

BOOK REVIEW

Fitzpatrick-Behrens, Susan. *The Maryknoll Catholic Mission in Peru, 1943-1989: Transnational Faith and Transformation*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012, xii+315 pages; with Index.

Missionaries to Latin America and Africa, before and after the establishment of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (1622), were less respectful of indigenous cultural traditions than missionaries to Asia. They had all the answers; they did not need to learn the local languages nor eat the local foods. They maintained, in the main, the ideology of European cultural dominance. The exceptions proved the rule.

This fascinating study of *Maryknoll Catholic Mission in Peru, 1943-1989*, by Fitzpatrick-Behrens captures in part the cocksure posture of missionaries; but there is a difference. As the first missionary congregation created in the USA in 1911, Maryknoll embodied Catholicism in American style—its ethnic configurations, the focus on sacraments, catechetical instruction and relief to the poor and needy. The mission insight, expressed in *Field Afar*, connects intimately Catholic Church and nation—the panacea to all world problems after World War II. The inescapable attraction of Fitzpatrick-Behrens' narrative centres on how Maryknoll's Catholic Faith and their belief in the American way plays out in the mission field: missionaries collaborated with the State in Peru without obviously appearing to do so. However, in less than two decades the same missionaries distanced themselves from, and challenged, their nation, and severed the link with the Peruvian state. This book that should be in the hands of every student and expert in mission studies provides interesting missiological and historical suggestions.

Arriving in Peru in 1943, Maryknoll missionaries were intent on implanting a Romanized Catholic church, made in the USA. On the other hand they focused on erasing the “magic” and “superstition” that supposedly dominated the local cultural Peruvian and Latin American Catholicism. The narrator creatively

and beautifully presents the background of USA ethnic Catholics, their ritual life, their marginalization from mainstream USA Protestant culture, and their struggle for freedom thanks to the Catholic Social Teachings. These constituted the ready-to-hand instruments for developing mission policy. The initial expected outcomes failed to materialize. The Maryknoll missionaries were rather distant from the rural Indian population. They used intermediaries, the shark feudalistic landowners and the catechists trained to memorize the essentials of their Catholicism, with whose aid they plunged single-mindedly and passionately into their mission. Catholicism branded in the USA, combined sacramental rituals with material aid; the missionaries, culturally sensitive but politically cautious, were opposed to leftist leaning.

Change in mission strategy was fast-forwarded by the new church of Vatican II that impacted Maryknoll and the church in Latin America and Peru. Investment in personnel ready to learn the indigenous Aymara language and culture, and live with the people yielded different results. After Vatican Council II, the Latin American Episcopal Conference adopted the Theology of Liberation and preferential option for the poor: the conferences of Medellin (1968) and Pueblo (1979) introduced a defining difference that was both disturbing to the cautious and energizing to the progressive missionaries. Maryknoll discarded the catechists as intermediaries, opposed the feudalistic landholders, and fully supported the land reforms of the military regime. However, their appropriation of the main tenets of liberation theology, the option for the poor, and the effort to implement the social teachings of the Church firmly rooted Maryknollers within a progressive church. Missionaries moved out of their isolation from the local church, and were fully committed to issues of justice, peace and human rights: no longer limited to cultural concerns, they turned into social and political activists. Advocates of human rights and defenders of the indigenous cultures and peoples, they broke with the policies of their Nation, broke with the brutal policies of the Peruvian government, and were targeted by both the government and the Maoist rebellion. Today, right wing bishops in charge of

the dioceses where Maryknoll missioned since 1943 would have nothing to do with their human rights stance based on the Catholic Social Teachings. They have been forced to leave Peru.

This is a fascinating and easy to read book. The only shortcoming is the lack of glossary of terms, and a comprehensive list of abbreviations. The index is very helpful.

This book is not only for the Maryknoll missionaries and supporters; it is important for the study of mission strategy in general, and missionary activity today from world perspective. As the Catholic church celebrates fifty years of Vatican Council II, the author's epilogue is instructive: the pushback coming from the newly appointed bishops could be interpreted as a sad story of rewriting half a century of history, or it may simply represent "one more cycle in the long history of the Catholic Church and its relationship with the indigenous people in Peru".

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Mulligan, Suzanne (ed.), Jim Corkery and Gerry O'Hanlon, *Reaping the Harvest: Fifty Years after Vatican II*. Blackrock, Co. Dublin: the Columba Press, 2012; 94 pages.

This collective work is a timely contribution to the commemoration of the event of Vatican II. *Reaping the Harvest* is put together by three Irish theologians to challenge the Catholic Church in Ireland and the world Church to rekindle and embrace the promises and hopes of Vatican II. Hope rests on the progress made so far to realize the promises of the council, especially in the area of the social teachings of the church. Much has been done, but more needs to be done. Embracing the more that needs to be done is imperative for the renewal of the Catholic Church undergoing a severe crisis particularly in Ireland.