.

“Hispanics, for instance, were often not allowed in restaurants, but were forced to eat in back alleys or in kitchens,”³⁰⁴ writes Pete Dimas in his dissertation on anti-Mexican prejudice in Phoenix. Elena Diaz Bjorquist told me a story about the time her family, while driving through Wickenburg, made a stop at the Arizona Café. After a long wait for someone to serve them, her mother heard the word “Mexicans” whispered behind the kitchen door. “Suddenly,” she said, “a door banged against the wall and a woman in a pink uniform and white apron burst out of the kitchen and screamed, ‘What are you people doing?’ She pointed to the wall on her left. ‘Can’t you read? You probably can’t. I’ll read it for you: NO DOGS OR MEXICANS SERVED HERE. That means y’all. We don’t want your kind here. Git out!’” Driving away, her father, who had been awarded a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star for heroic service in World War II, slapped the steering wheel and swore, “God Dammit! I’m a veteran. I fought for this country. Why can’t I eat where I want?”³⁰⁵

This handling of Mexican people with a view toward imposed segregation was one social agenda, but it was offset by another stated aim, namely, *Americanization*, which purported to bring immigrants and foreigners into the American mainstream. Blake Brophy writes, “Since Mexican Americans were economically poor and victims of discrimination, the Church often mirrored the attitudes of the dominant society and preferred to project itself as American and Americanizing.”³⁰⁶ One of the ironies was that at a time and in a state where segregated education was standard practice in large towns, ethnic Mexicans attending schools for Mexicans were, nonetheless, admonished to speak English and sometimes punished for not doing so.

With prejudice comes stereotypes. According to David Lavender, “Mexicans it was widely said were swarthy, dirty, and clannish.”³⁰⁷ His fellow Arizona historian Thomas Sheridan

³⁰⁴ Pete Dimas, *Perspectives on Progress and a Mexican American Community’s Struggle for Existence* (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 1991), 48.

³⁰⁵ Diaz Bjorkquist Interview.

³⁰⁶ Diaz-Stevens, “Latino Youth,” 99.

³⁰⁶ A. Blake Brophy, *Foundlings on the Frontier: Racial and Religious Conflict in the Arizona Territory, 1904-1905* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1972), xi.

³⁰⁷ David Lavender, *The Southwest*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1980), 126.

³⁰⁷ Sheridan, *Arizona*, 302.

notes that in turn most Mexicans perceived Anglo Americans, because of the unscrupulous actions of some, to be “arrogant, over-bearing, aggressive, conniving, rude, unreliable and dishonest”.³⁰⁸ Negative ethnic judgments were reinforced by ignorance. And ignorance was perpetuated by a segregated society.

Nor was all racism directly from the outside, that is, an inter-group phenomenon. Eric Meeks is a history professor at Northern Arizona University. In our conversation in his office in Flagstaff, he noted the presence of an intra-group kind of prejudice between Mexicans who were “cultivated” and those who were lower class. The former elites claimed superiority based on their European background and lighter skin. His book on the subject developed from his dissertation. In it he writes, “Sonoran Mexicans had long pointed to their Spanish heritage as a mark of their superiority. In fact many Sonoran Mexicans, who were actually the offspring of mixed marriages, denied being so, claiming, as one historian has put it, to be ‘Spaniards from Europe’ and ‘disdaining anyone who was not white.’³⁰⁹

A larger question arises here, namely: Why is there prejudice? Why is there discrimination? Edward Said wrote about how this may come about through a process he called “othering.” Applying it to the Orient and Occident, he meant by this term a mode of discourse for representing “the Other,” expressing a style of thought based on a distinction between “East” and West.” At the heart of this distinction lies the assumption of an “ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority. The belief in this radical difference between the two creates an ongoing state of tension between them.”³¹⁰ Elucidating the dynamics at play in colonialization, Said maintains that the colonized are “something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), something one illustrates (as in a zoological manual.” He goes on to suggest that the colonized are represented as an “object” to the colonizer. They become “the Other,” and as such

³⁰⁸ Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States*, new ed., updated by Matt S. Meier (New York: Praeger Press, 1990), 89.

³⁰⁹ Eric Meeks, *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 24.

³¹⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978,) 65-67.

are rendered “passive, non-participating, above all, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself.” Said claims that this results in a typology which grounds the “object’s” inferiority and confirms the studying subject’s transcendence. Thus the “Other” is, in his words, “contained and represented by dominating frameworks.”³¹¹

Still we haven’t answered the question of why is this so. C. G. Jung takes us deeper to the psychic roots of what he calls the unconscious mechanism of projection. According to Jung, traits of which we are unconscious, especially undesirable qualities we do not accept in ourselves, are projected onto another person or group. The content of the projection he calls the *shadow*. Hence, what we hate, fear, or do not know, gets projected onto an external “hook”—a person or group who must then bear our shadow. They become the problem, the threat, even the evil, which we have yet to recognize in ourselves. In them Freud’s scapegoat is realized, Said’s “other” is constellated.

For all the energy spent in the name of anti-Mexican discrimination, the international border in the mid-twentieth century was “a fiction” or at any rate “porous,” according to Frank Barios. He explained to me that not only was there relatively easy access back and forth, but it seemed more like an unreal line failing to make a dent in a unified culture.

Arizona became like a country without a border. People in Sonora and people in Arizona had the same culture. Identical. In Arizona, the Mexican Americans were really no different than the Sonorans. They grew up with the same culture, the same beliefs, the same food, and spoke Spanish the same way. New Mexico evolved completely different and so did California. There used to be names for them. The ones in New Mexico they called *manitos*. And the Mexicans there spoke a combination of half Spanish and half English. You go to California, they call them *porchos*, because they had their own way of doing things. . . . Today most of them coming across the border are from southern Mexico and their ways are completely different. But in those early years, Sonora and Arizona didn’t like have a border.³¹²

Barios offered his mother as an example. “My mother considers herself a Mexican, and even though she was brought up in this country, never lived in Mexico, but her primary language was Spanish. Over the years many people who met my mother would say, ‘What part of Sonora

³¹¹ Ibid, 65-67.

³¹² Barios Interview.

are you from?’ And she would tell them, ‘I was born and raised here in Phoenix.’ But everything about her was like a Sonoran.”³¹³

* * *

If the segregation of Phoenix’s mother church is the prime example of discrimination against Mexicans in the ecclesiastical sphere, an earlier incident, often referred to as the orphan abduction affair, is the most telling example of anti-Mexican sentiment on the part of society at large. It has been written about by Linda Gordon and also by Blake Brophy, who maintained that the event brought home “a restless and haunting specter of intolerance in our nation.”³¹⁴

The incident centered on forty New York orphans of Irish descent, which a group of nuns brought to the remote mining area of Clifton-Morenci, Arizona, in 1904. They had arranged with the French-born pastor, Father Constant Mandin, for Catholic families to adopt the children. But the adoptive families were Mexican. Discovering this, the town’s Anglo Protestant community was outraged by this “interracial” transgression, which, to their perception was tantamount to child abuse. A vigilante mob, seeking to “rescue” the waifs, kidnapped them and parceled them out to Anglo families. In the aftermath, the Catholic Church brought successive lawsuits to get the orphans back, but to no avail. In cases going all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, the vigilantes’ action was upheld.

Linda Gordon draws some worthwhile lessons from this story in helping us understand the climate in which it could play out. She remarks, “Citizenship, like child welfare, has long been a racialized practice, intimately connected to whiteness.”³¹⁵ According to this construct, “the racial difference of the Mexicans became marked, by Anglos, as a difference between immigrants and ‘Americans.’” She argues that anti-Mexican discrimination “continuously reinforced the fusion of racism with anti-alien sentiment.”³¹⁶

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Brophy, *Foundlings*, 32.

³¹⁵ Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 308.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 312.

Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens points out that language was another way used to render Mexican Americans aliens.

The subterfuge used to turn the original inhabitants of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California into immigrants was to lump third- and fourth-generation natives with Mexican immigrants on the basis of language, so that speaking Spanish made a person “foreign.” The U.S. Catholic Church followed this pattern by building new parishes for the English-speaking who poured into the Southwest.³¹⁷

Seeds of Discrimination

The roots of racial prejudice against Mexican people are centuries old. New Spain began in the Valley of Mexico around present-day Mexico City. In northern New Spain, which would one day become part of the United States, contact between Indians and Spaniards was more limited than in the southern regions. In this vast northern territory the large-scale divisions in Spanish society were muted. Part of this was due to numbers; there were far fewer Indians in the deserts of what would become the American Southwest, and also fewer Spaniards. Many of the Spaniards were priests in missions set up throughout the region that we now know as the states of the states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California.

The Mexican American War concluded in 1848, with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hilgalgo. It granted Mexicans in the United States full citizenship and the right to speak the Spanish language, yet the dominant narrative regarded them as racially inferior. To begin with they were associated with the Black Legend in the minds of many Anglo Americans. This negative stereotype with roots in the Reformation became popular in northern Europe, especially in Protestant countries, as a way a denigrating cruel and inhumane Spanish treatment of natives in the New World. Ironically, contributing to this narrative was a Spanish Dominican friar, Bartolome de las Casas, who hurled a fierce rebuke at Spain over its barbaric slave trade in the sixteenth century. According to Vicki Ruiz, “In the competition for New World empires, the Black Legend counterpoised virtuous English families against rapacious Spanish conquistadores.”³¹⁸ She

³¹⁷ Diaz-Stevens, “Latino Youth,” 296.

³¹⁸ Vicki L. Ruiz, “The Black Legend,” *The Journal of American History* (December 2006), 656.

references historian David Weber's citation of a tract from 1777, which remained popular well into the nineteenth century, entitled "A History of America," which extolls British colonization and fueled the ideology of Manifest Destiny. She notes, "Once the borderlands became territories and states, the diverse histories of pre-United States settlements, if acknowledged at all, became reduced to romanticized images of quaint New Mexican villages or crumbling California missions."³¹⁹

The Black Legend generated rabid prejudice during the period of U.S. westward expansion. Protestant missionaries and Anglo settlers moving into the American Southwest "confronted by late medieval Spanish Catholic practices that included severe mortification (notably among the *Penitentes*) denounced the 'barbarities' and 'ignorant superstitions' of what seemed to them a particularly odious example of foreign fanaticism."³²⁰ The *Penitentes* were a Hispanic laymen's confraternity, prominent in New Mexico, who enacted penitential displays of carrying crosses, self-flagellation, and other mortifications to mark Holy Week. Only in 1946, were they reconciled to the local bishop, after agreeing to mitigate their extreme practices.

As Linda Gordon points out, Anglo American ideological constructs arose not merely to cite difference but to establish rank. Laura Gomez calls our attention to "competing narratives of race" at play here. She cites two examples, both of them racist. According to the dominant view Mexican Americans were of inferior racial stock, unfit for self-government. But another "progressive" view held them in somewhat higher regard, emphasizing the "glorious" Spanish past with its celebrated conquest of the Indians.³²¹

Gomez' term "double colonization" describes two waves of systematic oppression of Mexican people, which ensured their status inequality based on race. The first was imposed by the Spanish and provided a later template for anti-Mexican disparagement.

The two hallmarks of the Spanish racial order as it was expressed in the "New World" were, first, the identification of the indigenous population as "savage" others and, second, the use of the first claim to legitimize Spanish conquest. . . . Spaniards and Indians corresponded to other key binaries: civilized/savage, Christian/heathen, pure/impure, honorable/shameful, European/indigenous . . .

³¹⁹ Ibid., 656.

³²⁰ Gaustad and Schmidt, *Religious History*, 174

³²¹ Gomez, *Manifest Destinies*, 62.

civilized Indians (neophytes) vs. barbarous Indians [Apaches, and other tribes who refused to submit to Spanish control].³²²

What lies at the root of these binary distinctions are, in matter of fact, cultural differences and biases determining how ways of life are perceived. Some are civilized, others are not; so are nobly human; others are closer to animals. In making the difference between races, W.E.B DuBois reminds us that it is not race that we think about, but culture: "... a common history, common laws and religion, similar habits of thought and a conscious striving together for certain ideals of life."³²³

Discrimination against Mexicans took various forms. At times they were seen as superior to Indians, that is, they were a middle caste, lower than European Spaniards but higher than Indians. However, from another, perhaps more dominant point of view, Mexicans were seen as the lowest in the racial hierarchy. This view was supported by the myth of the mongrel. Mexicans were considered half-breeds, the product of a mixture of Spanish and Indian blood. Indians, on the other hand, were not mixed, and therefore considered purer than *mestizos*. "Indians were a conquered race despised by Anglo Americans" and "Mexicans were constantly equated with Indians" by the most race-conscious of the early Anglo American westerners.³²⁴ The common prejudice among white Americans in Arizona—in labeling Mexicans as half-breeds or mongrels— "carried the assumption that a blend of origins was somehow inferior to a single one."³²⁵

Mexicans also were compared and contrasted to blacks, those other "people of color." In his dissertation Vernon Meyer cites the visit to Phoenix by the prominent black writer and educator, Booker T. Washington, in September 1911. He quotes Washington's remarks to the effect that the Mexicans are the most numerous of all the "colored" peoples of Arizona and "are performing in this part of the country much of the same tasks that the masses of colored people

³²² Ibid., 50-51.

³²³ W.E.B. DuBois, "The Conservation of Races" (1897), *Teaching American History Website* Accessed 22 March 2015. <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/the-conservation-of-races/>.

³²⁴ McWilliams, 190.

³²⁵ Gordon, *Great Arizona Orphan*, 97.

are performing in other parts of the south.”³²⁶ What he is recognizing here is that in Arizona Mexicans are at the bottom of the social ladder. Meyer goes on to note, however, that Washington mouthed the prevailing prejudice in Arizona when he described the Mexicans as “unprogressive, unsteady and unthrifty.” Washington contrasted the Negro’s push for education with the Mexican’s lack of such a desire and his fondness for drink.³²⁷

As discussed in the previous chapter with regard to alternating social judgments, at times the Mexican was seen as white, and at other times non-white, and perhaps most of the time as “off-white.” In his book *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona*, Eric Meeks notes:

Groups such as the Yaquis, Tohono O’odham, and ethnic Mexicans became “border citizens”—people whose rights of belonging were in question, leaving them on the margins of the national territory and of American society and culture. . . . Italian, Spanish, and Slavic immigrants in Arizona fought to ensure that they would be counted as respectable white citizens in part by joining Anglo-Americans in their struggle to define Mexican immigrants as non-white aliens. . . . The so-called Okies often worked in the same jobs and lived in the same labor camps as ethnic Mexican and indigenous workers, many Arizonans perceived them to be naturally inferior and not quite fully white. The concept of whiteness, then, was not monolithic. Its boundaries were periodically challenged or solidified in relation to evolving definitions of national citizenship.³²⁸

Meeks cites as examples of Indian glorification, the creation of two communities, Pascua near Tucson and Guadalupe south of Tempe. These were the two largest Yaqui settlements founded by Franciscan Father Lucius Zittier. In the 1910’s the priest secured a trust of land for thirty Yaqui Indian families, who worked on nearby ranches and railways, for “a pure Indian settlement without any admixture of whites or Mexicans.” He named it Guadalupe, but it was nicknamed Yaqui Town. In this endeavor Meeks suggests, “He invoked the discourse of Indian purity and Mexican impurity, warning that ‘any influx of Mexicans would ruin the settlement.’”³²⁹

Many Hispanic scholars seeking to blunt the discourse of purity, extol the richness and possibilities of *mestizaje*, the blend of Spanish and Indian which produced the Mexican. Richard

³²⁶ Vernon Meyer, “This Far by Faith: The History of Black Catholics in Phoenix, Arizona, 1868-2003” (Ph.D. diss. University of Dayton, 2004), 61.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ Meeks, *Border Citizens*, 12-13.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

Rodriguez, commenting on the Mexican's color, suggests, "Brown bleeds through the straight line, unstaunchable—the line separating black from white, for example. Brown confuses. Brown forms at the 'border of contradiction' the ability of language to express two or several things at once, the ability of bodies to experience two or several things at once."³³⁰

Echoing Vasconcelos, Fr. Elizondo was one of the first Mexican American writers to unapologetically celebrate *mestizaje*, as pointing the way to a future redemption of culture. In similar fashion, Justo Gonzalez elaborates:

A mestizo—strictly speaking, "a mixed breed"—is a person who stands between cultures, considered alien by both, and yet creating a new culture that may well be the vanguard for both dominant cultures. Latino and Latina theologians have developed this theme as a paradigm for understanding their situation, in which they no longer belong to the culture of their homelands, and yet they do not fully belong to the culture of the United States.³³¹

By genes and culture the Mexican is a hybrid. And the Mexican American is something of a double-hybrid. As Jorge Lara-Braud poetically puts it,

The Mexican American is stirred by the richness of his own inner diversity. He is not only a Mexican—tough Mexicanhood lies at the core of his being. He is not only an American—tough Americanhood touches every particle of his life. He is a Mexican American. This means the human intersection of two histories, two nations, two cultures, two languages, converging, colliding, blending, embracing, depending on one's location within the human geography evolved by one and a half centuries of relentless interaction. The interaction is by no means over.³³²

The Church Comes to *La Frontera*

Turning now to the locus of this paper, one discovers upon investigation that Old Arizona is something of a stepchild when it comes to historiography. Its terrain and climate were daunting challenges to human settlement. From the days of New Spain, few ventured into its deserts, let alone settled there. There are far more accounts written of Mexicans living in the more populated

³³⁰ Richard Rodriguez, *Brown: The Last Discovery of America* (New York: Viking Press, 2002) xi.

³³¹ Justo Gonzalez, "Latino/a Theology" in *Essential Theological Terms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 96.

³³² Jorge Lara-Braud, "The Status of Religion among Mexican Americans," in *Prophets Denied Honor: An Anthology on the Hispanic Church in the United States*, Antonio M. Stevens Arroyo, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980), 143.

areas of what would become Texas, New Mexico, and California. Arizona is typically left out. But the roots of the Faith here go back at least three hundred years.

The evangelization of Latin America initially was a function of the *Patronato Real*, whereby the Crowns of Spain and Portugal were responsible for the spread of the Faith through provisioning missionaries (from Portugal to Brazil and from Spain to its more western territories). Thus, the Church in Mexico was established by Spaniards and later overseen by Creole clergy, that is, native-born sons of Spanish descent. Arizona was visited by the Spanish missionary, Fray Marcos de Niza, as early as 1539. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, its southern area was evangelized by Spanish Franciscans and the Jesuits.

The arrival of the Italian Jesuit missionary, Eusebio Kino, in the year 1687, marks the beginning of evangelization in what is now southern Arizona and northern Sonora, the region called *Primeria Alta*. Prior to his death in 1711, he worked tirelessly among the Pima, Papago, Yuma, and other Indian tribes. Besides preaching the Gospel, he introduced cattle ranching to the area. A cartographer, he was the first to show that Baja California was not an island. In all Father Kino established twenty-nine missions. Many of these were destroyed in 1771, in a general Indian uprising. Most of the remaining missions failed following the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767, by King Charles III from all Spanish territories. Following the Jesuits, the Franciscans assumed control and have continued their work with various Indian tribes beyond Arizona statehood to this very day.³³³ In Arizona, of the churches Kino built two remain: Tumacacori (now partly in ruins) and San Xavier del Bac, which he founded in 1699—“the most impressive monument that Spain left in the Southwest.”³³⁴

Mexico’s war for independence took the form of an insurgency against the Spanish colonial authorities lasting from 1810 to 1821. Twenty-five years later the enemy was the United States. The Mexican American War began with the first battle on 25 April 1846, and ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 2 February 1848. Various scholars have drawn a connection between this event and the ideology of Manifest Destiny. Coined by a New York

³³³ Sandoval, *On the Move*, 23.

³³⁴ McWilliams, *North from Mexico*, 34.

newspaper editor in 1845, this dynamic phrase referred to the belief that the United States had a right “to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty. . . .”³³⁵ This way of conceiving America’s role imbued the westward expansion with sacral significance. “The Mexican American War therefore became a quasi-religious crusade as well as the most monumental land grab in North American history.”³³⁶

Beyond religious conceptualizations, economics played a role in Arizona’s emergence. The U.S. government had its eye on the West. It wanted to acquire California’s prized ports of San Francisco and San Diego, along with mineral rich Nevada, and to set up a trade route across New Mexico. In 1848, gold was discovered in California, which overnight captured many Americans’ imagination like a frenzy. “Gold fever,” as it was called, would lure them westward, directly through New Mexico and Arizona along projected trade routes and railways.

With the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, Mexico forfeited two-fifths of its territory, one half if we include Texas, seized in 1836. This vast region of 890,000 square miles increased the holdings of the United States by one third and would comprise the future states of Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Utah, Wyoming, and parts of Kansas and Colorado. It was an area greater than France and Germany combined. Six years later, in order to finish construction of a transcontinental railway, the United States purchased an additional 30,000 square miles of Mexican land for \$10,000,000. This acquisition was made final through the Gadsden Treaty of 1854.³³⁷ The U.S. government’s aim was to get the most land with the fewest Mexicans.³³⁸ This thinking will also be a key factor in the slow move to annex the territories of New Mexico and Arizona, the last of the contiguous states to be admitted to the Union.

As Laura Gomez points out, “One of the striking features of the standard American history of this period . . . is the sheer absence of colonialism as a topic or theme.” She notes that

³³⁵ Cited in Lavender, *The Southwest*, 126.

³³⁶ Sheridan, *Arizona*, 50.

³³⁷ Carlos Cortes, Entry entitled “Mexicans,” *The Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, Stephan Thernstrom, ed. (Belknap Press 1980), 701.

³³⁸ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 232.

most histories say imperialism began in 1890's, with the situation surrounding the Spanish-American War. But by her reckoning that was the second imperial moment. The first was in the 1840's.³³⁹ Historian Reginald Horsman captures the mood.

In the middle of the nineteenth century a sense of racial destiny permeated discussions of American progress and of future American world destiny. . . .By 1850 the emphasis was on the American Anglo-Saxons as a separate innately superior people who were destined to bring good government, commercial prosperity, and Christianity to the American continents and to the world. This was a superior race, and inferior races were doomed to subordinate status or extinction.³⁴⁰

What happened in the case of Mexicans in the borderlands taken over by the United States is complex and worth noting.

Mexicans . . . in the United States are here because of the territorial expansion of past generations of North Americans. Their lands have been taken from them and annexed to the United States, and their citizens have been guaranteed rights under treaties with our government; these treaties have often been broken or ignored and the people have been forced to assimilate "American ways" to exist.³⁴¹

* * *

The Mexican people's place in the history of the Catholic Church in the United States is unique and overlooked. For too long the dominant viewpoint among church historians has seen American Catholicism as an immigrant church. This is evidenced in various accounts by church historians, including *American Catholic: The Saints and Sinners Who Built America's Most Powerful Church*, by Charles Morris. In this presentation the church in the U.S. arises almost exclusively from working-class immigrants. Morris describes how this diverse congregation was shepherded by a largely Irish hierarchy, who forged them into an enclave community in the midst of an often hostile Protestant culture while at the same time promoting their assimilation.³⁴²

³³⁹ Laura Gomez, *Manifest Destinies*, 113.

³⁴⁰ Reginald Horsman. *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 1-2.

³⁴¹ Antonio M. Stevens and Virgilio P. Elizondo, "The Spanish-Speaking in the United States," in *Prophets Denied Honor: An Anthology on the Hispanic Church in the United States* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980), 86.

³⁴² Charles R. Morris, *American Catholic: The Saints and Sinners Who Built America's Most Powerful Church* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1997).

This standard interpretation does not do justice to the presence of Mexican Catholicism in the Southwest. Anthony Stevens-Arroyo points out, “[T]he official Church still is more comfortable with the image of immigrant than with that of a conquered people who have lived in this country for generations.”³⁴³ Consequently, the roots of Catholicism in the Southwest lie not with immigrants, but with a conquered people. In my interview, Santos Vega captured this in a memorable phrase, “We didn’t cross the border; the border crossed us.”³⁴⁴ Virgilio Elizondo puts it another way: “The Hispanic of the Southwest is an ‘exile who never left home.’”³⁴⁵

On the political front, under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildalgo, Mexican residents who chose to continue living in the lands annexed by the United States were given full rights of citizenship and the right to speak the Spanish language. But equality under the law did not translate into practice, as Laura Gomez points out, “Mexican Americans entered the nation as second-class citizens very much identified as racially inferior to white Euro-Americans.”³⁴⁶ The view from the American East, from both the centers of government as well as the Catholic Church, saw the southwestern *borderlands* as the frontier of civilization, a forsaken place where the civilized met the uncivilized.

Elizondo has written extensively about *mestizaje*, the intermingling of race and culture characteristic of the Southwest. But whites, coming to “settle” a land that was already settled, did not understand this. Consequently, race and culture became markers dividing whites from the native peoples and constituted a template of social division from the first days of the Arizona Territory and the church’s Apostolic Vicariate. Accordingly, lines were drawn to determine what belonged to the United States and what was left for Mexico, which was to influence every aspect of social life. Categories of race and culture came to establish who were the insiders and who were the outsiders in society and in the church. Ann Patrick has argued that people’s identity and the determination of what belonged to them was set by these racial and cultural defining lines,

³⁴³ Stevens Arroyo, “Emergence of a Social Identity,” 120.

³⁴⁴ Vega Interview.

³⁴⁵ Virgilio Elizondo, (Paper presented at Spring Hill Jesuit College, Mobile, AL, June 1992).

³⁴⁶ Laura Gomez, *Manifest Destinies*, 45.

and that these were also used to exclude “those who [were] different from sharing in what [was] within the protected sphere controlled by groups in power.”³⁴⁷

Catholics in Arizona during the Mexican and early American periods were miniscule in number and very poor. This contrasts with New Mexico, an area with a much larger population and where the faith had been more firmly planted. In 1860, the first census of Arizona (then a county of New Mexico) listed only 6,482 inhabitants, excluding Indians. Not surprisingly, race mattered for territories vying to become states. White Nevada managed to become a state quickly in 1864, while New Mexico and Arizona took until 1912, due to their larger Mexican population. In seeking to join the Union, Arizona’s political leaders touted the fact that, in contrast to New Mexico, theirs would be a white state. As Meeks explains, “Anglos in Arizona honed an argument for an end to territorial status based on the ideas that the majority of residents were white, educated, and civilized and that the indigenous and ethnic Mexican populations would have little role in government.”³⁴⁸

Following the Civil War most Anglos who ventured to Arizona regarded it as a punishing wasteland, an infernal, Indian-infested desert, a hurdle in the way between Santa Fe and San Diego. “Every bush is full of thorns . . . and every rock you turn over has a tarantula or a centipede under it,” wrote Dr. John S. Griffin. “The fact is, take the country altogether, and I defy any man who has not seen it—or one as utterly worthless—even to imagine anything so barren.”³⁴⁹ Martha Summerhayes, who accompanied her military officer husband to Arizona in August 1874, wrote, “The wind was like a breath from a furnace; it seemed as though the days would never end.”³⁵⁰

“You have to realize that nobody lived in Arizona until about the 1870’s,”³⁵¹ explains Dr. William White. White is a world traveler, who had spent most of his long life as a professor of

³⁴⁷ Ann E. Patrick, “Markers, Barriers, and Frontiers: Theology in the Borderlands,” in *Theology Expanding the Borders*, Maria Pilar Aquino and Roberto S. Goizueta, eds. *The Annual Publication of the College Theology Society*, vol 43 (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 10.

³⁴⁸ Meeks, *Border Citizens*, 37.

³⁴⁹ John S. Griffin, cited in, Sheridan, *Arizona*, 51.

³⁵⁰ Martha Summerhayes, cited in, Lavender, *The Southwest*, 256.

³⁵¹ Dr. William White, Personal Interview by author, Scottsdale, AZ, 14 February 2013.

economics at the University of California Berkeley, but who is a wealth of information about Arizona history. In his Scottsdale apartment where I interviewed him, he told me that his grandfather had brought Mormons from Utah to Arizona in 1873, where they settled in the ranching country of present-day Safford and Thatcher. Professor White grew up in Clifton, Arizona and lived there until he went off to college. He related how around 1900, Mexicans built the Catholic church in Clifton “with red bricks made by hand and brought by wheel barrow from the bed of Chase Creek. . . .It was beautiful,” he said. “I used to like to go to it. And some Mexican people would drag me to their midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.”³⁵²

Then we talked about the copper mines. He shared that “the Arizona Copper Company [located primarily in Clifton and Morenci] had a policy of paying the Mexicans half of what white workers got.”³⁵³ White described how the first mines in the area came about. “It was a Jewish merchant in Silver City, New Mexico, who heard about copper deposits in Clifton, Arizona and bought the area for \$10,000.”³⁵⁴ This was the beginning of mining in what would be known as the Copper State, the harbinger of the railroad, and of increasing numbers of white migrants from other states. Eric Meeks also knows this story. He writes, “Some of the elite investors who transformed Arizona into a mining empire were neither Anglo or Mexican. One of the most important, Henry Lesinski, was a Jew from Central Europe.”³⁵⁵

Mining is what brought Arizona to the attention of certain Anglo investors. And to facilitate mining, there had to be railroads. With this new burst of development came many workers from many parts. Okies, but also ethnic Poles, Czechs, Italians, Chinese, blacks, and Mexicans came to work in Arizona’s burgeoning enterprise of extraction.

The Church in Arizona

The Catholic Church grew as New Spain expanded from the Valley of Mexico. Moving northward, new dioceses were established—Guadalajara in 1548, and the Durango in 1620—to

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Meeks, *Border Citizens*, 25.

care for the souls evangelized by the missionaries. Until 1853, the year of the Gadsden Purchase, southern Arizona was part of the Mexican Diocese of Durango. Following the Purchase, Arizona became part of the New Mexico Territory, until 1863, when the Arizona Territory was created.

With the increased number of Mexicans and Indians who became part of the United States following the Mexican American War in 1848 and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853, the American bishops petitioned Pope Pius IX, and he created the Vicariate Apostolic of New Mexico in 1850, appointing Jean Baptiste Lamy as bishop. In 1859, the Holy See placed Arizona under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Santa Fe.

Church work got under way in Arizona in January 1866, when Bishop Lamy sent Fathers Jean B. Salpointe, Francis Boucard, Patrick Birmingham, and a seminarian, Mr. Vincent, from Santa Fe to Tucson (Phoenix did not yet exist). Fathers Salpointe and Boucard established St. Augustine Parish in the Old Presidio of Tucson (a former Spanish garrison outpost) with San Xavier del Bac as its mission. Father Birmingham went to the vicinity of present day Yuma to become pastor of Gila City. Mr. Vincent set up a school at the mission of San Xavier and also one in Tucson. In 1868, Tucson was designated a Vicariate Apostolic, that is, an ecclesiastical territory designated in a mission land with hopes that it will one day become a diocese. Father Salpointe was named Vicar Apostolic of this vast area from Mexico to Utah and from El Paso to Yuma. In 1897, Pope Leo XIII established the Diocese of Tucson, covering all of present-day Arizona.

Church leaders in this part of the world saw the need for ecclesiastical structures and institutions, while acknowledging the tremendous difficulties of this task. These challenges concerning the church in Arizona are highlighted in a letter by Archbishop Spalding of Baltimore to Cardinal Allesandro Barnabo, Vatican liaison to the American bishops, on behalf of Archbishop Lamy of Santa Fe.

The distance of Santa Fe to the Arizona border is from three to four hundred miles; there is no good road and the savages are everywhere. Therefore, it is impossible for the Bishop of Santa Fe to visit the territory since he already has a Diocese half the size of Italy. On the other hand, the Arizona territory is increasing in population day by day; there are many Catholics who, at this time,

are still without a pastor; and that is why a Bishop must be appointed immediately because all of these Catholics are walking in step with the misguided and perverted Protestant missionaries who always come with these migrations.³⁵⁶

Spalding, furthermore, stressed the urgency for Rome to act with regard to “the land which will eventually be taken over by the devil.”³⁵⁷

Three Frenchmen served as the first bishops in Arizona. The first was Vicar Apostolic, Most Rev. Jean Baptiste Salpointe, followed by the Most Rev. Peter Bourgade. Both of these churchmen later occupied the office of Archbishop of Santa Fe, the former in 1898, the latter in 1908. Following them in Tucson, in 1900, was Bishop Henri Granjon, who “wrote up his annual reports in French and computed his budgets in francs.”³⁵⁸

With the death of Bishop Henri Granjon in 1922, the missionary era in the Southwest came to an end. The pessimism of the former bishops abated and the prospects for the church in Arizona started to look brighter. On 5 December 1923, in St. Augustine Cathedral, Bishop Daniel J. Gercke was installed as the fourth Bishop of Tucson. He was the first American-born prelate—as well as the first whose native tongue was English—to preside over the church in Arizona, eleven years after it became the forty-eighth state.

Fr. Gene O’Carroll hails from County Donegal. He recently retired as pastor of a large north Phoenix parish. I found his material so rich that I interviewed him on three separate occasions. His stories enthralled me. He related intricate details of the behind-the-scenes background of the church and the Irish priests in Arizona. According to him, Arizona’s first American-born bishop had links to Philadelphia and the Philippines. Around 1898, at the time of the Spanish American War, the Archbishop of Manila negotiated on behalf of the Spanish forces their withdrawal. O’Carroll explains, “[Admiral] Dewey agreed to fire two shots on Manila, and then they would surrender. So then they could go back to Spain with their dignity in place by

³⁵⁶ Archbishop Martin John Spalding, Letter to Cardinal Allesandro Barnabo, April 4, 1868. In the personal papers of Bishop John Baptist Salpointe, Archives of the Diocese of Tucson.

³⁵⁷ Archbishop Spalding’s letter. Here the devil refers to Protestant missionaries, who were quicker to respond to the new settlements than were the Catholics. In the letters of Bishops Bourgade and Salpointe this point is made consistently.

³⁵⁸ Gordon, *Great Arizona Orphan*, 81.

saying, 'We surrendered under superior fire from one ship.'³⁵⁹ He goes on to relate that "the Filipinos were so disturbed by the Spanish authorities and the Spanish Church that, when the army left the Philippines, the Spanish clergy went with them. And the Spanish were notorious for not making native vocations. So the whole of the Philippines was practically deserted from the point of view of clergy."³⁶⁰

Filling this void, a Philadelphia priest, Dennis Dougherty, gathered together twelve priests and was given permission to staff a diocese in the Philippines. Fr. O'Carroll provides the background.

Among the twelve was John Bernard McGinley and Daniel Gercke. They were very close friends. They were both young priests. Dougherty was made a bishop in the Philippines and later came back and became the famous Cardinal Dougherty of Philadelphia. McGinley replaced him in the Philippines as a bishop. Then he was called back and he became the founding bishop of Monterrey-Fresno. His Vicar General, Gercke was brought back and he became the Bishop of Tucson. I think out of the twelve that went out, something like ten of them became bishops. Rome has a way of rewarding those who go out on a limb and help. . . . McGinley was from my home town in Donegal, Killybegs, and Dougherty's parents were from County Mayo. Gercke's mother was Irish and his father was a German Lutheran. Dougherty was later responsible for bringing Gercke's father into the church. And he became a daily communicant after that.³⁶¹

On the advice of his close friend, Cardinal Dougherty, Bishop Gercke went to Ireland and began recruiting seminary students for his Tucson Diocese. The first was a Donegal man, Neil McHugh, who was ready in 1944, but the Second World War forestalled his coming to Arizona until 1946. According to O'Carroll, these Irish-born priests represent the Third Wave of clergy coming to Arizona. The first wave came from France, the second wave was Franco-American, and the third wave were the scores of priests from Ireland.

No priest had set foot in Arizona from 1821 to 1848, during the period when the area was under Mexican control.³⁶² Its sparsely populated, punishing terrain had been under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Durango, Mexico. After the U.S. acquisition of Mexico's northern territory, however, the few Mexican priests in the American Southwest returned to Mexico and

³⁵⁹ O'Carroll Interview.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Sandoval, *On the Move*, 29.

were replaced by priests from France, some of whom were sent to Arizona. Arizona historian Marshall Trimble points out, “This was an especially egregious affront to Mexican people who had battled the French for independence during the 1860’s, overcoming the Napoleonic occupation in 1867.”³⁶³ The new French clergy were assigned by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the office which oversees and finances the Church’s missionary activity around the world.

It was founded in Lyons, France, 1822, the fruit of the missionary zeal of a young woman named Pauline Marie Jaricot, whose ardent ambition was to spread the Faith by supporting the missions. Until 1922, when the office came under pontifical jurisdiction and was moved to Rome, its efforts were directed from France, which, not surprisingly, led the world in numbers of Catholic missionaries. France, “the eldest daughter of the church,” was to retain this distinction until mid-century when Ireland would lay claim to exporting the greatest number of Catholic missionaries around the world.

Rome considered the vast area acquired by the United States from Mexico to be mission territory. Its ecclesiastical organization was overseen by the Archdiocese of St. Louis, a French bastion named for the king of France, often referred to as “the Rome of the west.” When Jean Baptiste Lamy, who would become the first Bishop of Santa Fe, was assigned there 1850, it was under the title *in partibus infidelium* (to the region of the infidels). Sandoval’s analysis highlights the fact that, as regards the New Mexico Territory (which included Arizona), the region’s bishops and most of its priests all hailed from France. Their aim, he says, was to “create a church like the one they had left.”³⁶⁴ Frenchmen staffed and ran the church in the Southwest well into the twentieth century. These priests were assisted by Franciscans (of mainly German descent), from the St. Louis and Cincinnati Provinces who attended primarily to the state’s Indian missions, and by various orders of women religious, among them the Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of Loretto, who numbered Irish-born women in their congregations. Fr. O’Carroll elaborates:

First of all, the Diocese of Tucson was founded by the French. A lot of people don’t realize that. Lamy was the famous Archbishop of Santa Fe. But Salpointe,

³⁶³ Marshall Trimble, Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 21 October 2012.

³⁶⁴ Sandoval, *On the Move*, 31.

Girard, Granjon, Bourgade—all of these people—were French. Most of them came from Le Monde, France, where there's the famous race car track. They followed Lamy to Santa Fe. Then Lamy sent Quetu to found Prescott, and he sent Machebeuf to found Denver, and he became the first Bishop of Denver. . . . Salpointe came to Tucson. I think he was sent down to Durango to tell the bishop, "By the way, half your diocese has just been sold in the Gadsden Purchase to Arizona."³⁶⁵

The second wave of Arizona clergy came about as a result of the First World War, which blocked French-born clerics from recruiting candidates in France. Neither priests nor bishops could go there during the war. As Fr. O'Carroll informs us,

So they started recruiting among the Franco-Americans. And they went to Nashua, New Hampshire, in particular. When I came to the diocese there were something like ten priests from Nashua. Paul La Rock, Palmer Plouard, Philip Poirier, Paul Lawrence—they were all natives of Nashua and they were all French-speaking. Some of them were educated actually north of the border in Quebec. They had been recruited by the first generation of priests from France. This was the second generation of the French, and they were followed by the Irish.³⁶⁶

The "Mexican Problem"

Arriving in the American Southwest, the French clergy were not of a mind to adapt to the cultural diversity they found here. Rather, their interest lay in imposing uniformity and doctrinal conformity.³⁶⁷ Sandoval calls this "the biased view of the American Church," which sought to restore the earlier glorious missionary church of the Spaniards in the face of Mexican collapse.³⁶⁸

Linda Gordon vividly describes the popular religious character of the Southwest:

The peasants had fallen into what the French saw as erroneous "folk Catholic" customs. The Mexicans rang church bells for civic occasions, conducted costumed and noisy public processions, brought food and music into cemeteries. They decorated churches with *retablos* and carvings, painted and hewed in "primitive" manner, with "staring eyes and raw colors . . . whose features looked like those of the people in the dark mountain villages of the north," and their art used Indian symbols such as lightning, arrows, and deer along with the cross. They adored irregular saints and the Virgin of Guadalupe. The Franciscans had encouraged, even propagated, many of these practices as a way of converting

³⁶⁵ O'Carroll Interview.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁷ Willa Cather's *Death Comes to the Archbishop* and Paul Hogan's *Lamy of Santa Fe* details some of the conflicts between the French bishop and his Mexican clergy and his misunderstanding of local native cultures.

³⁶⁸ Sandoval, *On the Move*, 31.

the Indians. When Americans took over the St. Louis see condemned these customs and charged its priests with stifling such syncretism.³⁶⁹

One of popular healers or *curanderas* from Sonora, Mexico was Teresa Urrea. She visited Arizona right after the turn of the twentieth century. Revered by her devotees, some called her Santa Teresa de Caborca. Denounced by church authorities, this woman—born an illegitimate child—went on to claim her own spiritual authority to heal. Ignoring the clergy’s sanctions, she became in Gordon’s words, “a prophet in the Old Testament tradition, [who] in repeated trancelike meditations . . . could summon power to heal even the most severely crippled, to see the future, to speak the truth.”³⁷⁰ Describing her message, she said, “I spoke much to the people about God, not about the church or to tell them to go to church. . . . I told them what I believe: that God is the spirit of love.”³⁷¹ However simple and true her message, Teresa Urrea was condemned by church officials, yet hailed as a saint by many of the Mexican people.

David Gomez is one of many scholars who fault the institutional church for neglecting its Mexican flock. His critique amounts to an indictment:

The Church ever since the Southwest was annexed, has approached the Mexican American people with the same colonialist, missionary attitude which motivated the Franciscan friars in their evangelization of the Indians during the mission era. . . . [Mexicans] along with Indians were treated like irresponsible children. The Church patronized them instead of defending them.³⁷²

As Laura Gomez speaks about a “double colonization,” Orlando Espin calls our attention to a re-evangelization of Mexicans in the recently annexed territory of the American Southwest. This represented a doubling down by church authorities aimed at bringing the people into line with the teachings of the sixteenth century Council of Trent, which had had little impact on the popular religiosity of Mexicans. This new model of church he claims “emphasized doctrine (and guilt) over experience and affect and devalued lay participation. Worst of all this new Church supported the American conquest of the Southwest.”³⁷³ In an equally stinging indictment, Diaz-

³⁶⁹ Gordon, *Great Arizona Orphan*, 82.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

³⁷¹ Teresa Urrea, cited in, Gordon, *Great Arizona Orphan*, 83.

³⁷² David F. Gomez, “El Movimiento Chicano,” in *Prophets Denied Honor: An Anthology on the Hispanic Church in the United States*, ed. Antonio M. Stevens Arroyo (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980), 124-125.³⁷³ Espin, *Faith of the People*, 138.

Stevens maintains, “Yet, as late as the 1950’s . . . Mexicans . . . were treated as if they were immigrants and recent arrivals not only to the United States but to Catholicism as well.”³⁷⁴

Catholics from the East Coast and Midwest, coming into contact with Mexicans in the Southwest, frequently showed disdain for their folk religion as pagan at worse and ignorant, superstitious, and needing correction at best. The irony, of course, was that these Euro-American Catholics were of one mind with the Protestants who excoriated their ancestors’ Medieval Catholicism for the same reasons. Unconcerned with the theological issues of the Reformation or the dictates of educated elites, David Badillo writes that “[p]opular Catholicism has embodied the visual, oral, and dramatic aspects of the religious practice of the common people, searching for a personal, spiritual connection.”³⁷⁵ And so it was with Mexican faith. Invoking Our Lady of Guadalupe as their mother, the Mexican religious spirit thrived on non-liturgical devotions of a popular nature often not approved by the church hierarchy. Jeffrey Burns sums it up succinctly, “At the heart of the ‘Mexican problem’ was a conflict over what it meant to be Catholic.”³⁷⁶

Espin elaborates further: “Compounding this perception, however, was the growing influence and control of the Irish in the U.S. Church, especially when we know that many among the Irish became fierce opponents of the Mexicans in the annexed lands.” Then he shares an interesting conjecture. “I am assuming that the American (specifically Irish) Catholics’ need for acceptance and respect in the wider U.S. society led many to conceive of Hispanic religion as an added weight that they did not want to carry, and as a source of embarrassment to their reformed Tridentine Church.”³⁷⁷ His observation highlights what we have seen is a familiar pattern. One group (Catholic immigrants from Europe) struggle to gain acceptance within the dominant culture (comprised of U.S. Protestants) by creating inferiors and distancing themselves from them. The

³⁷⁴ Diaz-Stevens, “Latino Youth,” 296.

³⁷⁵ David A. Badillo, *Latinos and the New Immigrant Church* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), xi-xii.

³⁷⁶ Jeffrey M. Burns, “The Mexican-American Catholic Community,” in *The American Catholic Parish: A History from 1850 to the Present*, ed. Jay P. Dolan (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 85.

³⁷⁷ Espin, *Faith of the People*, 138.

historical record shows this was indeed the case with the American Catholic Church as regards what came to be called “the Mexican problem.”

Anthony Mora explains,

[W]here Protestant Euro Americans frequently conflated racial and religious identities when they disparaged local Mexicans the mostly French clergy grappled with race and religion in different ways. On the one hand, the European clergy discounted Mexicans based on their European assumptions about race, stating explicitly that they believed Europeans and Euro Americans superior in most respects. Yet their shared religious identity created a different relationship with local Mexicans than that of the Protestant settlers.³⁷⁸

David Gomez supports Espin’s contention of church neglect of its brown members and, like him, lays much of the blame on the Irish clergy:

The Southwest Church has been dominated by French, German, and mainly Irish priests in top leadership positions, despite the fact that there has always been able Mexican and Mexican American priests available. Needless to say the Irish, non-Spanish-speaking priests and bishops have traditionally been unable to fully identify with the needs, aspirations, and best interest of the Chicanos.³⁷⁹

This assessment, however, is at odds with what many of my Mexican informants told me with regard to their preference for priests from Ireland over fluent Spanish-speaking priests from Spain.

The *mestizo* settlements developed a “self-reliant religion,” and formed what Sandoval calls “the church of the poor.” Yet he notes that it is due to them that the faith in the Southwest owes its existence. “These people viewed as inferiors by the Creoles (Spanish descendants born in the New World) and as a mongrel race by Americans who conquered the region.”³⁸⁰

Many scholars fault the official church and excoriate its authorities for their anti-Mexican prejudice. Unsettling stereotypes of Mexican parishioners were rife in the minds and words of churchmen. Santa Fe’s Archbishop Lamy reported, “Our Mexican population has quite a sad future. Very few of them will be able to follow modern progress. They cannot be compared to

³⁷⁸ Anthony Mora, “Resistance and Accommodation in a Border Parish,” *Western Historical Quarterly* (Autumn, 2005), 305.

³⁷⁹ Gomez, “El Movimiento,” 124-125.

³⁸⁰ Sandoval, *On the Move*, 32.

Americans in the way of intellectual liveliness, ordinary skills, and industry; they will thus be scorned and considered an inferior race.”³⁸¹

In a similar vein Bishop Bourgade in Arizona opined, “The Mexican on the frontier has a lot of Indian blood and is improvident, does not economize, does not save, works very little and spends like a child to satisfy his every whim. He is poor, and alongside the American is becoming a poor work hand, poorer and poorer. He doesn’t understand the needs of the priest and has no conception of the way the church operates.”³⁸²

Tucson’s Bishop Bourgade is quoted by Fr. Benzing in his memoirs: “The majority of the Salt River Valley are Mexicans, and ‘the scum and dross of Sonora’ (words of the Reverend Bishop).”³⁸³ The clergy shared these attitudes alongside benevolent notions of helping Mexicans become better Catholics who would also be “Americanized.”

* * *

One gauge of the discrimination experienced by Mexicans within the Catholic Church in America is the low numbers of priestly vocations among them. Latin America never had priests as numerous as in Europe because the church did not cultivate native vocations, but rather relied on *criollo* priests descended from the European colonizers. Only 230 priests remained in Mexico following independence in 1821.³⁸⁴ One vocations director lists several reasons for the low number of Mexican American priests.

1. The Spanish tradition of not creating a native clergy.
2. Open discrimination against Mexicans by priests.
3. Taking Mexicans for granted on the part of the church; no special effort to keep them Catholic.
4. The lack of education, especially higher education, among Mexican young people.³⁸⁵

³⁸¹ Bishop Lamy to the Vatican’s Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, Santa Fe, 18 December 1881, cited in Paul Hogan, *Lamy of Santa Fe: His Life and Times* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Inc., 1975), 407.

³⁸² Bishop Bourgade, Letter to Fr. Alexandre Guasco, Secretary for the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, 18 April 1890. Archives of the Diocese of Tucson.

³⁸³ Novatus Benzing, “Fragebogen und Supplementum,” 30 November 1899, in *The Kingdom of St. Francis in Arizona*, ed., Maynard Geiger (Santa Barbara: Franciscan Friars Santa Barbara Province, 1939), 22.

³⁸⁴ Sandoval, *On the Move*, 77.

³⁸⁵ Roger B. Luna, S.D.B., “Why So Few Mexican American Priests?” in Stevens Arroyo, ed, *Prophets Denied Honor*, 160.

David Gomez agrees, but comes at it from the other viewpoint, namely, that for the church to be attractive for youth to be willing to embrace a life of ministerial service, “Mexican Americans would have to be *gringoized* (and very few of them were).³⁸⁶ Sandoval cites cultural handicaps.

The number of native Hispanic clergy grew slowly during the 1950’s and 1960’s. One reason was that few Hispanics qualified for admission to the seminaries. Few Mexican Americans graduated from high school. Those who did often went to inferior schools, with the result that the rare one who applied to the seminary often could not pass the entrance tests. . . . Another reason, seldom articulated, was that the bishops also subscribed to the idea that the Hispanics were an inferior people. They felt that the priesthood, like the officer class in the Armed Forces, was for whites only.”³⁸⁷

Church leaders in the Western United States brought religious communities from Spain, (this was the origin of the Spanish Carmelites in Tucson) thinking that fluency in Spanish would make them effective in Mexican congregations. But imported Spanish priests did not seem to be the answer, nor did they quite fill the bill in their ministry to Mexican people. Jeffrey Burns explains why this was so.

[A] wide gap existed between Spanish and Mexican mentalities. One pastor in the 1930’s noted that Spanish priests have difficulty in understanding “the psychology, manner, religious feeling, and educational problems of the Mexican.” The Spanish priests were often criticized for remaining too aristocratic and aloof. Many Mexican parishioners complained that the Spanish pastor was too “*reganon*” (too scolding), and too authoritarian. The simple importation of Spanish priests backfired at times because the Spanish priests aggravated the isolation of the Mexican American from parish life.³⁸⁸

The thin representation of Mexican young men in the clergy will only be addressed and somewhat solved in the late twentieth century.

As the historical period of this study ends, 2 December 1969, with the installation of Edward A. McCarthy, as founding bishop of the Diocese of Phoenix, it may be apropos to end this chapter by citing his refusal “to see the Mexican American in his diocese as a problem to be solved, but rather as a person to be known and loved.”³⁸⁹

³⁸⁶ Gomez, “El Movimiento,” 124.

³⁸⁷ Sandoval, *On the Move*, 78.

³⁸⁸ Burns, “Mexican American Catholic Community,” 84.

³⁸⁹ Bishop Edward McCarthy, cited in Virgilio Elizondo, “Pastoral Planning for the Spanish-speaking in the United States of America,” in Stevens Arroyo, ed., *Prophets Denied Honor*, 183.

* * *

Concluding this chapter I am struck by the virulence and persistence of racism which dogged Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Arizona for most of the twentieth century. It was complex and nuanced. In some cases money, as a determinant of class, was a decisive factor. Economic status established an inverse relationship with regard to racial prejudice. The more money Mexicans had the less racism they experienced. But for the majority, who were of marginal means or in poverty, the racism directed at them was deep-seated and rampant. It had a long and intractable history as we have seen and played out in nefarious ways, which Linda Gomez captures in her idea of “a double colonization.” Anti-Mexican bigotry was likewise stoked by ideological fancies. At times Mexicans were seen as having the “saving drop” of Spanish blood, which placed them above “savage” Indians with no redemptive links to Europe. And at other times they were lampooned as defective “half-breeds,” lacking the purity of the unalloyed Indian or even the black.

But more and more an equally great pain for Mexican Catholics in Arizona was the neglect and condescension towards them by religious officials of their own faith. Mexican religiosity was at best patronized and at worst disdained and dismissed by Euroamerican bishops and Anglo-Catholics. The attitudes and stance toward Mexicans in the church adopted by bishops and white parishioners ironically came to resemble Protestant fears and prejudices against Catholics following the Reformation. The heralded unity within the “household of faith” was not immune to the racism of society at large. As for the Irish priests in Arizona, given their people’s history of oppression and prejudice, they should have known better. But as far as acting to end Mexican marginalization in this wider context most of them appear blind, or tone deaf, or to have opted to play it safe.

* * *

Following World War I, the seventy-five year run of French-born bishops overseeing the mission land of Arizona ended. The state began to grow with work to be had in mining, cotton and citrus, harvesting and ranching. But in the wake of World War II, it virtually exploded with

new residents. Many wartime fliers had been trained in its clear skies and predictable weather. After the war a good number made their way back to live in Arizona. The state also became a magnet for people with respiratory problems and various health conditions. Sunshine and dry light air was touted as a cure for many ailments.

Thus it was that in 1942 my parents, like many others, ventured Southwest in search of health. The doctor told them, "If you stay here, you'll both die. But if you move to the desert, at least one of you may live to raise the children." My mother—in a relapse of tuberculosis was put through the window of the train on a stretcher—and my father—a chronic asthmatic who frequently passed out during the ragweed season—together bade a tearful goodbye to relatives and their beloved Irish community in Chicago. Happily, Arizona was not only a new place but a another chance, giving them improved health and a new lease on life.

With the state's unprecedented growth came an urgent need for ever more clergy to minister to a burgeoning flock. As with numerous American dioceses, the Diocese of Tucson (which included the whole state with the exception of Navaho and Apache Counties in the northeast) opted for the "Irish solution." In the mid 1940's, the first of a sizeable contingent of young men fresh out of Irish seminaries came to Arizona.

*Much of the church changes when priests change,
and priests change because of places they go and people they meet.*³⁹⁰

*You just expected the voice of church to have an Irish accent.*³⁹¹

Chapter Five

IRISH PRIESTS

One might ask: Are the priests from Ireland who came to Arizona missionaries? The answer depends on our definition of the term missionary. Yes, in the sense that they left home to spend the rest of their lives serving the church in a foreign land where most of them are buried. No, in the sense that they were not primary evangelizers bringing the Gospel to people who had not yet heard it. Edmund Hogan distinguishes between “missionary evangelization” and “pastoral evangelization.”³⁹² The Irish priests in Arizona were examples of the latter, since they were not preaching to the unevangelized but primarily ministering to those already in the church.

Fr. Hoban charts a different distinction along economic lines. “The real missionaries went to Africa,” he says, “to very poverty stricken areas. It was a Third World kind of thing. America was regarded as being more comfortable, easier, people better off, and so on. If somebody said to you that he was going to the missions, you wouldn’t think of North America.”³⁹³

As far as the priests who came to the U.S. were concerned, Fr. O’Carroll states that in the 1950’s and 60’s “there were around 1,000 priests from Ireland in California, especially in the Dioceses of Los Angeles, Sacramento, and San Diego.” He said, “Besides Tucson, Yakima, WA, San Antonio, TX, Miami, FL were also magnets.” He went on to elaborate.

The year I was ordained, twenty guys left All Hallows for Los Angeles. The way it worked was that bishops from the States, who went to Irish seminaries every two years and recruited, got the big numbers. Some areas of the Southwest, like New Mexico, had very few priests from Ireland. In some cases a new Irish priest might head to Wyoming or—like one fellow in my class—Brooklyn because they

³⁹⁰ Michael Pasquier, *Fathers on the Frontier: French Missionaries and the Roman Catholic Priesthood in the United States, 1789-1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 21.

³⁹¹ Rios Interview.

³⁹² Edmund M. Hogan, *The Irish Missionary Movement: A Historical Survey, 1830-1980* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, Ltd., 1990) 2.

³⁹³ Hoban Interview.

had an uncle or a cousin already there. All Hallows supplied most of the Irish priests who came to America, but in the case of Tucson, St. Patrick's in Carlow supplied the most.³⁹⁴

Of the few remaining Irish priests who came to Arizona and are now retired, most credit their mothers for having the greatest influence on their vocation. And many had good memories as children of priests they knew growing up, but not all. Fr. Tot O'Dea holds his mother's spirituality in high regard but not the priests he experienced growing up in Ireland. He explains it this way:

My dad had a drinking problem, so he was absent, you know. He was kind of a zero influence in my life really, a negative one. My mom was a saint and a comedian. She was a happy woman, and nothing could shake it. She was very, very shrewd. She would warn me about the church. In fact when I was going to Carlow, she often would say to me, "Are you sure you want to do this?" And yet the rosary every night and tremendous piety in the woman. Gorgeous spirituality. And the church didn't destroy it. She wasn't "servilized" by this power thing. And she was so aware. She saw the abuse of power all around her. The grandstanding of the pastor, you know. And then the other priest, too. They were really abusive, looking down their noses at us. They had the biggest house in the village and they had the power. And we were just a bunch of peasants.³⁹⁵

Not atypical of many Irish priests, Msgr. Cahalane shares warm memories of his family's spirituality and their strong republican identity.

In my growing up years it [the evening rosary] was just regular practice. It was like having food, a regular part of our diet. My dad always led the rosary. And he did the Litany of Loreto at the end of the rosary all from memory. And I can always remember seeing him in prayer, praying the rosary. And he'd be just enthralled. . . . And my mom would have trimmings on the rosary [additional Hail Marys or Our Fathers for specific intentions] that would go on as long as the rosary itself. So I came out of that very devotional Catholic environment and a very patriotic one too. England was the oppressor. And we were an oppressed people. And I remember my mother in particular describing the Black and Tan season in West Cork in her growing up days. And she remembered when she was twelve years old and Michael Collins was assassinated not far from us.³⁹⁶

The pride of an Irish Catholic family was to have a son a priest. As one writer put it, "It was said of Ireland's seminaries during the middle decades of the last century that they were full

³⁹⁴ Rev. Eugene O'Carroll, Personal Telephone Communication, Phoenix, AZ, 9 September 2014.

³⁹⁵ O'Dea Interview.

³⁹⁶ Cahalane Interview.

of young men whose mothers had vocations to the priesthood. It helped too that becoming a priest brought with it education, power, and great social status.”³⁹⁷

Statistically, in 1800 there were about 1,850 priests in Ireland. In 1850 there were about 5,000 priests, monks, and nuns for a Catholic population of 5,000,000, while in 1900 there were over 14,000 priests, monks, and nuns for some 3,300,000 Catholics, or a ratio increase from 1:1000 in 1850 to 1:225 in 1900.³⁹⁸ I gleaned a different perspective on this from my interview with, Fr. Brendan Hoban, a pastor and author in County Mayo. One of the founders of the Irish Priests’ Association, he has authored half a dozen books, writes a weekly column for *The Western People*, a local newspaper, and is a frequent contributor to *The Irish Catholic*, the church’s national weekly newspaper. A critic of the institution and an outspoken advocate for church reform, Hoban is a priest “on the edge” of theological debate. When I mentioned him to Fr. O’Dea, he remarked, “Bright fellow. I thought the Vatican silenced him.” Addressing the issue of priestly vocations, Fr. Hoban points out, “A professor used to say to us: the big question wasn’t why there are so few vocations now. But why there were so many in the past. And part of the reason was economics. It was an opportunity to better yourself.”³⁹⁹

Describing his experience of priests during his teen years in Ireland, former Arizona priest Eamon Barden shares perhaps the most brutal memories. He recalls, “How I ever became a priest after having to experience them, I don’t know. They were the most ruthless bunch of guys that I ever was involved with. They were cruel: verbally, emotionally, physically. I remember in study hall, this priest hit a guy full on in the jaw and knocked him out.”⁴⁰⁰ It wasn’t only at school that he was mistreated. He told me that his parish priests were just as bad.

The parish priest I grew up with was Canon Day. And nobody ever went to him unless there had been a death. He was one of those people that was forbidding. People dreaded going in if they needed a baptism certificate, which they needed at times to get married or whatever. Then in my later years, the priest who was the president of the high school became pastor in our parish. He was a dreaded human being.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁷ Patsy McGarry, “The Rise and Fall of Roman Catholicism in Ireland,” in *Irish and Catholic?*, eds., Fuller, Littleton, and Maher, 32.

³⁹⁸ Larkin, *Historical Dimensions*, 27, 58.

³⁹⁹ Hoban Interview.

⁴⁰⁰ Eamon Barden, Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 28 October 2012.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

Finally, when Eamon entered to the seminary his experience of the priests there was much improved. As he observes, “They treated us with a little respect. There was no beating or verbal abuse. They called us, “Mr. Barden,” or “Mr. Whatever.” But in high school it was, “Barden, come over here.”⁴⁰²

In the past those who held Ireland in disdain referred to it as “a priest-ridden country.” But if it was priest-ridden previously, it became a virtual priest factory in the mid-twentieth century, when two out of three young men upon ordination left Ireland for ministry abroad. As Fr. Hoban put it, “The first decision you made when you left high school was: did you want to become a priest or did you want to become something else?”⁴⁰³ Those who studied in Maynooth were sponsored by their local bishop to serve in their home diocese. As Fr. Twomey points out, “Only the best and the *crème de la crème* went to Maynooth—the highest achievers academically, etcetera, and also those who could afford it.”⁴⁰⁴

Most young men training in religious orders also remained in Ireland. But all the others in various seminaries intended to leave for foreign missions. Those not belonging to missionary religious orders, who were studying to be diocesan clergy and to serve in dioceses abroad, signed up with foreign bishops who then sponsored them and paid for their education. The diocesan priests who served in Arizona describe it as a choice they made. The priests I interviewed told me that with the glut of vocations in Ireland, they wanted to go where they were more needed, while some sought a broader experience of culture and church, and still others had a yen for adventure and an experience of life outside of Ireland.

Recruitment and Motivation

Several Irish priests in Arizona cite Fr. John McMahon’s salesmanship as persuasive in their decision to sign up for the Diocese of Tucson. Fr. O’Dea relates, “John McMahon came in 1952 or 53 and did a sales pitch in Carlow. I remember he showed us slides of orange trees. I

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Hoban Interview.

⁴⁰⁴ Twomey Interview.

wanted some of them oranges. By the time I got there I became allergic to them.”⁴⁰⁵ Recalling how he came to affiliate with the church in Arizona, Msgr. O’Grady comments, “John McMahon came in 1953 to recruit students for the Tucson Diocese. He invited us to come to his talk. So I went. We knew we’d get something—American cigarettes or something. Anyway, he signed up 16 of us that day.”⁴⁰⁶

Eamon Barden recalls another priest issuing the invitation to come to Arizona. “When I was in high school, Paul Smith, who was a native of Longford, came in and showed slides of green mountains, and rivers, and streams. And later on we found out that they were taken in Vermont or Maine, because Paul knew that if he showed Arizona as it was, no one would ever come.”⁴⁰⁷ Fr. Harry Ledwith remembers, “My Dad happened to meet Paul Smith in a pub in [Longford] town. They were having a drink and he called me and said, ‘Get on your bike and come in here.’ So I cycled the two miles into town and met Fr. Smith. The next thing I enrolled in Carlow. ‘If God wants me, I’ll stay,’ I said.”⁴⁰⁸

Some were deceived by the scale of maps. Msgr. O’Grady tells how he gravitated to Tucson because on the map “it didn’t look that far from San Diego,” where several of his friends had gone. “I thought it looked pretty close—the next state, like the next county over here—and I thought we could meet up for golf together on our day off.”⁴⁰⁹

Noting that there were too many priests in Ireland, young Willy Waldron had an interview with the rector of All Hallows. “He asked me where would I like to go,” Fr. Waldron remembers.

And before I could answer, he said, “I would like a student to say: anywhere.” And he wrote in capital letters after my name: ANYWHERE. The next interview I had with the rector, he said, “The first time you were here, you said you’d go anywhere, with a preference for the United States.” Then, mispronouncing it, he said, “You’ll go to Tuck-son, Arizona.” I didn’t know where Arizona was.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁵ O’Dea Interview.

⁴⁰⁶ Msgr. Michael O’Grady, Remarks in his homily at Msgr. McMahon’s funeral, Phoenix, AZ, 14 November 2014.

⁴⁰⁷ Barden Interview.

⁴⁰⁸ Ledwith Interview.

⁴⁰⁹ O’Grady Interview.

⁴¹⁰ Waldron Interview.

Young Waldron went to the library to look it up in the Catholic Encyclopedia. Visually starting at the Canadian border his eyes tracked southward until he found Tucson, Arizona. “And when I was leaving the library, I met my classmates, Neil McHugh and Neil Mullaney, and they said, ‘Where in the world is Tucson, Arizona?’ I said, ‘Let me show you.’ And that’s where the three of us ended up. There were eight ordained in Ireland for Tucson that year, 1950.”⁴¹¹

During the middle decades of the last century, Ireland was a virtual priest factory unrivaled in the world. This heyday, Fr. Waldron calls, “the bumper years.” Not counting the houses run by religious orders which sent priests to Africa, Asia, and Latin America, six Irish seminaries together ordained approximately 150 young men annually for dioceses in the English-speaking world. Fr. Gene O’Carroll remarks, “There were forty in our class ordained the same year as me. That’s one graduating class in one seminary.”⁴¹²

Before 1960 under Bishop Gercke, new priests coming from Ireland traveled by ship and then by train to Arizona, “because the old bishop was a very old fashioned, traditional man, and wouldn’t allow us to fly at that time.”⁴¹³ Msgr. John McMahon—at ninety-three the oldest Irish priest—came to Arizona in 1948, after sailing “ten days from England to New York. Coming from an island country, when I took the train to Tucson, I had no idea of the immenseness of the United States.” He goes on to explain that the priests were provided for with “a salary of \$45 a month, as best I remember. But housing and food was included, and we had use of the parish car.”⁴¹⁴

* * *

Most of the Irish priests interviewed for this project said that a desire to serve was their primary motivation for becoming priests and for signing up with the Tucson Diocese. Fr. Malone commented, “Well, I would say generally my expectation was to serve, however that might be.”⁴¹⁵ Likewise Msgr. McMahon in the same vein remarked, “I saw myself as kind of a servant. I had

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² O’Carroll Interview.

⁴¹³ Rev. Alan Malone, Personal Interview by author. County Clare, Ireland, 21 June 2012.

⁴¹⁴ Msgr. John McMahon, Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 24 June 2012.

⁴¹⁵ Cahalane Interview.

that spirit of service.”⁴¹⁶ But instead of highlighting the “pull” factor of service, Fr. Ledwith noted a negative “push” factor at play in his decision. As a priest in Ireland, he told me that he would stagnate, Instead he said, “I was impacted by the possibilities of America. In Ireland you’re defeated before you start.”⁴¹⁷

I interviewed Fr. Gil Padilla, a retired Mexican American priest, at the Tucson rectory where he lives and helps out. An Arizona native, he lived and worked with some of the priests from Ireland. He surprised me in that he questioned their motivation and was fairly critical of them. He points out,

They would go to a missionary seminary and they’d be sent to America or Australia. They didn’t have the intelligence to get into the home dioceses. They were the rejects of Ireland. Fr. McCready, my first Irish pastor, was totally devoid of any comprehension and incapable of abstract thought. He couldn’t carry on a conversation. But he was a good confessor, a good counselor. But he had no knowledge of any theology or philosophy. And this was true for a lot of them: McCready, McHugh, Casey, Maguire, Smith, Cullinan. They had some very good ones too like McMahon, Gillespie, Mullaney, that I admired.⁴¹⁸

Priests from Ireland who came to Arizona were not theologians. One priest described theology in the seminary as “an obstacle course on your way to ordination.” General practitioners is probably the term that best describes them. They were primarily pastors who formed communities, built churches, and were ready to do whatever was needed. The two exceptions were Msgr. John F. Burns, a canon lawyer who became Chancellor of the Tucson Diocese and Fr. Alan Malone who also became a canon lawyer and later headed up the Phoenix Diocesan Marriage Tribunal. All the other Irish priests were pastors. And more than a few of them came to be revered.

The Irish priests were well aware of one another’s strengths and weaknesses. As they say in Ireland, they “sized one another up.” Terry Lynch, a former Arizona priest from County Cavan, Ireland, was not alone in paying kudos to an elder colleague for his sheer goodness.

Take Gene Maguire: Was he much loved because he was a great teacher? No. Was he much loved because he was a very efficient manager? No. He was much loved because he had a massive amount of kindness and patience and thoughtfulness and willingness to go the extra mile for people, and was kind and

⁴¹⁶ O’Dea Interview.

⁴¹⁷ Ledwith Interview.

⁴¹⁸ Padilla Interview.

generous and thoughtful and able to work with all kinds of people. People who live on the side of Camelback Mountain supported him in his efforts. But he was the kind of guy who would be collecting mattresses for people who needed them—like an Indian on the Reservation.⁴¹⁹

Arizona was experiencing its greatest population boom during the time of the Irish pastors. With scant resources the demands of the burgeoning diocese were basic. Churches and schools had to be built to keep up with the tremendous growth. Priests in ever greater numbers were required to meet the people's sacramental needs. What we see in the typical Irish priest is a pattern—not of a specialist, but of an unassuming worker—of one who takes on the task at hand and does not rock the boat. “It was kind of an Irish trait not to make waves,” shares Terry Lynch, a former priest from Ireland.⁴²⁰

But the lack of specialization we see in the Arizona Irish clergy and their quiet modesty may also be the result of cultural factors, as Professor Twomey points out.

I think Irish Catholicism is very pragmatic. The Irish intelligence has become very pragmatic because of the poverty and the struggle to survive. . . . You certainly don't show who you are. You don't display. . . . Very often we would tend to be more retiring, and that appeals to people. We would be very astute because we had to survive. It's a strategy. It's built into our genes at this stage. But there is a kind of a tradition in Ireland that entails a certain healthy disregard for public display of piety. This would have made the Irish priest kind of attractive. He would not display his piety. People would enjoy his humour.⁴²¹

But coming to America the Irish priests learned through the challenges and opportunities they experienced. By all accounts they appear to have embraced America as their new home. Those who were able to listen and learn, to grow and adapt, in large part were effective and in many cases came to be endeared to their parishioners. Msgr. O'Grady is affectionately known as perhaps the best comedian and story teller among the clergy. As my mother used to say, “He could make a cat laugh.” As a young priest he overcame lung cancer and is a healthy eighty-year-old today. He is the only retired Irish priest who divides his time between his home in Ireland and his home in Phoenix. When I interviewed him at home in County Clare, he recalled that “leaving the seminary one of our instructors said, ‘The first half of your education is over and

⁴¹⁹ Lynch Interview.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Twomey Interview.

the second half will begin now and you will learn from the people.” He went on to say, “One of the good things was I think I always knew how to learn from the people. I knew they would teach me about priesthood, I just had to listen to them.”⁴²²

O’Grady shared an early transformation in his understanding of ministry, whereby he came to realize that interpersonal relationships trump didactic expertise.

I learned my very first week when the pastor told me I was in charge of the convert class, and I said, “I don’t think I can do that.” I said, for openers, “We had only one Protestant in our village and she became a Catholic the year I was ordained.” And nobody would help me. So in the class someone said, “Prove the existence of God from St. Thomas Aquinas.” And I started. And I was getting worse and worse. So at the end of the class, I remember I joked and I said, “I don’t think I believe in the existence of God myself now. But I know that I can do better. And so give me a chance.” And they all came back. So I learned then. The first class was terrible I thought. Then I found out they were not looking for anybody with high ideas. I began to see it’s all about relationship. Connecting with people.⁴²³

The leading political activist and perhaps the most socially conscious among the clergy from Ireland was Msgr. Richard O’Keefe. Nicknamed “Dixie” by his mother, he was an indefatigable worker. Most of his priesthood was served in Yuma, Arizona, whose record heat and dryness stands in stark contrast to the fresh, lush countryside of his native County Tipperary. In his thirty-seven years as pastor there, he constructed the parish elementary school and cafeteria and built Yuma Catholic High School. I met and interviewed him at dinner at the Hyatt Hotel in Phoenix. He had come up from Yuma to attend an annual fundraiser for St. Mary’s High School at which a gifted Hispanic student, the son of former parishioners, was being honored as Knight of the Year.

Politically aligned with most of the Irish priests, O’Keefe is a social liberal and an avid Democrat, but more engaged than his fellow Irishmen. In later years he became a close friend and confidant to Arizona governor, Janet Napolitano, who is not a Catholic. During her tenure they traveled to Rome, where they discovered that the Bishop of Phoenix, on account of her pro-choice views, had intervened to have her stopped from entering St. Peter’s Basilica. But Msgr. O’Keefe told me, “I had to pull strings, but we got through.”

⁴²² O’Grady Interview.

⁴²³ O’Grady Interview.

Most of his life was spent working with the Mexican people of southern Arizona. He shared his experience as a new priest with the Mexican miners.

I started with them in that deadly strike in Douglas in '59. And I saw what devastation it was to families, and how the company store would run everything and charge them what they liked. And I wanted to do something. . . . They smuggled me into the mine down to 2900 feet in San Manuel. That was an experience. It was perilous. You wonder how in the name of God they lived beyond the age of fifty. . . . I was in the big effort by the miners to overthrow the old mine, mill and smelter union, which was dominated by the Canadians. And I helped them get into the United States Union, the United Steel Workers. I helped them organize. I didn't get home some nights until 3:00 or 4:00 o'clock in the morning.⁴²⁴

Irishness

Arizona's large crop of immigrant Irish priests brought a spirit to their ministry that wove together gifts of personality and spirituality that made a lasting impression on their flock. As several of my informants shared with me, there was something decidedly different about these priests. They brought with them an appreciation of community and cultural openness that enhanced their ministry. Theirs was a benign, tolerant approach—which, I maintain, came from their being Irish. And yet, like the dominant culture and the religious institution they represented, they had their blind spots.

By and large they shared signature traits of lightheartedness, humor, a robust work ethic, and a capacity for celebration. Born in the first half of the twentieth century in a poor, underdeveloped country, they were—culturally and psychologically speaking—more like nineteenth-century men. In the culture in which they grew up, love was conveyed in deeds more than in words. Even certain friendly gestures encountered in America took some of them aback. Fr. Gene O'Carroll, a no nonsense, mater-of-fact man, is retired and lives on the edge of the metropolitan area where the northern edge of Phoenix meets the desert. Besides serving as a pastor, he also gave one weekend a month on duty as chaplain to the Arizona National Guard. He put it this way.

I would say, if you were to put the three of them—the American Anglo and the Irish and the Mexican—on a scale, you know, the Mexican would be the most

⁴²⁴ Msgr. Richard O'Keefe, Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 6 January 2012.

emotional Catholic. The Irish guy would be in the middle. But the American Anglo is closer to British Catholicism, if you know what I mean. I found it a little difficult at times. I remember at my first Christmas in Arizona I got a hug. Well, nobody ever hugged me in Ireland. And this was a shock.⁴²⁵

The priests from Ireland hailed mainly from large families in humble rural backgrounds, where the model of masculinity was that of the strong silent type. Most of them hailed from farms and told me about hard work at a young age, of everyone's having to pitch in on. Many related how as children they typically shared a room with their siblings and had to rise early in the morning to milk cows before heading off to school on foot. During the summer holidays they helped their parents cut the high grass by hand with a scythe, stack it to dry, and later gather the hay into sheds. Some of them came from small towns and were the children of shopkeepers. All of them agreed, idleness was not tolerated and a willingness to do whatever was required was paramount. Rolling up one's sleeves for the task at hand was a definable characteristic of the Irish priests and nuns who came to Arizona.

As I was growing up as a kid the war [World War II] was on and you couldn't go anywhere. You couldn't go any farther than you could walk or take a bicycle. No cars. There was no petrol. We had to do with very simple living. You know, for many years we didn't see an orange or a banana. We didn't even know what they were. And I remember after the war ended and they came back, one of the big treats was to see the bananas and the oranges and things like that.⁴²⁶

At that time it was common for Irish Catholic families to have more than one child enter the priesthood or religious life. Sr. Dympna Doran, one of the Irish nuns who has taught for many years at SS. Simon and Jude School, is fairly typical in this regard. She shares, "There were fourteen kids in our family, seven boys and seven girls—Mamie, Jack, Josie, Trish, Tommy, Liam, Christy, Paddy, Dympna, Gerry, Veronica, Jimmy, Celie and Kathleen—in that order. So, I was number nine."⁴²⁷ One of her sisters also became a nun in the Loreto Order and stayed in Ireland.

I was particularly moved by what she shared about her priest brother and the affection for him surrounding his death. I think this gives us an inkling of the esteem in which priests were held in Ireland. Sister Dymphna recalls,

⁴²⁵ O'Carroll Interview.

⁴²⁶ Malone Interview.

⁴²⁷ Doran Interview.

My brother, Liam, went to seminary in All Hallows, Dublin and was ordained in 1958 and went to Bathurst, Australia for fifteen years. He later transferred to the Diocese of Dallas, Texas and served some pastorships there, and then moved to Diocese of Victoria, Texas, where he ended his days with cancer in May 2000. I was able to help him and be with him the last months of his life. After a big funeral in Cuero, Texas, I brought his body to Ireland and we had another enormous send-off at our home parish of Castlepollard, and we laid him to rest there in our town cemetery close to my parents' grave.⁴²⁸

Her description of a large family with close ties echoes other Irish nuns and priests in talking about their backgrounds. With the exception of the high rate of religious vocations, it could also apply to the Mexicans with whom they lived and worked in Arizona.

Besides presiding at liturgical rites Arizona's Irish priests hosted parish dinners, dances, picnics, and all manner of social get-togethers. They were proud of their native culture. Almost without exception you could count on a parish with an Irish pastor having an annual St. Patrick's Day Dance. Irish-born Tucson pastor, Fr. Harry Ledwith sees a marked contrast in kinds of priests, as he points out, "Today one often hears of the pietism and legalism characteristic of many traditionalist-leaning younger priests. They are clerics of the sanctuary, quite unlike the Irish priests who were primarily community men."⁴²⁹

The Irish clergy embraced American ways and, more specifically, they valued Mexican customs and fiestas. They remained keenly connected to Ireland, but they honored and appreciated the Mexican culture of the Southwest. Earlier priests in Arizona sought to Europeanize their Mexican parishioners and later priests sought to Americanize them. By all accounts the Irish priests took them as they were and found much in common with them.

One of my informants, a Ph.D. Candidate and instructor at Grand Canyon University, grew up in Glendale, Arizona, in a large Mexican family. What she shares gives us a sense of how this played out. "Typically, today a priest will perform a wedding and then return to his rectory or go about other business. The Irish priests I've known when I was little and in my parents' time performed weddings and then went to be with the bride and groom at their reception afterwards. They loved a party."⁴³⁰ Her comment offers a window unto the natural instincts of

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ledwith Interview.

⁴³⁰ Lisa Jaurique, Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 19 May 2012.

most of the Irish priests. Sociable and garrulous by temperament, they recognized the value in gathering people together for events and occasions other than Mass, of sharing with them in their homes highlights of their lives, of journeying with them. And this is why they were loved.

And yet regarding this same community, there were factors at work—namely, an entrenched social and ecclesial racist system which marginalized Mexican people—which these clergy in most cases failed to recognize and did little to address.

Contrasts

The Mexicans saw the Irish priests in Arizona as friends and allies. Though typically these Irishmen did not speak Spanish, they, nonetheless, conveyed empathy for their Hispanic flock and this seemed to set them apart from their American counterparts and even priests from Spain. The fact that most Irish priests did not speak Spanish does not appear to have alienated them from their Mexican parishioners. “They had a pastoral sensitivity,” according to Dr. Alberto Rios, “which like the Mexicans was shaped and influenced by matriarchal figures. They had grandmothers. And through grandmothers you may not get language, but you get sensibility. You get food. You get ritual. You get behaviors.”⁴³¹

Graciela Graf came to Arizona years ago from her native Venezuela. She came to know several Irish priests in Phoenix. In her words, “It was very easy to get close to them, and not only to be friends with them, but to speak about your own spirituality and get really deep.”⁴³² Many preferred the Irish priests to those from Spain, who of course spoke Spanish fluently. I met Lupe Woodsen for lunch at the Ikea cafeteria in Tempe, Arizona. Her mother came from Sonora, Mexico and never learned English. Lupe told me that growing up in Tucson she personally knew priests from Spain as well as a few from Ireland. In her judgment the latter trumped the former.

I think people were more comfortable with the Irish priests than they were with the Spanish. The Spanish priests were very critical of everything you did, whereas the Irish priests were a lot more welcoming and a lot more celebratory. [Their] mass was a little more relaxed. . . . Irish priests were a lot more parish

⁴³¹ Rios Interview.

⁴³² Graf Interview.

oriented, a lot more interacting, whereas the Spanish priests stayed in their area a little more.”⁴³³

The Irish priests appear to have sensed this as well, as Msgr. Tom Hever, from County Monaghan put it, “You know, in a strange way the Spanish priests were tougher on the Hispanics than the Irish were. They were much more legalistic. We were a bit more lenient. I don’t know whether they [Mexicans] liked to be chewed out or not—maybe it was a cultural thing. You know, you take it from your own, but you won’t take it from anybody else.”⁴³⁴

He went on to point out a strong cultural similarity between the Irish and Mexicans: their communal response to death. “You know, if you are at a funeral in Ireland at home, you never see ten people there. And with the Hispanics, you never see a Hispanic funeral with a handful of people. They all show up. . . .Because of things like that, I think there was more of an identification with the Hispanics.”⁴³⁵

Sr. Dymphna Doran confirms this perception: “We had a Spanish priest in Prescott who was from Spain. And I swear, they [Mexican parishioners] would have rather had an Irishman or an African or anybody else. He was so lording it over them. It was like a superior attitude. I couldn’t believe it. They were so good—kept coming to Mass, kept getting put down.”⁴³⁶

One of the Presentation Sisters from Ireland who came to Arizona, Sr. Evelyn O’Boyle—recalling her time teaching in the Holy Angles School in Globe, Arizona—takes particular delight in their cultural exchange. She remarks,

Even in elementary school [in Ireland] we were always collecting money for missionary countries. And I think the missionary spirit was just embedded. It became part of us, that when you came out you took everybody as they were. So Indians, Mexicans, Anglos, Irish—we didn’t stop to examine our differences. We kind of all shared things. We taught them our dancing and they taught us theirs. They were on TV. Those Mexicans could do the Irish dancing. They were wonderful.⁴³⁷

Part of my research involved placing an ad in *The New Vision* and *The Catholic Sun*, the official newspapers of the Tucson and Phoenix Dioceses respectively. In it I explained my

⁴³³ Woodsen Interview.

⁴³⁴ Hever Interview.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Doran Interview.

⁴³⁷ Sr. Evelyn O’Boyle, P.B.V.M., Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 31 March 2013.

dissertation project and asked Hispanics who had known the Irish priests, and who were willing to be interviewed, to contact me. One of those who responded, was Eugene Benton, who I met for lunch at Applebee's Restaurant in Tucson. He grew up there as a Mexican American in Holy Family (Tucson's oldest parish) which is staffed by Carmelite priests. He experienced both priests from Ireland and priests from Spain. What most caught my attention was when he spoke of the McCarthy brothers, three Irish Carmelites, and their involvement with local Indian people.

Benton signaled out Fr. Maurice McCarthy, who he said was in Arizona roughly from 1958 until 1964. Benton explained that Holy Family was a small mission that served the Yaqui community, much like Guadalupe parish near Phoenix. He recalls an area off Tucson's Grant Road called Old Pasqua, saying, "It's a village where they basically all had settled since the 1900's, when they came from the depression in Mexico. And they had one Mass on Sundays there at the mission, which was basically Yaqui and Mexican. Here Fr. McCarthy became very, very interested in the Yaqui culture, to the point where it became an obsession with him."⁴³⁸

Describing Fr. McCarthy, Benton said, "He thought there was a certain spirituality about the Yaquis that he felt was really similar to the old spirituality of Ireland."⁴³⁹ This pervasive spirituality seemed to draw Fr. McCarthy, who began spending more and more time at the mission so that parishioners complained that, in Benton's words, "Fr. McCarthy is over there with the Indians. He is not helping us out."

When the diocese took over the formerly Carmelite parish Fr. McCarthy was permitted to carry on his ministry to the Yaquis as their pastor. "The Yaquis even built a small little residence for him right at the Reservation, right next to their ceremonial church,"⁴⁴⁰ Benton remembers. He went on to confirm something that I had heard other informants share, namely, the preference for the Irish priests over the Spanish. He noted that "they saw him [Fr. McCarthy] as one sensitive to their culture. Because many times what happened, the Spanish [priests] always had I think—

⁴³⁸ Benton Interview.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

from what I can recall—a demeaning attitude because they thought the Yaquis were like lower class. So they saw Fr. McCarthy as one who understands us, one who really cares for us.”⁴⁴¹

Benton continued with his narration of the McCarthy brothers, mentioning next Colmcille, who also assigned to Holy Family for a while and, like his brother, Maurice, worked well with the Yaquis. A third brother, Declan, likewise spent time at Old Pasqua. As Benton observes, “Declan, the younger brother, who had been at St. Mary’s, he left [the priesthood] and married a Yaqui girl. In fact I know the family. They are still there. In fact, Declan became a construction owner and helped build a lot of the buildings at the new Yaqui Reservation.”⁴⁴²

* * *

Some have noted a contrast between the priests from Ireland and their American counterparts. Many of the Irish priests recreated together on the golf course on their day off. “I think there was kind of a companionship among the Irish priests,” recalls Msgr. Cahalane. “We tended to group together, you know, and share our stories. We have a common identity. I don’t see that same comradery with the rest of the clergy. I think among the Irish we had a fairly strong bond.”⁴⁴³

Most felt at home and accepted by the other clergy. However, Fr. Joe Hennessy, a fellow Cork man, records a certain jealousy toward them. “When I came here there was a reaction to the Irish Mafia—Maguire, McMahon, Smith, and Moynihan—all these guys were in the big parishes and were listened to. They were doing the work. Some of the other clergy resented their power.”⁴⁴⁴

The leading Irish pastors did make things happen. For instance, in later years when the Claretian Fathers were called back to California after many years operating the Cursillo Center, their seven acre retreat at the foot of Camelback Mountain went up for sale. The Diocese of Phoenix was first offered the property but was unable to purchase it. Not willing to see the church lose this prime property in a spectacular location, the “Irish Mafia” swung into action. As one put

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Cahalane Interview.

⁴⁴⁴ Hennessy Interview.

it, “What the bishop couldn’t do, three prominent east-side pastors—McMahon, Moynihan, and Maguire—did.”⁴⁴⁵ In 1987, after raising \$1.9 million, they purchased the property and gave it to the diocese. A few years later, with the help of their contactor friends, they renovated and expanded the whole place. Today Mt. Claret is a state of the art functioning retreat/conference center and a gem in the diocese’ portfolio.

The priests I interviewed agree that Msgr. John McMahon (who recruited more than a dozen of them for the Diocese of Tucson) was the “mover and shaker” in the diocese. He had the reputation of being the most successful fund raiser. Besides a new church at his parish of St. Theresa, Phoenix, McMahon built an arts center, sports complex, and a chapel at Seton Catholic High School in Chandler. He was primarily responsible for raising the funds for the new St. Francis Church on the Salt River Reservation, south of Maricopa, and had his hand in several church projects in Mexico. He told me, “Unlike a lot of priests, I was never afraid to ask for money. In fact I would tell them: more than our need for this or that project, you have a greater need to give and show your gratitude. And they responded to that message.”⁴⁴⁶ In the new Phoenix Diocese McMahon was responsible for scoping outlying areas for sites for future parishes and schools, purchasing the property ten years before any projected construction, at half the cost. When it came to the church of bricks and mortar, he was visionary. He was largely responsible for organizing the visits of Pope John II to Phoenix in 1987, and Mother Teresa in 1989.

A Mexican American priest and Arizona native, Fr. Gil Padilla, offers a more critical perspective on the Irish priests.

Fr. McCready told me once that he saw the difference between us—the Americans and the Irish—is that we were self-disciplined. Some of them were clannish. I remember one, a good guy, Tot O’Dea who was my assistant in Bisbee. He said, “Gil, this is your country, this is not our country. We are foreigners.”—even though they were citizens. You can take the man out of the bog, but you can’t take the bog out of the man.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ McMahon Interview.

⁴⁴⁷ Padilla Interview.

The Irish priests who came to Arizona in the 1950's and 1960's served as associates for about ten years before becoming pastors themselves. Most report having a good relationship with their American pastors and their bishops, Daniel J. Gercke and (after 1960) Francis J. Green. However, in December 1969, when the Tucson Diocese was split and the new Diocese of Phoenix was created, priests were given the opportunity to choose whether to stay with Tucson or join the new diocese. Some believe that it was no accident that the majority of the Irish priests happened to be already assigned on the Phoenix side of the boundary.

Fr. Gene O'Carroll—to whom I am so indebted for his stories and wealth of information—shines a light on the church politics involved and the part the Irish played in it. He maintains, “Green had an attitude toward the Irish—we all knew that. When the division occurred there was practically no Irish pastors in Tucson. I think there were two. And every second pastor in the Phoenix area was Irish. Most of the Irish were never in Tucson. We don't know what was behind it.”⁴⁴⁸ He goes on to share an anecdote that one year Bishop Green named nine new monsignors, most of them heads of chancery offices. But he left out the head of the Diocesan Tribunal, Fr. John F. Burns, an Irishman. O'Carroll relates, “And no Irish priests went to the installation of the monsignors. And the word got out, and he got the message. So the next year he decided to make about six Irish monsignors: O'Keefe, McHugh, and he made John F. Burns a monsignor. But he got the message that he had insulted the Irish, because he had made nine monsignors and not one Irishman.”⁴⁴⁹

The Irish nuns I interviewed for this project also elaborate on the differences between the Irish-born clergy and their American counterparts. Sr. Dympna Doran shares, “I would say they [Irish priests] are kind of looser in their interpretation of things and freer in their expression. [T]hey look at God as very loving, flexible, reaching out.”⁴⁵⁰ Sr. Anne Fitzsimmons observes, “American priests did seem to be a little bit more formal, or just needing everything to be just right, more organized I would say than the Irish priests, I think, now that I look back.”⁴⁵¹ Putting it

⁴⁴⁸ O'Carroll Interview.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Doran Interview.

⁴⁵¹ Sr. Anne Fitzsimmons, I.B.V.M., Personal Interview by author. Prescott, AZ, 8 October 2012.

succinctly, Sr. Leonie Bracken maintains, “They didn’t take life too seriously. They were willing to have fun, and they were willing to be with the people.”⁴⁵²

Sr. Raphael Quinn, principal of Ss. Simon and Jude School comments, “They [Irish priests] brought a spirit of enthusiasm and a sense of humility. I think they have a great legacy of commitment. They just connect with the people. They connect with their joys. They connect with their pain. I would say the American priests are a little bit more distant.”⁴⁵³ Illustrating this, Sr. Christine Gilsenan highlighted the availability of the priest from County Cavan who brought the Loreto Sisters to Arizona. “He was always on duty. And people were free to come and ring the doorbell. It was never the sense of the office is now closed, which is what people experience now. Fr. Smith had his faults and failings, but he had that huge sense of ministry and mission, of being with the people.”⁴⁵⁴

Before she retired at the age of eighty and went to live at SS. Simon and Jude Convent in Phoenix in 2012, I interviewed Arizona’s oldest Irish nun, Sr. Augustine Dempsey (affectionately called Gus) at Our Lady of Guadalupe Convent in Flagstaff. She and Sr. Liz Carey (also near eighty) were still working visiting the sick, bringing food baskets to the poor, and participating in ecumenical projects in the town. “But of course, we’re slowing down,” they said. “And we’re just not able to do as much as we’d like.”

I was struck by the feisty Sr. Augustine, who seemed to “tell it like it is” when it came to her unvarnished, down-to-earth accounts. She pulls no punches, as she weighs in on priests. “I would say of the Irish priests, they were a mixed bag. You would have had the wonderfully kind men. The men who walked with the people, who loved the people, and would have a joke and smoke a cigarette and have a jar . . . and you would have some who were rigid and frigid. I think there is more selfishness in the American priests. They were more money conscious. They had more.”⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵² Bracken.

⁴⁵³ Quinn Interview.

⁴⁵⁴ Sr. Christine Gilsenan, I.B.V.M., Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 23 September 2012.

⁴⁵⁵ Dempsey Interview.

She went on to relate an experience she had when she was a younger nun in County Cork following Vatican II. She told me, “Some friends brought a bishop in who was going to Rome, an American. And he came in and he stood there and he said, ‘I am the youngest bishop in the world.’ And he went on with his pomposity. And he told me he was looking forward to the following day, he was going to be on the golf links. And he went on boasting. And I don’t know what I said, but I deflated him. I was mortified afterwards, how I dared to speak.”⁴⁵⁶

Perceptions

Aware that most Arizona Irish priests usually began their ministry in small mining towns with primarily Mexican congregations, I drove to Morenci, Arizona, to record the recollections of two elderly women who had known several of them from years past. They shared memories of men who were relaxed and comfortable with them and whom they highly regarded. Irene Lizarraga affectionately recalled, “When he came here [Fr. McGrinra], he was very young. And he used to tell us he didn’t really want to come to Morenci, because all the priests who were being punished were sent here to the end of the world. And he was very quiet, very quiet. But when he was leaving, we all cried, because we were just close to him. And everybody was close to that priest.”⁴⁵⁷

Her friend and neighbor, Vina Rodela, remembers sharing holidays with the Irish priests.

They were always very friendly, always having a good time singing their songs. And they spent Christmas with us. Fr. O’Grady and Fr. McGrinra, both of them were here together at the same time for a while. And I have pictures of them playing with the kids. I have pictures of Elaine when she broke out with the measles. Her face—you couldn’t even see her eyes. And there is Fr. O’Grady hugging her, taking a picture with her.”⁴⁵⁸

Dr. Christine Marin was for years the archivist for Arizona State University. I was eager to talk with her, since she is a Mexican American and a native Arizonan, who personally knew some Irish priests, and who wrote her dissertation on the Mexican community in Globe, Arizona,

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Lizarraga Interview.

⁴⁵⁸ Rodela Interview.

focusing on roughly the same time period as mine. She shared an anecdote about her Irish pastor, Fr. Dan McCready. Parenthetically, at twenty-three he was the youngest Irish priest to come to Arizona, having been dispensed from the canonical age requirement of twenty-four for priestly ordination. He was also the sole Catholic pastor in Tempe for decades. The Newman Center across the street from Arizona State University in Tempe (whose aim was ministry to students) was not considered a parish, but rather was under the direction of a chaplain. Marin credits him for taking a stand for justice.

Fr. McCready had a good heart. And he didn't like this disparity between Anglos and Mexican Americans in Tempe, which continued even after the war [WWII]. He told us that the Anglo Catholic families came to him and wanted to raise funds for another Catholic Church in Tempe, because Tempe now was growing. It wasn't until later that Father McCready learned of the inner thinking of these families who had money, that they really wanted their second church, Our Lady of Mount Carmel on Rural, to be only for the white Catholic families and leave St. Mary's [site of the Newman Center] to the Mexicans. But he put a stop to it.⁴⁵⁹

Elena Diaz-Bjorquist, was born and grew up in the Mexican quarter of Morenci, Arizona. She has written two books, most of them recounting her family's life in the mining town. I met her at a Starbucks in Tucson and taped her recollections of the Irish priests. She recalled hearing from her parents how the Irish priests rolled up their sleeves and worked alongside parishioners on parish building projects. "Our church in Morenci was first built in 1913. It was blown up a few times. This wasn't just anti-Catholic, it was anti-Mexican. My parents remembered Fr. McHugh carrying lumber up the hill with the men to build a new church after the War."⁴⁶⁰ Fr. Neil McHugh was the first of the wave of Irish priests who came to Arizona beginning in the mid-1940's. His nephew, also from Donegal, Fr. Cornelius McGrinra followed him five years later.

McHugh had a habit of speaking through his teeth, which made him hard to understand. In later years, with the onset of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), he came to be known as the most conservative of the Irish priests, acquiescing to, but hardly relishing, the dramatic changes in the church. I mention this because all the Irish priests I interviewed told me that they and their colleagues embraced the conciliar reforms and drew energy from this time of renewal

⁴⁵⁹ Dr. Christine Marin, Personal Interview by author. Tempe, AZ, 22 February 2013.

⁴⁶⁰ Diaz-Bjorquist Interview.

and the church's universal shift of direction set in motion by the visionary St. John XXIII. I might add that the Irish sisters likewise welcomed and adapted to the reforms in church life. Both the Loreto and Presentation Sisters began to modify the habits they wore following the Council's mandate to return to the charism and spirit of their founding. By the end of the 1960's, all of them opted for putting away the veil and donning conventional women's attire with a simple pin on their blouse or jacket featuring the logo or symbol of their religious order.

One thing that emerges from interviews with informants recalling the priests from Ireland is that they seemed to have certain innate qualities that made an impression on their Hispanic parishioners that had nothing to do with their ecclesial office or liturgical role. Graciela Graf, originally from Venezuela knew several Irish priests well. She cites their sanguine make-up. "I think it's the personality of the Irish priests. They are just so warm and humorous. We just clicked, not just because of our faith, but it was just personality wise."⁴⁶¹ Graciela was particularly close to Fr. Alan Malone and remains in correspondence with him well after his retirement and move back to Ireland. She described him as "like one of the family." When her husband died suddenly, her "family priest," Fr. Malone, was at the Phoenix airport waiting to board a plane for Ireland. He got the call and went immediately to their home to comfort them and stayed and performed the funeral.

Yet these priests were quite distinct from one another and their differences can almost be categorized. Or as Jung might observe, certain archetypal patterns emerge in their characters. They themselves often saw one another in a particular light, or having a recognized strength. For example, they mentioned categories on the left and supplied names which strongly fit them:

saint	(Terry Sheridan, Gene Maguire)
fund raiser/builder	(John McMahon)
political activist	(Dixie O'Keefe)
decent, nice guy	(Mick McGovern, Tom Hever)
comedian	(Mike O'Grady, Tot O'Dea)
chancery office	(John F. Burns, Alan Malone)

Most defy categorization and (as one priest put it) would see themselves simply as willing "workers in the Lord's Vineyard."

⁴⁶¹ Graf Interview.

I came across these additional distinctions among several of the Irish priests. Neil McHugh and Cornelius McGrenra were uncle and nephew respectively. There was one set of brothers, namely Bernard and John Francis Cunningham. (Bernard belonged to the Los Angeles Archdiocese, but spent about four years in Phoenix). Cornelius and Thomas Cahalane were first cousins. Daniel McCready, at the age of twenty-three, was the youngest ordained and Terrence Sheridan, in his early forties, was the first to die. Holding the record for longest tenure served at one parish was Gene Maguire. He came soon after the founding of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Scottsdale and remained as pastor there for forty-seven years. Running a close second was Neil McHugh who founded Most Holy Trinity Parish in Phoenix in 1951 and remained there until his death over forty years later. According to Fr. O'Carroll in the 1950's in the Diocese of Tucson, a priest became a pastor approximately five years after ordination. In the 1960's it took around eleven years. But in Ireland at that same time, a diocesan priest typically waited thirty years to become a pastor (or as they say there: the PP or Parish Priest).

* * *

Whatever else can be said about Arizona's "third wave of clergy," namely, the priests from Ireland, they represent a unique moment in the history of the Catholic Church in the Southwest, a moment which has come and is almost gone. As of this writing, there are only two priests from Ireland serving as pastors, both of them in Tucson. Out of the 103 priests from Ireland who came for various stints to Arizona, those who are left—nine priests and three former priests—all have a sense of the passing of their time and some eloquently articulate what they believe is their lasting contribution.

Two of these priests were from the same village of Kildysart, County Clare and were classmates all through school and seminary. Speaking about Msgr. O'Grady and himself, Fr. O'Dea comments: "I think Mike and I brought a lightheartedness to parish life. . . .I was gifted with humor. I was, you know. And I was gifted with yarns and stories and crap like that. I think

we humanized religion.”⁴⁶² For his part Msgr. O’Grady claims, “We were willing to go wherever. We didn’t question. I think we were able to mix with all the different groups; we were so people-oriented.”⁴⁶³

Emphasizing church-building Fr. Waldron, who hails from County Mayo and built a couple of churches himself, stressed: “The Irish priests had great dedication and they could work. They had a certain administrative ability.”⁴⁶⁴ Fr. Malone from County Galway concurs, “So many of those fellows built up some fantastic parishes. All the Irish guys did awfully well.”⁴⁶⁵ When asked about the spirit of the Irish priests, Fr. Ledwith, without hesitating responded, ““Hospitality, compassion, and great joy.” And he added, “Although I think some of the priests from Ireland preached Jansenism.”⁴⁶⁶

The Irish Nuns

The Sisters of Mercy were founded in Dublin by Venerable Catherine McAuley, who opened her first facility to shelter and educate women and girls in 1827. Irish Sisters of Mercy came to the Arizona Territory in 1892 and established St. Joseph’s Hospital, Phoenix’s oldest and largest health care facility. An Irish nun of another order provides some background.

There were two blood sisters by the name of O’Grady, and one of them was head of the group that started it. And we have two sisters in our order who are nieces of theirs. When they came to visit us here, they went down to see the graves in St. Francis Cemetery. The Irish Mercy nuns are buried not too far from where our nuns are. There were still sisters from Ireland at St. Joseph’s during my early years here in the early fifties.”⁴⁶⁷

The Sisters of Loreto were founded in 1609 by an English woman, Mary Ward (recently declared venerable), who took her inspiration from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. In the early nineteenth century, the Loreto sisters in Ireland developed into a distinct congregation of their own. From this community came the first Irish Sisters to Arizona in 1954 at the invitation

⁴⁶² O’Dea Interview.

⁴⁶³ O’Grady Interview.

⁴⁶⁴ Waldron Interview.

⁴⁶⁵ Malone Interview.

⁴⁶⁶ Ledwith Interview.

⁴⁶⁷ Gilsenan Interview.

of Fr. Paul Smith. But the connection came through another Arizona Irish priest, Fr. Frank O’Rielly, whose sister belonged to the Loreto community in Navan, Ireland.

Sr. Liz Carey charts the history, telling me that in all twenty-six Loreto Sisters came from Ireland. Over their years in Arizona several new local recruits joined them, while others retired back in Ireland. “And some have gone home to God and rest in peace in Ireland or in Saint Francis Cemetery in Phoenix,”⁴⁶⁸ said Sr. Liz. Since 1954, when they came to establish and staff the new school, the Loreto Sisters’ main base has been Saints Simon & Jude Parish (later to become the cathedral parish of Phoenix). They branched out, however, before long. In 1965 they started St. Jerome’s School in Phoenix. Since 1972 they served at Sacred Heart in Prescott. Since 1976 they have been a fixture in Flagstaff, where they staffed Nativity School and also worked in nearby Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish. They have taught and run programs in Sacred Heart Parish and St. Mary’s School both in Phoenix and later at Notre Dame Preparatory, Scottsdale. Besides teaching and religious education, their ministries included faith development and social service.

The other large group of Irish nuns who ventured to Arizona belonged to the Presentation Order based in Cork Ireland. Holy Angels School in Globe, Arizona was dedicated, 16 March 1958. At the invitation of Fr. James McFadden, Sisters of the Presentation came to staff it. The order was founded in 1775 by Mother Nano Nagle with the charge of serving the poor and the missions. She labored during the time of the Penal Laws, whose “declared object was to reduce the Catholics in Ireland to a miserable populace, without property, without estimation, without education.”⁴⁶⁹ Over the ensuing decades more than two dozen of these sisters arrived in Arizona and ran the school until it closed in 2010, as well as Christ the King School in Mesa. Approximately thirty Presentations Sisters worked in Arizona at one time or another.

One of them is Sr. Evelyn O’Boyle, whose striking black hair belies her seventy years. I visited her in her home, where she lives with a couple of other sisters in a house owned by their

⁴⁶⁸ Carey Interview.

⁴⁶⁹ Sir Edmund Burke, cited in Sister M. Rosaria O’Callaghan, *Nano Nagle: Foundress of the Presentation Order* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1960), 29.

order near Encanto Park in central Phoenix. She came from a family of teachers in the Irish-speaking area of Spiddal, County Galway. In 1960, as a newly professed sister she arrived in Arizona where she has worked ever since. She shares a story from her time in Globe, which not only sums up the Sisters' compassionate spirit, but illustrates anew the parable of the Good Samaritan, with a twist.

She tells the story of "a man who was very poor." The sisters knew him because he was a daily communicant. After a few days missing him at Mass they became concerned that he must be ill. So Sr. Evelyn and Sr. Sheila who lived with her and, in her words, "would befriend the devil himself,"⁴⁷⁰ went to his home to see what was wrong. They were shocked by the poor shack he lived in. When they went in they were alarmed to see that he had a terrible foot infection around his toes. They immediately brought him to a hospital in Mesa, sixty miles away.

Because he had no insurance, the hospital refused to admit him. Sr. Evelyn then turned to Sr. Sheila and said, "Well, we can't take this man home," and then concluded, "Our congregation talks about ministry to the poor. And this is an occasion."⁴⁷¹ With that the nuns signed the papers that they would be responsible and pay the hospital bill. On their way home the sisters began to worry about the bill, how much it would be and when they would have to pay it. Soon the patient got better. But the doctor had told them, that if they hadn't brought him in that night, he could have lost his toe.

But as Sr. Evelyn shared, "We never got a bill and we don't know who paid it. A while later when we had to leave our convent, which we had leased for a year, the landlord said, 'I've got a buyer for the house.' Lo and behold, it was our poor man that bought house. And he let us stay in it. And when he died, he left the house to us in his will."⁴⁷²

In reflecting on their own qualities and temperament, the religious sisters who came to Arizona from Ireland parallel in many ways their Irish priest counterparts. Presentation Sister Leonie Bracken, from Cahersiveen, County Kerry, did double duty in Globe for twenty years,

⁴⁷⁰ O'Boyle Interview.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

because, as she said, “We were poor and the school hadn’t that much money. Every year nearly—I was a full-time teacher as well as principal.”⁴⁷³ Taking the measure of the Irish sisters, she points out, “I think we are more people-orientated. Coming here we were so well qualified, but we weren’t going out there saying, ‘Oh, I’m so qualified.’ We don’t boast. . . . I don’t think any of us came from broken homes. We were more satisfied with life. We weren’t ambitious. We did what we were told to do.”⁴⁷⁴ Her housemate, Sr. Evelyn O’Boyle, draws a contrast between them and American women religious.

About the Irish sisters I would say: it’s our culture, we work hard. We could be seen as workaholics, you know. I mean you worked from 6:00 in the morning until you dropped dead at night. American sisters don’t do that. They are more laid back. And they are very comfortable in telling you, “Oh, I work five hours and that’s it. You know, that’s my day.” . . . We are very well educated, but we don’t ever talk about it. American sisters talk a lot about their education or their degrees. You hear it all the time. We have it, but we just don’t talk about it. . . . We were trained in humility. Whereas the American sisters, even in class with them, gosh, they could talk up a storm about nothing.⁴⁷⁵

The Sisters left their mark on Globe, Arizona, as businessman Joe Oddonetto testifies. He owned and operated Joe’s Broad Street Grill, a Mexican-Italian restaurant in the middle of Globe, until his death in 2011. His obituary reads in part: “Joe had a generous heart and had a way of making people feel welcome and loved. He often provided meals to people in need in the community, including the Presentation Sisters of Holy Angels, and never declined an opportunity to help others.”⁴⁷⁶ A framed photograph still hangs in the restaurant featuring the Presentation Sisters from Ireland together with Joe who was taught by them as a boy. About him, Sr. Evelyn told me, “I guess we were strict in those days, but he used to say we had great understanding and patience and, if it weren’t for us, he’d have never made it.”⁴⁷⁷

Among the Loreto sisters, Sr. Raphael Quinn from Mulingar, Ireland, stands out as principal of SS. Simon and Jude School for forty years. She is an avid promoter of science, technology, art, music, and various well-rounded, integrated educational experiences fostering

⁴⁷³ Bracken Interview.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ O’Boyle Interview.

⁴⁷⁶ *Arizona Silver Belt* (Globe, Arizona), 20 July 2011.

⁴⁷⁷ Sr. Evelyn O’Boyle, Telephone communication to author. Phoenix, AZ, 9 July 2014.

human development. She and the school have received numerous awards in educational and service related fields. As well as having studied theology at two Catholic universities in California, she is an Arizona State University graduate and holds two master's degrees. Like several other sisters in her convent, she can dance jigs, reels, and hornpipes, play the guitar, and sing Irish songs.

I asked several of the Loreto Sisters to share what they thought was their congregation's greatest contribution in Arizona. Sr. Raphael said, "I think we always had a great prayer life. Community life was very strong with us always, and we had a very good background."⁴⁷⁸ Sr. Anne Fitzsimmons—the seventh of eight children who grew up in a village of two hundred people in County Westmeath and is currently director of adult formation at Sacred Heart Church in Prescott, Arizona—stressed "that whole commitment to community life and to prayer and to mission, those are the things that have really motivated us. I think we are there for a mission, whatever it is. I think one of our gifts is definitely hospitality—you know, that sense of welcome. That warmth is also a part of our Irish culture."⁴⁷⁹ Sr. Liz Carey in Flagstaff, Arizona, points out that "coming from Ireland I think we had a kind of perseverance. We knew there was work to be done."⁴⁸⁰ Describing her motivation in coming to Arizona, Sr. Christine Gilsenan said, "You made this huge sacrifice to leave your country to come as a missionary to be with people. I think it was more of a sense of going out of yourself, of service and ministry."⁴⁸¹ And Sr. Augustine Dempsey emphasized their witness to social justice. "I would imagine every Irish nun would fight for justice. I mean our own Sr. Bridget was out on the street corner supporting—not the labor movement, I can't remember—prostitutes, lesbians, and homos. God loves them as much as he loves us, and it's inhuman the way some speak of them."⁴⁸²

Who were the Irish nuns? I had the pleasure of interviewing eight of them in person. Most are near seventy years of age and two are approaching eighty. All of them impressed me

⁴⁷⁸ Fitzsimmons Interview.

⁴⁷⁹ Quinn Interview.

⁴⁸⁰ Carey Interview.

⁴⁸¹ Gilsenan Interview.

⁴⁸² Dempsey Interview.

with their zest for life, their faith, dedication, and ready humor. A couple of them shared vivid recollections of their personal backgrounds and of growing up in Ireland. Sr. Dymphna Doran spoke evocatively about herself and her vocation. I believe that in broad strokes it captures much of the Irish nuns' outlook and experience and for that reason is worth noting here.

She told me that she entered the Loreto Convent in Navan, County Meath in 1956, where she was joined three years later by her biological sister, Veronica. Her mission orders to Arizona came in 1959. She recalls that launching moment,

I was 21—ready for adventure but still full of loneliness for family, the nuns back home, and just for Ireland itself! When fifty-nine children hit the second grade classroom in September 1959, I had no time to think whether I was hot in my serge habit, or if I missed the cool breezes of Ireland. The whole concern was to get the hang of the American system and take workshops in phonics and different education strategies and get all those seemingly endless papers corrected every evening, as well as showing up for prayers and other religious community duties.⁴⁸³

She goes on to relate that her father died accidentally in 1960 but that she was not permitted to attend his funeral. “In those times we got back to Ireland every five years,” she explains. “And so, in 1964, I got permission to go see his grave and pray.”⁴⁸⁴ It was not until after Vatican II that the strict rules regulating nuns' lives were relaxed and Sr. Dymphna could at last visit her home in 1969.

Her early time in Arizona was marked by a flurry of activity. She pursued higher educational certification, gaining a B.A. at the University of San Diego, with a major in Philosophy and minors in History and Art. Later she went on to receive her Masters in Education from Northern Arizona University, majoring in counseling and guidance. She served as principal for six years at Nativity School, Flagstaff, as well as four six-year terms as sister superior for her religious community.

Sr. Dymphna told me that she hailed from a musical family which—she had no doubt—led to her competence in music. “My whole family was musical and we had lots of musical evenings and sing-alongs when I was growing up. My parents had very good voices and my

⁴⁸³ Doran Interview.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

mother and dad could play piano. My mother, as a young teenager, was the substitute organist at the church.”⁴⁸⁵ Not surprising with that background, Sister offered after-school lessons in clarinet, trumpet, and viola and formed an orchestra and band comprised of students at SS. Simon and Jude School. Irish step dancing too was one of her fortes. “We still do the four-hand reel at our St. Patrick’s Show at SS. Simon and Jude. I still play the guitar and sing ‘The Spinning Wheel’ and other old Irish songs. So, Irish tradition still lives on, and is still deep in our hearts here.”⁴⁸⁶

Sr. Liz Carey, lived and worked over sixty years in Arizona, thirty-seven of them in Flagstaff, and having turned eighty has recently retired to SS. Simon and Jude Convent. Full of stories, she paints a picture of growing up in Ireland, vividly recalling the history and environment of her home place and going on to comment on the background of the Loreto Sisters’ mission in Arizona. Her account captures what I found to be a characteristic Irish sense of history and of heartfelt attachment to what Irish people often call: the home place.

Sr. Liz began by saying that she was born in 1930 in Gaulstown, Rochfortbridge, Mullingar, County Westmeath. Her father farmed on land that was part of an estate, which in the mid-eighteenth century belonged to Robert Rochfort, one of the richest men in Ireland. Locals referred to him as the “wicked earl.” The story goes that while living in Gaulstown Park, he had also owned a fishing villa on Lough Ennell called Belvedere House. When he discovered that his attractive young wife was having an affair with his younger brother he imprisoned her at Gaulstown, while he continued to host lavish parties at Belvedere. According to Sr. Liz, he built “an enormous sham ruin which the people called ‘the jealous wall’ to block his wife from seeing his brother’s house and from ever catching a glimpse of her children.”⁴⁸⁷

In her imprisonment of thirty-one years, there were reports that the hapless wife soon became mentally unbalanced. Sr. Liz remarked, “As children, we feared we might meet her ghost when we were scampering around in the fields where all this happened.”⁴⁸⁸ She went on the

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Carey Interview.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

share that this unfortunate lady served as the basis for Charlotte Bronte's novel *Jane Eyre*. Likewise, she pointed out that Jonathan Swift was a regular visitor to Gaulstown and when he would walk along the banks of Lough Ennell, he noted how small the people seemed on the opposite shore. This gave him the idea for the tiny Lilliputians in *Gullivar's Travels*.

Sr. Liz concluded her local history by remarking that "Lilliput House, named in his honor, is open for accommodation!" And she adds, "By the way, the 'Jealous Wall', four stories high, is still standing. Belvedere House is a well preserved historic building, surrounded by beautiful gardens, a tourist attraction. But Gaulstown House burned down in 1920."⁴⁸⁹

Growing up Sister Liz heard her father tell these stories about the English landlords who owned the area. She said that her parents struggled and worked hard to make ends meet on a farm with five children to raise, of which she was the oldest. She described her after-school chores seeing to chickens, ducks, turkeys, lambs needing to be bottle-fed, looking after cattle, and so forth. Her recollection is almost lyrical: "The beauty of the earth and growing things was very important in our family. Springtime brought fields covered with daffodils, narcissi, crocus, snowdrops, lilac. I can still visualize the ripple of the wind over the ripening wheat, barley, corn. It appeared to be like a massive wave of gold, undulating to some golden place, like heaven."⁴⁹⁰

The draw of spirituality was second nature in her family. She put it this way: "Religion was ever present in our family. Dad had three sisters nuns, and a brother a priest. In the generation ahead of him, he had three aunts nuns, an uncle a priest. I have two sisters who are nuns in the IBVM Loreto in Ireland."⁴⁹¹ When it comes to the backgrounds of the Irish priests and nuns, I found from my interviews that multiple religious vocations were more the rule than the exception. Yet as religious as they appear to have been, more than a few expressed criticism of the church, as Sr. Liz surprised me when she added, "Dad also had some ideas about religion as practiced. He used to say, 'This kind of nonsense will have to end.'"⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

Reflecting on her vocation, she shared that her early experience of sisters greatly influenced her. “I had never contemplated marriage, I believe the call to religious life was nurtured by the Sisters of Mercy in our grade school in Rochfortbridge. They gave us an amazing education, music, piano, violin, singing, and experience in love of God and caring for people. They used to go out in the neighborhoods where people were ill, or poor, or bereaved—always available.”⁴⁹³

At eighteen, Sr. Liz entered the Loreto Convent in Navan, County Meath and in August, 1955 she was sent to Phoenix, Arizona to SS. Simon and Jude School, where she joined four other Irish nuns who had gone there the year before. They had set up a new elementary school beginning with grades one to four, with another grade added each year up to eight grade.

As I listened to Sr. Liz talk about her work here, I was struck by the substance of her commitment in terms of years and dedication. Her ministries included 1955-1972 in Ss. Simon and Jude, 1972-1975 in Prescott, 1976-2012, in Flagstaff. As she ticked off the list of labors undertaken by her and colleagues, it conveyed the sense of churchwomen ready and willing to do whatever was needed. “We were teachers in grade and junior high school,” she said,

always involved in catechetical ministries. We later served as hospital chaplains, chaplains in the jails, nursing homes, assisted living, hospice, Eucharistic ministry to the homebound, Cursillo, charismatic movement, Saint Vincent de Paul, pastoral associates, bereavement services, preparing vigils, funerals, committals, burials, working with ecumenical groups, and providing service as needed or requested.⁴⁹⁴

If the above descriptions paint too rosy a picture of the religious formation of the Irish nuns, Sr. Augustine Dempsey’s recollections act as a counterbalance. She recalls, “You know if you asked me to tell you my sins or short comings it would be easier than to try and romance about religious life back in the 40’s and 50’s. Religious life as we lived it in those prehistoric times was very grim! If we kept silence as we should have we would have lost the power of speech by the time we were rescued by St John XXIII and Vatican II.”⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid

⁴⁹⁵ Dempsey Interview.

Sr. Gus, as the sisters call her, went on to note that “the times were different.” She told me that “[s]traight out from school at seventeen and eighteen years of age, the words and terms used in the spiritual books provided for our sanctification had no meaning for us. We just stumbled through them and our pronunciation was the occasion of many a gaff.” Then, matter-of-factly, she summed it up by saying, “We who were chosen to be Brides of the Almighty chose in the mid-twentieth century just to keep the show on the road.”⁴⁹⁶

* * *

As to the question of what they considered their greatest contribution, the Irish nuns proffered rich and diverse responses. Interviewing the two Presentation sisters in their central Phoenix home near Encanto Park, Sr. Evelyn O’Boyle observes, “The sisters were willing to do everything. . . .We were general practitioners.”⁴⁹⁷ Her housemate, Sr. Leonie Bracken stressed affirming people.

We made a great contribution to the different cultures by telling them: be proud of your culture. We had Indians in our school in Globe and—you could see—they felt a little inhibited. So we taught them to be very proud of their culture. We talked about being proud to be Irish, and I told the Mexican students you should be proud that you are Mexican. And the same with the Indians. We all have our richness to bring.⁴⁹⁸

The Loreto Sisters I interviewed stressed education and doing good work. Sr. Christine Gilsenan said, “We left our country and we focused on: We are here for you. We focused on building the Kingdom among the people we are with.”⁴⁹⁹ Sr. Elizabeth Carey highlighted ongoing presence. “Living here at Ss. Simon and Jude, what we have found is that the people appreciated just the stability. For so many years we have been present here. And the people got to know us. And they liked the way we worked with their children.”⁵⁰⁰ Sr. Anne Fitzsimmons echoed this sentiment, “We have been here for so many years, whereas most communities, you know, come and go. Other sisters were moved around a lot more. It wasn’t like we were here for a while and then going back. No, as soon as the five years were up we became citizens. We just

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Bracken Interview.

⁴⁹⁸ O’Boyle Interview.

⁴⁹⁹ Gilsenan Interview.

⁵⁰⁰ Carey Interview.

had this sense of this is our home now.”⁵⁰¹ Sr. Raphael Quinn opined, “I think we had a great influence in education that really set us apart.”⁵⁰² And Sr. Augustine Dempsey summed it up in terms of connecting with people. “I’m seventy years in religion, and I thank God I stayed here. There were so many opportunities here. I mean, the jail, the hospitals, the nursing homes, meeting the people in their homes.”⁵⁰³

It is because of the far-reaching presence of Irish nuns and priests serving so many for so long in Arizona a half a century ago that Professor Rios’ experience rings true. Born and raised in the border town of Nogales, Arizona, he told me “I don’t think I ever heard a sermon delivered in anything but an Irish accent the whole time I was growing up.”⁵⁰⁴

* * *

From across the water, Divine Word missionary and professor emeritus of moral theology at Maynooth, Fr. Vincent Twomey helps us understand the Irish psyche and perhaps what inspired the priests and nuns who came to Arizona. He elucidates those qualities which he calls “the almost non-eradicable nature of the best of Irish Catholic spirituality: its sense of the transience of the world, the fleeting nature of fortune, the inevitability of tragedy, the centrality of humility, and the importance of loyalty to family and friends.”⁵⁰⁵ Boston College’s Maureen Dezell offers further insight into what drove the Irish in America. She writes, “In the secular trinity of Irish-American values, loyalty and humour are father and son. Self-deprecation is the spirit that works in mysterious ways.”⁵⁰⁶

In 1963, five months before his assassination, President Kennedy, the first U.S. President to visit Ireland, celebrated that country’s impact on the world: “Ireland has already set an example and a standard for other small nations to follow. This has never been a rich or powerful country, and yet, since earliest times, its influence on the world has been rich and powerful.”⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰¹ Fitzsimmons Interview.

⁵⁰² Quinn Interview.

⁵⁰³ Dempsey Interview.

⁵⁰⁴ Rios Interview.

⁵⁰⁵ Twomey, *End of Irish Catholicism*, 64.

⁵⁰⁶ Maureen Dezell, *Irish America: Coming into Clover, The Evolution of a People and a Culture* (New York: Doubleday Press, 2001), 76.

⁵⁰⁷ John F. Kennedy’s Address to the Irish Parliament, Dublin, 28 June 1963. *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum Website*. Accessed 22 March 2015

JFK, arguably America's favorite Irish Catholic son, goes on to illustrate the seemingly disproportionate influence of Ireland on the Western world. He cites how the island country was unmatched in preserving learning in Europe through the Dark Ages, how its own revolutionary struggle helped spark the cause of American independence, and how it excelled in the twentieth century with world-renowned genius in literature and the arts.

His paeon helps us to understand how the Irish—looking back over the centuries—like the Jews, might fancy themselves as something of a “Chosen People.” Perhaps it was something akin to that sense of “chosenness” that imbued the Irish nuns and priests in Arizona with a strong sense of commitment. From my interviews their clear sense of identity and robust sense of purpose came through.

CONCLUSION

As he reminisced, Msgr. O'Grady recalled the prophetic words of one of his professors. "When we were in the seminary, this priest Fr. Brophy told us, 'The American Church will be Hispanic in your time.'"⁵⁰⁹ Indeed, the people, who, when he first came here, were in his words regarded as something a "stepchild"—an object of missionary outreach on behalf of the institutional church—are rapidly becoming its new center and its new spirit. Since 1830, Catholics have constituted the largest church in America. But today the face of the American church is changing dramatically, with Hispanics comprising one third of U.S. Catholics. This growing group once so marginalized as to be invisible in the American Catholic Church can no longer be ignored. As Diaz-Stevens notes, "Latinos are the fastest growing and youngest population in the nation and in the Church."⁵¹⁰ For well over a century in the American church "the Irish exercised a virtual monopoly."⁵¹¹ It would be accurate to add that this was the case for half a century in the church in Arizona. Today, the church's future in America and in Arizona belongs to the Hispanics.

Long on the periphery, Hispanic Catholics have entered the mainstream. Their growth and emerging ascendance were made possible by the women and men who went before them. Almost all of the Irish priests who came to Arizona are deceased, as are many of the old Mexicans they lived and worked with. This adds urgency to the recording and preserving of their stories.

⁵⁰⁸ Dr. Donald Fixico introducing the course: Oral History of the American West. Arizona State University, Spring, 2008.

⁵⁰⁹ O'Grady interview.

⁵¹⁰ Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens, "Latinas and the Church," *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the U.S.: Issues and Concerns*, ed. Jay P. Dolan and Allan Figueroa Deck (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1994), 272.

⁵¹¹ Gaustad and Schmidt, *Religious History of America*, 210.

As Jan Vansina, a pioneer in the field of oral history, wrote, “The utterance is transitory, but the memories are not.”⁵¹² Time changes everything. Old towns once proud are no more. One of the threads that humanizes us and runs through our lives conferring meaning and identity is memory. The past is real in the minds of those who experienced it. As long as it is remembered it lives. As old woman laments, “[I feel] sad [that the real Morenci is gone.] You can’t tell your kids, ‘Look this [is] where I lived. Look this [is] where I went to school. Look this [is] where we had all the fun going up the mountains and this and that.’ You can’t go show them all that stuff.”⁵¹³

My aim was to tell a story of my state and my church that had not been told. It was important to fill in gaps in our knowledge of twentieth century Arizona history, particularly of church history of this place and time. Some have researched Mexican Southwestern Catholicism around the middle of the twentieth century, but this unique historical encounter has never been explored. No work has been done on Mexicans meeting and working with priests from Ireland. As for the Irish priests, they changed the landscape of the church in Arizona. Now we must ask: what can we learn from it? This study I believe enhances our understanding of broader issues of religion and ethnicity by examining the dynamics of the interaction of the priests from Ireland and their Mexican parishioners, in particular, through their own shared memories and the stories they told.

The Ground Covered

I began with the Mexican aspect of the encounter in order to set the stage and recall the context into which so many Irish priests came. I looked at various aspects of Mexican history and religion and cited parallels and differences as far as the Irish were concerned. I marked how Mexican Catholicism in Arizona had its own particular flavor. This is significant in helping us understand that religion and religious expression are not monolithic entities, pervasive and ubiquitous. Making this point Mario Garcia calls our attention to regionalism and its value as a

⁵¹² Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition As History* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), xi.

⁵¹³ Josephine Martinez Granado, from notes quoted in Diaz Borjkquist Interview.

lens for understanding religion. He points out that Mexican Catholic culture in America is not the product of twentieth century immigration, but rather reflects a 300-hundred year legacy as the original Christian faith of the Southwest. He claims that understanding American Catholicism in terms of regionalism emphasizes that the church as an institution, along with expressions of popular religious culture within it, are certainly not monolithic. My study with its localized narrative has made a contribution to this understanding.

Garcia maintains that the American Southwest is a region where one can see and experience a variety of influences. He writes, "Just as the Puritan influence and iconography characterizes the New England region from a Protestant perspective, so too does the Mexican/Chicano/Hispanic influence characterize southwestern Catholicism." He goes on to point out, "Catholicism in the Southwest is truly a borderland religion encountering and negotiating with varied religious cultural influences. The result is a unique southwestern brand of Catholicism."⁵¹⁴ He concludes by citing its looming importance as the future of the Catholic Church in this country."⁵¹⁵ Edwin Aponte agrees, but makes an even greater claim: "A better understanding of the pluralistic Latino/a religiosity and spirituality is essential for comprehending contemporary life in the United States and possible trends for the future."⁵¹⁶

In addition to the lens of regionalism though which one can appreciate the legacy of Mexican Catholics of Arizona, Garcia also maintains, "Chicano Catholicism is the very embodiment of Vatican Council II's call for enculturation and the recognition of diversity within the universal Church." Here he is referring to the fact that prior to the Council the Catholic Church was fairly standardized throughout the world. One of the shifts that came in the wake of Vatican II lies in affirming the local color and particular character of ethnic groups within the church universal. This would suggest that the universal church today does not canonize homogenization, rather, it calls forth and celebrates the unique florescence of individual cultures and peoples. Mexican Catholics in particular relished the innovation of Mass in Spanish and the

⁵¹⁴ Garcia, "The Chicano Southwest," 18.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁵¹⁶ Edwin David Aponte, *Santo! Varieties of Latino/a Spirituality*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, Books, 2012), 12.

opening it afforded to mariachi music and *folclórico* art and customs. Both the Irish priests and their Mexican parishioners in Arizona were on this wavelength. They were in accord with the spirit of Vatican II, and contributed through their uniqueness to this new diversified vision of the church.

Jesuit Father, Edmundo Rodriguez, sums up the period I have focused on in terms of Hispanics in the church.

1) Hispanics have for so long been seen by the dominant Church as the targets of missionary activity rather than as a people who have something significant to contribute to the development of the Church. 2) Hispanics themselves have been uncomfortable with the liturgical and governance styles of the dominant Church. The words *cold* and *legalistic* are often associated with these styles in the thinking of Hispanics. And 3) The American Catholic Church has only recently begun to see the importance of sharing power with the laity and with minority peoples.⁵¹⁷

Today, however, a sea change has come about within the institutional church in its recognition and treatment of its Mexican and Hispanic members. But it may be too late, as major inroads continue to be made by Evangelical and Pentecostal groups into the Mexican population. This fragmenting of religious identification is now a reality among Mexicans living in the United States, as well as in Mexico.

In a Pew Survey of changing American demographics entitled "The Next America," Hispanics are clearly the fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S. In 1960, they constituted a mere 4% of the population. In 2010, their number had risen to 50.5 million or 16% of the population. According to Pew's projection in 2060, Hispanics will number 132.8 million or make up 31% of the American population.⁵¹⁸

As for the unique contribution Hispanics will make to American society, the *National Catholic Reporter* gave the following appraisal. "Latino spirituality as a cultural force is likely to enhance the role of strong families, respect for tradition, generational wisdom, group identity over

⁵¹⁷ Edmundo Rodriguez, S. J., "The Hispanic Community and Church Movements: Schools of Leadership," in *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the U.S.: Issues and Concerns*, eds., Jay P. Dolan and Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 208.

⁵¹⁸ Paul Taylor, "The Next America." *Pew Research Institute*. Published 10 April 2010. Accessed 26 March 2015. <http://www.pewresearch.org/next-america/#Two-Dramas-in-Slow-Motion>.

typical American individualism, collective life over competition, and cultural patterns grounded in practices, beliefs, music, art and language that are more religious than secular.⁵¹⁹

* * *

Six thousand miles removed from one another, the priests from Ireland traversed ocean and continent to encounter and minister to *Mexicanos* and Mexican Americans in Arizona. Despite differences of language, culture, education, and vastly different geographical and historical contexts, together the two groups found that they had much in common.

From the end of WWII to end of the twentieth century fifty-four priests born in Ireland came to the Southwest to spend the rest of their lives in service to the church in Arizona. An additional forty-nine Irish priests temporarily worked in Arizona for various lengths of time. The high point in terms of numbers and the influence they exerted was around the time of the split of the Diocese of Tucson and the formation of the Diocese of Phoenix, that is, around 1970.

Irish priests and Mexicans: A unique historical moment, never seen before, never to be seen again. It has much to teach us about the human spirit, struggle in overcoming adversity, equality, minority acceptance, and the surprising bonds of kindred spirits.

Perseverance and committing themselves to the long haul emerges as a central feature of the legacy of the Irish priests and sisters in Arizona. In my interview Sr. Raphael, for many years principal of SS. Simon and Jude School, told me of the discomfort and put down she and the other Sisters of Loretto have felt at times attending Mass in the cathedral (their parish church) where the rector praised traditionalist women religious in habit and veil as “real nuns.” (Both the Loreto and Presentation Sisters from Ireland, put aside their traditional habits decades ago in the wake of Vatican II’s *aggiornamento*. They may wear a silver religious pin on their blouse or lapel but otherwise dress like other laywomen). Sr. Raphael described how novices in their community took first vows in the convent chapel with the other sisters and their families present. But the rector touted a young woman’s entrance into an ultra-conservative order by having her take the veil and profess vows in the cathedral at a crowded Sunday mass. “He made a big deal out of it,”

⁵¹⁹ National Catholic Reporter, Review, 7 December 2012.

she said. When I asked what came of it, Sr. Raphael replied, “She lasted four months. Our nuns came in 1954 and we’ll still here doing the work.”⁵²⁰ This illustrates the staying power of the Irish priests and sisters in Arizona. They perdured. Their commitment to service was robust. In almost all instances they saw it through to the end.

A New Situation

Several times as they reminisced, I heard from my informants: today it is a different time; today it is a different church. On the surface it sounds like a cliché, but as I thought about it, I realized how true this is. Of the scores of priests from Ireland who came to Arizona and are still priests only twelve are alive, two of them live in Ireland. Of the ten living in Arizona, there are five in the Phoenix Diocese, all of them retired. And in the Tucson Diocese there are five, three retired and two serving as pastors.

In the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, much has been made of what that event has meant for the church. Conservative religious commentators speak of a hermeneutic of continuity, which maintains that the Council was not a significant departure from the church’s traditional self-understanding. The progressive wing of the church emphasizes a hermeneutic of discontinuity, claiming that Vatican II represents something new and radically different from recent centuries of church tradition.

These conflicting interpretations have given rise to dichotomous ecclesiologies and conceptions of ministry. For example, many writers contrast two schools of clergy commonly labeled: Vatican II priests versus John Paul II priests. Writing about the latter, one commentator notes, “What the new generation of priests lacks in size, it makes up in zeal—at least for traditionalist causes that became hallmarks of John Paul II’s tenure.” He cites David Gibson author of “The Coming Catholic Church,” who wrote, “The younger generation of priests is much

⁵²⁰ Quinn Interview.

more orthodox, and John Paul inspired it. These priests are quite motivated by orthodoxy, belief, personal holiness. They would be akin to the Christian right in the Catholic sphere."⁵²¹

In his book, *What Happened at Vatican II?* Jesuit Father John O'Malley, refers to Vatican II as the "Council of Reconciliation." Following the traumas of the Reformation and the French Revolution, Pope John XXIII convened the Council, as he said, "to open the windows of the church." Fr. O'Malley maintains that the Council sought to reach out and reconcile the church with modernity, to affirm the good in other faiths, and in Pope John's unforgettable phrase, "to make the human sojourn less sad." Pope John's wave of renewal and the updating of Vatican II are significant to my project, because the Irish priests I have written about were implementers of the Council's reforms and transmitters of its spirit. They were Vatican II priests.

When asked about the difference between priests born in Ireland and their American counterparts, Fr. Ledwith reframed the question in terms of a generational shift rather than one of nationality. He pointed out, "I have more in common with the older Vatican II priests than I do with the young John Paul II guys." He went on to assign a term he associates with each group. "For Vatican II priests I think: servant. What comes to mind when I think of the young John Paul II priests: Kaiser." From Ledwith's point of view, there is a marked difference in priests generationally. It is more significant than ethnicity or country of origin. The key difference is one of generation and conflicting theologies, he explained.

As for the Irish priests most of them were ordained before the Vatican II's reforms took effect, the first fruits of the Council was Mass in the vernacular, which was introduced around the world on the First Sunday of Advent, 29 November 1964. Though some Catholics expressed consternation over the changes in the church, the Irish priests in Arizona were not only flexible but welcomed them. They had no objection to turning their altars around so that they now faced the congregation and reading prayers in English from the new Roman Missal. The sole hold out was Fr. McHugh, who acquiesced but reluctantly.

⁵²¹ G. Jeffrey MacDonald, "A small sturdy band of John Paul priests," *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 April 2005.

Today it is a different church, and many have noted that priests are different too. Where the old Irish clergy wore a black suit or black clerical shirt and pants, the younger, conservative John Paul priests parade in cassocks and birettas and don black vestments for funeral masses. They gravitate toward the trappings and accoutrements associated, not with Vatican II, but with the sixteenth century Council of Trent. This reactionary garb and insignia, while giving them status, further separates them from the people they serve and bespeaks a restorationist agenda. To steal a phrase from Pope Francis, it is ostensible clericalism. The Irish priests I interviewed dislike this posturing.

In contrast, the priests from Ireland were community men. To be sure, they led their people in prayer and by their good example. But their spirituality was more earthy and holistic, their temperament more sanguine. Who conducts a wake or funeral with warmth and wit quite like an Irish priest? For them life was a celebration. They reveled in conversation and visiting people, especially the sick. In their parishes they delighted in gathering the folks, fostering social ties and friendships, so that Catholics as well as others would feel at home. With their annual round of parish dinners, dances, and fiestas—in addition to their sacramental ministry—they communicated that the church is wherever the people are. As pastors they gathered the flock together for multiple occasions. The Mexican parishioners I interviewed appreciated this and affirmed their friendly, outgoing style.

In my own estimation many of today's younger priests I would call sanctuary men, that is, they gravitate to pietistic rituals, proper for men of the cloth but narrow in scope, betraying a tendency to be spiritually self-absorbed. Some maintain rigid clerical boundaries between themselves and the laity, like religious specialists prepared to do this but not that, available at certain times and not others. Today many young priests are neo-traditionalist—pietistic, ritualistic, legalistic—with a yen for the Latin mass, though none of them were alive when the mass was in Latin. They aim not to bring back something that was dear to them, but rather values which were later endorsed by two highly conservative popes, John Paul and Benedict—symbolic of a past time, a pre-Vatican II mindset, a medieval mentality. Their enterprise is ideological. This is a main reason most of the Irish priests I interviewed agree that the church is

different now than in their day, although several held out hope that Pope Francis will turn things around. Fr. Ledwith addressed the twilight of the Irish priests and the changing church most forcefully, saying, “I couldn’t give a damn about there being no more Irish priests. I blame the bishops. I wonder if we [the church] won’t end up like the gods of Greece and Rome—I mean so much of the religion makes for great stories, but it’s not relevant.”⁵²²

Writing for the prestigious Jesuit magazine, *America*, J.J. Lee assesses a dawning reality which the Irish priests of Arizona in their heyday could not have fathomed. He makes a dire prediction: “If there is to be a future for Catholicism in Ireland, it has to be seen as a new missionary endeavor. Incredible though it may appear in a once so prolific a nursery of so extraordinary a missionary movement, Ireland has now become a missionary country for the Catholic Church.”⁵²³

We have explored how, in the twentieth century, Ireland became the world’s leading producer of priests and nuns. Its missionaries to foreign lands constituted a vast ministerial network that has been called Ireland’s Spiritual Empire. Writing in the 1950’s, John O’Brien cites an irony. As Ireland’s population dramatically decreased, simultaneously the number of Irish Catholic clergy reached its highest level ever. In 1956, there were 5,489 priests in Ireland (diocesan and members of religious orders)—one for every 593 Catholics. There were also 18,300 nuns and Christian Brothers. Vocations were so high that between a third and a half of clergy left home to serve in the missions.⁵²⁴

This contrasts sharply with the reality today. The number of Catholic diocesan priests in Ireland dropped 13 per cent in the decade between 2002 and 2012, from 3,203 in 2002 to 2,800 in 2012, a fall of 403 in the decade according to new figures. Over the same period the fall in the number of priests in religious congregations and orders was similar, dropping from 2,159 to 1,888 in 2012, a fall of 271 or 12.5 per cent. Nuns disappeared at the rate of 23 per cent over the

⁵²² Ledwith Interview.

⁵²³ J. J. Lee, “Ireland’s Catholic Future,” *America The National Catholic Review Website*.
<http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/irelands-catholic-future>

⁵²⁴ John A. O’Brien, *The Vanishing Irish: The Enigma of the Modern World* (New York: McGraw-Hill), 1954.

decade. For the female congregations, the drop in numbers was bigger, down from 8,953 in 2002 to 6,912—a fall of 2,041.⁵²⁵

Quoting statistics from the bishops' own website, Fr. Brendan Hoban said, "We explained in graphic terms that in 10 to 15 to 20 years' time Irish priests – apart from a tiny cadre of aged individuals – would have virtually disappeared. In Dublin diocese (with 199 parishes to pastor) there are now just two priests under 40 years of age."⁵²⁶ The irony remains that exported Irish priests, who not that long ago sustained the church in the English-speaking world and beyond, are no more and they are not coming back. In Hoban's words, "The crisis is now mathematically certain. If we keep going the way we are, the future of the Irish priesthood is now unsustainable."⁵²⁷

No longer is Ireland the storehouse of priests and religious. Today's majority of vocations hails from Africa, India, and the Philippines. Priests from these global regions today constitute the fourth wave of clergy serving the church in Arizona. Many Catholics find this arrangement a cultural disconnect. Irish-born Sean Lee, shares his experience at St. James Parish, Phoenix. "We liked the new [African] priest we got, but we couldn't understand him. After several Sundays trying to get what he was saying in his homily, we left and went to a nearby parish where we could understand the priest. He's an American."⁵²⁸ This experience is more and more common not only in the Dioceses of Phoenix and Tucson but in many others throughout the US.

Looking back on this study I am aware of the biases and limitations of my own position as an Irish American scholar who felt an immediate rapport with the priests and people I interviewed. I wonder, however, what it might feel like to have undertaken this task as a Mexican American researcher. I ask myself, what would the experience be and what would the view look like for one with a different standpoint?

⁵²⁵ Statistical Yearbook of the Church, an annual Vatican Library publication, cited by Patsy McGarry, *The Irish Times*, 5 July 2014.

⁵²⁶ Rev. Brendan Hoban, cited in Patsy McGarry, "Significant drop in numbers of Irish priests and nuns," *The Irish Times*, 5 July 2014.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁸ Sean Lee, Personal Interview by author. Phoenix, AZ, 21 October 2012.

It leaves me considering how others might follow up on this research. I maintain that, following the French and the Franco-Americans, the Irish priests constituted the third wave of ethnic clergy to serve the Catholic Church in Arizona. What might be explored next is the fourth wave, that is, priests from Africa, the Philippines, and India. An investigation into what has shaped them—culturally, religiously, philosophically—and how they bring that heritage to bear in their ministry to Mexican Catholics in Arizona, and how they are regarded in turn would be an engaging undertaking.

Another angle to be examined has to do with the increasing number of Mexican and Mexican priests serving in Arizona. I claim that many Mexican Catholics were not that fond of priests from Spain. A future study might explore the differences between Mexican and Spanish priests. Of particular interest would be knowing if Mexican clergy play a role in keeping Hispanic Catholics from joining other faiths and, if so, in what ways this plays out.

Michael Pasquier, referring to French missionary priests in the early United States, coins the term “religious specialists.” He observes that cultural separation allows religious specialists “to place themselves above local cultures.”⁵²⁹ The twentieth century Irish priests in Arizona exercised a full-time profession and a life-long vocation and as such they could be called religious specialists. But this study claims that they were also more than this. I likened them to general practitioners rather than specialists. They emerge as men of a more holistic understanding and practice in contrast to other priests who narrowly see themselves as only religious specialists. Now that we have observed what I call the passing of an era with the last of the Irish priests, this distinction invites further examination. What kind of clergy is needed in tomorrow’s church? How will pastors understand their ministerial role? What are twenty-first century Arizona Mexican Catholics looking for in their priests? How can their needs best be met? If specialization creates a boundary, where and how should it be crossed? And what has the story of the Irish priests in Arizona taught us that may shed light on these questions?

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⁵²⁹ Pasquier, *Fathers on the Frontier*, 8.

In 1962, when I was thirteen, my parents took me to Ireland. My father, whose parents were long dead and whose siblings had emigrated, had been away from the Old Country for forty years. In my mother's case, it was thirty-eight years since she had been "home" to see her parents and most of her family. She had never met her youngest sister, Nora, who was born after my mother emigrated. It was a moving and emotional homecoming, the trip of a lifetime. One of the vivid memories I took away from that visit was the image of my Aunt Nora hovering about the hearth. She boiled the kettle there, baked bread there, and seemed to constantly tend the fire—stoking it, "mauling" the ashes, putting in sods of turf. When I asked my aunt about her seemingly endless occupation at the fireside, she replied, "You don't want the fire to die out and have to light it again. It's better to keep it going."

Immediately, I could relate to the metaphor. Irish country life revolved around the fire. Around this symbolic center of the home everybody gathered, cups of tea would be poured, ghost stories and tales would be told, ballads sung, poetry recited, airs played, sets and reels danced, and family, friends and neighbors would pass the night away. For untold generations Ireland's turf fires created a cheery glow, into which a traveler might wander in out of the cold, damp night and find welcome.

The priests who came from Ireland to Arizona were ordinary in most respects. There was a lot they did not see, causes they did not take up, trails they did not blaze. They were not courageous prophets or innovative theologians. But they were dedicated, generous, down to earth, and available to the people they served. In my interview of former priest Terry Lynch, my last question was: What would you say was the greatest contribution of the Irish priests in Arizona?" He paused and thought for a moment. Then he said, "I suppose we kept the fires burning."⁵³⁰

⁵³⁰ Lynch Interview.

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- Arizona Silver Belt*
- National Catholic Reporter*
- San Diego Union*
- The Catholic Observer*
- The Catholic Sun*
- The Christian Science Monitor*
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Tucson Weekly

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PERSONAL INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

Person's Name, Place, and Date of Interview

Araiza, Delma	Tucson, AZ	16 August 2012
Barden, Eamon	Phoenix, AZ	28 October 2012
Barios, Frank	Phoenix, AZ	14 February 2013
Benton, Eugene	Tucson, AZ	16 August 2012
Bracken, Sr. Leonie, P.B.V.M.	Phoenix, AZ	31 March 2013
Briceno, Joseph	Phoenix, AZ	5 October 2012
Cahalane, Msgr. Thomas	Tucson, AZ	11 January 2013
Cullinan, Rev. John	Phoenix, AZ	14 April 2013
Carey, Sr. Elizabeth, I.B.V.M.	Flagstaff, AZ	8 October 2012
Colleary, Pat	County Mayo, IE	1 July 2012
Dempsey, Sr. Augustine, I.B.V.M.	Flagstaff, AZ	8 October 2012
Diaz-Bjorquist, Elena	Tucson, AZ	11 January 2013
Doran, Sr. Dympna, I.B.V.M.	Phoenix, AZ	23 September 2012
Fitzsimons, Sr. Ann, I.B.V.M.	Prescott, AZ	8 October 2012
Garcia, Pete	Tempe, AZ	2 January 2013
Gilsenan, Sr. Christine, I.B.V.M.	Phoenix, AZ	23 September 2012
Gaxiola, Richard	Phoenix, AZ	2 November 2014
Hennessy, Rev. Joseph	Sun Lakes, AZ	1 November 2012
Hever, Msgr. Thomas	Scottsdale, AZ	4 April 2012
Hoban, Rev. Brendan	Ballina, County Mayo, IE	15 June 2012
Jaurique, Lisa	Phoenix, AZ	19 May 2012
Leahy, Rev. Liam	Tucson, AZ	11 January 2013
Ledwith, Rev. Harry	Tucson, AZ	19 September 2014
Lee, Sean	Phoenix, AZ	20 October 2012
Lizarraga, Irene	Clifton, AZ	28 March 2013

Lynch, Terry	Phoenix, AZ	21 October 2012
Malone, Rev. Alan	Kildysart, Co. Clare, IE	21 June 2012
Marin, Dr. Christine	Tempe, AZ	22 February 2012
McArdle, Rev. Kevin	Tucson, AZ	16 August 2011
McHugh, John	County Mayo, IE	1 August 2014
McMahon, Msgr. John	Phoenix, AZ	24 June 2014
Meeks, Dr. Eric	Flagstaff, AZ	30 September 2012
O'Boyle, Sr. Evelyn, P.B.V.M.	Phoenix, AZ	31 March 2013
O'Carroll, Rev. Eugene	Phoenix, AZ	14 April 2013 20 February 2014 5 September 2014
O'Dea, Rev. Thomas	Kildysart, Co. Clare	21 June 2013
O'Grady, Msgr. Michael	Phoenix, AZ Co. Clare, IE	14 April 2013 21 June 2013
O'Keefe, Msgr. Richard	Phoenix, AZ	6 January 2013
Padilla, Rev. Gilbert	Tucson, AZ	16 August 2013
Quinn, Sr. Raphael, I.B.V.M.	Phoenix, AZ	23 September 2012
Rios, Dr. Alberto	Tempe, AZ	30 August 2012 27 September 2012
Rodela, Vina	Clifton, AZ	28 March 2013
Rodriguez, Trinidad	Stanfield, AZ	16 August 2012
Rooney, Nora	Co. Mayo, IE	1 August 2014
Trimble, Marshall	Phoenix, AZ	21 October 2012
Twomey, Rev. Dr. Vincent	Maynooth, Co. Kildare, IE	4 July 2012
Vega, Dr. Santos	Tempe, AZ	26 January 2013
Waldron, Rev. William	Sun City, AZ	19 May 2012
White, Dr. William	Scottsdale, AZ	14 February 2013
Woodsen, Lupe	Tempe, AZ	20 October 2012

APPENDIX A

IRISH PRIESTS INCARDINATED IN THE DIOCESE OF TUCSON

Name	Place of Birth	Seminary	AZ Arrival
Barden, Eamon	Co. Longford	All Hallows	1967
Burke, William	Innishannon, Co. Cork	Carlow	1963
Burns, John F.	Knocknaboula, Foynes, Co. Limerick	Carlow	1947
Cahalane, Cornelius	Co. Cork	Carlow	1950
Cahalane, Thomas Paul	Glandore, Co. Cork	Carlow	1963
Callanan, Patrick Joseph	Bandon, Co. Cork	Carlow	1950
Casey, Coleman	Carna, Co. Galway	Carlow	1950
Coleman, James	Ballymacoda, Co. Cork	Carlow	1977
Colleary, Patrick O.*	Cully, Charlestown, Co. Mayo	All Hallows	1974
Colton, Bernard Joseph	Clanabeggan, Omagh, Co. Tyrone	Carlow	1950
Crossan, Seamus	Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	All Hallows	1983
Cullinan, John Francis	Eskra, Co. Tyrone	Carlow	1946
Cunningham, Bernard	Co. Donegal	All Hallows	1955
Devlin, James Aidan	Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny	St Bernard, Rochester	1963
Duggan, Patrick Mary	Moville, Co. Donegal	Carlow	
1957Foley, Maurice	Ballymacoda, Co. Cork	Carlow	1963
Gillespie, Joseph	Derrybeg, Co. Donegal	All Hallows	1950
Groves, Edmund	Clonakilty, Co. Cork	Carlow	1949
Hennessy, Joseph Irenaeus	Ballinspittle, Co. Cork	Carlow	1963
Hever, Thomas F.	Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan	All Hallows	1962
Horan, Bartholomew	Co. Kerry	Carlow	1948
Kelly, Martin Christopher	Co. Clare	Waterford	1947
Kelly, James	Milltown, Co. Kerry	Carlow	1960
Leahy, Liam	St. Lukes, Co. Cork	Carlow	1972
Ledwith, Harry	Templemichael, Co. Longford	Carlow	1974

Name	Place of Birth	Seminary	AZ Arrival
Lynch, Terrence Joseph	Stradone, Co. Cavan	Carlow	1967
Maguire, Eugene	Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim	Carlow	1947
Malone, Aloysius	Fedamore, Co. Limerick	Carlow	1959
McCaffrey, Killian*	Dublin City	St. Meinrad, IN	2007
McCaughey, Peter Aloysius	Killybrone, Emyvale, Co. Monaghan	Carlow	1951
McCormack, Patrick C.	Monasterevan, Co. Kildare	Carlow	1962
McCready, Daniel A.	Buncrana, Co. Donegal	Carlow	1947
McGovern, Michael Anthony	Glangevlin, Co. Cavan	Carlow	1945
McGrenra, Cornelius D.	Laconnell, Ardara, Co. Donegal	Carlow	1951
McHugh, Neil Patrick	Ardara, Co. Donegal	Carlow	1944
McMahon, John J.	Stradone, Co. Cavan	Carlow	1948
Minogue, Michael J.*	Scariff, Co. Clare	St.Johns,Camarillo, CA	1981
Moynihan, Cornelius	Knocknagree, Co. Cork	Carlow	1947
Mullaney, Cornelius	Sligo, Co. Sligo	All Hallows	1950
Mulvihill, James	Whitegate, Co. Clare	Carlow	1945
O'Carroll, Eugene Michael	Derry, Co. Derry	All Hallows	1962
O'Connor, James Ambrose	Swinford, Co. Mayo	Carlow	1959
O'Dea, Thomas Christopher	Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co. Clare	Carlow	1959
O'Grady, Michael	Kildysart, Co. Clare	Carlow	1958
O'Keefe, Richard William	Co. Tipperary	Thurles	1959
O'Leary, Thomas	Begenalstown, Co. Carlow	Carlow	1958
O'Reilly, Francis John	Ballycumber, Co. Offaly	Carlow	1945
Reid, William Joseph	Co. Roscommon	All Hallows	1950
Sheridan, Terrence	Oldcastle, Co, Meath	Carlow	1947
Smith, Patrick	Ballintubbert, Co. Laois	Carlow	1959
Smith, Patrick	Gallonbawn, Crosserlough, Co. Cavan	Kilkenny	1964

Name	Place of Birth	Seminary	AZ Arrival
Smith Paul Peter	Cloncoid, Co. Cavan	Carlow	1946
Stapleton, James	Co. Dublin	Carlow	1958
Waldron, William	Claremorris, Co. Mayo	All Hallows	1950
Williams, John	Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow	Carlow	1970

* * *

*Ordained for Phoenix Diocese. All others were ordained for Tucson. However, most ended up being incardinated in Phoenix Diocese following the split from Tucson in December 1969

APPENDIX B
IRISH PRIESTS WHO SERVED IN ARIONA FOR A TIME

Name	Place of Birth	Seminary	AZ Arrival
Breslin, Daniel F.			
Buckley, Michael, O.C.D.	Castleisland, Co. Kerry	Clonliffe	1974
Collins, William Patrick	Doon, Co. Limerick	St. Paul, MN	1947
Coyle, Martin, S.S.C.	Co. Mayo	St. Columbanus, Navan	1975
Crowley, Edward, CSsp.	Askeaton, Co. Limerick	Clonliffe	1980
Cunningham, John Francis	Co. Donegal	Thurles	1968
Doolan, Ailbe, O.C.D.	Castlemartyr, Co. Cork	StMary, Donnybrook, Dublin	1980
Dorian, Brendan	Ardee, Co. Louth		1996
Doyle, James A., O.S.M.	Co. Dublin		1969
Egan, Michael	Ashroe, Cashel, Co. Limerick	Carlow	1904
Fenton, William, O.C.D.	Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork	Clonliffe	1972
Geoghegan, James, O.C.D.	Co. Dublin	Clonliffe	1978
Greene, Daniel P.	Co. Tipperary	Washington, D.C.	1983
Horan, Brendan Thomas	Portumera, Co. Galway	Carlow	1959
Joyce, Sean Patrick, O.Carm.	Castlebar, Co. Mayo	Washington, D.C.	1973
Kearney, Gabriel Wm, O.Carm.	Moate, Co. Westmeath	Washington, D.C.	1966
McKeogh, Matthew, O.C.D.	Kildimo, Co. Limerick	Clonliffe	1981
Kielty, James P. (M.Afr.)	Achill, Co. Mayo		1976
Killackey, Cyprian, O.C.D.*	Eyrecourt, Co. Galway	Clonliffe	1952
Kissane, Richard, Cscp	Ballylongford, Kilgarvan, Kerry	Clonliffe	1983
Leahy, Kenneth, O.Carm.	Kinsale, Co. Cork	St. Alfred College	1960
Lynch, John Francis	Kilskyre, Kells, Co. Meath	Maynooth	1962
Lysaght, John, O.C.D.	Co. Limerick	Clonliffe	1981
Maguire, Rory S.J.	Belfast, Co. Down	St. Stanislaus, Tullamore	1959

Name	Place of Birth	Seminary	AZ Arrival
Maher, Patrick J.	Co. Kilkenny		1928
McArdle, Kevin, O.C.D.*	Dublin City	Clonliffe	1943
McCarthy, Columcille, O.C.D.	Bandon, Co. Cork	All Hallows	1961
McCarthy, Maurice, O.C.D.	Bandon, Co. Cork	All Hallows	1958
Moran, Brendan			1959
Moroney, Daniel B.	Kilfenora, Co. Clare	Irish College, Rome	1961
Murphy, Michael			1877
Murphy, Patrick Joseph	Drummin, Westport, Co. Mayo	St. Benedict, KS	1926
Nolan, Timothy			1955
O'Brien, Henry P., SS	Co. Dublin	Milltown Park, Dublin	1949
O'Brien, Thomas P., CSV	Co. Mayo	Washington, D.C.	1967
O'Callaghan, Dominic, O.C.D.	Lackandarra, Mallow, Co. Cork	Clonliffe	1978
O'Donnell, Henry Joseph SSC	Bruckless, Co. Donegal		1969
O'Donohoe, Raymond M.	Co. Tipperary	All Hallows	1964
O'Reilly, Patrick Joseph	Navan, Co. Meath	Thurles	1983
O'Rourke, Peter Brendan	Aughavas, Co. Cavan	Maynooth	
O'Sullivan, Ivo, O.F.M.	Co. Dublin	St. Anthony, Rome	1957
O'Sullivan, Daniel Francis	Sneem, Co. Kerry	Kilkenny	1947
Reynolds, Henry	Killeen, Granard, Co. Longford	Carlow	1949
Stone, Colm (John), O.C.D.		Clonliffe	1977
Troy John J.	Co. Kerry		
Walsh, Patrick J.	Ballylongford, Co. Kerry	St Peters, Wexford	1975
Wheeler, Ambrose, C.S.C.	Co. Dublin		1990
Winters, Gerald, O.C.D.	Castlebar, Co. Mayo	Clonliffe	1966
Wren, William	Knocknagoshel, Co. Kerry		1968

*Two priests served in Arizona over 60 years. Most on list served for a few years.
Abbreviations of Religious Orders: O.C.D. – Carmelites / O.F.M. – Franciscans /
C.S.C. – Holy Cross / S.J. – Jesuits / M.Afr. – Missionaries of Africa

APPENDIX C
QUESTIONS ASKED DURING PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Of Irish Priests:

How did you come to be in Arizona?

What was your seminary formation like?

How did it equip you for ministry to Mexican people? Did you learn Spanish?

How much exposure have you had to Mexican parishioners?

What were your expectations/challenges?

How did you understand your own ethnic identity?

Did you experience any prejudice for being an Irish immigrant—from society, from other clergy?
for being Catholic in the U.S.?

How are Irish priests different from American priests?

What do you think is the greatest contribution of the Irish priests in Arizona?

In your experience in the parishes, would most of the Mexicans be American-born or would they
come from the Old Country? What did they call themselves?

How would you describe their economic status?

What were the mining towns like?

Tell me about Mexican identity. Did they see themselves as American or hyphenated Americans
or were they still attached to the Old Country?

How did they differ from Anglo parishioners?

What experiences led you to greater understanding of Mexicans? Say, from time spent with them
outside of liturgy. Were you invited to their homes?

Did you see prejudice or racism against Mexicans?

How was Mexican religiosity different from how you were raised? From that of Anglo Catholics?

Comment on Vatican II, in terms of yourself and Mexican people with whom you worked.

Did the church effectively serve them?

Any leads for my research? Who else would be a good resource?

Of Irish Sisters:

How did you come to be in Arizona? Expectations? Challenges?

What kind of preparation did you have for ministry in the Southwest?

How did you understand your own ethnic identity?

Did you experience any prejudice for being an Irish immigrant? from society, from clergy? for
being Catholic or for being a sister?

How are Irish priests different from American priests?

How are Irish sisters different from their American counterparts?

What would you say are the Irish nuns' greatest contribution to the church in Arizona?

How is Mexican religiosity different from that of Anglos?

What things struck you about the Mexican people that you will always remember? Their spirit,
human qualities, spirituality, and so forth?

What experiences led you to greater understanding of Mexicans, say, from time spent with them
outside of liturgy? Were you invited to their homes?

Did you see prejudice or racism against Mexicans?

How was Mexican religiosity similar or different from how you were raised? From that of Anglo
Catholics?

How well did the church meet the needs of Mexican people in your experience?

Can you put me in touch with other resources? People to interview?

Of Mexican Sources (some questions altered to suit non-Hispanics):

What were a couple of vivid incidents with Irish priests that you'd say express what your relationship was like?

What memories do you have that made you feel you had common ground with the Irish priests, and what memories do you have of cultural difference or distance between you?

What was the greatest barrier and what was the strongest link between you both?

Recall the wider community. Can you describe how non-Catholic, Protestant America, regarded Irish priests and Mexican Catholics in Arizona? If there was prejudice, what was it about? What were the stereotypes?

What experiences led you to greater understanding of the Irish priests? Tell me about time spent together outside of liturgy and formal church activities. What was the most humorous memory? What made you feel comfortable together? What complaints do you have?

What things struck you most about the Irish priests that you will always remember? Their spirit, human qualities, spirituality, and so forth?

Tell me about the Mexican spiritual outlook. How does Mexican religiosity differ from that of Anglos?

How well did the church meet the needs of Mexicanos in your experience?

Comment on effects of WWII and Vatican II in the Mexican communities.

Can you put me in touch with other resources? People to interview?

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL FOR STUDY



To: Tracy Fessenden
ECA

From: Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 05/17/2012

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 05/17/2012

IRB Protocol #: 1205007829

Study Title: Building Bridges: Irish Priests/Nuns and Mexicans in Arizona, 1944-1969

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.