



**TO BE KNOWN IS TO BE LOVED:  
A CALL TO JOURNEY ALONGSIDE LATINO/A COMMUNITIES  
FOR EFFECTIVE PASTORAL LEADERSHIP**

by

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this doctoral thesis to my wife who insisted that it was time for me to pursue a higher education, who not only stayed by my side but read every single word I wrote.

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## **Introduction**

My personal journey back to Catholicism is a familiar story. I am a cradle Catholic, but I never really knew much about my faith and merely fulfilled the bare minimum requirements. I did what my parents expected of me and occasionally attended Mass, especially on Christmas and Easter. As a young adult, I stopped going altogether. My wife, on the other hand, was very involved in the Church. My shallow religious life began to change when Amy and I were married in 1987. I was reintroduced to Catholicism, and my newly discovered faith flourished at a rapid pace thanks to my wife's example and her influence on me to get involved in parish life and community.

Similar to my lax Catholic identity, I didn't really experience my Hispanic ethnicity as something I needed to embrace until 2017, when I started my educational journey at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago. My interest in Hispanic Theology and Ministry (HTM) became a driving force in my own spirituality. I wanted to embrace my identity and better understand the Hispanic communities I now serve as a permanent deacon in the Archdiocese of San Antonio, Texas. As I became more and more involved in Hispanic popular religiosity, my understanding of my own Hispanic heritage and spirituality grew. This has been profoundly beneficial for me personally, as a deacon, and for those I minister to and with. This has caused me to wonder why there are so many Church leaders—priests, deacons, and laity—hesitant to get involved in Hispanic ministry and enter into their devotional practices.

What accounts for this lack of involvement? Is it due to ethnocentrism and prejudice, or is it simply a result of isolation and the lack of relationships with Hispanics? During my eight years of ministering as a deacon, I have heard many responses from

clergy and lay leaders about their lack of outreach to the Hispanic community. If Hispanics are part of the parish, why are they so often placed at the bottom of the list when it comes to accompanying them, especially in respect to the devotional practices that mean so much to them? During my first parish assignment after ordination, I experienced a very troubling dynamic. Once a year, ministry leaders were instructed to schedule their events and activities for the year ahead and request their desired facilities. This was critical given the size of the parish and the limited space of the facilities. I dutifully prepared the calendar for the Spanish marriage ministry core team meetings and the retreat. We were the first ministry to present our schedule and facilities request. We were bluntly told to wait for the English language programs and ministries. They had first dibs, and we would get what was left over. I was surprised. I was told, “That is just how it’s always been.” They refused to budge. The pastor at the time said, “It’s just easier this way.” I knew instinctively that it would be easier for him because he wouldn’t have to deal with ministry leaders who would complain. The Hispanic community just went along with this. I was shocked, but apparently, the Spanish-speaking parishioners were accustomed to this treatment.

Hispanic communities want to be known and understood. To be known requires respect and understanding of their communities’ pastoral needs and religious practices. Sadly, many leaders have a colonial mentality that foment stereotypes and even prejudice toward Hispanics. The only way to move beyond this mentality is to sincerely enter into relationships with *Latino(a)s*,<sup>1</sup> and understand how they see themselves. In

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<sup>1</sup> *Latino(a)s* is one of many racial identities that will be used in this project. It is used as a larger category for all people of Latin American and Caribbean descent, regardless of race and ethnicity, and is inclusively gendered. The primary term I will be using is Hispanic since it is the term most often heard locally.

other words, *Latinamente* (as seen by the Latino). This respectful understanding must begin with our Church leaders, both clergy and lay. Latino/as want to be known and accepted. They want to share their cultural and religious practices that connect them to their families and ancestors. In many dioceses, Hispanic Catholics play a vital role in the life of the Church. Yet, barriers to inclusion remain, even in places where they have been or soon will be the majority of Catholics. Hispanic Catholics want to fully participate in the Church's mission to serve the whole community and not just other Hispanics. They are eager to share their gifts ministerially, monetarily, and through collaborative service in their parishes.

On the national level, Timothy Matovina believes Latino(a)s are transforming the U.S. Catholic Church.<sup>2</sup> The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in their 1995 pastoral letter, "The Hispanic Presence in the New Evangelization in the United States," see the youthfulness and innate Catholicity of the Hispanic presence as a source of great hope and "a providential gift from the Lord in our commitment to that New Evangelization to which we are called at this moment of history."

Almost three decades later, Hosffman Ospino and other key leaders in Hispanic ministry are critically asking whether the Church's Hispanic, Catholic hope is slipping away. Ospino highlights the ongoing research of Pew that reports the dramatic exodus of Hispanics from Catholicism. In April 2010, the Pew Research Center reported that 67 percent of Hispanics identified as Catholics; however, in 2023, only 43 percent of Hispanic adults self-identified as Catholic. The reasons for this are complex and

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<sup>2</sup> Timothy Matovina, "*Becoming Latino: THE TRANSFORMATION OF U.S. CATHOLICISM.*" *The Future of Catholicism in America*, edited by Patricia O'Connell Killen and Mark Silk, Columbia University Press, 2019, pp. 74–107. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/kill19148.6>. Accessed 15 Jan. 2024.

systemic, but simply put, Hispanic Catholics are searching for a place where they are seen, welcomed, and invited to share their faith and leadership with the whole community.<sup>3</sup>

Through this thesis project, I intend to help reveal Hispanic communities that are already present but not often seen. I will introduce their religious practices to the larger community, especially Church leaders. Specifically, the ethnographic research will focus on the religious practice called *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* (ANM). This is Spanish for nocturnal adoration of the Blessed Sacrament by Mexican Catholics who believe this is the real presence of Jesus Christ in the consecrated hosts reposed in the Tabernacle. My study will look at how Hispanics have historically and are presently practicing nocturnal adoration as part of their popular religious practices. More importantly, I explore what drives them toward these religious practices. By listening to their stories, I have heard their heartfelt voices as they express their needs and desires spiritually, socially, and emotionally. Like the Samaritan woman at the well (John: 4-42), her realization of being known is what moved her to become a disciple of Christ. She announced his presence to the villagers, who shunned her. To be known is to be loved.<sup>4</sup>

Chapter One will begin with my own journey of better understanding my own cultural and religious identity as I have accompanied Hispanic communities in my ministry as a deacon of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, Texas. I will focus primarily on my experience as a participant-observer in the practice of ANM and how this led me to

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<sup>3</sup> Hosffman Ospino, “Analysis: Is the U.S. Church’s Hispanic Catholic Hope Slipping Away?” Catholic Review, September 27, 2023. <https://catholicreview.org/analysis-is-the-u-s-churchs-hispanic-catholic-hope-slipping-away/>.

<sup>4</sup> YouTube. Accessed May 19, 2025. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q49BbfgJbto>. *Woman at the Well*, lalaland481. The full phrase is “To be known is to loved and to be loved is to be known”

research the history and current impact of this devotion on Latinos/as in the United States. This chapter will present the thesis argument and provide a general overview of the research project, its design, and methods.

Chapter Two will delve into the pastoral, social, and theological dimensions of Hispanic popular Catholicism and devotional practices, referred to as *Santo* praxis and *lo cotidiano*. I will draw from the works of theologians who have shed light on Hispanic communities' religious practices and their spirituality in everyday lives. Combined with my own experience of Hispanic communities, I will highlight key themes and methods of Hispanic theology and ministry. Concurrently, it will provide a detailed description of the qualitative research methods used during the fieldwork.

Chapter Three contextualizes the practice of ANM within the history, in broad strokes, of Mexican Catholicism and how this devotional practice was brought to the United States by Mexican immigrants. The goal is to demonstrate how popular religious devotion is forged in the historical struggles of people who are oppressed. I describe in detail the rituals promoted by ANM.

Chapter Four provides an in-depth view of the participants of this ethnographic study who call themselves adorers—in Spanish, *adoradores*. It summarizes my in-depth interviews with them and my own experiences of nocturnal adoration as a participant-observer. This chapter also includes a detailed summary of my interviews with members of the clergy and their views and experiences with ANM and its members.

Finally, Chapter Five will analyze and interpret the study's findings and draw conclusions related to the thesis argument. The chapter presents a theological reflection

of the study's findings and proposes a pastoral response related to the importance of intercultural competence for effective leadership and accompaniment of Hispanic communities.

## Chapter One

### *Mi Gente y Mi Cultura: My People and My Culture*

When Joseph Tomás McKellar, co-director of PICO California, asked Pope Francis what words of encouragement he could offer him to share with his community, Pope Francis replied, “Stay with the people. Stay close to your people, listen to what the people in your community are yearning for, and allow them to teach you.”<sup>5</sup> I have witnessed and experienced the transformation that happens when we listen and put into practice these words of wisdom. When asked, “What words of encouragement can I share with the community?” Pope Francis’s response was not aimed at the community but at its leaders. When pastoral leaders commit to be truly present to the flock entrusted to them, getting to know them and coming to love them, personal and communal transformation happens.

It is my experience that Hispanic communities want to be seen and heard. Through shared experiences, I have addressed this need to take the time to better understand what popular religious practices mean to the Hispanic community. My familiarity with these rituals increased profoundly once ordained, and my assignments took me to predominantly Spanish-speaking parishes. My immersion in these communities and my studies at CTU opened a newfound awareness of the grassroots of our Church, the ordinary people in the pews wanting a place at the table. They are

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<sup>5</sup> J.D. Long-Garcia, ““What Pope Francis Means to U.S. Latino Catholics.”” *America, The Jesuit Review*, September 20, 2019, <https://doi.org/https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/09/20/what-pope-francis-means-us-latino-catholics>.

hungering to be fed spiritually and to feed others in their families and community with the bread of life.

The Hispanic culture is infused with a profound spirituality that expresses itself primarily through popular piety and devotion. I am more aware and appreciative of my own culture and faith. I have come to understand the connectedness that Hispanic popular piety has to the suffering Jesus, our blessed Mother Mary, and the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. This is how Hispanic communities—of various ethnicities—forge a beautiful unity in diversity through sharing their cultural prayers, practices, and rituals. My immersion experiences in Hispanic ministry and in popular piety inspired me to focus my doctoral project on ANM.

### **Thesis Statement**

This project's thesis contends that developing intercultural competence and nurturing a capacity for empathy is a central component of effective pastoral leadership in Hispanic and other culturally diverse settings. Pastoral leadership must be rooted in a practical theology that connects knowing the “other” with loving the “other” as a co-disciple of Christ. Unfortunately, many pastoral leaders are formed in a cultural comfort zone, surrounded by people who share a similar worldview. Therefore, this thesis project focuses on my own experience of how pastoral immersion and accompaniment are essential parts of pastoral formation and theological education. This is especially true in Hispanic ministry, where respectful accompaniment of parishioners must include participation in their popular religious devotions. Specifically, this project critically reflects on my experience in the Archdiocese of San Antonio, participating in and accompanying Hispanic parishioners in the popular religious devotion of nocturnal

adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, which I will often refer to in Spanish as *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*.

The scope of the thesis project had five distinct yet interrelated phases: (1) field work and data collection; (2) socio-historical investigation of the religious practice of nocturnal adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; (3) an extensive literature review focused on various dimensions of Hispanic popular religious devotion; (4) analysis and interpretation of the project's findings; (5) and finally, drawing conclusions from the data, a theological reflection, and questions for future study.

### **Eucharistic Adoration and My Spiritual Journey**

Devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe and Eucharistic adoration greatly influenced my decision to become a deacon. Before accepting the call to become a deacon, I spent three years discerning and often resisting the call. I spent many evenings before the Blessed Sacrament in adoration, asking for our Blessed Mother's intercession. One evening, as I knelt silently in prayer, I had an overwhelming desire to become a deacon. I wanted to serve the community, as described in the Acts of the Apostles 6:2-3: "It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve the table. Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom whom we shall appoint to the task." In assisting our priest with the sacraments only, as so often is the case, deacons may lose sight of direct involvement with the laity, which is our initial responsibility, according to the book of Acts and what Pope Francis is asking of his clergy.

My first and only experiences in Eucharistic adoration, prior to being introduced to ANM or the National Nocturnal Adoration Society (NNAS), were solitary moments of silent prayer before the Tabernacle. When I was first asked to help with the exposition of

the Blessed Sacrament for a nocturnal adoration vigil, I could not understand why anyone would want to spend the entire night in communal, vocal prayer. This was so different from my own style of silent prayer. Nocturnal adoration was difficult for me at the beginning and has not gotten easier, but it has definitely impacted my experience of *lo cotidiano* (daily life) in both my spiritual and secular activities. It took some time before I realized the purpose and cultural significance of the emphasis on communal prayer in ANM. It is inspired by the way Jesus prayed with his community of disciples and how, in his most difficult agony, he asked his disciples to keep watch and pray with him in the Garden of Gethsemane. When prayer is in silence, it's usually about our individual needs and the needs of our circle of friends and family. In ANM, the vocal, communal prayers build a sense of community central to collective cultures. The ANM prayers are also expansive in their scope. There are prayers for the many needs of the world—for the sick, loved ones, enemies, priests, and other Church leaders, vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and those without faith or hope. The discomfort and difficulty of ANM is an act of reparation to counter the power of sin committed throughout the world, with the sacrifice of time and the need for rest offered in adoration. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus not only asked to be released from the burden that was about to transpire, but he also prayed for all people and the sins committed throughout the world. The *adoradores* pray for all of us and all of God's created world alongside Jesus's presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

One night, as an *adorador* was reading the prayer intentions from the ritual book at the beginning of the vigil, I heard my name, Deacon Rudy, added to the list of petitions. The ritual book does not offer that option, but this community was so grateful

for my presence as a representative of the clergy that they adapted the ritual prayers to thank God for me. A community that was just getting to know me was praying for me. That moment made me realize the importance of clergy to those to whom they minister. By listening to them, the clergy and Church leaders can hear what the community needs from them. Our clergy, Church leaders, and lay leaders should take to heart what our parishioners have to say and what Pope Francis and his successor, Pope Leo, are asking of those entrusted with the pastoral care of souls. We are all part of the same body of Christ. Too often, Church leaders are put in a “one hand does not know what the other hand is doing” situation due to their administrative duties. Church leaders do not usually have the answers to the needs of their community. All the hours spent in class will not get anyone closer to knowing what is in the hearts of the individuals who sit in the pews, unless they make an effort to listen and learn from them.

To listen and respond to the spiritual and social needs of parishioners is essential to pastoral leadership and intercultural competency. For the Hispanic community, the spiritual and the secular are often one and the same. Carmen Nanko-Fernandez<sup>6</sup> and Dinorah B. Méndez<sup>7</sup> agree that the Hispanic community’s secular and spiritual lives are inseparable. This can only be understood if ministers take the time to listen and learn from the Hispanic community. This requires not only studying about Hispanics but also forming relationships that are mutually enriching and accepting the invitation to participate in the popular religious devotions of Hispanic communities. In our

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<sup>6</sup> Carmen Nanko-Fernandez, “‘! Despierta Iglesia! Reconfiguring Theologies of Ministry Latinamente,’” essay, in *Ministries In The Church*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, Diego Irarrazabal, and Paul Murry (London: SCM Press, n.d.), 93–102.

<sup>7</sup> Dinorah B. Méndez. “Key Characteristics of Mexican Spirituality.” In *Transformation* 28, no. 3 (2011): 206–23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43052861>. Accessed 7/31/2022.

willingness to learn and humbly accompany the community, we witness the tenderness of Jesus's leadership as the Good Shepherd.

### **Anticipated Outcomes of the Thesis Project**

The achievable goals for this thesis project are: 1) to introduce nocturnal adoration as practiced by Hispanics to a wider audience within the Catholic Community, especially to clergy and other key Church leaders; 2) to further advance an understanding and appreciation of Hispanic popular Catholicism within local parishes; 4) to demonstrate how the Hispanic community and their spirituality can be a positive and unifying force within the larger parish community; and 5) to invite clergy and other Church leaders to reflect on their own intercultural competence and pastoral empathy by listening to the *adoradores* as they share their stories about ANM and their experiences with Church leaders.

With this thesis project, I intend to introduce and invite the reader to experience the devotional practices of the *adoradores* involved in ANM through their firsthand testimonies. Through this ethnographic research, *adoradores* had the opportunity to personally share what they believe about Catholic beliefs in the Eucharistic presence of Jesus Christ. It is hoped that by reading and reflecting on their personal stories, the reader will become aware of how this particular type of worship has positively impacted the lives of the *adoradores* in their personal relationships with Jesus and how the communal emphasis of ANM's rituals fosters a sense of inclusion and belonging.

The design and methodology of this project are essentially the creation of a safe space where the voices of Hispanic Catholics can be heard. Hopefully, their testimonies will help Church leaders better understand their social and spiritual needs and inspire

them to participate in the popular religious devotions of the people entrusted to their pastoral care. The in-depth interviews explore whether this style of pastoral leadership that accompanies and participates can possibly break down ethnocentric barriers that so often divide people of different cultures within the same parish community. These barriers may often be unconscious due to stereotypical ideology, influenced by colonialism and racism.

## **Methodology**

My faithful participation in the Spanish-language masses and sacramental celebrations of my community has resulted in a deepening of my relationships within the Hispanic communities to which I am assigned. My presence as a member of the clergy who immerses himself in the community he serves is particularly important to Hispanics and their shared collective cultural preferences. My experience with both U.S. and Mexican versions of nocturnal adoration is a unique opportunity to serve as a bridge between English- and Spanish-speaking parishioners who want to deepen their spirituality through adoration. By sharing the devotional practices of Hispanic communities, or *Santo* praxis, I hope to increase awareness and understanding of the Catholic Church's diverse community and the call to increase our intercultural competence.

In the cries of "*Santo!*" in their religious practices, Latino/a Catholics are expressing their connectedness to the Holy and their sense of the presence of God. They were willing, without even being asked, to share their personal stories. Study participants were excited and grateful to have a member of the clergy listen to their stories of struggle and resilience in the daily experiences of life, *lo cotidiano*. This is why I have chosen a

narrative approach to my research methods. It is a method best suited for the project's participants and for the audience I hope to reach with the project's findings. My research method allowed me to be a participant-observer in nocturnal adoration as well as a member of the clergy. As a participant-observer, I applied the methods of critical ethnography to my interviews and observations of the participants, and to my own spiritual experiences within the context of the thesis project.

A narrative approach to ethnographic research is best aligned with the goals of this thesis project. John W. Creswell describes the narrative approach “as a method [which] begins with the experiences as expressed in the lived and told stories of individuals.”<sup>8</sup> According to Creswell, these stories convey a message that sheds “light on the identities of individuals.”<sup>9</sup> As the researcher, I interviewed, observed participants, and participated in their *Santo* praxis—in this case, nocturnal adoration—and gathered information for the data required for the research. Creswell describes this as an ethnographic approach to research as a participant-observer in which the researcher, who is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people, observes and interviews the group's participants.<sup>10</sup>

This combination of methods for gathering qualitative data from personal, collective, spiritual, and lived experiences is reflected in the work of Dinorah B. Méndez, who claims that “religion in all times and ages has formed an integral part of the social fabric.” Méndez continues to describe “the Mexican as the two sides of the same coin, the need for solitude and of community... while religion is personal and individual, it is

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<sup>8</sup> John W. Creswell, “Five Qualitative Approaches to Inquiry,” essay, in *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE, 2013), 69–103.70.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 71.

inseparably communal.”<sup>11</sup> Carmen Nanko-Fernandez makes similar observations about Hispanic spirituality, claiming that “the Hispanic American community is a theological community, a community where distinctions between sacred and secular are blurred or even non-existent.”<sup>12</sup>

Cahalan and Mikoski stress that practical theology is a mixture of ideas and methods that come together according to what is being studied and always includes the researcher’s own thought process and experiences.<sup>13</sup> Swinton and Mowat emphasize that qualitative research is a combination of a variety of methods as we journey through the research experience with an understanding that methods and ideas may change as the researcher responds and adapts to ongoing explorations.<sup>14</sup> Being a participant-observer of nocturnal adoration, I was attentive to Creswell’s caution about how our own philosophical assumptions can affect ethnographic research. It was important for me, from the outset, to be aware of this natural tendency and check my assumptions with trusted advisors and the CTU committee supervising my research. I was determined to present the research findings and analysis as authentically as possible. Thus, I have included numerous direct quotes from the participants themselves.

We are all a product of relationships, according to Swinton and Mowat. It is through these relationships that we become part of any ministry to which we belong. At the same time, we are unique individuals and have our own thought processes. As a

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<sup>11</sup> Dinorah B. Méndez. “Key Characteristics of Mexican Spirituality.” In *Transformation* 28, no. 3 (2011): 206–23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43052861>. Accessed 7/31/2022.

<sup>12</sup> Carmen Nanko-Fernandez, ““! Despierta Iglesia! Reconfiguring Theologies of Ministry Latinamente,”” essay, in *Ministries In The Church*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, Diego Irarrazabal, and Paul Murry (London: SCM Press, n.d.), 93–102, 98.

<sup>13</sup> Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski, *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 66.

<sup>14</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2016), 28.

cleric, researcher, and *adorador*, I was intentionally aware of my distinct roles. As a member of the clergy, I was aware of my authority as an official representative of the Church, who also recognized my own shortcomings and those of many clerics. As a fellow *adorador* who kneels alongside his companions, I was just another disciple striving to accompany Christ and his companions by staying awake and present. As a researcher, I constantly reminded myself to keep an open mind and allow the research findings to emerge without premature analysis.

DeWalt and DeWalt explain that “participant observation is a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture.”<sup>15</sup> I am not just a researcher but a participant who became interested in ANM long before I decided to make it part of this thesis project.

DeWalt and DeWalt list George W. Stocking, Jr.’s three main modes of ethnographic methods as being “participation, observation, and interrogation.”<sup>16</sup> As mentioned, I first became involved with nocturnal adoration as a deacon serving the community. After observing the beginning and ending of the rituals that involve clergy, I became interested in finding out more about nocturnal adoration and its rituals. My first questions to the members were not for research but for self-knowledge and self-awareness.

According to DeWalt and DeWalt, being a participant-observer “enhances the quality of the data obtained ... [and] the quality of the interpretation of the data.”<sup>17</sup> When

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<sup>15</sup> Kathleen Musante DeWalt and Billie R. DeWalt, *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, a division of Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

one is part of any ministry that involves any type of camaraderie, there is always a sense of understanding, and by walking with those involved, a familial and spiritual bond is created. Inculturation develops when different nationalities, ethnicities, and cultures find a common spirituality. *Adoradores* come from different parts of the Americas, Mexico, and the United States. They are of different ages and have different jobs, dreams, and so on. As a member of the clergy serving various communities, this has been a beneficial addition to my research and my ministry. As members of the clergy, there is a need to know the communities to whom we minister. I believe that to smell like the sheep, we must embed ourselves with the sheep, as Pope Francis encourages us to do. As members of the clergy, who often move from parish to parish, embedding oneself within the sheep can be short-lived and difficult.

The methods of research used for this thesis project and my experiences, past and present, complemented each other in that I am both outsider and insider, observer and participant, and teacher and student all at the same time. I belong to that group of people Méndez described when saying that “while religion is personal and individual, it is inseparably communal.”<sup>18</sup> I believe this is a profound insight that guided my in-depth interviews and even shaped my phrasing of questions. It is also a reminder that I must keep an open, unbiased mindset when analyzing the data. My journey as an *adorador* and a witness to other *Santo* praxes has given me the opportunity to witness *mi gente y mi cultura* (my people and my culture) through several lenses.

This narrative methodology took on a life of its own. One story led naturally to another. With the helpful advice of my directors and peer readers, I realized that, as a

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<sup>18</sup> Dinorah B. Méndez. “Key Characteristics of Mexican Spirituality.” In *Transformation* 28, no. 3 (2011): 206–23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43052861>. Accessed 7/31/2022.

participant-observer, a practical observation approach would help me see myself within the context of this research and the *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* community I was interviewing. I believe that the uniqueness of the methodology that was developed during the research process corresponds with the uniqueness of the individuals I interviewed and all the members of the ANM community.

The specific methods and phases of the fieldwork were as follows: First, I identified a purposeful sample of participants in this research project. In this initial phase of the field work, I relied on recommendations regarding whom to interview by my established network of ministerial colleagues and co-participants in nocturnal adoration at the Catholic Church where I was assigned and where ANM is practiced and a parish where NNAS is practiced. Some members of the Hispanic community were willing to talk about all aspects of their lives, especially to someone they believed could guide them spiritually. This was beneficial for me as a deacon, but it was very important that I reintroduced myself as a doctoral student researcher, which, by their actions and mannerisms, did not appear to change the fact that I am a deacon. I explained my thesis project to them and asked for their help in identifying participants who would be willing to participate in the study's two groups: lay and clerical.

The first group consisted of 11 laymen and one woman who were at least 18 years old, active participants in nocturnal adoration, and self-identified as Hispanic or other similar racial identities. The topic of racial identity came up primarily when I explained to them that my concentration was on Hispanic theology and ministry. One participant responded by saying, "We are Mexicans, not Hispanic." Since racial identities and identifiers are never simple, it is important to clarify the following terms that were used

during the research project and are now in this report. *Hispanic* is the common term used in Church documents. In theological works and research, Hispanic is commonly interchangeable with the terms Latino, Latino/a, Latine, Latinx, and/or other variations of ethnic identities. The term *Latino* was used by some *adoradores* during their interviews but not as a means of self-identification since all of the participants were Mexican. The second group of participants consisted of five priests and two deacons who are currently serving or have served in parishes where nocturnal adoration is practiced in the Archdiocese of San Antonio, Texas. One priest was from another diocese, and another was from Colombia but resides in North Texas.

In compliance with the guidelines for research on human subjects, established by the Institutional Review Board of CTU, I provided each participant with a consent form<sup>19</sup> that explained the project's purpose, the conditions of their participation, and the safeguards taken to ensure confidentiality. For example, the names of the participants will not be revealed; rather, a pseudonym was assigned to each interviewee. Audio recordings and notes of the interviews will be solely in my possession, stored securely, and deleted at the proper time, as advised by my committee. The 19 participants signed the consent form, and all but one priest agreed to have their interview recorded.

The primary research method consisted of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each of the participants. After I was asked to help with the nocturnal adoration vigils by my pastor, it was the members of the ANM board of directors who asked me to continue participating as an *adorador*, as was the case with most *adoradores*. Therefore, the interviews with the lay participants were loosely structured to allow for relational

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<sup>19</sup> Consent forms can be found in Appendix B

storytelling, beginning with a story about how they were invited to become an *adorador(a)*. The semi-structured format of the interviews gathered basic demographic information and then continued with the following open-ended questions:

1. Tell me about how you became an *adorador(a)*. Who invited you? Why did you accept?
2. Tell me about your experiences in nocturnal adoration.
3. What is it about nocturnal adoration that inspires you to spend, with others, a full night of prayer and companionship?
4. How has this method of worship influenced *lo cotidiano*<sup>20</sup> (the everyday)?
5. How are other members of the larger community aware of your presence as individuals and as a community of *adoradores*?
6. What have Church leaders done to encourage others to participate in *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*?
7. Tell me about your experiences with priests or deacons who oversee the parish where you participate in adoration. How have they been supportive? How have they not been supportive?
8. How does praying before the Blessed Sacrament differ from other forms of prayer or compare to praying at home, at Mass, or before or after Mass?
9. Tell me what it is that you believe about the Blessed Sacrament.
10. Tell me about the history of *Adoración Nocturna* as you understand it.

The research also included approximately 45 minutes of semi-structured interviews with priests and deacons. Since this project refers to ethnocentrism and the importance of ethnorelativism (a term used by Milton J. Bennet),<sup>21</sup> it emphasizes the importance of intercultural competence; thus, it is important to understand the point of

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<sup>20</sup> *Lo cotidiano*, the phrase itself, includes not only one's home life but also the secular world, church life, and health. The term includes their concern for those who surround them and the concerns they may have in both their personal community and the community at large.

<sup>21</sup> Anthony J Gittins, "Developing Intercultural Competence," essay, in *Living Mission Interculturally*, ed. Anthony J Gittins (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2015), 98.

view of the clergy that shepherd these flocks of *adoradores*. Given their place in the community, they may have a wider view of the congregation they serve. The interviews included the following questions:

1. Tell me about your experiences with the *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* and its members.
2. How have you participated in their rituals and practices? How has this impacted your own spirituality and pastoral leadership?
3. What are the challenges you have experienced? What are the blessings you have experienced?
4. How has *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* impacted the larger parish community? Has it fostered unity, or is it a source of tension?
5. How has *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* affected you spiritually and culturally?

I diligently transcribed and translated the interviews from Spanish to English, using my knowledge of the Spanish language and, when necessary, using Google Translate and Word Document Translator. The participants' comments were grouped and coded into general categories that corresponded to the areas of investigation. I analyzed and compared responses to the same questions to discern overall patterns and relationships within the data. While analysis of the data began at the inception of the research, it was important, especially given my own identity as a participant-observer, not to rush to conclusions and interpretation until the data collection phase was completed. At that point, I looked for common themes and relationships, compared the stories, and selected direct quotes of the participants for further theological reflection.

Most individuals love talking about themselves, love telling their stories. So often, stories are one-sided and told through the eyes of those who are from the dominant culture. They lack knowledge of the community and reflect many assumptions. By

allowing the participants in this study to tell their own stories, a positive dialogue of differences may emerge not only for the larger parish community but for the pastor, clergy, and lay leaders. Clergy and other church leaders may be aware of the multicultural demographics of the parishes assigned to their care and, at the same time, may not be fully aware of the spiritual needs of the different cultures within the parish community. This thesis project may open minds and doors for ministerial growth in intercultural competence and ministerial opportunities. As Pope Francis reminds us, “priests, [all church leaders], should be shepherds living with the smell of the sheep.”<sup>22</sup> In doing so, members of the clergy not only live with the smell of the sheep, but they also learn from the sheep.

DeWalt and DeWalt also make a point that research must adapt to the ongoing research. There are too many variables to take precise courses of action concerning research methods. My research involved active and complete participation. My involvement is beyond passive or moderate participation, as described by DeWalt and DeWalt. As a member of the clergy and a spiritual director, I believe, has prepared me to be open-minded and see things as I should, through unjudgmental eyes. When I spoke one-on-one during our interviews with the *adorador*, our roles, I believe, were made clear: I am a researcher, not a deacon. I made every attempt to make the participants comfortable with that scenario. The informant’s role was to talk freely about *Adoración Nocturna*, as I assured them of their privacy as laid out in the consent form that they had signed prior to the interview. I believe that in spending the night with them, I was able to gain their trust as an *adorador* first and a researcher second. Not all *adoradores* are

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<sup>22</sup> Pope Francis shared this with the priests at the Chrism Mass on March 28, 2013, shortly after he was elected pope.

comfortable talking or being around clergy, out of what I believe is an overabundance of respect.

“Attention to detail in observation should also include noting nonverbal cues and communication.”<sup>23</sup> As a father of seven, nonverbal cues have been part of my life, just as my involvement with individuals in the criminal justice system has also helped me recognize nonverbal cues. “A researcher who has been in the field for some time runs the risk of not looking carefully enough for new insights; Not seeing contradictory material; Not seeking out new explanations or phenomena.”<sup>24</sup> My personal opinion may cause biases if I am not careful, especially when new topics or issues are introduced. Research must be objective. A researcher’s purpose is to do their best to present, as accurately as possible, a description and understanding of what we are observing.<sup>25</sup>

During our interviews, an attempt to be casual was the best approach. It helped the informant to relax while speaking to the clergy. I asked a set of questions and ended with, “What else would you like to say?” An effort was made to make the informant aware that I was interested in what was being said. I often repeated what they said, asked them to elaborate, or asked what they meant. I intentionally allowed for silence. I monitored my tendency to interrupt, understanding that some individuals need time to think and put their thoughts together before speaking; thus, I deliberately waited silently and patiently.

I always asked the participant to open with a prayer so that they could introduce in their own words the direction of their thoughts before the interview. The informant

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<sup>23</sup> Kathleen Musante DeWalt and Billie R. DeWalt, *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, a division of Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 87.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 111.

usually asked for guidance by invoking the Holy Spirit so that their words were honest and truthful. I also asked them to close with a prayer, with the intention of giving me some idea of how they felt about the interview. The closing prayer usually ended up being “Thank you for Deacon Rudy and all he does.” This was emotionally humbling. My opening and closing prayers tended to follow the formula of the collect prayers found in the Roman Missal. When using this prayer formula, I addressed what was happening at the time of the prayer, before or after, which may have inadvertently led the participant in a certain way. This is the main reason I asked the informant to open with a prayer.

## Chapter 2

### Hispanic Popular Piety

Popular Hispanic religious devotions and practices are very important to the people and the church as a whole. Examples of popular Hispanic devotions are *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, also known as *La Morenita*, as described by Virgilio P. Elizondo, who explains why this apparition of our Blessed Mother is important to the Hispanic people of the Americas,<sup>26</sup> as well as the devotion to *Santos*, their devotion to the saints and to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and how these saints, Mary, and relatable passages relate to the lives of the Hispanic communities. *Santos* are also carved or painted images of Christ, our blessed Mother, saints, etc.<sup>27</sup> Two examples of Santos are *La Virgen de Guadalupe* from Mexico and the Black Christ (*El Cristo Negro*) from Guatemala. These are just a few of the devotions that are part of the Hispanic's *lo cotidiano*.

United States bishops have called for their ministers to study and grow in intercultural competence. Pastoral leaders who can build bridges of understanding are needed now more than ever as racial and political divisions continue to increase fear and separation. The danger is not only racial hatred but racial indifference. Indifference is a state of being, a lack of love; it is not an emotion. Emotions are constantly in flux due to our experiences, our own and our shared experiences. Indifference is a dismissal of individuals who are deemed “the other” and are believed to be less than. This is a common stance for people from the dominant culture who have no need to acknowledge

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<sup>26</sup> Virgilio P. Elizondo, *The Future Is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet* (Boulder, Colo: University Press of Colorado, 2000), 63-64.

<sup>27</sup> Edwin David Aponte, *¡Santo! Varieties of Latino/a Spirituality*, (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2012).

and relate to people who are culturally and racially different. They notice the cultural difference but fail to see their own cultural diversity. This denial and indifference lead to seeing diversity as a problem or nuisance to be solved.

## **Popular Piety**

Popular piety is an important form of the spiritual life of certain members of our Catholic faith, keeping in mind that “much of our official liturgy today was popular piety at one time.”<sup>28</sup> The Catholic church has described popular piety in its encyclical *Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines* and claims that “genuine forms of popular piety, expressed in a multitude of different ways, derives from the faith and, therefore, must be valued and promoted.”<sup>29</sup> It continues to say that popular piety is not at odds with the liturgy; instead, it promotes the faith and is a natural expression of the faith. Popular piety “predispose[s] the people for the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries”<sup>30</sup>

The directory admits “that there is no uniform definition of popular religiosity and popular piety. Nor is there a consistent expression of devotion to Christ, Mary, and the saints.”<sup>31</sup> According to James Empereur, S.J., “Popular piety is not legislated, it spread of its own accord and at its own pace.”<sup>32</sup> Peter C. Phan also claims that it became popular among the common people whose spiritual nourishment was not being met by the

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<sup>28</sup> Peter C. Phan, *Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines: A Commentary* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2011), 16.

<sup>29</sup> Vatican City Congregation for Divine Worship and The Discipline of The Sacraments, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, Principles and Guidelines*, (Dec. 2001). [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20020513\\_vers-direttorio\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20020513_vers-direttorio_en.html), paragraph 4.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., paragraph 4.

<sup>31</sup> Peter C. Phan, *Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines: A Commentary* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2011), 4.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 9.

Church. Devotions became “popular—that is, well-loved—source of spiritual nourishment”<sup>33</sup> for the common people. “Popular religious practices are impossible to eradicate, that is why they are called popular.”<sup>34</sup> The directory also expresses the need for popular piety and the richness that it brings to the Church. The directory adds that popular piety should not take the place of the liturgy. Popular piety is an expression of faith that derives from the culture, which, with the help of the guidelines of the Catholic Church on the liturgy, introduces their cultural religious practices to the local church and, at times, into the liturgy, as mandated by the local bishop or his approval. Popular piety is an expression of faith with its “origin in the culture of the people,”<sup>35</sup> which varies from country to country. It should not be at odds with the liturgy but respected, with an understanding that the liturgy is the center of the Church’s life.

*The Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, Principles and Guidelines* reminds us of the Second Vatican Council’s *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10, where it states that “‘the spiritual life is not limited solely to participate in the liturgy’ (Ibidem, 12).”<sup>36</sup> The document adds that although the richness of popular piety contributes to the richness of the church, it must continuously be evangelized and is a “treasure of the people of God ... only known to the poor and to the humble”<sup>37</sup> and, in some cases, by those who are marginalized and “dominated by a social order not their own.”<sup>38</sup> The directory reminds its

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., v.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>36</sup> *Vatican City Congregation for Divine Worship and The Discipline of The Sacraments, Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, Principles and Guidelines, (Dec. 2001).*  
[https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20020513\\_vers-direttorio\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20020513_vers-direttorio_en.html), Decree.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>38</sup> Peter C. Phan, *Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines: A Commentary* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2011), 13.

readers that “the son of God who, for love of mankind, became a poor, small child born to a simple humble woman.”<sup>39</sup>

Popular piety is characterized by a great variety and richness of bodily, gestural and symbolic expressions: kissing or touching images, places, relics and sacred objects; pilgrimages, processions; going bare-footed or on one's knees; kneeling and prostrating; wearing medals and badges... similar expressions, handed down from father to son ... ways of giving external expression to the heart and to one's commitment to live the Christian life.<sup>40</sup>

Popular piety adds a native element to the sacred and transcendent and a longing for God's loving mercy.<sup>41</sup> The *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, Principles and Guidelines* also mentions “confraternities devoted to the mysteries of the passion of Our Lord,”<sup>42</sup> and it encourages the sacrament of penance and Holy Communion, which are elements of ANM. The directory also claims that “popular piety is the first and most fundamental form of the faith's ‘inculturation’ and should be continually guided and oriented by the Liturgy, which, in its turn, nourishes the faith through the heart (103).”<sup>43</sup>

### **Secular/Sacred; Inseparable**

Orlando O. Espín claims that to understand the individual, one must know the individual.<sup>44</sup> Timothy and Kathy describe what John meant in his gospel when he used the phrase “Make known translates a Greek word meaning a momentous announcement

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<sup>39</sup> *Vatican City Congregation for Divine Worship and The Discipline of The Sacraments, Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, Principles and Guidelines*, (Dec. 2001). [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20020513\\_vers-direttorio\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20020513_vers-direttorio_en.html), para 62.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, para 15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, para 61.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, para 41.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, para 91.

<sup>44</sup> Orlando O Espin, “Popular Religion as an Epistemology (of Suffering),” essay, in *The Faith of the People; Theological Reflection on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 156–79.

that rivets attention.”<sup>45</sup> How can individuals whose words and feelings are not known or understood be ministered to effectively without first knowing them as a person? There are instructors of Scripture who help us, by interpreting, to understand what is written in Scripture. It must be the same in our attempt to understand or minister to others; we must attempt to listen so that we can try to understand. Just because I am Hispanic does not make me an expert at knowing or understanding every Hispanic individual’s suffering. Unless time is taken to get to know someone, they may never be truly known. Listening to another’s story and trying to make sense of it through their eyes and their experiences, which may require sympathetic listening, is the only way to make a meeting a momentous and riveting encounter.

In Proverbs’ “Woman of Worth” (31:10-31), a woman who is worth seeing and listening to should be admired and worth looking up to. The woman is a metaphor for God’s people, male and female. Her actions are worth noting and mimicking. She loves her family and community, and her actions are respected by the author, who adds that “a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” (Proverbs 31:30). It is in the everyday life experiences of the woman that this proverb is asking the reader to listen to and take heed. Her everyday actions unite her to God.

Separating spirituality from the secular is unfathomable to many members of the Hispanic community. Jesus tells us to remain in him, just as he remains in us (John 15:4). For several members of the nocturnal adoration community and for many Hispanics, separating oneself from Jesus is inconceivable. As mentioned previously, Méndez describes “the needs for the Mexican as two sides of the same coin: the need for solitude

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<sup>45</sup> Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (NY, NY: Penguin Books, 2016), 48.

and community,”<sup>46</sup> more so in the face of indifference. This is evident in their (Hispanics’) popular devotions. Love is an act of giving oneself freely in popular piety rituals. Giving oneself freely is also evident in nocturnal adoration when members spend the night with Jesus, just as his disciples did in the Garden of Gethsemane. Popular piety is this act of love, of giving and receiving unconditionally, as Christ has given himself to his Church.

### **Tangibility**

Popular piety is tangible; it brings religious experiences to life, making it present in our world today. It is the tangible that makes a difference in the lives of many in our Hispanic community. The need for a priest or a deacon to bless items of faith and sprinkle holy water on them is a valued experience. These items, which include candles, rosaries, statues of all sizes, prints, icons, and so forth, are important to many individuals. These are all items of faith that individuals build on to get closer to God as they live out *lo cotidiano*. When items of faith are being blessed and sprinkled with holy water, and no water comes into contact with the individual holding the items, the individual will gesture, at times by tapping their head, indicating that they want to be blessed as well. The tangible does not necessarily need to be physical; a personal witness can be a tangible experience. In other words, an “I was there; I could almost touch him” experience is very powerful to some individuals. The blessing of our bishop as he processes out after Mass is as good as being touched by him. We see this in the book of Acts where we read, “They even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots

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<sup>46</sup> Dinorah B. Méndez. “Key Characteristics of Mexican Spirituality.” In *Transformation* 28, no. 3 (2011): 206–23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43052861>. Accessed 7/31/2022.

and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them” (Acts 5:15). Eye contact is a visible form of communication and can be as tangible as an embrace or a handshake. The number of faithful who show up for ashes on Ash Wednesday, which is not a holy day of obligation, gives evidence to the importance of the tangible, the touch, and the visible.

Edwin David Aponte quotes Ronald Rolheiser: “Long before we do anything explicitly religious at all, we have to do something about the fire that burns within us.

What we do with that fire, how we channel it, is our spirituality ... What shapes our action is our spirituality.”<sup>47</sup> Popular piety is a physical response to the spiritual.

“Hispanic people seek to interact with the divine or the transcendent, whatever they call it, in their daily lives. Spirituality is the relationship that exists, is experienced, reflected upon, and cultivated for self-knowledge.”<sup>48</sup>

“Popular Catholicism and Scripture share in common a similar matrix: The world of the people.”<sup>49</sup> All rituals came to the world through Scripture and through our salvation story. Passover was created by God as a reminder of his merciful love. More recently, God gave to the Americas *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, who instructed Juan Diego to tell those in charge to build a shrine. *Guadalupe* is a reassurance of God’s presence and of his merciful love for the poorest of the poor. Juan Diego’s mantle with the image of Guadalupe, which still exists to this day, is a tangible reassurance of God’s love.

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<sup>47</sup> Aponte, Edwin David. *¡Santo!: Varieties of Latino/a Spirituality*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012. 53.

<sup>48</sup> Aponte, Edwin David. *¡Santo!: Varieties of Latino/a Spirituality*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012. 53.

<sup>49</sup> Hosffman, Ospino, “The Bible and Catechesis,” in *The Word of God and Latino Catholics: The Teachings of The Road to Emmaus*, (American Bible Society) 51 – 70, 61.

Popular piety and its religious practices, celebrations, and festivals are a tangible means of praise and worship that engages the whole community. “Religion provides the values and beliefs that produce order, social control, cooperation, and group harmony ... [and] social stability by providing acceptable norms of conduct and those mechanisms of adjustment in order to manage unforeseen crises or lack of human control.”<sup>50</sup> “Latino/a theologians and faith educators would concur with the observation that lived experiences is perhaps the most powerful catechetical school that we possess.”<sup>51</sup> “In the everyday we learn that faith makes sense when it provides meaning to our experience as women and men whose lives are uniquely shaped by the particularity of our ethnicity and our sociocultural location.”<sup>52</sup> For many, the tangible helps in their desire to remain in the true presence of God. “They [Hispanics] perceived the world as a sacred place where God becomes present.”<sup>53</sup>

God came to his created world in many forms: visible columns of cloud and fire (Exodus 13:21), a burning bush (Exodus 3:1-6), as the Word made Flesh within the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and our Lord God was heard walking in the garden (Genesis 3:10). Sacred Scripture is vividly portrayed in *Las Posadas*, *Via Crucis*, and statues of Mary and Jesus, including images of Jesus’s scourged body. The Rosary itself helps and guides individuals to reflect on the life of Christ as it is found in Scripture from the annunciation, Jesus’s life, and finally, with Mary’s assumption and coronation. While praying the Rosary, we can add the element of tangibility. The Rosary is held by

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<sup>50</sup> Dinorah B. Méndez. “Key Characteristics of Mexican Spirituality,” in *Transformation* 28, no. 3 (2011): 206–23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43052861>, 216.

<sup>51</sup> Hosffman, Ospino, “The Bible and Catechesis,” in *The Word of God and Latino Catholics: The Teachings of The Road to Emmaus*, (American Bible Society) 51 – 70, 59.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 61.

the petitioner throughout the prayer. Rosaries are made with a variety of materials, from the elaborate to the simple, and are carefully selected by the user. Our senses make items of faith come to life and enhance our spiritual life in many visible ways.

This tangibility of the spiritual makes the Hispanic community a people united with their Creator. Popular piety is a tangible piety. It creates sacred and secular experiences that made the Hispanic community who they were yesterday, who they are today, and who they will be tomorrow. Each day and each experience, religious or secular, creates a new person through the changes that come from each experience. All aspects of everyday life unite individuals in one way or another with others, no matter their cultural or national origin, due to communal activities that involve prayer, worship, work, or recreational time. Since popular piety is of the people, it unites us in *lo cotidiano*. We are inculturated whether we want to be or not. It is how we accept this inculturation that makes the difference. The adage that says that a man never steps into the same river twice because the river is always changing and the man is never the same is a lesson that should be part of *lo cotidiano*. We never step back into the life we had when we move into the next phase of our lives.

### **Popular Piety**

Although popular Catholicism, popular religiosity, or popular piety are often used and are interchangeable, I have chosen to use popular piety to describe the devotional attributes of the Hispanic communities involved in this research, except when quoting scholars or texts where other phrases are used.

For the Hispanic community, popular Catholicism, as described by Hosffman Ospino, is a community who practices their faith in a manner that relates to the suffering

life of Jesus, his Mother Mary, and the saints.<sup>54</sup> “Popular religion concertizes the experience of the sacred and expresses the integration of the mystery of faith and the struggles of life.”<sup>55</sup> This is done in several ways: the annual reenactments of *Via Crucis* (the way of the cross), *Las Posadas* (the inns<sup>56</sup>), the celebrations of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, *Día de los Muertos*, and the construction of *altarcitos* (home altars), among other rituals and methods. Candles with the images of Jesus, Mary, the saints, or their family’s patron saint are displayed on their *altarcitos*. With the help of these religious items, these communities are able to bring prayer and worship into *lo cotidiano*. These ritual practices, according to Nanko-Fernandez, were developed through the years by combining the ritual practices of the people involved—Spaniards, indigenous people, and African peoples—and reflect the history of violence, conquest, and slavery of the oppressed populations.<sup>57</sup>

Nanko-Fernandez reminds us of Orlando O. Espin’s explanation of these practices: “Creedal beliefs [and the written words] were communicated and ‘expressed primarily in and through symbol and rite, through devotions and liturgical practices.’”<sup>58</sup> Pope Benedict XVI reminded us in his 2010 pastoral letter that we cannot dismiss popular piety. “‘Popular piety is thus one of the Church’s greatest treasures. The faith has taken on flesh and blood,’”<sup>59</sup> “Jeanette Rodríguez asserts that ‘all human beings are

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Germán Martínez. “Hispanic Culture and Worship: The Process of Inculturation.” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 11, no. 2 (1993): 79–91. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25153979>, 88.

<sup>56</sup> (A reenactment of Joseph and Mary as they look for lodging)

<sup>57</sup> Carmen Nanko-Fernández, “Performative Theologies,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Reader in Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, First ed., (John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2019), 79 – 89, 82.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 81.

symbol-creating creatures who use ritual behavior to organize socially meaningful ways to express values and traditions.”<sup>60</sup>

### ***Santos***

*Santos* are images that were first carved out of wood; today, they are made of varied materials. The term *santo* also means carved figurines. *Santos* are a form of spirituality that dates back to the Spanish colonial period. These images are created to help individuals focus on their prayer life and are symbols of hope and strength that may be needed to survive daily struggles.<sup>61</sup>

### **The Virgin of Guadalupe**

Our Lady of Guadalupe (*La Morenita*) was very influential in bringing Catholicism to the natives of Mexico. Elizondo describes in detail the symbolism in her image that is important to the natives. Elizondo first explains that when Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego, she spoke the ancient Nahuatl language. In the image of Guadalupe are symbols of the indigenous people's deities, the sun and the moon. She wears turquoise, the color reserved for the supreme deity. Her eyes are not of a god but unmasked, and in them is seen the image of a man, a sign that all generations are accepted. On her womb is the Aztec glyph, a symbol that represents the center of the universe. Through her, a new people and a new Christianity were born, according to

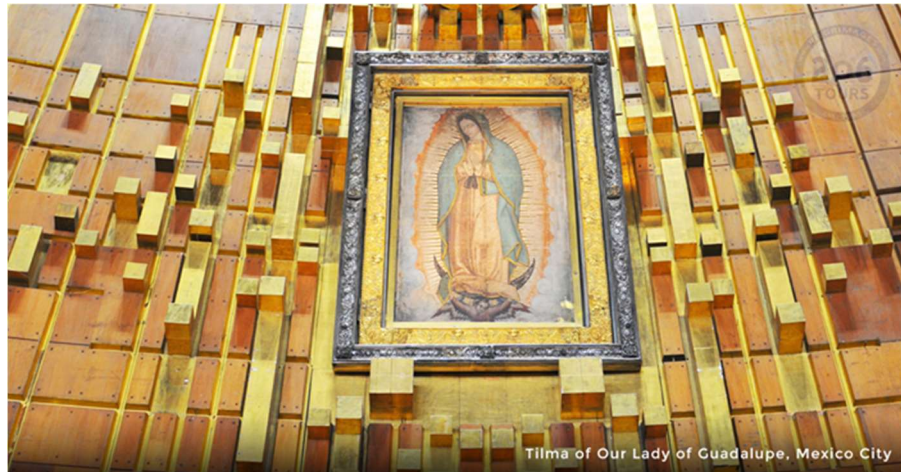
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<sup>60</sup> Edwin David Aponte, *¡Santo! Varieties of Latino/a Spirituality*, (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2012), 80.

<sup>61</sup> Edwin David Aponte, *¡Santo! Varieties of Latino/a Spirituality*, (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2012).

Elizondo. “Through the lady millions would approach the church for Christian instruction and baptism.”<sup>62</sup>

Fig 1<sup>63</sup>



## Mary and the Saints

“God exists not only in sacraments ... also in surprising ways in people ... they are a vital part of the history of grace in the world.”<sup>64</sup> Being in communion with the saints and Mary is part of our sacramental response to be in solidarity with Christ. The faithful request for Mary’s intercession has placed Mary in an incredibly special place in the life of the Church. She is part of salvation history. Along with Mary, the saints are examples of how to live our lives in communion with God. Mary and many of the saints were persecuted and oppressed. Mary’s “own historical existence makes clear that her context was an economically poor, politically oppressed, Jewish peasant culture marked by

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<sup>62</sup> Virgilio P. Elizondo, *The Future Is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet* (Boulder, Colo: University Press of Colorado, 2000), 63-64.

<sup>63</sup> All photos and charts can be found in Appendix A

<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, “Communion of Saints and Mary,” essay, in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspective*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2011), 433–460, 448.

exploitation and publicly violent events.”<sup>65</sup> Many individuals find solace in knowing that they have similar lived experiences with the saints or with Mary. The mediation of Mary and the saints does not obscure Jesus as mediator, “but reveals its strength as they participate in his prayer for the world.”<sup>66</sup> Through Mary and the saints, God shows his special interest in “the poor of the land.”<sup>67</sup>

### Popular Devotions

According to Aponte, the religious affiliation of the Latino/a community does not matter. There is a common creative “energy, celebration, music, movement, [that is] relational ... [with] shouts of *Alelúya* and *Santo*.”<sup>68</sup> It was the desire of “the early missionaries of Mexico that the essence of the gospel message reaches the masses in a simple, comprehensible, and enjoyable way.”<sup>69</sup> For the people whose own pre-Columbian rituals were performative and very visual, this method of evangelization was essential. These rituals are found in the reenactment of Jesus’s life, the way of the Cross, the Holy Family fleeing, through pilgrimages to sacred places that hold sacred statues, paintings, icons, and so forth. Examples would be Our Lady of Guadalupe, “the Black Christ of *Esquipulas* of Guatemala (also known as *El Cristo Negro de Esquipulas*, and *Milagros*)”<sup>70</sup> (pictured below)

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<sup>65</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, “Communion of Saints and Mary,” essay, in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspective*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2011), 433–460, 456.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 442.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 449.

<sup>68</sup> Edwin David Aponte, *¡Santo! Varieties of Latino/a Spirituality*, (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2012), 20.

<sup>69</sup> Virgilio P. Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 34.

<sup>70</sup> Edwin David Aponte, *¡Santo! Varieties of Latino/a Spirituality*, (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2012), 23.

Fig 2



and Our Lady of *Candelaria*, Patroness of the Canary Islands (pictured below).

Fig 3



Ospino describes popular Catholicism as a way of life that embodies the everyday activities of the Latino/a and is a way of understanding God's messages and how they affect them through their own eyes and lived experiences <sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Hosffman, Ospino, "The Bible and Catechesis" in *The Word of God and Latino Catholics: The Teachings of The Road to Emmaus*, (American Bible Society) 51 – 70, 60-61.

## ***Día de los Muertos***

*Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) has its roots in the Meso-American cultures, dating back thousands of years. The Pre-Columbian indigenous people of the Americas believed in the cycles of life and death. Life meant consuming what once was alive—plants and animals—enabling them to continue living. Many of these cultures honored their dead. “These Meso-American cultures retained skulls as remembrances of the deceased and kept them as tokens of their spirits.”<sup>72</sup> The construction of altars for the *Día de los Muertos* is a traditional part of the celebration. Altars are known as *ofrendas* and are a reminder to the believers of the joys and love that we share with those who have died and have been called home.

## ***Las Posadas***

*Las Posadas* was and continues to be a neighborhood practice that has now shifted to the Church. It is a reenactment of Joseph and Mary’s journey as they traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem looking for lodging. For some, it was a generational displacement. For others, it historically began when the border crossed them after the Mexican-American War. These Mexican nationals became unwanted immigrants without leaving their homes.

## ***Altarcitos***

*Altarcitos*, or home altars, are a permanent fixture, unlike the *ofrendas* of *Día de los Muertos*, found in the houses of many members of the Hispanic community.

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<sup>72</sup> “*Day of the Dead Educational Activity Guide*.” (Mexic-Arte Museum, Austin, TX). PDF document.[http://www.mexicartemuseum.org/images/uploads/education/Day\\_of\\_Dead\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.mexicartemuseum.org/images/uploads/education/Day_of_Dead_Guide.pdf).

*Altarcitos* are personal creations<sup>73</sup> and are intended for “maintaining beneficial relationships between the earthly family ... and the heavenly family.”<sup>74</sup> The altars may have photos of individuals who need help or have had a positive influence on one’s life, and can also include religious icons, candles, flowers, items of faith, and trinkets of one’s life, simple or elaborate. Locations of *Altarcitos* in the home can vary, depending on the creator and their spiritual needs.

### ***Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* and National Nocturnal Adoration Society Vigils**

Nocturnal adoration closely resembles how the *Vatican City Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, Principles and Guidelines* describes popular piety, and by all accounts should be seen as popular piety. In this study, I introduce some of the individuals of the ANM and NNAS who are a part of our diverse Catholic Church—a Church that has the Eucharist at its core, no matter the language, nationality, ethnicity, culture, or global location. They all express the same love for the true presence of God that is celebrated and adored in various ways. Nocturnal adoration is not new globally. It started in Rome around 1809. It came to the Americas over 100 years ago. By introducing Hispanic spirituality focusing on *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, which I will explain in greater depth in the following chapter, I hope to alleviate cultural barriers and open a dialogue of differing spiritualities.

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<sup>73</sup> Kay F. Turner, “Mexican American Home Altars: Toward Their Interpretation.” In *The Chicano Studies Reader: An Anthology of Aztlán, 1970–2019*, edited by Chon A. Noriega, Eric Avila, Karen Mary Davalos, Chela Sandoval, Rafael Pérez-Torres, and Charlene Villaseñor Black, NED-New edition, 4., 200–210. University of Washington Press, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.13167849.18>.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

## Inculturation

Elizondo claims that “to be made in the image and likeness of God does not require the finishing touches of Anglo-American melting-pot assimilation.”<sup>75</sup> Both *El Mexicano* (the Mexican) and *el Hispano* (the Hispanic) can relate to the suffering of Jesus. Jesus did not fall in line with the Jewish leaders of his time and, as a result, was persecuted. At the same time, every experience remolds individuals into what we are becoming. Elizondo claims it is with the richness of the blending of cultural tradition that we can produce a beautiful religious experience that comes from those whom God, through Jesus, has chosen to glorify through their actions. “He [God] revealed himself in what the world ignored. It is there that the unsuspected event took place. It was in the unsuspected places and situations of the world and through ‘unlikely’ persons that God continues to work today.”<sup>76</sup>

At Pentecost, the languages being heard were different, but the message was the same. “Every cohesive human group has a language, and the specific language of the group is tied in with its identity and uniqueness.”<sup>77</sup> Hispanic communities may all speak Spanish, but the variations in word meanings and phrases may differ due to different national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. The language being heard is not always a language understood as intended. These types of differences are neither right nor wrong, just different. Some choose to see differences and respect them, those who choose not to respect differences, and those who choose not to see the differences at all. “President Lyndon B. Johnson said in 1965, ‘You do not take a person who, for years has been

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<sup>75</sup> Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 2.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say “You are free to compete with all the others,” and still justly believe that you have been completely fair.””<sup>78</sup>

Human nature tends to complicate things by justifying our worldly beliefs of superiority or inferiority, actions or inactions, and racism or anti-racism. By doing so, a gray area is created, a vision blurred by indifference or racism. “U.S. Supreme Justice Harry Blackmun wrote in 1978, ‘In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way. And in order to treat some persons equally, we must treat them differently.’”<sup>79</sup> Ibram X. Kendi quoted Audre Lorde who, in 1980, said, ““We have all been programmed to respond to human differences between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one of three ways: ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate. But we have no pattern for relating across our human differences as equals.””<sup>80</sup>

We are made in God’s image and likeness (Genesis 1:26); therefore, there are as many images and likenesses of God as there are people in the world. It is in our differences that we can see each other as God intended us to be seen. That is what Kendi, Lorde, Blackmun, and Johnson are all trying to explain in their descriptions of what they see as equality. Elizondo expresses these same sentiments when he discusses his time with Mexican Americans all over the United States and around the world. He says that they are “everywhere; and, as different as we are from one another, we are a distinct

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<sup>78</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019), 19.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

people, we have a common soul. *Somos un pueblo* (we are one people).”<sup>81</sup> Adding that we cannot know ourselves without the knowledge of our history, he states that “Conversion begins with the poor and marginated; they are the heralds, the prophets, of a new people.”<sup>82</sup>

Elizondo describes a new Christianity that is an inculturation of Iberian Catholicism and pre-conquest religions. The laity of this new Christianity may not be in control, but instead influential. Elizondo also discusses the importance of Galilee concerning inculturation when he explains that Galilee is not mentioned in the Old Testament but is mentioned 61 times in the New Testament. According to Elizondo, Galilee was a cultural mix of people that stemmed from simple people who were oppressed, marginalized, and seen as nothing. Elizondo refers to the Galileans as *mestizos*, comparing them to the *mestizos* of Mexico, of which he claims to be a part. Galilee is central to Jesus’s ministry. He and his disciples are referred to as Galileans. God, through Scripture, brings people of different cultures together with the help of his begotten Son.<sup>83</sup> “In the wisdom of God, it is precisely here in this impure, culturally mixed, freedom-loving, rebellious reign that God made the historical beginning of his visible reign on earth.”<sup>84</sup> We are called to go out to all nations. In this globalized world, all nations are in our midst so that on the day of Pentecost, we don’t have to go far. “Worship truly expresses the spirituality of the people when it is historically relevant to their struggles and hopes in celebrating word and sacrament.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Virgilio P. Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 2.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>85</sup> Germán Martínez. “Hispanic Culture and Worship: The Process of Inculturation.” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 11, no. 2 (1993): 79–91. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25153979>. 90.

According to Martínez, the Hispanic community will become the largest minority in the U.S., and the average age of those who are Catholics may comprise the community whose presence will, if it has not done so already, soon be the majority. If this is true, then their history should be known. Combining their historical background with its “rich spiritual traditions ... can be a major factor in the ongoing process of liturgical inculturation.”<sup>86</sup> Inculturation is, and has been, an ongoing process from the beginning of Christianity. The struggle that inculturation faces is racial. The dominant culture, although not always the majority of the population, has always dictated what will be done. The history of the Hispanic communities in the United States has been tainted, and continues to be tainted, by the dominant culture. Vatican II has made some efforts toward religious reform with the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry in 1987. “Vatican II calls the church today to value and respect the gifts of diversities, not only symbolic but real.”<sup>87</sup>

The Vatican supports the Hispanic communities and their values, but it falls short of the “three post-Vatican stages: first, the translation of liturgical text to modern language; second, the reform of all the sacramental rituals; third, the adaptation to different groups, regions, and peoples according to the genius and traditions of their cultures.”<sup>88</sup> “The first and second stages have largely been accomplished, the third still belongs to the future.”<sup>89</sup> This may be, in part, due to the lack of Hispanic clergy in the United States. Elizondo and Germán, among others, agree that the shortage of priests is an ongoing problem.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 81.

Inculturation is anti-racist; there is a need for inculturation, but there is a greater need for an openness to see through the eyes of the One we are trying to emulate—Jesus. “Inculturation demands a critical integration of people’s symbolic thinking, profound values, common language and traditions into the liturgical life of the church.”<sup>90</sup>

Inculturation, as defined by Britannica’s online dictionary, offers the following: “Christianity: Inculturation: respecting places and peoples: As the gospel has spread into new regions of the world, there has proven to be [a] need and opportunity for fresh conceptions and formulations of the faith.”<sup>91</sup> God has called us to bring all people together, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, but it ends there. After the sacraments are received, those who received them go their own way and are often not seen again. “Pope Gregory expressed to Augustine, ‘I prefer that you insert into the Church of England ... those things you are able to gather from many Churches.’”<sup>92</sup> Pope Benedict XI expressed the importance of popular piety in 1964 by kneeling before the image of *La Morenita*, signifying her importance to the world. Pope Francis reminds Church leaders to learn from their flocks.<sup>93</sup> We are encouraged to bring cultures together, to learn from them, and to experience spirituality from them; to do so, they must first be known and loved.

Our faith, spirituality, and prayer life are very personal and, at the same time, communal. We were created as a community, as is revealed by the creation story in which we find the marriage union God created between man and woman. We are one

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/>

<sup>92</sup> Germán Martínez. “Hispanic Culture and Worship: The Process of Inculturation.” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 11, no. 2 (1993): 79–91. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25153979>, 84.

<sup>93</sup> J.D. Long García, September 20 et al., “What Pope Francis Means to U.S. Latino Catholics,” *America Magazine*, September 20, 2019, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/09/20/what-pope-francis-means-us-latino-catholics>.

people united by our creator and divided by our sinful nature that our first parents chose to bring into our world. Jesus came to bring the new heaven and new earth and to reunite us with each other and with the Triune God. Inculturation is the process by which this can be accomplished.

## Chapter 3

### History and Rituals of *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*

In this chapter, I contextualize the practice of nocturnal adoration of the Blessed Sacrament within the history (in broad strokes) of Mexico and Hispanics in the United States. I then describe in detail the rituals promoted by ANM in Mexico and in the United States. The official prayers often follow the pattern of the Liturgy of the Hours, according to the Roman rite, and are strictly followed with only slight variations to accommodate local communities, as does the National Nocturnal Adoration Society. Through nocturnal adoration and its rituals, I demonstrate how popular religious devotion is forged in the historical struggles of oppressed people. The more recent history and the present reality of migration contextualize the findings of the ethnographic study of the *adoradores*, who likely have their own stories of migration.

#### *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*

ANM is new to the United States. It is believed to have arrived in the United States approximately 70 years ago and is fairly new to Mexico. Its foundation in Mexico was inaugurated on February 4, 1904, at San Felipe de Jesus Catholic Church in Mexico City. “It was canonically added to the archconfraternity of the Nocturnal Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament of Rome on May 5, 1904, and elevated and constituted as an association, with powers to its National Council to add to other associations of the same name and statutes, on June 29, 1913, by Pope St. Pius X.”<sup>94</sup> Nocturnal adoration may be fairly new in the Americas, but that is not the case globally. ANM’s roots come from the

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<sup>94</sup> Translation by Word Document Translator.

Association of Nocturnal Adoration, founded in Rome in February 1809, when Don Giacomo Sinibaldi and his companions chose to remain through the night in adoration on the occasion of the Jubilee of the Forty Hours, and it was eventually elevated to an archconfraternity on April 23, 1824, by Pope Leo XII.<sup>95</sup>

In 1810, “the Nocturnal Adoration Society came into existence in the Church of Santa Maria in Via Lata in Rome”<sup>96</sup> due to the political and religious struggles that emerged during the French Revolution. These religious and political struggles did not discourage those whose love for Christ had never stopped, beginning with those who stood with Peter behind locked doors (John 20:19). From Rome, it spread into several countries. It was introduced in Paris in 1848 by a Carmelite monk, Fr. Herman Cohen. In 1863, Cohen started a society in London<sup>97</sup> and, eventually, it made its way to Spain in 1877. From Spain, it found its way into Mexico and then Texas, California, and finally, Montreal, Canada, in 1881.<sup>98</sup> The first installation and vigil of Mexico’s Nocturnal Adoration section occurred from February 4-5, 1900,<sup>99</sup> and by 1930, *ANM* sections numbered 240, which came into being during the *Cristero* War that began in 1926. The first National Nocturnal Adoration Society (NNAS) council in the United States was approved by Archbishop Michael Corrigan in New York City in 1903. The NNAS office

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<sup>95</sup> “La Adoración Nocturna Del Santísimo Sacramento,” in *Ritual Oficial De La Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, 2014th ed. (Mexico, D.F.: ADNOMEX, A. C, n.d.), pp. 19-34, 19.

<sup>96</sup> 1. National Nocturnal Adoration Society, “Bienvenidos a La Sociedad de Adoración Nocturna Nacional USA Welcome,” *National Nocturnal Adoration Society*, accessed January 15, 2023, <https://nationalnocturnaladorationsociety.org/history>.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Matthew Buttler. “Eucharistic Angels: Mexico’s Nocturnal Adoration and the Masculinization of Postrevolutionary Catholicism, 1910–1930,” in *Local Church, Global Church*, edited by Stephen J. C. Andes and Julia G. Young, 53–90. Catholic University of America Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt19rmckz>, 72.

was in New York until 2012, when it moved to Laredo, Texas. It became an archconfraternity in 1912.

According to Butler, prior to the *Cristero* War, in 1925, Pope Pius XI noted that “Mexico would be saved by prayer alone and that no prayers were more agreeable to God than those of the nocturnal adoration, because they were developed by sacrifice.”<sup>100</sup> The history of ANM is filled with persecution and devout men who, in some cases, died for their love of Christ and their religious beliefs, in many ways emulating the religious struggles during the French Revolution and the Muslim persecution in Spain.

“The ANM was proud that it provided the first ‘martyr’ of the *Callista* persecution,<sup>101</sup> José García Farfán, the ANM’s wizened *Puebla* chief”<sup>102</sup> in approximately 1927. *La Semilla Eucaristica*, ANM’s monthly literature, posted that this was an “Era of Martyrs.”<sup>103</sup> The era included such names as Luis Navarro Origel, Miguel Gómez Loza, Luis Magaña Servín, and Juan Manuel Bonilla, a boy martyr who was imprisoned, tortured, and killed for his faith in 1927. Young or old, according to Butler, these men who died for the love of Christ were said to be “fully masculine.”<sup>104</sup> Butler quotes Miguel Palomar and Vizcarra when they say, “I have not come here to tell you that men should take communion because they are men but that they must be men

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>101</sup> The *Callista* persecution was an anti-clerical movement that was enforced by then-President Plutarco Elías Calles, who was an atheist. In part due to the power the Church had politically and its financial wealth. After the Mexican Revolution, the government needed to gain access to the Church’s property. It also wanted to reduce the Church’s political power.

<sup>102</sup> Matthew Buttler. “Eucharistic Angels: Mexico’s Nocturnal Adoration and the Masculinization of Postrevolutionary Catholicism, 1910–1930,” in *Local Church, Global Church*, edited by Stephen J. C. Andes and Julia G. Young, 53–90. Catholic University of America Press, 2016  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt19rmckz>, 87.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 87.

because they take communion.”<sup>105</sup> This in no way was or is intended to minimize the experience of the woman’s role as a *Cristero*.

Women have played a role in Christian persecution from the onset, beginning with the women who traveled with Jesus (Luke 8:1-3). During the *Cristero* War, both men and women put their lives on the line as a form of protesting against an anti-clerical/Catholic government. Hispanic women in the Catholic Church have often been pictured as, and often are, the prominent religious leaders of the family. It is *ANM* that puts the men front and center while not omitting women and children. Some *adoradores* acknowledge that it is the women in men’s lives who influenced them at the beginning of their faith journey.

### **The *Cristero* War**

The *Cristero* War, 1926 – 1929, was a time of great persecution. By order of then-President Plutarco Elías Calles, the government started enforcing a penal code from the 1917 Mexican constitution that had not been enforced since its installation, limiting the power of the Catholic Church and forcing the closure of Catholic churches. This practice forced Catholics to celebrate Mass and worship the Blessed Sacrament at the risk of losing their lives. Butler’s description of the brave individuals whose great love for Christ and the Blessed Sacrament is immeasurable and should be recognized. Butler shares with us one of these accounts. According to Butler, one of the men told of an experience where on December 24, 1927, these individuals went into the mountains, hid in a cave, and spent the night in what was described as a profound silence as they prayed for the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 53.

liberty of the Church. One of these individuals remembered the night, comparing it to the cave in Bethlehem.<sup>106</sup> This description of those who suffered great persecution and risked their lives for the sake of the Church and their faith is a great example of the love they had for a God who they knew loved them first. In this same way, the prayers found in ANM's rituals are filled with prayers for all of God's created world, with intense prayers for priests, the need for priests, and their personal and clerical struggles.

The *Cristero* War began with an uprising against a 1917 Mexican constitution that limited the power of the Catholic Church—the same Catholic Church that was influential in Spain's conquest of what are now the Latin American countries. It was a religious, anticlerical battle that influenced the political world of Mexico and the United States. It began as a nonviolent protest that turned violent when President Plutarco Elías Calles decreed that most churches would no longer be allowed to practice their faith and that only those churches allowed by the government could remain open, served by a priest that the government would appoint—a promise not kept. Although the Catholic Church pushed for a continued nonviolent approach throughout the war, the people on the ground stood up to their persecutors and took up arms, in whatever form was available, at times attacking government soldiers with nothing more than machetes and homemade slings. It “began with isolated uprisings here and there. At times attacking barracks or municipal buildings.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Matthew Buttler. “Eucharistic Angels: Mexico’s Nocturnal Adoration and the Masculinization of Postrevolutionary Catholicism, 1910–1930,” in *Local Church, Global Church*, edited by Stephen J. C. Andes and Julia G. Young, 53–90. Catholic University of America Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt19rmckz>, 83.

<sup>107</sup> James Murphy, *Saints and Sinners in the Cristero War: Stories of Martyrdom from Mexico* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019), 80.

The *Cristero* War was brutal and violent. Some priests were known for taking up arms and committing violent acts against the government's soldiers as well. Neither side was innocent of the brutality that occurred during this conflict. One of the most famous *Cristeros'* generals, José Reyes Vega, was a priest who took up arms even though most of the priests of that time chose to hide and protect themselves from harm or even death, which often occurred. Vega, however, was known for committing great atrocities. In doing so, Vega chose to ignore the pope's call for non-violence from the clergy. Before his death, "Vega was reconciled to the Church and his priesthood. He made a general confession to the local parish priest and was buried at the parish church in *Arandas*."<sup>108</sup>

It is estimated that over a hundred priests, out of a total of 3,600, took the path of fighting rather than fleeing. Archbishop Francisco Orozco, along with other priests, did not take up arms but chose to hide with the people and continue his sacramental duties: Masses, marriages, funerals, keeping the Blessed Sacrament in homes, and even confronting soldiers to protect lives. These priests went against Pope Pius XI's recommendation to suspend public worship.<sup>109</sup> These events are comparable to the persecution of the Church in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>110</sup> and in France due to the Ferry Law.<sup>111</sup> Churches were closed, Tabernacles were empty, and there were no Masses, sacraments, or priests to visit and comfort people in need. President Plutarco Elias Calles took everything away. He was determined to rid Mexico

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> The Jules Ferry Laws are a set of French Laws that established free education (1881), then mandatory and laic education (1882). Jules Ferry, a lawyer holding the office of Minister of Public Instruction in the 1880s, is widely credited for creating the modern Republican School (l'école républicaine). The dual system of state and church schools was largely staffed by religious officials but was replaced by state schools and lay school teachers. The educational reforms enacted by Jules Ferry are often attributed to a broader anti-clerical campaign in France.

of all that was Catholic. That was when “the first significant immigration to California”<sup>112</sup> occurred.

“Their [*Cristeros*] battle cry would be *¡Viva Cristo Rey!* (Long Live Christ the King), words that have since become synonymous with *Cristero* martyrdom in the minds of Mexican Catholics,”<sup>113</sup> and it can be found in the *Ritual Oficial de la Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* as part of the prayers during nocturnal vigils.

Between 1927 and 1929, the area that *Cristeros* liberated was larger than the state of New York, which included several functioning municipalities and schools. This was accomplished by uneducated laborers and farmers fighting for their faith, religion, and freedom. The leaders of the *Cristeros* enforced a righteous lifestyle; there was to be no drinking or carousing. There was to be no immoral behavior. Immoral behavior was not tolerated for the purpose of achieving final victory. “Some elderly Catholics saw the war as an easy way to the next world.”<sup>114</sup> The soldiers of the *Cristero* War also had the support of the rural population, providing prayers, food, weapons, and safe places to rest, bathe, and pray. The rural population was crucial in transporting necessary items of aid, arms, and so on to wherever they were needed.

The government tried different methods of destroying these supporters and their supply lines, but the *Cristeros* found ways around the government’s efforts, using guerrilla-type warfare, which was extremely successful. Women played a big role in keeping supply lines open and doing necessary work for the cause. Unlike the Rosie the Riveters of the United States, who were well publicized for the beneficial work they did

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<sup>112</sup> James Murphy, *Saints and Sinners in the Cristero War: Stories of Martyrdom from Mexico* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019), 86.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

for the war, these *Cristero* women, who were at times on the front lines, had taken a vow of secrecy for the cause and the protection of those involved. The vow of secrecy made it easier for the women to move around, fairly unnoticed, in hostile areas. Not much is known about their actions because of this vow of secrecy, and nothing has truly been written about them.<sup>115</sup> Help also came from across the border. The United States' Knights of Columbus assisted in the war effort. They "helped fund the *Cristeros* in their long struggle. They also sheltered refugees and deported priests and lobbied American politicians to support restoration of Catholic rights in Mexico."<sup>116</sup> "On the other hand, the Ku Klux Klan came out in support of the anti-Catholic movement."<sup>117</sup>

Julia G. Young describes what she and others, including Matthew Butler, call the *Cristero* diaspora as not a religious-only conflict but as a transnational conflict due to the reactions and responses of individuals and communities on both sides of the border. Individuals and communities aided religious exiles and individuals who came to the United States. The great number of immigrants that flowed into the United States were able to organize communities that built national churches. Religious communities opened schools and convents and also developed organizations that helped sponsor and support the *Cristeros* and their war efforts, especially in United States cities like San Antonio, El Paso, Los Angeles, and Chicago.

The number of immigrants was big enough to amass two groups of several hundred men from El Paso and San Antonio, forming two militias willing to return to Mexico to fight with the *Cristeros* although these attempts failed due to the intervention

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> *Cristero War: A History from Beginning to End (Hourly History, 2021)*, 40.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 40.

of the American government. The cry ¡Viva Cristo Rey! still resonates among Hispanic communities.<sup>118</sup> “During the late 1920s, San Antonio became an important center for Mexican *Cristero* sympathizers. Home to a sizable Mexican population with a thriving middle class.”<sup>119</sup> San Antonio’s “Archbishop Arthur Drossaerts made resources available to Mexican immigrants, including forty-two priests and 195 nuns.”<sup>120</sup> Los Angeles, Chicago, San Antonio, and El Paso became vital hubs for the displaced Mexican clergy, religious, and laity in the United States

The *Cristeros* eventually hired a military commander, Enrique Gorostieta, whose help was very beneficial to the cause.<sup>121</sup> Gorostieta described the *Cristeros* as warriors taking orders without hesitation. Simple peasants going into battle dressed in white linen clothing with nothing more than machetes against federal machine guns.<sup>122</sup> The three-year *Cristero* War gradually came to an end on June 21, 1929, with some brokering efforts by Calles, the United States government, and the Catholic Church in the United States. Not all were pleased with the agreement. This did not stop the violence, and some 5,000 *Cristeros* were executed while Calles remained in power. In 1934, Lázaro Cárdenas became president and dismantled Calles’s rule. This was followed by a Catholic president named Manuel Ávila. Calles eventually fled to the United States.<sup>123</sup>

Matthew Butler discusses the laity’s religious role during the *Cristero* War, claiming that with the lack of *curos* (priests) that came about due to President Calles’s

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<sup>118</sup> Julia G. Young, “Cristero Diaspora: Mexican Immigrants, The U. S. Catholic Church, and Mexico’s *Cristero* War. 1926-29.” *The Catholic Historical Review* 98, no. 2 (2012): 271-300. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23240138>.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>121</sup> James Murphy, *Saints and Sinners in the Cristero War: Stories of Martyrdom from Mexico* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019).

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>123</sup> *Cristero War: A History from Beginning to End (Hourly History, 2021).*

law, the laity took up many of the sacramental responsibilities authorized by the bishops and clergy. The consecration of the hosts still fell under the authority of the *curos*. The sacraments were restructured so that the chosen laity could guide others through the sacraments, baptism, marriage, confession, and self-communion. The people needed<sup>124</sup> “something tangible,”<sup>125</sup> as so many do today.

“We know that the laity used these reconstructed faculties. In *Coalcoman* (Michoacan), the people knew how to confess without a priest by reciting the *Confiteor Deo* and asking directly for absolution ('hear me in penitence and give me Your absolution; give me peace in this life and in the next, salvation. Amen.').”<sup>126</sup> “Canon law already permitted emergency baptisms and marriages.”<sup>127</sup> “Thus, Catholicism survived the *Cristiada* less by a process of 'inventing' new traditions than by creatively reworking the old.”<sup>128</sup> The hierarchy reassured the laity and the *curos* that the desire to do what was right would get them to heaven during those difficult times. At the time, the actions of the laity were compared to “Muslims praying to Mecca.”<sup>129</sup>

“From an early age extra-liturgical adoration of the sacrament was encouraged. Lay associations, such as the Nocturnal Adoration, also led sacramental vigils. Many Catholics were therefore devotees of the Eucharistic God.”<sup>130</sup> The hierarchy’s concern was that this would become the norm or that the people would become lukewarm; this never happened. According to Butler, “Calles wanted people to abandon God and the

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<sup>124</sup> Matthew Butler, “Religious Conflict and Innovation in Cristero Mexico,” in *Journal of Latin American Studies* 38, no. No.3 (August 2006): 465–90, <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/3875868>.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 481.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 477.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 475.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 489.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 481.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 486.

Virgin, but 'that was when most altars were made to them, in forests, in caves, in the mountains, on riverbanks ... Then Christ and the Virgin were everywhere.' For such people, Calles filled the heavens."<sup>131</sup> That is the power of the faithful who were willing to give up their lives instead of turning their backs on Jesus Christ, our savior.

### ***Adoración Nocturna Mexicana Ritual***

The focus of this research is on the *adorador* who takes the time to worship God in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament during the vigils of ANM and its growth in Mexico and the United States. The intent of ANM is to create an intimate encounter with Christ using scripture throughout the night, emulating the night when Jesus asked Peter, James, and John to sit and pray with him through the night. Jesus woke them from their sleep and asked them, "Could you not stay awake with me for one hour?" (Matt. 26:40).

The vigil is made up of seven hours, known as *turnos*, (shifts) and each *turno* has its own prayers, psalms, scripture readings, reflections, and Rosary. Each *turno* has a different group of *adoradores* (worshippers) to reflect and pray for one hour. The prayers resemble the Liturgy of the Hours of the Roman rite as they are prayed in a community setting. All prayers are vocal throughout each hour, with some time for silent prayer/reflection at each *turno*. Jesus's disciples asked Him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1), yet at the hour Jesus needed them the most, they fell asleep. Jesus also told them, "Remain in me, as I remain in you" (John 15:4), making the Blessed Sacrament of the altar a reflection of Jesus's promise to remain with us always, until the end of time

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

(Matthew 28:20). Pope Benedict XVI claims that this is a continuation of the Eucharistic celebration, a taste of the heavenly liturgy, and that ANM is a continuation of the mission of the disciples<sup>132</sup> and a call to pray unceasingly. *El Consejo Nacional de la Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* (The National Council of Mexican Nocturnal Adoration) reviews the ritual and makes needed changes to accommodate the different sectors of society,<sup>133</sup> but the call to pray unceasingly does not change.

*La Semilla Eucarística* (Año 115 – No.03) March 2023 edition added Pope Francis’s thoughts and reflections on the Eucharist:<sup>134</sup> *La Semilla Eucarística* informs its readers that they celebrate his ministry by reflecting on Pope Francis’s messages through his homilies and teachings. *La Semilla Eucarística* continues to describe the meaning of worship as an act of virtue. It is God’s initiative for man to unite with him. It continues to point out Pope Francis’s ideas of what it means to worship God. First, worship is going to the source, God.<sup>135</sup> Second, worship leads to a Christian life, which leads to the Lord.<sup>136</sup> Third, worshipping means putting everything in its place, God being first.<sup>137</sup> Fourth, “to worship is to discover that when praying, it is enough to say, ‘My Lord and my God!’ and let ourselves be filled with his tenderness.”<sup>138</sup> Fifth, worshipping means not conforming to the desires of the world, not seeking the comforts of the world.<sup>139</sup> Sixth, worshipping means surrendering unconditionally to love God and to receive God’s

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<sup>132</sup> “Presentación” in *Ritual Oficial De La Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, 2014th ed. (Mexico, D.F.: ADNOMEX, A. C. n.d.).

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Translated by Google Translate and SpanishDict.com.

<sup>135</sup> *La Semilla Eucarística*, Año 115 – No.03, Marzo 2023, 6-7.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 7.

unconditional love.<sup>140</sup> Seventh, worship is a true and honest, loving relationship with Christ.<sup>141</sup> Finally, Pope Francis says that if we are faithful to worship, lives are changed, healed, elevated, and anointed, not only for the worshipper but also for those they pray for.<sup>142</sup> Through the *adoradores*' words and actions, they live out Pope Francis's message in their everyday lives.

The members of ANM are a community within the parish that comes together to pray for self, the parish community, and all of God's created world<sup>143</sup> and "to guard and pray, during the hours of the night"<sup>144</sup> alongside Jesus. At the parish where this study took place, preparation for the vigil and the vigil itself begin after the vigil Mass on Saturday. Those who cannot attend the Saturday vigil Mass attend one of several Masses on Sunday after the vigil. The council's members gather to prepare for the vigil, followed by the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, preferably by a priest or deacon, followed by prayers,<sup>145</sup> including Scripture readings and, often, the rosary.

The first hour of the night begins at 10 PM. Each of the *turnos* ends when the next shift processes in. There is a ritual for the beginning and ending of each shift, as there is for all movements throughout the night, found in the *Ritual Oficial De La Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, which is discussed later in this chapter. After the initial meeting that precedes the vigil, all members of the community march in for the exposition of the

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>143</sup> After the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the participant's personal petitions, which were placed in a basket during the meeting that precedes the vigil celebration, are placed at the foot of the altar, followed by communal prayer over the intentions found in *Ritual Oficial De La Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* on page 58.

<sup>144</sup> "*Ritual Oficial De La Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, 2014th ed. (Mexico, D.F.: Adnomex, A. C. n.d.), 4.

<sup>145</sup> All prayers, except for a few that include personal, silent prayers, are found in *Ritual Oficial De La Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*.

Blessed Sacrament, followed by more prayers and songs found in the ritual. The night ends with an early morning Mass if Mass does not precede the vigil; if no Mass is offered, depending on the parish, at the end or beginning of the vigil, the *adoradores* are, as are all Catholics, responsible for attending Mass, as prescribed by our Holy Church. All participants, men, come prepared to stay the night on Church property, bringing with them cots, sleeping bags, or just blankets and pillows to lie on. ANM is celebrated once a month. It is also recommended that *adoradores* should go to adoration as often as possible throughout the month. Most Catholic churches have holy hours and/or scheduled adoration. There are a few Catholic churches that offer perpetual adoration.<sup>146</sup>

### **The Structure of *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana***

Matthew Butler refers to the Catholic men (*adoradores*) as quasi-military, disciplined, loyal to authority, and steadfast. The term *masculinization*, as Butler explains it, was used in this era not for the purpose of minimizing the role of women but possibly for making Holy Communion and the Sunday Mass more appealing to men.<sup>147</sup> The militant aspect of ANM is evident in some of the forms<sup>148</sup> required to be filled out and signed by the officers, who are part of the board of directors, and stamped with the council's seal. There are forms for traveling and attending vigils outside of the

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<sup>146</sup> Perpetual adoration is a Eucharistic devotion whereby members of a given parish unite by volunteering to spend time, usually an hour, but sometimes more, of adoration before the exposed Blessed Sacrament, both during the day and throughout the night, seven days a week. Members normally sign up for an hour while others show up at their convenience, spending their time before the Blessed Sacrament in personal prayer, unlike the structured prayers and schedule followed by the *adoradores* in the ANM ritual book.

<sup>147</sup> Matthew Buttler. "Eucharistic Angels: Mexico's Nocturnal Adoration and the Masculinization of Postrevolutionary Catholicism, 1910–1930." In *Local Church, Global Church*, edited by Stephen J. C. Andes and Julia G. Young, 53–90. Catholic University of America Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt19rmckz.7>.

<sup>148</sup> The forms used are found in Appendix C.

*adorador*'s home parish, transferring from one council to another, showing that a vigil was attended at another parish so as not to be counted as absent, and recording discipline for unexcused absences. The structure of the vigil is somewhat militant as well.

*Adoradores*, men, women, and children, march into the church behind the council's flags, the directors, and the leaders of the night hours in two rows, side by side.

Understanding the structure of the vigil is instrumental in understanding and knowing the *adoradores* and the sacrifice of love that the *adoradores* and their families offer up for God's created world. It is also an expression of their love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The following is a summary of the instructions for ANM as found in the *Ritual Oficial De La Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*:

The *adorador* is asked to be clean and presentable, both physically and spiritually. They must march in as instructed, two columns side by side, and genuflect as they enter for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and their shifts. They are asked to prepare for their shift by reading the prayers beforehand, so they can read in unison, as one, clearing the mind of all outside distractions. It is suggested that they follow the rituals as intended, with an understanding that what is printed in red is instructions. The *adorador* is required to sit, stand, and kneel throughout the vigil, as prescribed in the ritual, if they are physically able to do so.

When the relief *adoradores* enter to begin the next *turno*, the leader of the *turno* at the entrance signals by tapping the palm of his hand with the ritual book with just enough force to be heard by everyone. At this point, those being replaced stop praying and wait silently while the relief group takes their place. After the leader signals the first time, three in total, all those processing in, two lines side by side, go down on both knees

and bow down, some with their heads to the ground, and the leader of the relief group proclaims: Our Sacramental Lord, be forever blessed and adored. All respond: “Our King, for ever and ever.”

Fig 4



At this point, they all stand and march forward. Halfway to the altar, the leader taps his hand again, and all go down on their knees and respond as above. This happens once again when the leader reaches the foot of the altar. As the *adoradores* march in, they pray silently: “My Lord, Jesus Christ.” Once the relief group takes their place, the group being replaced marches out, walking backward in the same fashion as they marched in, the leader reciting: “Our Sacramental Lord, be forever blessed and adored.” All respond: “Our King, for ever and ever,” three times, never turning their backs to the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

There is a proper order for the leaders, candles, and flag-bearers as they approach the Blessed Sacrament before they take their place in the pews. Kneelers should be present for the first and second chorus leaders. If possible, a minimum of four *adoradores* is required for each shift. Care is taken so that someone who can read is placed on each

side. In some cases, there are individuals who are unable to read. Others are poor readers, and there are still others whose first language may not be Spanish, or those who can speak Spanish but struggle to read Spanish. The leader of the first chorus begins the prayers. The left side, as you face the altar, is always first. Keeping in mind that the Blessed Sacrament is solely acknowledged, there is no salutation to anyone, no matter their position in the church. Alleluia is always omitted during Lent.

There is also an order they follow concerning the manner in which they bow for different situations. A simple bow is a slight bow of the head. A moderate bow is a slight bow with head and body, and a profound bow is a deep bow from the waist, where the fingers may be able to touch the knee. Concerning genuflections, a simple genuflection is the right knee to the ground. When the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, a double genuflection is required, both knees to the ground, which includes crossing oneself and executing a slight bow of the head.<sup>149</sup> Crossing oneself is also explained in the ritual. One crossing consists of a sign of the cross on the forehead, the lips, and the chest, which is often followed by the sign of the cross: forehead, chest, left shoulder, and then the right shoulder.<sup>150</sup> The ritual also explains the manner in which one should receive the Blessed Sacrament blessing.<sup>151</sup>

The flag of the council is carried by the president or someone delegated to the task, and a separate flag for teens is carried by a teen. The flags are carried with respect, “vertically and gallantly.”<sup>152</sup> When not marching, the flag-bearer allows the pole to rest

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<sup>149</sup> *Ritual Oficial De La Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, 2014th ed. (Mexico, D.F.: ADNOMEX, A. C, n.d.), 29-30.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

on the ground, and, using his right arm, leans the flag slightly toward the Blessed Sacrament. When the Blessed Sacrament is present, no candle is carried alongside the flags. The candles are processed in with the flags before the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and are placed at the foot of the altar, where the basket of intentions will eventually be placed between them.

At the end of the vigil, when the Blessed Sacrament is not present, the *Vexilla regis* is sung as flag-bearers process between the two rows of all the *adoradores* who are assembled from the altar through the center of the nave and out the doors. This occurs after the repose of the Blessed Sacrament and after all the prayers are complete. Instructions concerning the flag include the rituals for when other councils' flags may be present. The flag passes in front of a Tabernacle, the required bowing in front of the flag takes place, and so forth. There are additional instructions within the ritual concerning the flag.

### **Coming Together for the Vigil at 9:35 PM<sup>153</sup>**

The gathering time may vary to accommodate the evening schedule. The flags, candles, and a crucifix, among other items of faith or images that pertain to ANM, are set up near the director's table. When entering what is called the guard room (meeting room), the *adorador* announces themselves by saying: "May the Blessed Sacrament be adored," followed by a response by all in the room of "Forever adored." If at any time an *adorador* is called by name, during roll call, he will respond with: "Long live Jesus."

When putting on *el distintivo* (the insignia), the *adorador* prays in silence: "Your yoke is easy, Lord, and your burden is light. Give me your grace to carry it with dignity."

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid. 38-40.

Fig 5



Roll is called at this time. Instead of the common response of present, the phrase “*Viva Jesus*” is said.

Opening prayer: All kneel, followed by a member assigned to lead the opening prayer with an invocation, followed by a response. After a brief silence, the opening prayer is said, followed by all praying out loud one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and a Glory Be. This is followed by a reflection by the assigned presenter, who begins by saying, “Speak, Lord” and all respond, “May your servant listen.” Then he reads from *La Semilla Eucarística* and offers a reflection or explanation concerning his chosen readings. *La Semilla Eucarística* contains the National Council’s monthly intentions, including our Pope’s intention, articles on spirituality, or the liturgy. Afterward, the floor is open for others to share their thoughts. The reader closes by saying, “Lord, have mercy on us,” and all respond, “Thanks be to God.”

### **Instructions from the Vigil’s Manager**

At this time, the leaders, or managers, take care of business. In addition, at this time, the prayer intentions of the *adoradores*, written on a form distributed by the

National Council, are collected and placed in a basket that will be presented and placed at the foot of the altar before the Blessed Sacrament.

The vigil is structured so that at the first hour, Vespers are prayed, and at the last hour, Lauds; each hour in between has its own structured readings. It is at this time that the leaders of each hour, the candle- and flag-bearers, readers, and so on, are appointed. The instructions on how each *turno* should be handled are found in the Ritual of ANM and go as follows:

1. The leader of the first chorus will:

- A. Start the invocations.
- B. Introduce the antiphons of the psalms.
- C. Direct the alternating verses corresponding to the first chorus in the psalms, as well as in the hymns.
- D. Lead the Sunday prayer (Our Father).
- E. Recite the final prayer.

2. The monitor (instructor, chosen by the leader of the hour) will enunciate the statements of the psalms and the readings.

3. The reader will:

- A. Proclaim the biblical readings.
- B. Introduce the brief response.
- C. Direct the alternate verses in the psalms, corresponding to the second chorus, as well as in the hymns.

If there are not enough *adoradores* for the *turno*, all can be read by a single *adorador*.

All prayers must be read with reverence and intent, remembering that “the prayer of the office is a true conversation with God and is done in the name of the church.”<sup>154</sup> When reading Scripture, the readers must read with the understanding that they are, at the moment, the voice of God.

The first hour of the night: 10:00 PM – 11:00 PM

### **Departure of the Guard (The guard refers to all members who are present.)**

1. All the worshippers who are present—all the adults, men, women, teens, children, and infants—form two lines facing each other from the front of the church to the entrance to the nave.

2. The procession to the altar should always be the longest route.

“The leader takes the flags and leading the secretary with the tray or basket of intentions with two worshippers carrying two lit candles one to the right and another to the left, they solemnly pass through the middle of the rows to stand at the head [in order to lead the *adores* to the altar].”<sup>155</sup>

### **Anthem and Salute to the Flag**

As the flag is carried between the two rows of worshippers, the anthem is sung.

As the flag passes in front of the worshippers, they bow their heads deeply.

The one who presides intones, “The King’s banners are approaching.”

All keep singing, “The mystery of the cross shines, in which life suffered death and with his death gave us life.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 52.

## **March of the Guard**

Once the flag has arrived at the head of the row and the singing of the previous stanza has finished, the one who presides intones, “To the sacred solemnities.”

All singing, “Let the joys come together, and the hymns resonate from the heart; retire the old; be all new, hearts, voices, and works.”<sup>157</sup>

The flag-bearers stand to the left or the right of the altar, and the candle-bearers leave after the candles are placed at the foot of the altar. (The ritual is strictly followed. At times, slight variations on minor details are made at the discretion of the leader: the placing of the candles or flags, or adding prayers, for example.) The rows of *adoradores* come forward, taking their places in the pews, kneeling, and forming the two choruses. The first chorus is to the left as you face the altar, and the second chorus is to the right.

## ***Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* Hymn**

The *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* hymn is sung by all.<sup>158</sup>

## **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament**

The starting times for the exposition and the first hour are flexible to accommodate the agenda for the evening. The rest of the hours begin and end according to the schedule found in the ritual book.

As the Blessed Sacrament is taken from the Tabernacle and placed on the altar, a song is sung. Recommended songs are found in the ritual. At this point, the flag-bearers go down on one knee with the flag tilted toward the Blessed Sacrament. The Blessed

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 54-55.

Sacrament is incensed. After this, the flag-bearers stand with the flags upright. All are kneeling with the leaders, clergy, if present, at the front, facing the Blessed Sacrament.

### **Tribute Act**

Next, the Tribute Act is read by the chaplain (priest or deacon), if present, or by one of the leaders. It begins, in part, with, “Lord Jesus Christ, our King and Lord, we believe that you are truly present in the universe. We fall on our knees to worship, contemplate, and to praise you; thank you for everything you grant us every moment of our lives without deserving it.”<sup>159</sup> All respond, “Thank you, Lord.” The leader continues with this prayer,

Our mission is to adore you for those who do not adore you; bless you for those who deny and offend you; and atone for our own sins and make amends for all the sins that are committed in the world; unite our intentions and supplications with yours, to make the blessing of your mercy descend upon the earth. But, as you have said, ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be open to you, we knock now at the door of your Sacred Heart, through the intercession of the most Holy Mary and our holy protectors so that you may receive us and listen to us in private audience. As a King and merciful Lord, we present to you with humility and confidence the memorial of our intentions.<sup>160</sup>

At this point, the chaplain places the basket or tray of intentions at the foot of the altar.

Photo below, taken by R. Mendez, is of the basket of prayer intentions at the foot of the altar.

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 57-58

Fig 6



The priest, deacon, or leader continues, “Accept them favorably, if it suits your glory and for our eternal salvation. Since we do not know what else we must ask to please you. Let the Holy Spirit pray in us so that we can ask for what we need so we can do the will of our Father.” All respond, “Amen.”<sup>161</sup>

### **Preparatory Prayers**

A list of prayers follows: (At this point, the flags are also placed in flagpole stands, and bearers take their seats.) prayers for our blessed mother, patron saints of the council and ANM, holy angels, St. Joseph, the collect, and the national council, as well as a litany prayer for priests, a consecration to the Holy Spirit, and for the human race to the sacred heart of Jesus. There are prayers for the different solemnities that are part of the liturgical calendar. Times and prayers may vary depending on how things move along in the meeting room as preparations for the night are made.

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

## Office of the Holy Sacrament

Evening prayer begins, which includes all who are present, men, women, and children. It starts with the Invitatory, Antiphon, Psalm 95 (94 in the Spanish bible), as in the Liturgy of the Hour, and reading and psalms corresponding with the liturgical calendar. At the half hour, the act of relief is prayed (nocturnal tribute by Fr. P. Llopart, S. J.). The *Te Deum* follows, and on solemn vigils, the act of reparation is prayed after the *Te Deum*.

### **Prayer of Reparation Is Prayed (This prayer is prayed at each hour of the night.)**

After this prayer, this must be said, “We pray in thanksgiving for all the benefits we have received from our Lord God.”<sup>162</sup> This is followed by one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory be to the Father. Included are prayers of thanksgiving for every instance and moment, holy and divine sacraments, each followed by one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory be to the Father. This is followed by prayers in atonement for national sins and for Mexico/America. All respond, “Forgive your people.”<sup>163</sup> Finally comes the prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel. At about 10:30 PM, the women and children are left alone to pray the Rosary. Each hour has a mystery of the Rosary assigned to it. The men return to the guard room or meeting room, and hours are assigned if they have not been assigned yet. After this hour, which normally ends at 11:00 PM, the women and children go home after withdrawing as prescribed.

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 149-150.

## **The Second Hour of the Night, 11:00 PM – 12:00 AM**

The changing of the guard begins promptly on the hour, as described above. Before the new group takes their position in the pews, those who are being replaced stand and form two rows for their exit while those entering take their places in the pews. Once the changing of the guard is complete, the leader of the first chorus begins with, “Lord, open my lips.” All cross their lips and respond, “And my mouth will proclaim your praise.”<sup>164</sup> This is followed by the leader of the first chorus reciting the antiphon according to the liturgical season. The psalms are then recited in chorus, alternating strophes, as in the liturgy of the hours when recited in communion with others, beginning with the first chorus, including the Glory Be at the end of each psalm. Two scripture readings are read by the leader unless it has been assigned to another. The final hymn is recited except during Lent. It begins with the *Te Deum*, which is recited at regular vigils and sung on solemnities. There are special instructions if a priest is present or if it is prayed outside of the Office, followed by a few minutes of silence. For the remainder of the hour, the Rosary is prayed until the next changing of the guard. All process in and out as described above. The third hour is dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth *turnos* (shifts) follow the same pattern as the second *turno*, with their assigned psalms, reading, prayers, and Rosary. The leader of the shift usually allows some time for silent reflection before the Rosary begins.

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 181.

## **The Seventh Hour of the Night**

The seventh hour is structured differently. Beginning at 4:00 AM, this hour is the Office of the Virgin Mary. This hour begins, as do the others, with three antiphons and their psalms, a short reading, the canticle of Zechariah, intercessions, the concluding prayer, and expiatory prayers.

### ***Laudes, 4:30 AM***

This begins with the initial invocation, psalms, and canticle with appropriate antiphons, the canticle of Zechariah, a prayer, and a salutation to the Blessed Virgin Mary. There is no Rosary at this last hour.

### **Morning Prayer, 4:45 AM**

To prepare for this final hour, the night guard wakes all those who may still be asleep, proclaiming, “Let us bless the Lord.” All respond, “Thanks be to God.” The *adoradores* then line up in two rows to enter the church and join those who are assigned to the seventh hour, processing in as in any shift change. After all enter and take their seats in the pews, the leader begins by guiding all those present in saying, “*En el nombre del Padre y el Hijo y el Spiritu Santo*” with the sign of the cross. All do the same. The *adoradores* are given time to add their own intentions aloud sometime during this final hour. This is followed by an act of contrition. A moment of silent prayer is given, and then an opening prayer. After the prayer, all silently pray the Lord’s Prayer, Hail Mary, and the Creed. This is followed by the night manager proclaiming in a loud voice, “Let us deeply venerate and thank the mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Word.” All stand and pray the Angelus. The night manager begins another prayer, followed by the prayer

response. Next, there are prayers to St. José, the angels of God, the patron saint of the council, and St. Pascual Bailón.

1. Meditation on the Eucharist

In preparation for the Holy Communion, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 1-7 from John Paul II is found in the ritual and read.

2. Blessing and Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament

The blessing of the Blessed Sacrament and the reserve are executed as prescribed by the Catholic Church with no variation.

3. Prayer of Thanksgiving

All kneel and leader begins with, “To the Lamb, who has been slain for us, glory, honor, praise, power, and blessing forever and ever.” All respond with three Amens, followed by a litany that expresses love for Jesus’s body, soul, and blood and for what he has done for us and for his guidance on and protection from evil. This is followed, in part, by a prayer in “the inauguration speech of Pope Benedict XVI, at the V general conference of the Latin American and Caribbean episcopate.”<sup>165</sup> It begins, “Stay with us, Lord, accompany us even if we have not always known how to recognize you.”<sup>166</sup> The following prayers are recited by all: prayer to Mary our Mother, prayer to offer the Eucharist for priests, prayer after Communion, act of Faith, act of Hope, act of Charity, and prayer for our brother adoradores.

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 332.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 332.

## Withdrawal and Exiting of the Guard

After all the prayers have been completed, all prepare to exit the church. All the *adoradores* stand in two rows, leaving the center of the aisle open for the individuals with candles, flags, and the basket of prayer intentions, as well as the directors, who stand at the foot of the altar as they prepare to lead the rest of the community out of the church. All kneel, and a voice proclaims: “May the most Blessed Sacrament be adored.” All proclaim: “Forever be blessed.” This is repeated three times. “Everybody stands. Finally, the flag salutes the Tabernacle, bowing slightly; the worshippers make a simple genuflection, and the entire guard retires slowly behind the flag, in two rows.”<sup>167</sup> There is a final prayer, which may be omitted, consisting of an antiphon, a psalm recited in chorus, and a prayer with responses from a leader and the *adoradores*.

Also found in the ritual book are vigils for solemnities and annual celebrations:

- Section (council) inaugural vigil
- Rite of belonging to *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*
- Rite of promotion of veterans
- Holy Thursday vigil
- Hourly shifts
- Last hour
- Good Friday vigil
- General vigil of Corpus Christi
- Vigil for the dead
- Prayers for the end of the year
- *Vigilia de Espigas* (ears of wheat) vigil to give thanks to our Lord for the fruits of the earth
- Prayers for the celebration of meetings/gatherings
- Prayers for the sick

“The following are the permanent general intentions of nocturnal adoration.

1. The greatest honor and glory of God in all of our works, prayers, interceding and atoning for them.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 339.

2. The triumph of Our Holy Mother Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church and the propagation of her faith.
3. The Roman pontificate at his office's Apostolic intentions.
4. The needs of the nation, peace, and harmony among all nations, and the restoration of Christianity.
5. The restoration of Catholic unity, the union, success, and prosperity of those who work for the social sovereignty of Jesus Christ.
6. The promotion of the genuinely Catholic press and the disappearance of the heretical, liberal or immoral press.
7. The diocesan Bishop and his Apostolic intentions.
8. The conversion, propagation and perfection of the daytime at nighttime adoration of the Blessed Sacrament throughout the world, with its shifts of Saint Tarsicio and a spirit of zeal and sacrifice in our spiritual directors.
9. Mexicans who worship the Lord.
10. The increase and perfection of communions and devotion to the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary.
11. The advancement and spiritual profession of the clergy and religious communities, and the increase in vocations to the priestly and religious state. The conservation and propagation of communities.
12. The Catholic missions.
13. Catholic associations, especially Catholic Action, the propagations of the faith, the conference of Saint Vincent de Paul, the Marion congregations and for catechetical centers.
14. The recovery of the holy places, especially the sacred cenacle (retreat house) and the Apostolic intentions of the Latin patriarchs of Jerusalem.
15. The union of the Christian churches separated from the Roman church.
16. The conversion of the Israelites and gentiles, of the sinners, heretics, schismatics, the perseverance of the righteous.
17. Those who suffer spiritual or temporal needs.
18. The benefactors of nocturnal adoration.
19. The souls in purgatory.
20. The monthly intention of the Apostolate of prayer.”<sup>168</sup>

There was a time when this ceremony was conducted every day of the month.

This is only possible when there are enough *adoradores* to follow the rituals as structured for each night. It is difficult to get enough individuals for the monthly vigils in the United States, and it is not possible to do so without the cooperation of several parishes coming

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<sup>168</sup> *Estatutos De La Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, Mexico, D.F.: Adnomex, A. C. 2012, 73-5.

together as is done in Mexico City, according to some of the *adoradores*. Some *adoradores* would like to see a month-long nocturnal adoration vigil in the United States.

## **Chapter Four**

### ***Adoradores & Clergy***

In this chapter, I give an in-depth view of the subjects of ethnographic study who call themselves *adoradores*. I present a summary derived from the open-ended questions listed and from other topics that emerged during in-depth interviews with them. I include my personal experiences of nocturnal adoration as a participant-observer. I also include a detailed summary of my interviews with the clergy and their views of and experiences with *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* and its members.

#### **Participants of the Study**

There was a total of 12 *adorador/as* who participated in this study. A woman and six men volunteered to participate on the same evening I presented and discussed this project with the group. All the other *adoradoras* (women adorers) were reluctant and appeared somewhat intimidated by the request. The rest of the men came one at a time after taking some time to think about it. The woman agreed to be interviewed at a public park. One *adorador* lived several miles from the church, and we met in the middle at a Wal-Mart parking lot, finding a nice, quiet spot under a tree on the loading dock side of the building. Only one *adorador* agreed to meet at his house, and after the interview, I was asked to bless their new home. Two interviews were conducted by phone. All the other interviews were conducted at the church on the nights of the vigil between the *turnos* and before or after the vigil.

Eight *adoradores* who participated were from the parish where this study took place. Two *adoradores* were from a different parish that practices the National Nocturnal Adoration Society (NNAS). One *adorador* was from El Paso, Texas, and is a longtime

volunteer at ANM's United States office located there. I first contacted him at that office when I first started looking into ANM. After talking to him on several occasions via telephone, I finally asked him if he would like to participate in this study. He agreed, and our interview took place on the phone.

Another *adorador* was from Ft. Worth, Texas. I met him at the anniversary celebration of the section where this study took place, and which he and other members of the Ft. Worth section attended. Other members of the ANM and NNAS sections were in attendance. He and I sat together at the celebration, and he freely talked about his experiences in ANM. It was then that I asked him if he would participate in this study; without hesitation, he agreed. We agreed that we would do the interview over the phone after the celebration.

Most of the *adoradores* were excited to volunteer. This was especially so for the only woman who participated. They were eager and willing to tell their stories. The *adorador* who was interviewed at his home did so with his wife at his side and his Bible on his lap. Two of the men interviewed at the church had their sons with them. One of the men wished that I could interview his sons, who were minors. I explained to him that I could not, and he was slightly disappointed.

One of the twelve *adoradores* talked extensively about amazing encounters or events that happen daily. He is sure that God has a hand in these grace-filled experiences. He told his stories with great enthusiasm, sharing them during the interview and whenever there was time to talk at the vigils. He was always willing to express his deep trust in Christ's love and Christ's presence in the Blessed Sacrament. This is a pattern that I observed among all the *adoradores*.

## Participants of the Study

Fig 7

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Currently resides in</b>	<b>Years in the U.S.</b>	<b>Place of birth</b>	<b>Years as an <i>adorador</i></b>
Abelardo	29	San Antonio, TX	2	Metchuela, San Luis Potosi, MX	6 months
Alberto	32	San Antonio, TX	8	Guadalajara, MX	4
Juan Pablo	37	San Antonio, TX	20	San Miguel, MX	2
Norberto	37	South of San Antonio, TX	37	San Angelo, TX	1
Pepe	40	San Antonio, TX	24	Durango, MX	13
Roy	46	San Antonio, TX	26	Guanajuato, MX	14
Lupe	47	San Antonio, TX	SA - 14; US - 31	San Miguel, Guanajuato, MX	36
Pedro	49	Ft. Worth, TX	22	Tecoautla Hidalgo MX	4
Lalo	53	San Antonio, TX	A total of 42 in the U.S. and 11 in Mexico, from the ages of 3 - 14	San Antonio, TX	5.5
Connie	57	San Antonio, TX	38	Zacatecas, MX	2.5
Beto	59	San Antonio, TX	In SA - 24	Laredo, TX	32
Ralph	74	El Paso, TX		El Paso, TX	43

## *Adoradores*

**Norberto** was born in San Angelo, Texas. He is 37 years old and received his *distintivo* six months prior to our interview. He received his *distintivo*<sup>169</sup> after two years of inconsistent attendance at the vigils. He decided to go to one of the ANM vigils after attending several retreats, including an ACTS<sup>170</sup> retreat. English is his first language, and he initially struggled with the rituals before coming to some understanding of their content with the help of the *adoradores*. His Spanish has improved, and he has been asked to lead the prayers at the *turno* to which he is assigned. The Blessed Sacrament has turned his life around. He has grown spiritually and mentally as well. It is in adoration where he finds peace, saying, “not alone but with others.” He believes that all prayers are important, but adds that “praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament has more power and is more meaningful.” Norberto claims that the idea of talking to God was one of the reasons he accepted the invitation to go to ANM, adding that talking to God in *adoración* has turned his life around. Norberto also claims that he goes to pray before the Blessed Sacrament as often as he can, noting that he was not always a praying person. Norberto felt that refusing to do this interview would be irresponsible as an *adorador*.

**Connie** was born in Zacatecas, Mexico. She is 57 years old, has lived in the United States for 38 years, and has been an *adoradora* for two and one-half years. Connie insisted that she and her husband should start going to *adoración nocturna* for the purpose of saving their marriage, which she claims it did. She also claims that her prayers

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<sup>169</sup> One must attend six consecutive vigils to receive a *distintivo*, which is celebrated once a year, usually at the anniversary celebration of the section.

<sup>170</sup> ACTS retreats are weekend Catholic-based retreats. Founded by members of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Selma, TX, in 1987, it has spread globally. ACTS is an acronym for Adoration, Community, Theology, and Service, which are the main topics discussed during the retreat.

are an essential part of her day. She has to pray every day and go to Mass every Sunday, saying that “it is like having my first cup of coffee. Not praying or attending Mass is like starting the day without coffee.” Connie expected that *adoración nocturna* would be more like perpetual adoration, adding that the thought of being there all day and night was alarming. She believes that all parishes should have *adoración nocturna*, including a separate night for women and possibly more time for contemplation. Nocturnal adoration has given her the strength to pray more often through all her struggles and concerns. Connie says that adoration is an important part of Catholicism and refers to the Blessed Sacrament as Jesus’s true presence, adding that “*él es el máximo*” (he is the maximum). Connie, like most of the *adoradores*, believes that more people should know about *adoración nocturna*.

**Juan Pablo**, a 37-year-old man who has resided in the United States for 20 years, was born in San Miguel, Mexico. He has been an *adorador* for two years. He claims that one day he just had the urge to go to *adoración nocturna*. It was not what he expected. “It was not Holy Hour.” After receiving his *distintivo*, he was excited, referring to it as a graduation. Upon receiving his *distintivo*, he claims to have felt loved and has learned to respect himself. He feels the love of Christ at every vigil and would like others to come and feel Jesus’s presence as well. *Adoración nocturna* has changed his life. Juan Pablo claims that he is “continually being molded at each vigil. Praying before Jesus is a distinguishable experience.” Juan Pablo experiences an uneasy feeling when he misses a vigil. He knows that he is a sinner, but he also feels the call to be there with Christ. For Juan Pablo, ANM is a treasure that he is willing to sell everything for (Matthew 13:44-

46), as the scripture tells us. It has changed his life. His family and co-workers have let him know that he has changed for the better.

**Lalo** was born in San Antonio, Texas. His family moved to Mexico, where he lived from the age of 3 until he was 14, and then his family returned to San Antonio. Lalo is a very passionate *adorador* and finds God in all things. He was instrumental in bringing ANM to the San Antonio parish that he and his family attend. Lalo is now 53 years old and has been an *adorador* for five and one-half years. The desire to bring ANM to his parish came after an impactful experience he had during adoration at an ACTS retreat when he was asked to assist. He always said, “*No vas a creer lo que me pasó*” (you will not believe what happened to me) before telling me about each of his spiritual encounters with God. Lalo claims to be a soldier praying in the presence of Christ, along with Christ, for all those in need, and for the needs of the Church. Lalo believes that if ANM were at every parish, the world would be a different place. Lalo can see God’s hand in everything, as evidenced by his stories. All good comes from God, according to Lalo, and as far as bad things happening, God prevents them from becoming worse.

**Lupe** is 47 years old, has lived in the United States for 31 years, and has been an *adorador* for 36 years. He is what is considered an “elder” of the section to which he belongs. This section relies on his vast knowledge of how things in ANM are done. Combining his knowledge of ANM with his spiritual guidance, he is instrumental in the success of this section. Lupe was 10 years old when an old man, whose name he cannot remember, asked him to be an *adorador*. Lupe agreed. He refers to this as the reaction of an *ovejita* (little lamb), saying, “We follow not knowing why, only that we will be happy.” He says that in *adoración* “something happens, [something within our hearts],

and we know we are in the presence of God.” He also believes that “Jesus wraps himself around the *ovejitas* who do not have the theological knowledge of a theologian.” He believes that our spiritual journey evolves much like our human nature. We begin our lives as infants and eventually grow into adulthood, except that when you begin your spiritual life, your age is irrelevant. You are an *ovejita*, and you progress at your own pace; age is irrelevant.

**Pepe** has been an *adorador* for 13 years. He was born in Durango, Mexico, and has resided in San Antonio for two years. He is a member of our local ANM board of directors, claiming that their section is a work in progress. He hopes that ANM will spread to all churches and would like to see the younger generations be more involved in ANM. Pepe was introduced to ANM by two *adoradores*. Prior to the invitation, he had no idea what ANM was. He claims that ANM “is more along the line of realizing the richness that is our Holy Catholic Church,” adding that “we have the opportunity that many others may not have and that is to pray before the Blessed Sacrament for the reparation of all the sins committed around the world.” The idea, at first, of coming together with men only was unimaginable, given that at his place of origin, the church is for women.<sup>171</sup> Pepe also talked about his children who kneel with him in *adoración*, following in his footsteps. He wanted his young boys to share their testimony and was disappointed, as were his boys, that they could not. He wonders how his life would have been different if he had found ANM as a teen. Pepe worries about those who do not have the ability to leave their homes to spend time in adoration and those who do not have a prayer life.

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<sup>171</sup> The Idea of the Church being for women is a common theme among Hispanic communities. This was true for me as well; my first experiences with prayer were from both of my grandmothers.

**Alberto** was born in Guadalajara, Mexico, and is 32 years old. He has been an *adorador* for six months and has lived in the United States for eight years. Alberto first heard of ANM when he still lived in Mexico, and his grandfather was an *adorador*. At that time, he could not comprehend why anyone would want to be an *adorador* and stay all night at a church after going to Mass every Sunday. While on a retreat in the States, he experienced adoration for the first time. It was there that he learned how to pray before the Blessed Sacrament with the help of an *adorador*, who handed him the ANM ritual book and told Alberto what pages to read from. It was there that he had a desire to start attending ANM. His concern was staying away from his wife and family for the night, but this quickly changed when he found peace, comfort, and a burden-free feeling as he knelt with Jesus face to face. It was at the ANM vigils that Alberto learned how to pray. He also recognized the *distintivos*; his grandfather wore one just like it in Mexico. Like all the others, Alberto finds peace and comfort while at the monthly ANM vigils.

**Abelardo** was born in Metchuela, San Luis Potosí, Mexico, and has resided in the United States for two years. He is 29 years old and has recently become an *adorador*. He became aware of *adoración* after going on an ACTS retreat that he attended out of curiosity in 2023. This retreat brought him closer to God and helped him “arrive at the truth and the way that is Jesus Christ.” It also helped him turn away from the falsehoods and damage that come from worshiping *Santa Muerte*,<sup>172</sup> which he claims to have done. He has since rejected the teachings of *Santa Muerte*. He now “approaches the Blessed

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<sup>172</sup> La Santa Muerte is known as the Narco Saint and is worshipped by drug dealers. She is often associated with magic, witchcraft, and Satan. The Catholic Church has condemned the worship or veneration of Santa Muerte. In “Have You Heard of Saint Death? Don't Pray to Her,” Mary Farrow explains that Santa Muerte is “not a recognized saint by the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, in 2013, a Vatican official condemned devotion to her, equating it to ‘the celebration of devastation and of hell.’”

Sacrament with love and devotion and with an understanding that the Lord is fully present in the Blessed Sacrament.” Although Abelardo had turned to *Santa Muerte*, he claims to have always believed in God but states that he was temporarily blinded by *Santa Muerte*. About his newly found relationship with Christ, he states that “I am with him and in him,” adding that it has influenced his daily life.

**Beto** has been an *adorador* for 32 years. He was born in Laredo, Texas, where his Catholic upbringing took root at a young age. It was in Laredo where he first heard of ANM. He has been a resident of San Antonio for the last 24 years. Although he began the practice of *adoración nocturna* under the Mexican version, he helped start a section of the National Nocturnal Adoration Society at the parish he started attending once he and his wife moved to San Antonio. It is through Beto’s true faith and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament that he has been able to stand the tests of time. He has faced many hardships, which include illnesses, financial struggles, family concerns, unemployment, homelessness, and his wife’s near-death experience, all of which happened in two years of their lives. During the interview, Beto talked about his abusive father and how the church leaders and his mother guided him to trust in Jesus and a prayer life, a prayer life that included praying for his father. It is in adoration that he finds “peace, comfort, safety, and belonging. God is listening to me and me to God.”

**Roy** was born in Guanajuato, Mexico, and has been living in the United States for 26 years. He has been an *adorador* for 14 years and is 46 years old. Roy is a member of the National Nocturnal Adoration Society. His first experience of adoration was at a retreat. Prior to the retreat, Roy had no idea of what adoration was about. Today, Roy says, “I will be an *adorador* until death.” After the tolls of a long day of work, he is able

to find peace in adoration and would like the whole world to experience what adoration can bring to one's life. Roy strongly believes that children can benefit from adoration as well, saying, "It is the best thing that can happen to the world." Roy would love to see *adoración nocturna* spread to other parishes, especially since he claims to have seen people change and grow spiritually because of *adoración nocturna*. For Roy, the nights at *adoración nocturna* do not get easier, but they are worth the effort, adding that his worries become easier to handle, and it's worth coming to the vigils every month. Roy says that *adoración nocturna* is the best thing that can happen to our world.

**Pedro** lives in Ft. Worth, Texas, and was born in Tecozautla, Hidalgo, Mexico. He has been a resident of the United States for 22 years, is 49 years old, and has been an *adorador* for four years. After struggling with alcoholism, the possibility of his wife and him separating, and the loss of his grandchild just a few days after the child was born, he began to rethink his busy schedule that usually did not include family or church. Pedro decided to accept an invitation to go to adoration, saying that "the thought of seeing God captivated me." Their desire to receive Holy Communion after finding their way back to the church led him and his wife to add the sacrament of matrimony to their civil marriage. The Blessed Sacrament has kept him from straying onto the wrong path. He has been able to find peace in adoration and often takes the day off from work to prepare for the ANM vigil.

**Ralph** has been an *adorador* for 43 years and is 74 years old. He lives in El Paso, Texas, and has been involved with the church from a young age. He has been a volunteer at ANM's United States office as treasurer for 40 years. He is hoping to retire from that position as soon as someone takes over as treasurer. He still works full-time at his regular

job and keeps a very busy schedule. He refers to being an *adorador* as work, as a job, and it is this work that brings him closer to the Blessed Sacrament, allows him to appreciate life, and makes him respectful and helps him respond to the family in a positive way. He also claims that if we think about straying, God finds a way to call us back. He desires to retire and ease off from other church ministries to focus solely on *adoración nocturna*. He truly believes that his participation in *adoración nocturna* helps protect those around him, both family and friends.

### List of the Clergy

Fig 8

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Currently resides in</b>	<b>Years in the U.S.</b>	<b>Place of birth</b>	<b>Years as an <i>adorador</i></b>
Fr. Luke	30	San Antonio, TX	Came to the U.S. as a child	Mexico	
Fr. Matthew	43	San Antonio, TX	San Antonio, TX - 10; U.S. - US	Kenya	
Fr. Marcos	52	Holly Ranch, TX	US - 25	Columbia	30
Deacon Ike	57	San Antonio, TX	57	San Antonio, TX	
Deacon Steven	72	San Antonio, TX	72	San Antonio, TX	
Fr. Pedro	73	Laredo, TX	San Antonio, TX - 33	Laredo, TX	45
Fr. Len	65	San Antonio, TX		Uvalde, TX	

**Deacon Steven** is 72 years old and a resident of San Antonio, Texas. He had not heard of ANM until he was assigned to a parish where ANM is practiced. He was asked to help with the clerical needs of the vigils, which he claims to be “simple and fulfilling.” He adds that the ANM community does a lot of good for the parish and that these

individuals present themselves as good Catholic men and women who come as families to Mass and in other church ministries, noting that this “is not the case with other members of the parish. How can I say no to them?” Dcn. Steven claims that they were very helpful in guiding him the first few times he assisted in ANM. He and his pastor were not sure how to see or take ANM when they first arrived, and he was grateful that I was part of ANM. He questioned why he should be there if I was there every month. Like his pastor, he finds the *adoradores* demanding, claiming that they want to follow Mexico’s liturgical calendar, which is slightly different, especially when it comes to the dates that correspond to saints and some solemnities.

**Fr. Matthew** is originally from Kenya, is 43 years old, and has resided in the United States for 12 years. He is familiar with the National Nocturnal Adoration Society. His description of the *adoradores* was firm and direct. First, he called to mind their commitment and reverence to the Lord, saying that it is “more than an obligation; it is something that they cherish.” Second, the *adoradores* provide “encouragement, the manner that they bring others to adoration...[using] their life-changing experience in adoration is an evangelistic invitation to spend time with the Lord.” Third, he mentioned “organization. Everything is in its proper place and time ... and after the vigil, they come out refreshed, as if not tired. This is missing in other organizations.” He also claims that, through them, he is reminded of what it was that brought him to the priesthood, saying that “priests often forget due to their schedule.” He claims that “priests can benefit from them (the *adoradores*)” adding that the *adoradores*’ spiritual experiences are experiences that they cherish. They are “painless and have roots that go beyond all others.” Fr. Matthew believes that being an *adorador* is not a sacrifice.

**Fr. Luke** came to the United States from Mexico as a child. He is a recent addition to the clergy and became familiar with the NNAS at his first assignment. He is now a pastor at a parish that does not have *adoración nocturna*, and he desires to introduce it to that parish. He commends the *adoradores* for staying all night, claiming that the “*desvelada* (a physical tiredness that comes from staying awake) cannot be easy.” He claims that “this living out of the faith is uplifting” and energizing for him as “a priest and as a Christian man.” He adds that “they are active in the parish and are beneficial members of the community, not contentious towards others, very positive, and have a deep reverence to the Blessed Sacrament.” He points out that the practice of their priestly office, which comes from their baptism, is obvious. Fr. Luke claims that although NNAS is intended to be bilingual, it is attended by predominantly Spanish-speaking individuals, which may make it difficult to be inclusive.

**Deacon Ike** is 57 years old and has been ordained for three years at the time of our interview. He is familiar with the NNAS section at the parish to which he is assigned and has been a member of that same parish long before NNAS was instituted. Although he has been there since NNAS’s conception, he was not familiar with its workings until after he was asked to help them with the exposition and reposition of the Blessed Sacrament after his ordination. Dcn. Ike has noticed the *adoradores*’ involvement in several of the other ministries within the parish. He also claims that NNAS is a beneficial and important ministry. According to Dcn. Ike, their zeal and reverence for the Mass and adoration are expressed in a “visual and more animated way,” referring to this as “exceptional experiences.” He claims that seeing their devotion has helped him spiritually. He mentioned that he catches himself, as he calls it, “doing the jiggly thing up

there”; in other words, when he serves as a deacon at the Spanish Mass, he starts moving to the vibrant music of the Mass. Dcn. Ike would love to stay all night with the *adoradores* but claims, as do most of the clergy, that it can be difficult due to their busy Sunday schedules. He often feels guilty that he cannot give Jesus more of his time in adoration.

**Fr. Len** has recently been assigned to the parish where ANM has been established. He initially questioned it since he was not familiar with either the Mexican or the United States versions of nocturnal adoration, claiming that he called the archdiocese to see whether it was a valid ministry. During this call, he learned that the archbishop supported nocturnal adoration, saying, “There is nothing I can do about it.” Fr. Len did not give the impression, during the interview, that he is a fan of ANM or interested in going out of his way for the group, claiming that its members are demanding, and most of them come from parishes that do not have nocturnal adoration. Fr. Len has also seen the many ways the *adoradores*, who are members of his parish, help in different ministries and has asked its members to help in getting proposed ministries started.

**Fr. Marcos** is 52 years old and from Colombia. He has been involved with nocturnal adoration for 30 years, first in Colombia and, eventually, in the Houston, Texas, area. He was ordained in 1996 and moved to the United States in 2000. He helped start two sections of ANM in the Houston, Texas, area and currently lives in Holly Lake Ranch, Texas. Fr. Marcos claims that the Colombian version of *adoración nocturna* is the same as the Mexican version. Fr. Marcos says that the *adoradores* “worship as warriors who defend the faith, giving witness to the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.” At the same time, the *adoradores* permit him to “be a better leader and to grow as a pastor and

guide the people.” He claims to have struggled convincing the priests who were associated with the parishes that he helped in getting ANM started that ANM is beneficial to the Church. He says that “first we must convince the priests of the benefits of *adoración nocturna*.” Fr. Marcos seemed to be more concerned about the logistical struggles that ANM adds to the parishes’ busy schedules, adding that logistical struggles arise due to other ministries’, including some priests’, failure or unwillingness to find common ground with the *adoradores* in sharing the parishes’ facilities. Fr. Marcos claims that some church communities make things more difficult than they need to.

**Fr. Pedro** is 73 years old, was born in Laredo, Texas, and was introduced to *adoración nocturna* at his first assignment as a priest in Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico. He claims to have been an *adorador* since 1980. He is familiar with both the United States and Mexican versions of nocturnal adoration. He permitted the establishment the United States version at the parish where he was a pastor in San Antonio. He discussed the devotion the Catholics in Mexico had for the Blessed Sacrament, saying that “the people’s devotion to the Eucharist counteracted what the Mexican government was trying to implement.” This statement was in reference to the *Cristero* War. When speaking about the *adoradores*, his voice was filled with pride, joy, and love for the people. According to Fr. Pedro, this devotion he spoke about has spilled into our U.S. culture and continues to grow. He notes that “adoration is a uniting piety that brings people closer to Jesus in the Eucharist. They are soldiers, somewhat militant.” He adds that it brings joy to him as a priest, saying, “This is what priests should be doing. This love for the Eucharist by the worshippers is powerful.” He also believes that the ACTS retreats have a lot to do with ANM’s growth in popularity.

## Ten Questions for the *Adoradores*

The semi-structured interviews revolved around the following questions:

### 1. How did you become an *adorador*? Who invited you? Why did you accept?

Fig 9



Several had profound experiences while participating in adoration at ACTS retreats or other religious retreats. Many of them, after spending time in adoration and/or *adoración nocturna*, came to the conclusion that their lives had changed due to adoration and/or *adoración nocturna*. Other individuals chose to go for the sake of their families. Still others found the idea of seeing Jesus and spending time with Him very interesting. Others just wanted to see what it was about.

Abelardo expressed his thoughts very well. As he sat through the interview, he held his Bible in his hand, saying,

The first time I heard about adoration was at an ACTS retreat in September of 2023. An uncle invited me to the retreat when I first came to the United States. I did not want to go, but he continued asking me. I decided now I do want to know what a retreat is. I always believed and still believe in God, but I was far from

him. I had made a very bad decision to worship *La Santa Muerte*. But when I went to the retreat, I saw what God's truth is, because, as it says here in the Bible, Jesus decided to make the way and the truth, he who goes to the Father if not through Him. I then understood many things, and that was how I came to *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, in order to be able to come and adore Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and be closer to the Father.

Pepe gave glory to God by saying,

It caught my attention, and honestly, I didn't know about *adoración nocturna* ... the invitation caught my interest, and I accepted, by the Glory of God, I accepted. Blessed be God, we have been here since 2018 (referring to the section). And this is a very beautiful experience, but more than experience, a knowledge, an awareness of the richness given to us by our Holy Mother Catholic Church. I was ignorant of that wealth. Our Lord Jesus Christ is so close. Each of us has the opportunity to come and worship him, to bless him, to make reparation for his sacred heart, to make reparation for all the sins that are committed throughout the world, beginning with one's own. It's a great blessing. I feel very thankful to God for this opportunity.

## **2. Tell me about your experiences in nocturnal adoration.**

The experiences in *adoración nocturna* have some common characteristics. The first is that the *adoradores* strongly believe that they are in the true presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, and they all expressed a willingness to be there. Many of them expressed a feeling of comfort, of peace, with some expressing a letting go of whatever they are going through, feeling closer to God, talking with God, a belonging, valuing oneself, and an overcoming of the enemy and daily struggles. For example, Alberto put it this way:

My experiences have been good. At the beginning, before I went to every vigil of *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, it was a bit difficult for me because I am a father, I have a family, I have 3 children, I go to work, and the thought of spending the whole night there made me mentally tired. But when I get there in the presence of God, I feel strong, I feel relieved, I feel much lighter, I feel like I'm resting instead of being tired. I feel more alive and filled with the Holy Spirit. When I go to nocturnal adoration, my work problems are no longer problems. I now find solutions, and I am more patient with my spouse and my family. I find that I have more temperance and prudence to talk to them; that is the peace that it gives me.

In another example, Beto said,

I feel a lot of peace, comfort, feeling part of belonging to that Somebody that is there listening to me. Even though, at that time, I'm hurting or maybe we're going through a situation, I can cry, I can talk about anything and everything. Knowing that God always listens to me, he's present ... I'm in the presence of our Lord; it's Somebody that's there, and he is attentive. He listens to me, and I'm listening to him. I'm offering these prayers, and I'm like, wow. One hour is not enough for me ... a night goes by so quick that it feels timeless. I just feel that every month that we do it, I feel renewed. I feel renewed, and I feel like, okay, I can tackle this.

**3. What is it about *adoración nocturna* that inspires you to spend, with others, a full night of prayer and companionship?**

Once again, peace came up several times, as did prayer, talking with Jesus, and spending more time with Jesus in prayer. Spending time with others, men and women who are truly devoted to Jesus, was also mentioned. There is an awareness among the *adoradores* that Jesus is there, he is present, and they are praying with Jesus. With hand gestures of wonderment, Pepe added, “How can you say no to Jesus?” They pray with Jesus, asking for forgiveness for the world as Jesus and his apostles did at the Mount of Olives (The *adoradores* often use “the Mount of Olives” instead of the Garden of Gethsemane.). The Mount of Olives is also used in the prayer of reparation that is prayed at each *turno* of the night except that they stay awake. Lupe explained it this way:

Because we are in the eternal presence of God, we have, as the center, Jesus; Jesus is the center of *adoración nocturna*. So, we, the *adoradores*, are together, and we are replacing those apostles who were sleeping on the mountain of olives. So what is different are the *adoradores*, those who go with contrite hearts, those who go to see Jesus, like Peter, James, and John, who were there, close, calls us to be there, close, with Jesus, heart to heart. So it's like accompanying Jesus in the olive orchard praying ... he knew and he knows that we are there accompanying him, to adore, to make *expiación* (atonement) for sins, personal, national, and for the whole world. It is something special because it is a pillar of the church that holds up part of what the Church is doing for the good of humanity. We are repairing, we are restoring the heart of Jesus.

Pepe claimed that forgiveness is a major aspect of *adoración nocturna*:

Jesus is alive and present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. How can you not be present with the King of Kings? How can you say no to him? It's very hard to say no when you already know, and you know what you are doing, what it's all about. When you have him face to face, to ask for forgiveness, forgiveness for all the sins of the whole world, asking for every need that needs to be asked for. The prayers that the ritual provides are precise and exact. Every hour is different, every hour has different prayers, different intentions. That is fundamental, and it is so necessary.

Lalo was adamant that they were soldiers, warriors, praying with the Lord:

More than anything, as it says [in the ritual book], pray for those who do not pray, those who cry, for those who do not know God, it is an act of the *sagrario* (Tabernacle). Pray for those who offend [God], everything that it (the ritual) contains are part of the sacred act. I put myself like a soldier, that is what calls me, to be like a warrior of the Lord. To confront whatever comes our way. That is what makes me come to *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, for the sins of this nation and of the world. That is what keeps me here.

#### **4. How has this method of worship influenced *lo cotidiano*?**

This question seems to have touched them in a very special way. It was an opportunity to speak about the impact of worship on their lives and families. Lupe explained it this way:

It has influenced my family because we have to give our reason for our faith. Influences: First, as a dad to teach the family and the children where is Jesus, where is the source, it influences the family. From there, we receive the grace to work, to live, to communicate with humanity, to communicate with nature, to communicate with others through our lives from day to day and moment to moment. It is unique and special because we know that Jesus goes wherever we go. He wants to envelop us, wants to surround himself around us. We are surrounded by Him, and we walk with him.

For some of the *adoradores*, their sins have become obvious in that they are more aware of the damage that sin can inflict on the soul and of how sin is in direct conflict with God's law. Several *adoradores* also claimed to be more patient at home and at work due to their time in *adoración nocturna*. For some, ANM has also become a spiritual growth

and a journey. It is a continuous remolding and reshaping of their faith, religious practice, and family life. For others, it has influenced them to take *adoración nocturna* to the world, beginning with other members of their own parish community. Many *adoradores* can see God in everything, at home or at work.

Roy claimed,

It has helped me to be more patient; I am no longer bothered by the small stuff. Before, something would happen, and it would frustrate me, it would make me angry, and now I think before I react ... At work, too, I'm more patient. I know I can't control everything, so I just let them flow. I do what I can do, and what I can't, I leave it to God.

Ralph, on the other hand, was more concerned about how his actions may influence another's outcome, asking himself,

What if I were with God instead of with my friends? Could the bad things that happened when I was away from God have been avoided? That is why I left the bad life behind. It is these tests that bring us closer to God. The positive is always alongside his people, who are always asking for help in our work, on our spiritual journey, for the protection of our wives, our children, and our friends in whatever they are doing. Always in prayer, knowing that he gives us everything. We have the power of God in one hand and the power of the Blood of Christ in the other.

**5. How are other members of the larger community aware of your presence as individuals and as a community of *adoradores*?**

This question brought out their humble personalities. Some *adoradores* claimed that if others see a difference in them, it is because they wear their *distintivo* while others did not know how to respond to the question. Pedro, on the other hand, said that for some reason or another, they come to him and discuss what he described as intimate matters.

Beto described what may be how most of them feel:

I'm not there to be seen as an *adorador*, but I want to say that I want to be a witness for Christ. I'm not there for me but for Christ. At Mass, I put on my *distintivo* even if it is not a vigil, English, or Spanish Mass. People ask, What is

that? It gives me the opportunity to explain what an *adorador* is and does. That is a gift that God gave to me—to pray for others and to invite them to join us.

Others believe that they must notice because of their behavior at Mass or in their participation in other ministries. Most *adoradores* had a hard time answering this question, but I believe Lalo expressed it the best by saying,

When people look at you, how do they know that we are *adoradores*? It's by your presence, your mannerism, by your actions, what you do, how you speak. I think here it's like all Christians who approach God, it must be through the testimony that they see in you. Well, you have to give testimony; we cannot be the light in the church and darkness at home or on the street; it goes hand in hand. It is in the testimony that one gives on how he acts, how he speaks, how one dresses. They are the ones who are going to see change. One cannot know if they are seeing you differently. One cannot say that they look at me differently. It would be up to the community that they see us as who we are.

**6. What have church leaders done to encourage others to participate in *Adoracion Nocturna Mexicana*?**

The demeanor of most of the *adoradores* was one of reluctance in saying anything that might sound negative about the clergy. Connie was the only one who spoke without hesitation, saying, “We invite them, but they forget, the priests. The priests, they need to encourage the people to come to adoration and make announcements when it occurs.”

Most of the *adoradores* agreed that the clergy are supportive only because they let them continue even though they may not know what it is all about. Some of the *adoradores* said that the priest who let them get the sections started was supportive, but the new priests are not as supportive. Lalo expressed it this way:

Well, yes. We have had the priest's support because even though he doesn't know about ANM, he is letting us do what we were doing before. The previous priest gave us a

hand, gave us the okay, and gave us permission to go talk to the archdiocese, to deliver the documents<sup>173</sup> personally.

Abelardo was slightly more expressive about the whole scenario, saying,

The priest, he must encourage others. At Mass, he must give examples about adoration, what it is really like, and why we should go to adoration. I think that the priest should do more. We have heard that here in the United States, there are not a lot of *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* sections, so they don't know much about it. Like those who know, like you, for example, you who are deacon, when you are up front, you should invite the community and tell them how beautiful it feels to be there [in adoration]. I think that would motivate somebody. Say to them, Let's go worship the Lord, to adore him with love, and with lots of faith. I think that it should come from someone who is inside<sup>174</sup>, those are the ones who should invite others who may want to meet Jesus and be there with him.

Lupe expressed his thoughts on why they may not support *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, saying,

Priests who do not support [*adoración nocturna*] may not do it out of evil; they do it out of their need to make sure things are done right. But here, if we ask for the Blessed Sacrament, if the priest would have a change of heart like our deacon, he would do it, and that's where the faith is. And when there is not a good experience with priests or deacons, we simply stay on the sidelines, and since it is the work of Jesus, he will fix it.

**7. Tell me about your experiences with priests or deacons who oversee the parish where you participate in adoration. How have they been supportive? How have they not been supportive?**

This question also made some of the *adoradores* uncomfortable. Connie, on the other hand, was adamant that the clergy needs to help more:

Oh, my God. Us women, we leave early, we cannot give an account if they support men or not support, but you, as deacon, [do]. But I'm not from this parish, but those [priests] of this parish, yeah, they could. I think they fall short, and they could give

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<sup>173</sup> The documents being referred to here are the documents needed to get a section started. These are normally mailed by the parish office. In this case, the pastor gave the *adoradores* permission to take them to the archdiocese in person.

<sup>174</sup> By this, he means Church leaders.

more. They lack support. I would like to see the deacons and priests be more helpful in *adoración nocturna*.

Most of the *adoradores* agreed that some pastors are supportive, referring to pastors who were helpful in getting sections started; however, as for those who have come after them, they have not been very helpful. The *adoradores* are grateful, though, that they have been allowed to continue. They also believe that they (priests) should be more available, present, and even more attentive. Ralph went as far as comparing priests in the United States to those in Mexico, saying that, in Mexico, the clergy are 100% supportive of *adoración nocturna*. Pepe gave a lengthy account that applies to how most of the *adoradores* feel:

So far, there is a big difference between our former priest and the current priest. Our previous pastor was very supportive of this section from the beginning. He was key [in our development]. Because if he had wanted to, he could have said no. You could see, you could see in him his interest in *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*. He had that faith, that respect for the exposed Blessed Sacrament. He got up on several occasions to say Holy Mass at 6:00 in the morning for the *adoradores*. He is a priest who looked at the Eucharist with a lot of love. The one we have now, well, I have had the pleasure of having him present at one *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* [vigil] and was present in the morning for the repose of the Blessed Sacrament. I have seen little of him, perhaps because he is the new priest and has not had much time here and has just been assigned here. I know little about him. So I don't know how much he supports *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*. Maybe because the fact that it is *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* and we're in the United States, sometimes that causes a little bit of indifference. It shouldn't be like that because we adore the same Lord. We should unite in prayer. If we do *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, it means that we are all Latinos, we do it, we do it in Spanish. But it would be very nice if our American brothers had a nocturnal adoration section. It would be a great thing for the Church, or more than anything, for this parish, for this community, and for the parish in general. I think all priests should support a section in their parishes. Because we go back to the same thing—prayer—and prayer sustains the Church. And the deacons who have come, they've done well, including the one present here now.

Pepe's statement covers many points that most of the *adoradores* find true. Many of them see or have seen how the Hispanics (Latinos, or any term you choose to use) are seen as the other and, at times, with indifference. Being seen as the other or with indifference does not deter the *adorador*; they know that we all pray to the same God, and that is what unifies us.

**8. How does praying before the Blessed Sacrament differ from other forms of prayer or compare to praying at home, at Mass, or before or after Mass?**

The *adoradores* all believe in the true presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Some believe that it is more important, more intimate. They believe that when they are praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus is there in person; he is alive. It was described as a private audience with Jesus. Theirs is a respect that manifests itself before the Blessed Sacrament. Others say that the prayers used in the ritual are prayers of the Church, prayers that come from God himself. Some added that the one hour we are assigned is not enough.

Being before the Blessed Sacrament is like St. John being with Jesus, according to Lalo.

Like St. John, who reclined on Jesus's chest, that is what one feels. That is what I feel when I'm in front of him. I can recline on Jesus's chest; that is because I have him so close to me, next to me, and I am able to cry, cry in front of him, with joy, sadness, for so many things.

Juan Pablo expressed it this way:

When we are in front of the Holy of Holies, it's very different. I feel that we are before the most Holy, before Christ who is alive. I feel when we take from the ritual, the prayers, reading of the psalms, the prayers are from him. I feel that they are more truthful. I don't know, there are differences, yes, he is distinguished, he is distinguished because our Lord Jesus Christ is there. How can I explain it? With everything that the ritual contains, it is very different from what is said at the Mass. Well, in the Mass, Christ is also there, in the consecration, but [in adoration] I feel a greater respect, and my attention to the Lord is far greater.

Alberto said that when one is in front of the Blessed Sacrament,

It is like scripture says that Moses spoke face-to-face with God. And when I'm in front of the Blessed Sacrament, I feel that I am talking face to face with Jesus. And when I'm out here [in the world], I know he is there. I know that he is always with us. But in adoration, we have him face to face and know that he could be hugging me, just like John, the beloved disciple, how I could lean on his chest. When I am at adoration and I feel sad or tired, I imagine Jesus embracing me.

**9. Tell me what it is that you believe about the Blessed Sacrament.**

They all believe that Jesus is present in the Blessed Sacrament, and they need to be there with Jesus in reparation for all sin. They believe that Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is everything. They believe that everyone should know what can be gained from being before the Blessed Sacrament. Lupe said,

The Blessed Sacrament is something special for us. It is something specially given to the little ones, to the sheep in the field. Jesus surrounds himself with the people who don't have any theological knowledge. They are simple. They are from the villages. We are sheep from the villages; sometimes we are not accepted by society, ecclesiastically, because they look at us, in part, with indifference. As long as we are with Jesus, who can be against us, the Blessed Sacrament is the Holy of Holies. If we are before the Blessed Sacrament, we are in a holy place. It is a sacred place. It is where we are in heaven. We may not see him with our physical eyes, but we know we see him with the eyes of our soul. If we are before him in silence, Jesus can touch our hearts. It is more; Jesus can talk to you there. It is a matter of saying to Jesus, "Give me faith, Jesus, you are here, here to believe in you, to love you, to adore you as you want." The Blessed Sacrament *is*; it is what it is.

Roy wrapped it up by saying, "If the people knew what we have, they would value the Blessed Sacrament much more. If they knew that we have the body, soul, and divinity of Jesus in that little piece of bread, if people really knew what we have, there would be more reverence, more love, and more adoration."

**10. Tell me about the history of *Adoración Nocturna*, as you understand it.**

When asked this question, most of the *adoradores* only knew what was in the ritual, which was very informative. Some *adoradores* only knew that it started in San Felipe in Mexico and involved persecution by the Mexican government. One *adorador*

knew that in Mexico it is 125 years old, only because they were getting ready to celebrate its anniversary. Others knew about the *Cristero* War and how it influenced ANM. Lalo and Beto were very knowledgeable about the history of *adoración nocturna*.

Lalo talked to me about its history from the moment I got involved. Beto had literature on the history of *adoración nocturna* and how it migrated to the Americas. Pepe took it in another direction, saying, “I understand it as a need for prayer on the part of a group of people or a good priest. I don't remember exactly right now. But it started with one; that one invited another. He thought about it and did it because he saw the need and was inspired by the Holy Spirit. But that's how I understand it. It is a need for prayer to sustain the Church.” Pepe’s account sums up what most of them feel, in that it sustains the Church. Fr. Pedro affirmed this with his belief that the *Cristeros*’ prayers help keep the Catholic Church alive in Mexico.

There is a desire among the *adoradores* that *adoración nocturna* should be practiced at all parishes. This is a belief that some of the clergy who participated in this study share with the *adoradores*. Lalo claimed that spreading *adoración nocturna* to other parishes is part of his calling. Prior to the interviews, several of the *adoradores* who participated in this study and some others who were not interviewed asked whether this project would help ANM spread to other parishes and whether the bishop would get a copy of this thesis project.

It was evident that the *adoradores* are truly devoted Catholics and are faithful believers in Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. They are also firm believers that attending Mass and going to confession are very important as an *adorador*. One *adorador* and his sons travel a little over 100 miles every month for the vigils. Another *adorador*, while a

young boy in Mexico, remembered his uncle traveling over an hour to pick up his grandfather and take him to the monthly vigil. Not all parishes have *adoración nocturna*, so many *adoradores* have to go to a parish where *adoración nocturna* is practiced. More than half of the *adoradores* where this study took place are not of that parish. Several families come to ANM, mothers and fathers with children of all ages, infants in strollers, toddlers, pre-adolescents, adolescents, young adults, adults, the elderly, and one *adorador* in a wheelchair.

### **Interviews with Clergy**

#### **1. Tell me about your experiences with *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* and its members.**

Dcn. Ike and Dcn. Steven were asked to help the *adoradores* with the exposition and the repose of the Blessed Sacrament. That is how the two of them were introduced to *adoración nocturna*. Dcn. Steven had never heard of *adoración nocturna*. Dcn. Ike had been aware of it but did not get involved until after his ordination. Dcn. Ike's interest grew as he got to know its members and learned what *adoración nocturna* consisted of. The deacons agreed that the *adoradores* were helpful in guiding them with their responsibilities at the vigils. Two members of the clergy, Fr. Pedro and Fr. Marcos, each had over 30 years of experience with *adoración nocturna*. The younger priests were introduced to *adoración nocturna* prior to ordination, much like the older priests that were part of the study, and all were influenced spiritually and personally by ANM and its members.

Overall, there are some similarities in their experiences with the *adoradores*. All, except for one priest who, at the time of his interview, had no comment concerning

certain aspects of *adoración nocturna* and its members, seemed to agree that the *adoradores* all have a great reverence for the Eucharist and can be or are a good influence on the community and a positive presence in the parish community. All the *adoradores*, according to several members of the clergy, participate in other ministries at the parish.

Fr. Luke said it best by saying that the *adoración nocturna* community is

very active [members of the community]. I would be there for portions of the night with them and, of course, to do the exposition and the benediction at the end. Overall, it was a very positive interaction. The members had a deep, deep reverence, deep respect for the Eucharist, and there were large numbers [of them]. I think that the people who were involved and engaged, especially the leaders at the time, were just very kind, very humble, very dedicated Catholics. And so the experience, overall, was very positive with that group.

Fr. Pedro saw the *adoradores* as soldiers, saying, “They almost seem like soldiers.

Soldiers in defense of God’s soldiers, being sort of militant in a way, in the spiritual sense, devoted to God. That is why I think they take charge of promoting their devotion.” The American version, according to Fr. Marcos, is less poetic and shorter, missing some of the beautiful rituals.

## **2. How have you participated in their rituals and practices? How has this impacted you spiritually and your pastoral leadership?**

Fr. Pedro was impacted by its horrendous past. He talked about the *Cristero* War and how the *Cristeros*’ devotion to the Eucharist counteracted the government’s persecution. Fr. Luke and Fr. Matthew were overwhelmed by their deep reverence, adding that it was a very positive interaction and very uplifting. Fr. Marcos claimed that it made him a better pastor because it lets him see leaders in them. Dcn. Ike expressed that he felt guilty because he could not spend as much time before Jesus due to his responsibilities. Dcn.

Ike, Dcn. Steven, Fr. Matthew, Fr. Pedro, and Fr. Marcos all mentioned the overwhelming responsibilities of the clergy. Fr. Matthew expressed how it impacted him:

When they invited me for the adoration, it brought to me a realization of what I was missing as a priest. Sometimes we do so many things, and we miss getting involved in many ministries that benefit us as individuals first, before it benefits us as ministers. So I attended several of them, at least for a few hours, because of ministry demands. But it reminded me that I have to be in the presence of the Lord, at least one hour a day.

The overall opinion of the *adoradores* by the clergy concerning this question was one of respect—that the *adoradores* were a positive influence in their spiritual lives and helped them to grow as leaders. Dcn. Steven expressed it very well when he said,

It was, in a sense, fulfilling, because it's not necessarily something that you normally do. You can see the spiritual aspect of these gentlemen's prayer life. To be part of something, which a lot of times you don't see, especially from our men. Especially men in our age groups, the older men. So sometimes it's difficult for them to be part of this, but it seems like they were embracing it quite well. That's one of the things that I said to myself: Okay, well, I can't deny them. So, you know, that's why I stuck it out with them, and I'm doing the things they needed.

### **3. What are the challenges you have experienced? What are the blessings you have experienced?**

The challenges have been sleeping arrangements and vagrants due to the church being open all night at one parish. Promoting bilingual *adoración nocturna* is also a challenge. Fr. Marcos and Dcn. Ike claim that everyone wants things in their own language. Fr. Marcos added that “the language may be a challenge, but the spirit of both is the same. Staying the night or just spending time there is all that matters ... you do not need to speak, but be there with the Lord.” He continued, saying that convincing priests of the advantage of having *adoración nocturna* is also a challenge. Other concerns are logistics, the continuous use of the church, which lasts approximately 12 straight hours through the

night, and making sure the facilities are ready for Sunday's busy schedule. The biggest concern is the added burden on the clergy's busy schedule.

For Fr. Matthew, a challenge is sustaining the practice once he or a member of the clergy is reassigned to a parish with no nocturnal adoration. Dcn. Ike added that he would like to spend more time with Jesus, saying, "He has trouble understanding how it can be done. It is only suitable for individuals that are able to make those specific, beautiful sacrifices for Jesus, and we should all make those sacrifices, especially for Jesus. But it's hard."

As for the blessings, for Fr. Matthew, they have changed and strengthened his prayer life. The blessings continue, according to the clergy, in that they have inspired others, lay and clergy, by the way they act, present themselves, are family-oriented, bring awareness to, and a love and devotion for the Eucharist, and are a strong force within our Catholic institution. For Fr. Luke, it is a blessing

seeing their love and devotion and, obviously, the intercessions that they offer, the intercessory power, spiritual power that they hold, spending that time with Jesus, praying as a community, in that church, for our community. I always felt very supported by that and ... the litany of the prayer for the priests. Yes, it's amazing to me.

Fr. Pedro commented on their self-sufficiency and the importance of having an active president, adding that they are "a lay movement ... it is their organization, structurally organized, so that there is enough of their own funds ... for snacks, they buy their own rituals. They managed their own funds, they elect their own president, treasurer, secretary, and had fundraisers." The consensus seems to be that the blessing the *adoradores* bring to the Catholic community outweighs the challenges.

**4. How has *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* impacted the larger community? Has it fostered unity, or is it a source of tension?**

The consensus seems to be that the *adoradores* are a positive influence on the community. They have a positive impact on marriages and are inviting, family-oriented, humble, and in no way prideful or egotistical. In short, they are a beneficial ministry within the Church. They are also involved in other ministries within the Church and seem to influence the lives of the clergy as well. Fr. Mathew expressed it in this way:

It developed in me the sense of praying in the presence of the Lord, not only praying in my bedroom or in the sitting room, but if there's an opportunity to sit before our Lord and have my prayers in his presence, that was the perfect practice for me.

Fr. Luke added:

They themselves were a people who were open to invite others, to recruit other members. The quality of time spent with Jesus was transformative. The transformation that took place in their lives, that deepening relationship with the Lord, was very clear. They had a very good relationship with other members of the community, which, at times, is not seen in some of the other ministries.

Dcn. Ike contributed:

Nocturnal adoration does benefit the parish; it builds up an understanding that Jesus is important, the Eucharist is important, the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is important. It helps build up the church because we do have a lot of people who don't believe in the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Most of the clergy agree that the *adoradores* appear to be a source of unity. According to

Dcn. Ike, the U.S. version of *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* is bilingual, but it is predominantly Spanish-speaking and alienates the English-speaking community.

##### **5. How has *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* affected you spiritually and culturally?**

Most of the members of the clergy have been affected spiritually by the *adoradores*.

Fr. Pedro and Dcn. Ike claim that, culturally, the *adoradores* have affected them as well.

Dcn. Ike noted,

Culturally, yes. I see how the Spanish-speaking community has such a great love and zeal for Jesus. I do both the English and the Spanish Masses at the parish; English Masses are very beautiful, but when I get into the Spanish Mass, it's a whole different experience. The music is very different and upbeat. The people are more animated with their gestures. The people, when receiving Holy Communion, are more reverent. There is a significant difference in the way the Hispanic community is receiving Jesus. I see them receiving on the tongue or in the kneeling position, the women wearing veils. It's a very different ethnic culture, so it helps me appreciate the Hispanic Latino community. It's a difference of loveliness.

Fr. Pedro shared this concerning his spirituality:

I've always felt that when I see, especially the men, so inclined to the Eucharist, an individual so filled with grace and his devotion to the Eucharist has filled me with joy and has lifted my priesthood because this is what I do. You see, as a Catholic priest, to see that there is devotion and love for the Eucharist amongst the lay people, it's powerful.

Fr. Matthew referred to it as “quality spirituality,” emphasizing that it has changed his prayer life completely and saying that he never prays in his room anymore but always in the church or the chapel where one finds our Lord. Fr. Luke captured it quite well when he said,

Spiritually, feeling very supported by them and their prayers and intercessions, and then just to see the laity really living out their priestly office as a people, really living it out, I mean, in the spirit of love for God, for others, and in constant intercessions. And so it was very uplifting to see their love for Jesus. It was the first time that I had seen something like that. Their commitment, for me, was out of this world. To stay here all night and then to think that it's so inconvenient because those people, most of them, were middle-aged, and they have families to go back to and work to begin. And this *desvelada* [to keep awake] is not going to be easy for them the next night or that week. To take their work week in stride, to see that kind of fire and spiritual living out of their faith, it was very uplifting.

Fr. Len was the only member of the clergy who did not really contribute to the conversation of ANM. He was willing to be interviewed but did not want to be recorded. Unlike his predecessor, the ANM experience is new to him, and he is not sure what to think of it. For Fr. Len, ANM seems to be a burden. He made changes once he arrived at

the parish. The previous pastor had a special Mass for the *adoradores* on Sunday morning at the end of the vigil, which usually ends at 6:00 AM. When he could not celebrate Mass for them, he asked me to do a celebration of the liturgy of the word with Holy Communion. Fr. Len, on the other hand, said that it was unnecessary, and they are part of the community, so they have to participate as part of the community. He was not going to get up early for an extra Mass. Too much was already expected of him on the weekends. He also claimed that many of them, whom he called demanding members, were from other parishes where ANM was not practiced. The parish ministries that Fr. Len inherited were used to getting things their way. When Fr. Len was not going to let them do that anymore, this came as somewhat of a shock to the *adoradores*. The *adoradores* also understood that things may change due to the new pastor.

Fr. Len was not, and still is not, familiar with the rituals, believing women do not have the same rights. At the time of his interview, he was unaware that the *adoradores* participated in other ministries; he has since seen their involvement. He also sees ANM as somewhat secretive, so he could not understand when the archbishop asked him to ban a ministry that was seen as secretive by the church and yet allowed ANM to continue. He received the ritual book, adding that reading Spanish is difficult for him although he is bilingual. Our interview was short because he had no knowledge of ANM. He also gave me the impression that he was not interested. He did not really respond to the list of questions that I had prepared for the clergy, so I did not pursue it any further. We did have a good conversation concerning his struggles as a priest and their heavy burden due to their responsibilities, which seems to be an ongoing theme with the clergy who participated in the study. Some of the clergy interviewed noted that the *adoradores* also

have busy schedules with their jobs and families, and are involved in other ministries within their parishes.

Fr. Len seemed to be annoyed by ANM's presence at the beginning; he still sees them as demanding but seems to tolerate their presence a little better today. Every conversation I have had with him after the interview concerning ANM is a continued acknowledgment of my first impression of his feelings concerning this organization. The *adoradores'* leaders do not understand his annoyance but believe that they have to be respectful of the clergy's needs—after all, they allow them to continue.

The *adoradores* want to follow the Mexican calendar of Solemnity and feast days, which do not often follow the U.S. calendar, which complicates things between the *adoradores* and the pastor. Both sides are trying to work things out, but the ANM calendar has numerous events throughout the year. As a member of the clergy and ANM, I am often caught in the middle. Both factions want me on their side. As a member of the clergy in the United States, I follow the U.S. liturgy, and my responsibilities lie with the bishop of our diocese. The board of directors tries to pressure me to side with them, at times using manipulative language. They remind me that I am an *adorador* who made a promise to Jesus, and Jesus is the center of the Church.

### ***Adoradores'* Devotion**

Five of the seven members of the clergy who participated in the study were overwhelmed by the *adoradores'* devotion and love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in that it changed the way they pray. Six of the seven had a sense of awe and inspiration regarding how humbly they present themselves to others, with two of them saying that we should, as priests, have their level of devotional prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

These clerics proclaim that the *adoradores* exemplify their baptismal priestly duties through their actions within the community. In general, the clerics noted that they are good examples to follow, adding that they are all about family and community and that they are not only examples for the laity but for clergy as well. Two members of the clergy asked themselves whether they could ever attain the level of devotion that the *adoradores* have for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

### **My Experiences with Nocturnal Adoration and Its Members as Clergy and an *Adorador***

My experiences with *adoración nocturna* and its members started inadvertently, after attending an ACTS retreat. My first ACTS retreat led to being involved in as many church ministries as possible and finally becoming a permanent deacon, where I was asked to help at an NNAS vigil. This was when I first witnessed men and women so devoted to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament that it made me wonder why I was not as devoted to the Blessed Sacrament as these lay individuals were. I tried to see the Blessed Sacrament as they did but fell short at the beginning. It was not adoration as I knew it; it was much more. This led to my listening to the prayers that came from the NNAS and ANM ritual book and to the *adoradores* as they prayed next to me.

My time in *adoración nocturna* has had its ups and downs. I want to be there for every vigil, but it can be very difficult at times. During the vigil, I may hear a prayer or drift off, or something comes to mind, making me remember that I'm here with others, praying for the good of God's created world. There are times when I wonder what it would be like to attend a vigil without diaconal, observer, or student responsibilities. The idea of just coming in, alongside others, and visiting, listening, and praying without any other responsibilities is something that I long for at times.

I cannot say that participating in *adoración nocturna* has affected my everyday life, as it may have some of the *adoradores*. What I can say is that it has added a new and different spiritual element to my life. As far as members of the larger community are concerned, I don't believe anyone sees me as anything but a deacon.

As a member of the clergy who serves the *adoración nocturna* community, there are some challenges and blessings. A blessing is to be part of a ministry so devoted to the Blessed Sacrament that it reminds me of the message that I should be sharing with others— Christ should be the center of our lives beyond the Church. I have always spent time in adoration, usually alone. In nocturnal adoration, I am surrounded by *adoradores*, but there are times when I feel that I am alone with Christ while surrounded by *adoradores*. It is the *adoradores* who have taught me, through their actions, how I should spend time before the Blessed Sacrament.

The *adoradores* have imprinted on me, as did some of the members of the clergy who were part of this study, the need to pray with Jesus in adoration. The *adoradores* have instructed me through prayers in the ritual of the need to continue to pray for the sins of the world alongside Jesus. I made a promise to pray the Liturgy of the Hours daily when I was ordained. It was my time in *adoración nocturna* that I realized that I was, at times, just going through the motions of praying. I realized the importance of the Liturgy of the Hours due, in part, to ANM, the devotion of the *adoradores*, the prayers in the rituals, and the lessons found in *La Semilla Eucarística*. It is because of these experiences that I no longer rush through the Liturgy of the Hours.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

In Chapter Five, I analyze and interpret the study's findings and draw conclusions related to the thesis argument. This chapter presents a theological reflection on the study's findings and proposes a pastoral response related to the importance of intercultural competence for effective leadership and accompaniment of Hispanic communities. This chapter addresses the need to open the door to solidarity in the hope of encouraging Church leaders, especially clergy, to effectively lead in this time of great political and cultural division within society and the Church. I also share my personal experiences in nocturnal adoration, which began with a request from my pastor to preside over the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. I share what I have learned and how the practice has impacted me as a person and in my role as a permanent deacon in the Catholic Church.

#### First Group of Participants: Laity

Why Adoracion Nocturna Mexicana? "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church" (Colossians 1:24). The lacking in the afflictions of Christ of which Paul speaks is not about Christ but is about his own lacking and that of the church. "The word *thlipsis*,<sup>175</sup> which is never used of Jesus's passion but is regularly used of the hardships of those proclaiming the gospel, suggests that the afflictions were

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<sup>175</sup> From the Greek meaning "tribulation" or "pressure." It refers to the sense of distress, affliction, and suffering.

Paul's, not Christ's."<sup>176</sup> Paul's explanation in his letter to the Colossians is seen in the *adoradores* who have faced hardships and obstacles in their everyday lives and, at times, when proclaiming their faith to friends and families. Several *adoradores* claim to have struggled with their faith at one time or another. The *adoradores* come to adoration out of a need. Most of them came to adoration and eventually to *adoración nocturna* from a need to repair their lives from the damage created by their sins—sins that the *adoradores* openly acknowledge and confess before each vigil. Others were just curious and needed to know what it meant to talk to God.

A few of the *adoradores* claim that they were just far away from God and needed to come back to him. There is an understanding among the *adoradores* that Jesus, through his passion, has brought them closer to God, and it is through their faith in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist that they maintain their prayerful diligence at their monthly vigils and throughout *lo cotidiano*. The *adoradores* have faced an array of obstacles that they have since embraced, knowing that it is these obstacles that make them stronger in the same way Paul explained it to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 12:9). It is with these obstacles that the *adorador* goes out into the world to profess God's love that they experience in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. The *adoradores* are able to find peace mixed with awe and wonderment in *adoración* and other Church activities and in doing so, share this awe and wonderment with others. Like Paul and the Samaritan woman at the well, they, too, have become ministers of God's word in *lo cotidiano*, and, like Paul and the Samaritan woman, they, too, are true evangelizers.

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<sup>176</sup> Raymond Edward Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 880.

There are *adoradores* whose faith journey started at a young age with unfortunate obstacles that plagued them as youth, but who never thought about being unfaithful to God. Due to these types of shared experiences, the *adoradores* bring their children (who are invited to participate in the vigil's rituals) with them to the vigils, claiming that these young members will continue to sustain the Church. These children, boys and girls, are known as *Tarsicios* and *Ineses* (or *Inesitas*), names inspired by Saints Tarcisius and Saint Agnes, martyred children of the early centuries of Christianity. *Tarsicios* and *Inesitas* must be at least eight years old and must have made their first communion. This stage ends at the age of 18. The *Tarsicios* and *Ineses* are often allowed to lead prayers and a decade of the Rosary at the vigils. The *Tarsicios* and *Inesitas* carry their flags in and out of the vigil and are often assigned to carry the candles as well. Their voices are often heard, adding their own intentions during the last hour of the vigil.

The willingness to involve children is a reflection of Jesus's words to the crowd concerning children when Jesus, "taking a child he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it he said to them, 'Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me'" (Mark 9:36-37). During the first hour of the vigil when the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament transpires you will see parents with infants in their strollers, toddlers sleeping on or under the pews, and young children kneeling with Rosaries in hand or hands folded in prayer. This family involvement was noticed by some members of the clergy who were part of this study.

The participants in this study believe that God has called them to be there with Christ for the sake of the world. They believe that they, along with the priest, are able to

sustain the Church with their prayers. It is their time in *adoración* that gives them the strength to persevere against any situation that may come their way. As they put on their *distintivo*, the *adorador* prays for the strength they need with this prayer, “Your yoke is easy, Lord, and your burden is light. Give me your Grace to bear it worthily.”<sup>177</sup>

## Peace

The desire to remain with Jesus and stay awake for just one hour is their goal. The *adoradores* see this as replacing Jesus’s disciples who fell asleep while in the garden. It is who they are, who they have become. This, too, has been witnessed by most of the clergy who participated in this study. While first witnessing the *adoradores*’ rituals at the vigils, many members of the clergy were surprised at their willingness to stay and pray all night.

The members of the clergy know and have felt the peace that comes from being in the presence of Christ. These peaceful experiences came to these clergy members through their spiritual journeys that brought them to the sacrament of ordination, through their formative years, and from being around like-minded people. Unlike the clergy, *adoradores* often came to this Christ-given peace through *thlipsis*-giving experiences and uneducated methods. In ANM, most of those who participated in the study found peace, rest, and comfort from spending time with a merciful and forgiving God. The lessons the *adoradores* have learned and the lessons they can share with those who have some theological knowledge come from living their faith in *lo cotidiano*.

The *adoradores* know that the feelings of peace, rest, and comfort come from the true presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. In Jesus’s presence, the

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<sup>177</sup> *Ritual Oficial De La Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, 2014th ed. (Mexico, D.F.: ADNOMEX, A. C, n.d.), 47.

*adoradores* also have a sense of healing: physically, mentally, and spiritually. These feelings are far greater than just knowing and believing in Christ; it is a belonging and a cherished experience of Christ's love and protection. There is an awe of being in the presence of faithful men that some members would never have believed existed. A feeling of awe overcomes them, knowing that, although they will be there all night, they can go to work the next day if they must, feeling rested. A knowing that they can go spend the day with family or serve in other church ministries which is often the case. There is, among the *adoradores*, a wonderment of feeling alive, filled with the Holy Spirit and God's love.

The knowledge of a merciful God is always on the mind of the *adoradores*. This wonderment and awe come from a fear of the Lord and are a reflection of what is found in Isaiah 11:2-3: "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord." The *adorador* draws inspiration from knowing that there is a God with a love far greater than anything this world has to give. They are not afraid of the Lord, but they fear disappointing him or falling short of the responsibilities that they have been called to fulfill, much like the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7-29). The *adorador*, like the Samaritan woman at the well, feared what the people said about them, and they are often treated indifferently. It was when she and they realized that they had nothing to fear that they were able to go and evangelize.

Pope Francis, in his General Audience on June 11, 2014, explained that fear of the Lord is to follow him humbly and obediently, like a child who knows he is loved. One who fears the Lord is not submissive but courageous. Fear of the Lord is a gift, according

to Pope Francis.<sup>178</sup> This is the image that the *adorador* reveals through his actions in *lo cotidiano* and throughout the ANM vigil.

The *adoradores* who come together once a month to kneel in prayer with our Lord are not afraid; there is nothing to fear, according to the *adorador*. The *adorador* will stop and pray with Jesus whenever possible throughout the month by stopping at any Church knowing that Jesus is there in the Tabernacle. The *adorador* sees this action as an opportunity that not all people have, such as those who can no longer leave their homes for some reason. The *adorador* claims it is not an inconvenience but a time to gain strength due to daily struggles, or a time to express one's gratitude.

### **In the Presence of a Loving, Merciful, Listening God**

It is a knowing and an understanding that before them is a merciful God who brings the *adorador* to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. For the *adorador*, Jesus is right there within reach, just as Jesus was with the Samaritan woman. It is this tangible presence of Jesus in the Eucharist that they see and trust. They know that Jesus is there, waiting to hear and answer their prayers. *The adorador* prays for the needs of the world because they believe they were called by Jesus to do so. They do not know the needs of those for whom they are praying; they just know that there are needs—needs that Jesus knows very well. When praying for themselves, it is so that they do not fall away from God. They feel that when they need him for their own personal reasons, they can feel his

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<sup>178</sup> “General Audience of 11 June 2014: Francis,” General Audience of 11 June 2014 | Francis, June 11, 2014, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140611\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140611_udienza-generale.html).

presence. They feel like they, too, can lean at Jesus's side, just as his beloved disciple did (John 13:23). They not only imagine Jesus's physical presence, but they experience it.

### **God's Shared Strength**

ANM is a source of strength for the *adoradores*. It builds in them confidence in God's power and confidence that God is a treasure that He himself gave to everyone. The *adoradores* treasure and cherish this gift, knowing that our merciful God offered his forgiveness through his Son; therefore, the *adorador* prays in reparation for all the sins of the world alongside Jesus.

Praying before the Blessed Sacrament, the *adorador* receives the strength needed to continue in this world—a strength that helps them spread God's love through their actions, their testimonies, and, more importantly, through their combined prayers. The *adoradores* feel safe and loved while they discuss their problems with Jesus. For the *adorador*, Jesus is with them, just as he was in the garden of Gethsemani with his disciples and with the Samaritan woman. For the *adoradores*, there is a similarity between them and Jesus's disciples.

### ***Lo Cotidiano***

For the *adorador*, *adoración nocturna* influences their lives and *lo cotidiano*, beginning with their families. Clergy who participated in this study agree that they are family oriented. The *adoradores* claim that the children will follow them. The influence that *adoración nocturna* has on the *adoradores* goes beyond the family. Their experiences in *adoración nocturna* have increased their daily prayer lives, encouraged them to pray more often, and helped them show patience at home, at work, and in all aspects of *lo cotidiano*. ANM has made them more aware of their actions, words, and

general behavior. Their awareness of their sins has become greater; they no longer justify their sinful actions. When this type of knowledge enters their hearts, their sins are more painful to them, and they understand that reparation has to be made for the damage their sin has done to Jesus's heart.

*Adoración nocturna* gives the *adorador* a joy that can only come from being with Jesus. They are a reflection of God's love through their everyday lives, as seen by those around them. The *adoradores* believe that it is their responsibility to make others aware of the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist. They are ambassadors of Jesus in this world, and they eagerly desire to express Jesus's love to all those they encounter.

Although the *adoradores* pray for the communities of which they are a part and for the world in general, they are mostly a humble community and understand and feel that they are not there to be seen. Some *adoradores* choose to wear their *distintivo* when they attend any Eucharistic celebration, claiming it helps them make others aware of *adoración nocturna*. Some *adoradores* believe that they are recognized as *adoradores* by their actions. They do not want to be seen as an *adorador* but a witness to Christ. When asked whether they were recognized as *adoradores*, the *adoradores* thought long and hard before responding. Members of the clergy who participated in the study claim that the *adoradores* are a humble people and noncontentious in nature, but willing participants of the greater community.

### **Perceptions of Priests' Involvement**

The *adoradores* all agree that the priest should encourage others to participate in *adoración nocturna* and should support *adoración nocturna* with more enthusiasm. The *adoradores* claim that the clergy fall short in their involvement with ANM. Those

members of ANM who started in Mexico, including the clergy, spoke of the priests and bishops in Mexico as being 100% supportive of *adoración nocturna*.

Overall, the *adoradores* were somewhat reluctant to say anything directly negative about the priests regarding how they interact or see *adoración nocturna* and its members. The two new pastors at parishes where *adoración nocturna* is present are not at all familiar with *adoración nocturna* and have not given any indication of wanting to get involved (only one of two agreed to be interviewed). They make themselves available if no deacon is there.

The previous pastors of parishes mentioned earlier were very beneficial in getting *adoración nocturna* started at their parishes and were praised by all the *adoradores* while the new pastors were spoken about carefully. When asked whether they were supportive or unsupportive, their responses were carefully worded so as not to offend anyone. It sounded as if most of the *adoradores* were making excuses for the priests' non-involvement. An *adorador* who was not from the diocese where this study took place said that there are three or four priests who do not support *adoración nocturna* in his diocese. They agree that the new priests could be more supportive, present, and attentive while at the same time claiming that all the deacons are supportive and do good. An *adorador* from one of these two parishes claimed that he felt dismissed by their new pastor as he tried to explain *adoración nocturna*. The *adorador* claimed that the pastor listened but made no effort to hear what was being said, causing the *adorador* to leave the meeting feeling hurt and dismissed. A few of the members of the clergy who participated in the study claimed that their busy schedule is not a good excuse for not

attending ANM. One *adorador* felt that clergy who are not supportive may be motivated by racial prejudice due to it being *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*.

### **Second Group of Participants: Clergy**

Fr. Pedro and Fr. Marcos have known and experienced *adoración nocturna* for over 30 years each, and both are familiar with the U.S. and Mexican versions of *adoración nocturna*. Fr. Marcos is also familiar with the Colombian version of *adoración nocturna*, which he claims is the same as ANM. The members of the clergy who participated in this study have witnessed and acknowledged the grand devotion that the *adoradores* have for the Blessed Sacrament. Although the members of the clergy who participated in this study are familiar with ANM, a few have only assisted in NNAS vigils. The clergy agree that the *adoradores*' commitment to *adoración nocturna* is powerful and uplifting and that the *adorador* has a deep reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. The clergy also agree that the *adoradores* are focused, dedicated, inviting, organized, prayerful, humble, family-oriented, involved with the extended community, and living out their priestly office as baptized Catholics. These members of the clergy have had positive experiences with the *adoradores*. The overall demeanor when speaking about the *adoradores* revealed their respect for the *adoradores*, at times raising their hands in gestures of power, pride, and love. Their voices, some with a slight quiver, gave away their true sentiment toward the *adoradores*, calling them soldiers or warriors.

All of the clergy felt that their busy schedules restricted their time at the vigils, yet at the same time, most of them claim that their involvement with the *adoradores* has helped them spiritually and pastorally, going as far as saying that they have become more aware of their daily prayer life and that there is a need to pray as earnestly as the

*adoradores*. Several of them have made some effort to stay for longer periods of time at the vigil, but admit that it is hard, once again due to their busy schedules. When Fr. Pedro was assigned as a chaplain for ANM over 30 years ago, he would hear confession after the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Fr. Matthew has thought about sending the penitents to spend time before the Blessed Sacrament as their penance. He believes that spending time before the Blessed Sacrament for penance would be the best way to show remorse for one's sins.

### **Blessings and Challenges**

Fr. Marcos claimed that priests who were not supportive of nocturnal adoration are concerned about logistics. They believe that the unlocked doors all night and the extended use of Church facilities could pose a problem, especially if the Church was not ready for Sunday services. Trying to broaden the cultural perspective in multicultural parishes is also a challenge, according to those interviewed. Although the NNAS is bilingual, it is predominantly Spanish speaking. Spanish was the first language of the *adoradores*, who were only familiar with NNAS, which can be a challenge in multicultural communities. Fr. Marcos has experienced some members of the clergy finding *adoración nocturna* too complicated. He also added that it is challenging to try to convince these same members of the clergy how beneficial *adoración nocturna* and the *adoradores* can be to the greater community. For the clergy, to give more than one hour to *adoración nocturna* can be challenging; however, at the same time, it is understood that it must be a challenge for the *adoradores* as well. One concern is more personal for some members of the clergy: there may be a possibility that this newfound praying practice that some members of the clergy have embraced would fade away after being

reassigned. Another concern is that the *adoradores* may be overzealous and somewhat demanding when pushing their agenda.

Overzealous *adoradores* from the parish where this study took place sometimes use the Blessed Sacrament and the title “*adorador*” as an excuse or a way to get others to see things their way, at times holding their promise as an *adorador* against them if they miss a vigil or choose not to attend vigils anymore. For the overzealous members, everyone who made the promise must attend all vigils, no excuses. These same individuals, usually one of the directors, tend to ignore the schedule, making scheduled events go one to two hours longer than necessary by adding prayers, found in the ritual, that do not follow the order of the event and are read out of context. They also try using the Blessed Sacrament as an excuse to ignore the pastor’s logistical guidance concerning other church events and the liturgical calendar. Although few, these *adoradores* claim that they need to follow what is in the ritual book, which follows Mexico’s liturgical calendar, and which does not always coincide with the U.S. liturgical calendar or the parishes’ events calendar.

These same overzealous members are adamant in bringing members who have decided to stop attending ANM back to ANM, claiming that they made a promise to Jesus. On several occasions, these same members have wrongfully tried to use me to influence others by exploiting my office as a deacon, claiming they have to listen to me because I am a deacon. Some members of the board of directors have made me feel as if I am there to do their bidding because I am an *adorador*. As a member of the clergy and an *adorador*, I am often caught in the middle, listening to some members of the board of directors complain about the pastor, and the pastor complain about the *adoradores*. At

this point, I must add that most of the *adoradores* are not overzealous members of ANM and only show an interest in participating in the vigils. Most of the members are unaware of the conflict that occurs between the board of directors and the pastor.

Blessings seem to outweigh the challenges; the first blessing would be the *adoradores* themselves. A blessing noticed by clergy who have spent time with the *adoradores* at the vigils is their willingness to participate fully at the vigils. Every *adorador* wants to participate fully in the experience. The clergy have witnessed and seen the *adoradores* present themselves as Catholics should present themselves in the eyes of the Church. According to the clergy, they are a thriving community, alive and devoted to any ministry to which they belong. The members of the clergy agree that the *adoradores* are inviting, evangelizing, and an inspiration to watch. The organization is well organized, self-sustaining, and a good example of how one should practice one's faith. The *adorador* is rarely seen outside of the family unit and are perceived as communitarian. Fr. Luke says of the *adoradores* that "the transformation that took place in their lives is very clear." The clergy seem to agree that the *adoradores* are a true blessing to the larger community.

### ***Adoradores' Effects on the Clergy***

Members of the clergy interviewed claim that the *adoradores* have positively affected them spiritually and culturally. The *adoradores* are a community that brings joy and uplifts their priesthood; it has introduced them to a quality spiritual life. Seeing men and women so devoted to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament has left some of them in awe. Seeing a culturally enhanced zeal for Jesus, as well as a deep personal love and visible reverence for Jesus, is an impactful experience for most of the clergy who participated in

this study. The *adoradores* give testimony to how Catholics should see and give praise to God, according to most of the clergy. Fr. Marcos is the only priest who claims to have taken the time to stay the whole night at the ANM vigils, saying, in part, that “staying the night with the Lord is impactful.” He gave the impression that the *adoradores* need to see the clergy at the vigils even though it is difficult due to their Sunday schedules. Fr. Marcos added that although one may be tired from staying at the vigil, one must serve at the Masses, claiming that you must serve because things happen, and you may not have another opportunity to serve at a Mass again.

### **The Samaritan Woman**

The Samaritan woman at the well that we read about in the Gospel of John, chapter 4, verses 7 – 29, came to mind as I was interviewing the *adoradores*. The idea of being known and loved by Jesus, as expressed in the story of the Samaritan woman, is also expressed in the *lo cotidiano* of the *adoradores*. And like the Samaritan woman, they have an overwhelming desire to evangelize. The Hispanic community is often seen as the other, much like the Samaritan woman who was shunned by those of her community. The *adorador* knows and understands very well that God knows what is in their hearts and all that they have done, both good and bad. They also understand that it does not affect Jesus’s love for them.

Jesus came into this world and presented himself to the Samaritan woman by asking for a drink (John 4:7). Jesus came to her as if she was the only one who mattered to him at that moment in time and had, with her, “the longest conversation Jesus had with

anyone in the bible.”<sup>179</sup> The *adorador*, when in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, feels that one-on-one with Jesus and can spend as much time with him as they desire. The *adorador* knows and has experienced the power of God being with them not only at the vigils but also in *lo cotidiano*. With the Samaritan woman, “Jesus had found a worthy conversation partner. Instead of drawing water for him, she drew truth from him, the kind of truth that would change the lives of her and her people,”<sup>180</sup> the same truth that is found among the *adoradores* at their ANM vigils and *lo cotidiano*. Jesus made the Samaritan woman and, by proxy, the *adorador*, a Woman (people) of Worth (Proverbs 31:10-31).

Michael Peppard compares the woman at the well to Mary when she receives the message that she will conceive and bear a son, which he derives from different traditional versions of the narrative story. Both women are at a well, and both will receive life-giving water<sup>181</sup> that they are willing to give to others. The *adorador* also wants to share that living water with everyone willing to receive it. Jesus surprises the woman at the well by asking for a drink of water, an inconceivable request, especially from a Jew. The *adorador* is also surprised by Jesus, not because he is present and gives them what they need without being asked, but because of his endless, merciful love.

“‘Living water’ is a metaphor for Jesus’s Spirit-empowered wisdom teaching, which cleanses and gives life to those who accept it. This understanding is in line with

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<sup>179</sup> “Bashaw, Jennifer Garcia. ‘THE WOMAN AT THE WELL AND JESUS.’ In *Scapegoats: The Gospel through the Eyes of Victims*, 219–42. Augsburg Fortress, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1x67d49.16>,” n.d., 219.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>181</sup> “Peppard, Michael. ‘A Woman at a Well.’ In *The World’s Oldest Church: Bible, Art, and Ritual at Dura-Europos, Syria*, 155–201. Yale University Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1kft8j0.10>,” n.d.

the rest of the gospel.”<sup>182</sup> In receiving or accepting this living water, the *adorador*, like the Samaritan woman, knows and believes that Jesus is the Messiah. This belief is amplified in the actions of *lo cotidiano* of the *adorador*, who, like the Samaritan woman, can now “focus on the future.”<sup>183</sup> For both the Samaritan woman and the *adorador*, the future consists of following Christ and being evangelizers of the true presence of Jesus in their communities through word and example. “The Samaritan woman becomes the earliest and most successful evangelist in all of the Gospels. Her story serves as an inspiration to all Jesus-followers who will go on to communicate the good news of Jesus with others.”<sup>184</sup> It was not the disciples who brought the good news of Jesus to the Samaritans, but the woman. The *adorador* is not an ordained minister, but a laity, who may not fully understand the needs of the people in the pews as Jesus does, but understands that there is a need and is willing to spread the good news of the wonders of Jesus Christ.

The meeting at the well is a nuptial theme in scripture. “In Genesis 29, Jacob meets his future wife, Rachel, at a well at midday. A generation before, Abraham’s servant had found Rebekah at a well before he brought her home with him to marry Isaac (Gen 24). Even Moses met his wife, Zipporah, at a well in Exodus 2.”<sup>185</sup> The meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well is a betrothal between Jesus and his church outside of his own Jewish community, which extends to a metaphorical betrothal to the *adorador*

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<sup>182</sup> “Bennema, Cornelis. ‘The Samaritan Woman: An Unexpected Bride.’ In *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John*, 2nd Ed., 161–74. Augsburg Fortress, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.Ct9m0t70.14.>,” n.d., 163.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>184</sup> Bashaw, Jennifer Garcia. ‘THE WOMAN AT THE WELL AND JESUS.’ In *Scapegoats: The Gospel through the Eyes of Victims*, 219–42. Augsburg Fortress, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.Ct9m0t70.14.>,” n.d., 233.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 228.

and the church of which he is a part. “The woman’s abandoned water jar, her testimony, and the Samaritans’ confession (which most probably includes hers) shows that she has drunk of the ‘living water’ and consequently becomes a source of living water for her community (cf. 7:37-38).”<sup>186</sup> The water jar is part of her everyday life, just as the *adorador* leaves *lo cotidiano* once a month to build the strength needed to become living water for their community. “The woman’s belief and her expression of discipleship (she testifies and ‘gathers’ the village) are two integrated aspects of salvation—her discipleship is her belief-response.”<sup>187</sup> The *adorador*’s belief-response is in their words and actions, as this thesis project has demonstrated.

In the gospel, the Samaritans are often the heroes: “the good Samaritan, the Samaritan leper,”<sup>188</sup> those relieved of demons (Luke 8:2), those that Jesus healed but could not keep quiet, (Mark 7:36), even those who he just entered into their lives (Luke 19:1-10) all of whom became his followers, evangelizers, and examples for the *adoradores* who, like the Samaritan woman, are also seen as outsiders. Jesus, too, was an outsider when he met the woman at the well, a Jew in Samaria. This is a lesson of inclusion. “Jesus finds acceptance not among his own but with a Samaritan woman. The Samaritan woman in our story is an outsider like Jesus, but in an intersectional way.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Bennema, Cornelis. ‘The Samaritan Woman: An Unexpected Bride.’ In *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John*, 2nd Ed., 161–74. Augsburg Fortress, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.Ctt9m0t70.14.>,” n.d., 169.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>188</sup> Bashaw, Jennifer Garcia. ‘THE WOMAN AT THE WELL AND JESUS.’ In *Scapegoats: The Gospel through the Eyes of Victims*, 219–42. Augsburg Fortress, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.Ctv1x67d49.16.>,” n.d., 221.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 223.

## To be Known Is to be Loved

The Samaritan woman and the *adorador* have shown what it means to be known and to be loved by their testimonies and their fearless actions in *lo cotidiano*. It was not until the Samaritan woman realized that Jesus loved her and that her past did not matter to Jesus that she found the courage she needed to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. That knowledge of being loved made her forget or dismiss what people thought about her, and she went back to her village and proclaimed the good news of the One to come (John 4:25). The *adoradores*, the Samaritan woman, and many individuals want others, especially clergy, to see them for who they are, not just a nameless individual in the pews. Both the *adoradores* and the Samaritan woman need to be known and, therefore, loved, giving them the confidence and courage to proclaim the good news. The Samaritan woman stood before Jesus; the *adoradores* kneel before the visible presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar and know that he is the Messiah. Both the Samaritan woman and the *adorador* fully understand what it means to be known by a merciful God and therefore loved. Neither the Samaritan woman nor the *adorador* wants to keep Jesus's love for themselves, so they go and share it with all those they encounter. As some of the *adoradores* have claimed, they are not afraid to enter their community wearing the *distintivo* that shows who they are and creates inquirers who want to know what it is they are wearing. They are willing to profess, through their testimony, their love for the One who loved them first.

The *adoradores* and the Samaritan woman needed a little push, an invitation, not only to spend time with Christ but also to guide others to do the same. It is that nudge that inspires the *adoradores* to come together once a month and pray with Jesus for the good

of all God's created world. According to members of the clergy who were part of this study, the *adoradores* have more to offer than some ministers have to give. For the clergy not to make an effort to know those they minister to can be damaging, just as it was for the *adorador* who left his meeting with the new pastor feeling unheard and dismissed. When Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (John 13:34), this was not meant for a select few but for all people. This is a sentiment all *adoradores* express at the vigils and in *lo cotidiano*. The *adoradores* express this knowing and loving through the prayers found in the ritual. Their praying for all of creation may very well be an example of intercultural competence; they exclude no one in their prayers and, in doing so, love unconditionally, as Jesus commanded all people to do.

The *adoradores* pray throughout the night for all the world, for those who don't know God, those who have turned away from God, and those who do not know how to pray; the list of those for whom they pray is extensive. These prayers found in the ritual are how the *adoradores* show their love for one another. Their prayers are for all people. While it is impossible to know all people, the *adorador* loves them whether they know them personally or not. The *adoradores* know and understand that God loves everyone, and that is all that matters to them. The Samaritan woman must have realized that as well. Why else would she have returned to her community with such haste that she left her water jug behind? The *adorador* is faithful to the call to pray for one hour, as Jesus asked his disciples to do in the garden of Gethsemane. The *adoradores* stand watch with Jesus as soldiers, as warriors, and in doing so, find the peace that Christ offered his people

when he said, “Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid” (John 14:27).

“Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid” is what the *adoradores* experience in ANM. It is a sentiment that they all express. The *adoradores* are willing to stay the night, knowing that they have nothing to fear. During the changing of the guard, they march in, kneeling down on both knees, placing their foreheads on the floor, and professing their love for Jesus. By prostrating themselves, they express their trust in God, knowing that God will protect them as they lie in such a vulnerable state.

### **Reparation and Atonement**

The *adoradores* used the words *reparation* or *atonement* several times during our interviews. For the *adorador*, it is necessary to ask for forgiveness, to make atonements for our sins and those of the whole world. The *adorador*, like Moses and Aaron, who were called to make a purification offering to make an atonement for themselves, their families, and all the Israelites (Leviticus 16:2-28), the *adorador*, in union with Christ, offers reparation and atonement for God’s people and those of the whole world through their ANM prayers. There are prayers for reparation in the ritual, *Acto de reparación al Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* (Act of Reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus), which is prayed at every *turno* of the vigil. The *adoradores* pray in part, “Jesus, your heart is wounded by our sins. Grant that, in rendering you homage of love, we may be able to make atonement for the sins of the world.”<sup>190</sup> They acknowledge the pain they have done to Jesus and sorrowfully continue praying, “With our hearts filled with sorrow and pain

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<sup>190</sup> *Ritual Oficial De La Adoración Nocturna Mexicana*, 2014th ed. (Mexico, D.F.: ADNOMEX, A. C, n.d.), 72.

for the ingratitude of sinful humanity; but with infinite mercy, allow us tonight to unite our mournful cries to yours, our tears to your tears that flowed for us from your eyes on the mount of olives, to the blood that you lovingly shed on the cross.”<sup>191</sup> After offering prayers for all those who turn their backs on Jesus, they add, “May the sorrowful cry of atonement and sincere repentance of our contrite hearts rise up to you, Lord.”<sup>192</sup>

The *adorador* knows and understands that sin separates us from God, but it does not cut us off from God. The *adoradores* are asked to go to confession before the vigil to make atonement for their own sins. Throughout the night, at the different *turnos*, the *adoradores* ask God to forgive all the sins of the world to repair the damage that sin created. Jesus did this for us with his passion, yet man continues to sin and is in continuous need of reparation. It is the intent of the *adoradores* to make reparation for everyone by praying alongside and in union with Jesus, much like Jesus and his disciples did in the garden of Gethsemane. The *adorador* understands the importance of prayer, as did Peter when he said, “Let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter, 4:8). The *adoradores* live out Peter’s guidance to pray by asking for forgiveness for themselves and for the sins of the whole world with confidence that our merciful God will hear their intercessions.

It is with an overwhelming desire for forgiveness that the *adorador* approaches the Blessed Sacrament of the altar with an understanding that “God agrees to accept as reparation a sinless human life, provided that it is lived with the intention of making reparation for the sins of others.”<sup>193</sup> The *adorador*, during the final hour of the vigil,

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>193</sup> “McNaughton, David. ‘Reparation and Atonement.’ *Religious Studies* 28, No. 2 (1992): 129–44. <http://Www.Jstor.Org/Stable/20019535>,” n.d.

offers up in prayer their own personal intercessions with a desire not to sin anymore. It is these intercessions that help them get through *lo cotidiano*, these daily experiences that often bring individuals to their knees.

The question remains: How can ministers, priests, deacons, and church leaders know what those they minister to need if they do not take the time to know them? To know and understand those we minister to, we must follow Jesus's example of taking the time to have a conversation with them, as he did with the Samaritan woman. How can they truly love those to whom they minister if they don't take the time to know them? I am familiar with members of the clergy who believe that they have all the answers, often arriving with boxed answers to questions they have not yet heard. There was a time that I, too, knew the answers to everyone's problems. I truly believed that I and those I was ordained with could change the world by showing our parishioners what we knew. After my ordination, I came to realize I knew nothing. After getting involved with the Hispanic community, I realized I knew less than the nothing I knew before. What changed? I started doing what my father used to tell me: When you listen to others who are trying to instruct you, you may just learn something. My father was right. Today, I hear the voice of my father when I hear Pope Francis's message to our church leaders: to learn from the people.

The clergy who took the time to see and learn from the *adorador* were in awe of them. They saw a reverence for our Lord that they had not seen in others or in themselves. They grew spiritually and openly acknowledged the impact the *adorador* had on their lives and on the lives of the parish community. The clergy who choose not to take the time to tend to their flock miss out on who the *adoradores* are and how they

impact those around them. They only see the side of the story they created, one that is often based on prejudicial ideology. It was only when the members of the clergy took seriously their vocation as being in the feet of Jesus that they witnessed what Jesus sees in those who are his *ovejitas*.

### **The Importance of Prayer**

I started to listen so that I could minister to people as they needed to be ministered to. By participating with them, the listening and paying attention became tangible. Pope Francis's message is to pay attention. The *ovejitas* taught me how to pray deeply and why we need to pray deeply. When members of ANM come together as family, with their families, to pray, they fulfill Jesus's call to pray together (Matthew 18:20), they become each other's two or three, and they find Jesus in their midst. All members of the church should be inseparable; in other words, they should be faithful to each other, and this can only be accomplished if an attempt to know others so as to love others is made.

According to some of the *adoradores*, praying from the ritual elevates their prayers to those of the clergy. Some members of the clergy, as I have mentioned, believe that they fall short in their prayer life after getting to know and spending time with the *adoradores*. It was obvious, through the interviews, that prayer was very important to the *adoradores*. The *adorador* believes that praying before the Blessed Sacrament is universally helpful. They themselves have seen what prayer can do for oneself and for those around them. There is a fear among some *adoradores* that if they do not come to the vigils and pray that their absence in prayer may not stop any danger that their prayers were intended to stop.

## **My Time with the *Adoradores***

Given the nature of this thesis, I now ask myself if I should continue serving as a deacon at the parish to which I am not assigned, but where ANM is practiced. The deacon and the pastor at that parish like the idea of my helping them with ANM because it lightens their load. My struggle with this is that they say, you're here, you can take care of the exposition and the benediction. They often assume that I will. As the deacon always says, You're here. Why not? The question remains: How can they know those to whom they are ministering if they don't take the time to know them? It was my involvement with ANM that got me so interested not only in nocturnal adoration but also in becoming an *adorador*. I can also say and understand that nocturnal adoration is not for everyone.

I would like for individuals, especially the clergy, to make an effort to know those to whom they minister, those who are part of the community to which they are assigned, for the purpose of being better ministers to all the different ministries of their parish. My involvement as a deacon first and as an *adorador* second allowed me to meet people so devoted to the Blessed Sacrament that it 1) made me want to be like them, 2) caused me to wonder why they are not known as they should be known, and 3) questioned why some members of the clergy find the *adoradores* burdensome. Granted, some ministries are more troublesome than others, as Fr. Luke pointed out. I must add that I wonder, at times, whether my questioning my diaconal service is a result of wanting the assigned clergy to get involved. By serving in their stead, am I creating an injustice to both the clergy assigned to that parish and to the *adoradores*?

At a time in the Catholic Church where “four in ten believe you can be a ‘good Catholic’ without believing that in the Mass, the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus,”<sup>194</sup> it is reassuring to see individuals who truly believe in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, individuals who have a great desire to share this experience with others. If four in ten Catholics do not believe in the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, shouldn’t this ministry be utilized to bring that truth to those who question Jesus’s true presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar? Through their shared stories, one can see that they are willing to participate in sharing Jesus’s message of love for God’s created world. They are the metaphorical Samaritan woman who goes into the communities after spending time with Jesus to express the love and mercy that one can gain from knowing Jesus.

I attended vigils at five different parishes: three in Austin, Texas, and two in San Antonio, Texas. All but one were ANM sections. The *adoradores* at all five parishes shared similar stories concerning their love for Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, their journey toward *adoración nocturna*, and their respect for clergy. Their stories are similar in that several *adoradores*’ journeys began at a young age with the help of grandfathers, uncles, and other family members. Several of these claim that they traveled several miles, some walking, to get to a vigil. For some, once they arrived in the United States, it took some time before finding a parish that had ANM. This time away from *adoración nocturna*, from Jesus Christ, was a concern for them.

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<sup>194</sup> Dinges, William D. ‘Catholicism Today: ADRIFT AND/OR ADJUSTING.’ In *The Future of Catholicism in America*, Edited by Patricia O’Connell Killen and Mark Silk, 27–73. Columbia University Press, 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/Kill19148.5>,” n.d., 45.

For those born in the United States, their journey was slightly different. Some were influenced by family, others were invited by *adoradores* at the parish they attended, and still others came out of curiosity, a need for peace, a desire to get rid of their personal demons, and religious retreats. One common denominator is that, whether born in the United States or Mexico, they all love Christ and want to spend the night in prayer with him. They all have a peace that they themselves have trouble putting into words. Several agree that the *desvelada* is trivial, and they get the rest they need to make it through the next day. They also have a desire to tell everyone their story and want everyone to experience *adoración nocturna*. It is evident through their shared stories that the Samaritan woman's inspiration was present. They all seem to have been called by someone in the village who was bringing them the good news of the One who was to come.

At two of the Austin parishes, the newcomers, or those who were visiting, were asked to introduce themselves. It was during these self-introductions that I met individuals from Mexico visiting family in the United States, individuals from other U.S. cities, and, at times, *adoradores* from different parishes within the same city who, for whatever reason, missed the vigil at their own parish. There always seem to be *distintivos* from U.S. sections at the Mexican versions of *adoración nocturna* and vice-versa, a testimony to their promise to attend a vigil once a month. Although it is common to see members of both ANM and NNAS attend the others vigil, they adamantly defend their desired section. Some *adoradores*, including two members of the clergy, claim that the ANM rituals are more poetic and closer to what nocturnal adoration should be, while members of NNAS claim that their version is more inclusive.

The pastors at the Austin parishes seem to be more involved with *adoración nocturna*. They gave reflections on *La Semilla Eucarística* before the vigils began. One pastor interrupted the meeting and asked the *adoradores* to devote an hour of prayer for “Right to Life” at one of the abortion clinics in that area. The *adoradores* at all the parishes also discussed how the pandemic changed the presence of the community, in that some got comfortable staying at home and have not found their way back. The community was encouraged to find ways to bring people back, not only to nocturnal adoration but to the Church, Mass, and so on.

At the third Austin parish, after introducing myself as a deacon, I was invited to speak on that same night. One of the directors quickly asked me to give a presentation on the importance of adoration as their meeting was about to begin. After my presentation, I was asked by some of the *adoradores* if I was moving to that parish. At another Austin parish, they asked me to come back and give the religious classes a presentation on the Blessed Sacrament. This was yet another sign of the need for members of the clergy to be present.

When the *adoradores* start gathering for the vigil, and often throughout the night, they open up to me; they want to talk, and do talk, about anything. They often ask for added prayers for friends or family, even at the parishes where I was only visiting. Once they know you are clergy who are willing to spend time with them, they seem to want to spend time with you and talk. They want to tell their story, as many of us do. They often share their life’s journey with me, sitting next to their wives and children, hiding nothing, an open book, as the saying goes.

At each of these events, I am always amazed that everyone will stand and take their turn willingly to read during the vigil, even if they are not fully literate and often struggle with reading. It has been my experience that in these communities, many of them struggle with the readings, yet they stand willingly and read, and everyone else listens while kneeling patiently in prayer alongside them. Many times, as the reader struggles with a word, you can hear an individual sitting next to the reader whisper to the reader the text or word with which they are struggling, as they have done for me. This is a true testament of their devotion to Christ in the Eucharist and their wanting to be part of this blessed experience. I often see that the *adoradores*' demeanor and temperaments are a reflection of the beatitudes found in the gospels of Luke and Matthew. They mourn for the sins against God, are considered humble (meek) by the clergy, hunger and thirst for righteousness and mercy, and desire a clean heart, and, by their actions, are seen as peacemakers. It is their hope and desire that they and all those for whom they pray are able to enter, one day, into the kingdom of heaven, and they believe that all are children of God.

### **Intercultural Competence**

Long before the idea of my being a deacon entered my mind, the RCIA team at St. Helena Catholic Church thought it would be a good idea to introduce the students to the different ministries of the church. Each ministry was asked to bring snacks for that day and talk about their ministry and its involvement in the church. Every ministry I approached was willing to come and introduce their ministry at the beginning of the class, except the *Guadalupanos*. At that parish, they were not a physical presence like other ministries. They, like the other ministries, brought snacks but just dropped them off

early and left. When I asked them why they could not stay and introduce themselves, they said that it would interfere with their Rosary time. I explained that we didn't need everyone, just one or two people, but they said we all need to be there for the rosary. I did not understand at the time and let it go. It was after getting involved with ANM that it all made sense. Like the *adoradores*, the *Guadalupanos* at that parish are very devoted to their prayer life. I believe that if I had taken the time to ask if they could come at their convenience, they may have found some time to be there for the catechumens and candidates. I failed to listen and missed the opportunity to get to know them and who they are.

Members of the clergy who made an effort to spend time with the *adoradores* know the men and women who are called *adoradores* and have had their lives enriched by them. Some members of the clergy interviewed were filled with the same excitement that Mary of Magdala brought to Jesus's disciples when she brought them the news of Jesus's resurrection (Matthew 28:8). It was evident that the news that the Samaritan woman brought to the villagers was exciting because they followed her back to Jesus. If the clergy take the time to listen and sit with the *adoradores* and witness for themselves the *adoradores'* devotional practice of praying before the Blessed Sacrament, they may be able to see the love the *adorador* has for our Lord. The clergy may come to understand why this practice of adoration is important to the *adorador*. According to the clergy, they bring to the community a Eucharistic awareness of the power that comes from praying before the Blessed Sacrament. The *adorador* is willing to run back, like the Samaritan woman, and share with their community and church leaders the power of their prayers that emulates Jesus as he prays for all people.

Pope Francis's message of solidarity is emulated through the prayers of the *adorador* as seen in their night of prayerful intercession. Pope Francis's passing on April 21, 2025, has only solidified his call for solidarity and inculturation through his message and those he appointed to serve as cardinals. Since his passing, his message of solidarity has been broadcast through various news media. There are over seventy nations represented by the conclave of Cardinals, many of whom Pope Francis appointed, making the Church more inclusive, and almost twice the number of nations represented when he was elected pope. Pope Francis chose to put the most vulnerable, the non-theologians, front and center through his message. The non-theologians are what the Catholic Church is made of; they are the majority. I have mentioned several times in this project what Pope Francis called church leaders to do. I have expressed my thoughts and those of the clergy who participated in this project regarding how the *adorador* has influenced their lives. In many ways, these members of the clergy emulate the idea that Pope Francis put into practice himself: to listen and learn from the most vulnerable, those who sit in the pews.

Intercultural competence is not new. Abraham was told that he would be the father of many nations (Genesis 17:4-8). From the beginning, God wanted his creation to be united. At Pentecost, everyone heard the same message in their own language for a reason, and that was to bring all nations together in solidarity through his respectful message of inclusivity. Jesus gives us a lesson of inclusion when he and the Samaritan woman at the well talk at length. The trouble with all of this began at creation when we first met a self-serving serpent who introduced greed and a self-serving ideology into the world. People want things done in a manner that pleases and is beneficial to themselves

and like-minded people. It is seen throughout the world and in ministries within the Church. I cannot remember when or where I first heard this saying: If someone does something in a way that irritates you, the way you would do it will irritate them. Could this knowledge be a tool for understanding that differing opinions do not always make one method or idea right or wrong, just different? Traveling north, south, east, or west on a circle will bring you back to where you started. Everyone traveling on the circle will lead, follow, and encounter all at the same time. Everyone will come across every point that makes up the circle. The question is: Are we respectful leaders, followers, and members of the circle? Respectful communication will accomplish respectful intercultural competence.

God has given us many individuals who can guide us to know and to love others. The most resourceful of these are the *ovejitas*, who we find in the pews every week. The most helpful of these are those who have come before us and set examples for us. Jesus and his disciples were not the first; God's messages came first through his prophets. Now they come through the *ovejitas*. They are the majority and the most important members of God's creation and of our church. Jesus spent most of his time with the *ovejitas*, yet they are invisible. If church leaders take the time to listen, they will hear the voices of the invisible tell them what they, the Church, need. Those in power need nothing, yet many of them believe that they know what is best for the Church. The truth is that they are not the Church; they oversee the Church, and they often, as I have mentioned, come with and use pat answers or offer solutions to questions or problems that come from assumptions or are not part of the conversation. They fall short of Pope Francis's request to learn from

them, the *ovejitas*, which calls to mind the board that hinders one's vision (Matthew 7:1-5).

Kendi reminds us that those who claim not to see color—what he calls color blindness—are dismissive and disrespectful of individuals who are different from themselves and are displaying a form of racism.<sup>195</sup> In other words, they are indifferent to nationalities, cultures, customs, and so on. If one claims not to see color, one must wonder what color is seen when they look in a mirror. Are they ignoring who they are as well? “As U.S. Supreme Justice Harry Blackmun wrote in 1978, ‘In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way. And in order to treat some persons equally, we must treat them differently.’”<sup>196</sup>

On the day of Pentecost, when the people heard the disciples of Christ in their own language, they were filled with wonderment. They were called to repent and to a communal life (Acts 2:14-47). We, too, are called to repent and come together every Sunday. Every Sunday, all Catholics around the world stand in **one** line to receive the **one** body of Christ, as the body of Christ. *Anamnesis*, “the making present ... of his unique sacrifice in communion with the whole Church in heaven and on earth, the living and the dead”<sup>197</sup> is what Catholics should hold as true. It is evident throughout scripture that we were intended to be communal; we are made in the image of a Triune God. Our fallen nature allows us to separate ourselves from God and from each other. To know and to love is a decision that we can make on our own. It is our choice, and it is the right choice. To be known and to be loved is something that we desire for ourselves, but not

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<sup>195</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*. (New York: One World, 2019), 11.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>197</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City, VA, D.C.: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; Distributed by United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 1362, 1354.

always for others. To be known and to be loved is what God has called us to do, and that is the premise of the Samaritan woman at the well. That is to say that when we encounter someone whom we do not take the time to know and to love, we are exhibiting failure at the very core of our faith and existence. In a world with a “me first” mentality, can intercultural competence be possible? I believe that it is possible if we look for it. Jesus told us, “Ask and it will be given to you” (Matthew 7:7). If we can focus on profiting from cultures that are not our own, we may possibly enrich our lives, and we may be able to walk on peaceful ground.

We become God’s anointed through the sacraments. In baptism, we are anointed priest, prophet, and king, and as his anointed, we are called to preach the good news.<sup>198</sup> By saying, “Do not touch my anointed ones,”<sup>199</sup> he is referring to those who are “in communion with Christ.”<sup>200</sup> For the *adorador*, preaching comes through their lived witnessing of their faith. Through prayer, they emulate Jesus, the One with whom they have chosen to pray in communion.

### **Pastoral Response**

This thesis project has demonstrated that by listening to the stories of the individuals who take their places in the pews—in this case, the *adoradores*, and those who listen to them, the clergy—one can see how lives can be positively influenced by taking the time to listen and accept others for who they are and how they practice their faith. This thesis project has also introduced the concept of how a selfish mentality and an

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<sup>198</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Liturgy of the Hours; Lenten Season - Easter Season*, vol. II (Catholic Book Publishing Corp., 1976), 609.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 609.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 609.

unwillingness to see or accept differences can create a dismissive attitude and, at times, a cultural misunderstanding due to racial ideologies, which are often unintentional, but harmful nonetheless. To love God and to love others as oneself seems to be the answer. Ironically, it is easier said than done, but not impossible.

Most of the clergy interviewed, those who took the time to see, listen, and walk with the people who sit in the pews, in this case, the *adorador*, have been impacted and influenced in a positive way. Those who choose not to take the time only see what they have chosen to see. To move forward from what is, according to Kendi, a racist state of mind, we must reconstruct our own ideology. Time to listen to another's story is often avoided, and assumptions are often made, creating a false story of others. Assumptions are individualistic. The false story is, therefore, manufactured differently by different individuals, creating a multitude of false stories. Thoughts are vehemently defended without hearing the whole story as told by the one to whom it pertains. The irony is that we demand to be heard, yet too often, we fail to take the time to listen to others.

How we see each other is influenced by those around us as we grow into adulthood. It was not only our parents, but all of our social circles. We know right from wrong. The trouble is, right from wrong can be, and has often been, manipulated to suit our needs and influenced by those around us. That is not to say that parents and those around us did a bad job raising the younger generation, but they, too, were influenced by others. The question is: How do we begin reconstructing our ideology to be respectful of others, to truly love others as ourselves? To create successful relationships, we first need to accept others for who they are, just as Christ does, unconditionally. It can be accomplished with a true understanding of what it means to be anti-racist, which can be

accomplished by making strong efforts to love others. This does not mean that one must change one's life to be like another, but to understand, see, and respect the idea that differences are not always destructive. There are bad people in this world, but what made them bad? One does not have to accept their behavior, but in understanding the whys, there may be ways to guide individuals to a respectful or respected, competent ideology.

Those individuals who sit in the pews normally look up to and, at times, put the clergy on pedestals. There are members of the clergy who see themselves and often allow themselves to be seen as better than non-clergy. History has demonstrated that when those who are considered others are looked down upon, the results can be oppressive and destructive. This is not always done with malice; it may be an unawareness of how certain behaviors or ideologies can be harmful. This study has demonstrated how one can learn from the *adoradores'* devotional practices and, possibly, how best to serve those same individuals. It begins with making an effort to know them.

“To be known is to be loved, and to be loved is to be known”<sup>201</sup> is a very powerful statement that needs to be analyzed. **To be known** means to be respected for who you are, to be seen as a creation of God, to be listened to and heard, to be able to share one's joys, sorrows, and one's everyday experiences without being judged. That is what it takes **to be loved** because if one is treated in this way, one feels loved and is able to reciprocate that love with a great level of self-awareness, of being accepted as Christ accepted the Samaritan woman. Once an individual experiences being truly loved as Christ loves, that individual may experience what it truly means to be known, heard, and respected.

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<sup>201</sup> *Woman at the Well*, lalaland481 YouTube...Accessed May 19, 2025.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q49BbfgJbto>.

The ability to know and love is an ideology that one chooses to accept, just as one chooses to love God. Our Lord taught us in his prayer to forgive as we have been forgiven, which means to love as we have been loved. This does not mean that one only forgives if first forgiven, loves only if first loved by another, or loves an enemy only if the enemy loves first. Christ was clear when he said that the good you do will be poured out to you (Luke 7:38). I believe that this message should be better explained than just hearing about loving others in a short homily at Mass. There must be a desire to take to heart Pope Francis's message to listen and learn and to walk with the *ovejitas*. The flock needs good shepherds. Jesus and many of our church leaders have given us examples of how intercultural competence should be lived out. These are the lessons that should be taught while in priestly and diaconal formation and should be part of our continuing education. The history of the Church is taught along with how it developed and was influenced by different cultures and their religious practices. Including intercultural competence when studying the history of the Church may bring inclusivity and be of great benefit to the *ovejitas*. Religious practices have changed and been influenced by various cultures, nationalities, and ethnicities over the years, but God remains the same and never changes (Malachi 3:6; Isaiah 40:8; Psalm 136:1).

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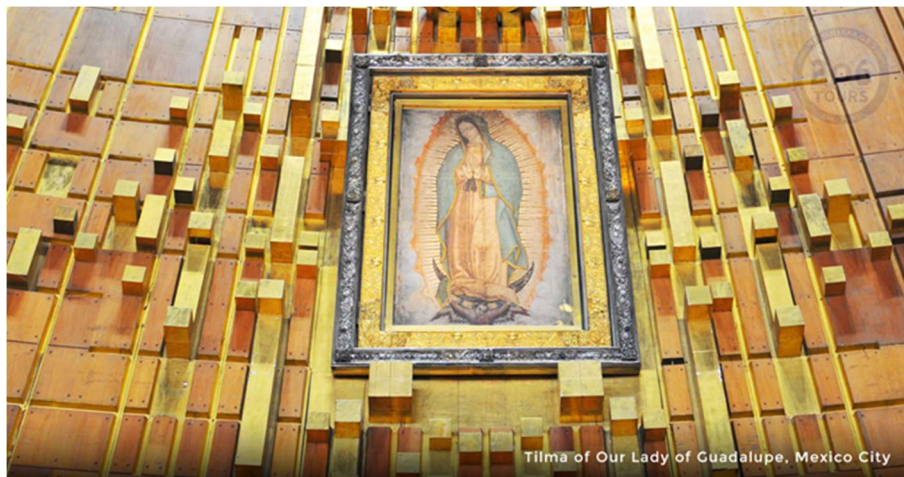
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## Appendix A

### Photos and charts

**Fig 1:** Photo of Our Lady of Guadalupe taken by Fr. Sean Connolly, Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our lady of Gudalupe, Mexico City, Mexico Downloaded from [www.pilrimage.com](http://www.pilrimage.com) found on page 321039x541



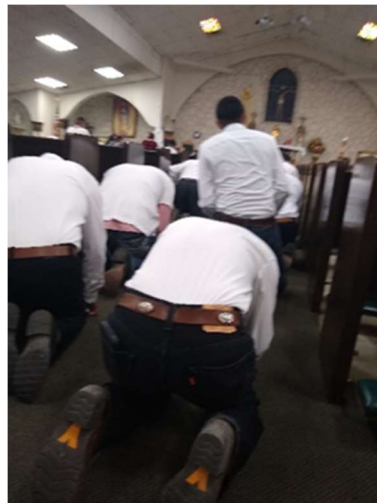
**Fig 2:** This photo of the Black Christ of *Esquipulas* of Guatemala (also known as *El Cristo Negro de Esquipulas*) taken by Rodolfo Mendez at the San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio Tx. Found on page 35.



**Fig 3:** This photo of Our Lady of Candelaria Patroness of the Canary Island taken by Rodolfo Mendez at the San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio Tx. Found on page 34



**Fig 4:** this is a photo, taken by Rodolfo Mendez, of the *adoradores* processing into the church at the beginning of a *turno* (shift) of one of the hours for the vigil. They go down into this position three times as described on page 57. In the photo the *adoradores* are seen in their customary dress, black pants and white shirts.



**Fig 5:** This photo found on page 60, a selfie taken by Rodolfo Mendez, is of me wearing my *distintivo* at one of the vigils I attended. The *distintivo* is the insignia that the members of ANM receive and wear at each vigil they attended. It is given to the *adorador* once they fulfill their obligation of attending 6 vigils in a row as described in the footnotes on page 74.



**Fig 6:** This photo, taken by R. Mendez at one of the ANM vigils, found on page 64, is of a basket filled with the personal prayer intentions of each of the *adoradores*. These forms are filled out prior to the beginning of the vigil and are placed in the basket. The basket is placed at the foot of the altar after the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.



**Fig 7:** Page 74, List of the lay participants.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Currently resides in:</b>	<b>Years in U.S.</b>	<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>Years as an adorador</b>
Abelardo	29	San Antonio TX	2	<i>Metchuela, San Luis Potosi, MX.</i>	6 months
Alberto	32	San Antonio TX	8	<i>Guadalajara, MX</i>	4
Juan Pablo	37	San Antonio TX	20	<i>San Migel, MX.</i>	2
Norberto	37	South of San Antonio TX	37	San Angelo TX.	1
Pepe	40	San Antonio TX	24	<i>Durango MX.</i>	13
Roy	46	San Antonio TX	26	<i>Guanajuato, MX</i>	14
Lupe	47	San Antonio TX	SA - 14; US - 31	<i>San Migel, Guanajuato, MX</i>	36
Pedro	49	Ft. Worth TX	22	<i>Tecozautla Hidalgo MX</i>	4
Lalo	53	San Antonio TX	A total of 42 in the US. 11 in Mexico from the age of 3 - 14	San Antonio TX	5.5
Connie	57	San Antonio TX	38	<i>Zacatecas MX</i>	2.5
Beto	59	San Antonio TX	In SA - 24	Laredo TX	32
Ralph	74	El Paso TX		El Paso TX	43

**Fig 8:** Page 84, List of clerical participants.

Name	Age	Currently resides in:	Years in U.S.	Place of Birth	Years as an <i>adorador</i>
Fr. Luke	30	San Antonio TX	Came to the US as a child.	Mexico	
Fr. Matthew	43	San Antonio TX	San Atonio, TX – 10; 12 - US	Kenya	
Fr. Marcos	52	Holly Ranch TX	US - 25	Columbia	30
Deacon Ike	57	San Antonio TX	57	San Antonio, TX	
Deacon Steven	72	San Antonio TX	72	San Antonio, TX	
Fr. Pedro	73	Laredo TX	San Antonio TX - 33	Laredo TX	45
Fr. Len		San Antonio TX			

**Fig 9:** Page 86, Invitation pie chart.



## **Appendix B**

### **Consent Forms**

Consent forms for English speaking participants

#### **Nocturnal Eucharistic Adoration Latinamente Consent Form**

I am asking you to participate in a research study titled “Nocturnal Eucharistic Adoration Latinamente” I will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions. The Faculty Advisor for this study is Scott C. Alexander, Ph.D. Director, Interschool Doctor of Ministry Program at CTU.

#### **What the study is about**

This study is about creating a respectful understanding of the Hispanic community’s popular religious practices, in this case Adoracion Nocturna Mexicana, to church leaders specially our priest and deacons. In the hopes of demonstrating to church leaders, by listening to you and your needs, the best way they can join you through your spiritual journey and why it’s necessary for them to do so.

#### **What we will ask you to do**

What I will ask of you is to share your journey in Adoracion Nocturna Mexicana. We will meet at your convenience, most likely at the church or wherever you feel more comfortable. The meeting will be one on one and recorded, with your permission. I will ask you questions about Adoracion Nocturna Mexicana and your spiritual journey. Our meeting should last about 60-120 minutes, maybe longer if you are comfortable with that and we can meet more than once, all at your convenience.

#### **Risks and discomforts**

I do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research.

#### **Benefits**

As far as benefits are concerned there are none, except possible cultural understanding and solidarity among other members of your church community.

#### **Incentives for participation**

There are no incentives involved, no money or gifts for your time.

### **Audio/Video Recordings**

I will be audio recording our conversation, with your permission. These recordings will help me keep to the true facts of our conversation. No one but I will have access to these recordings and the recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete. For your protection and your privacy your names will not be used. Please sign below if you are willing to have this interview audio recorded. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

☐ I do not want to have this interview audio recorded.

☐ I am willing to have this interview audio recorded:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security**

Your privacy is important. I will use fake names that will be assigned to you, I only will have access to your true identity and this information will be kept separate from all other research documents that I will be working on and are needed for this research project. Your true identity will be handwritten so that they cannot be accessed via internet or any other electronical means.

### **Taking part is voluntary.**

Taking part in this research is voluntary, you do not have to participate and if you did agree to be interviewed, you can change your mind and decide you do not want to be interviewed for any reason at any time, even after we start the interview. You can also refuse to answer any questions that you may feel uncomfortable answering.

### **Follow up studies.**

We may contact you again to request your participation in a follow-up study. As always, your participation will be voluntary, and we will ask or may ask for your consent for any follow up studies. May we contact you again to request your participation in a follow-up study? Yes/No

### **If you have questions**

The main researcher conducting this study is Rodolfo Mendez, a doctoral student at Catholic Theological Union. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Rodolfo Mendez at [rmendez@student.ctu.edu](mailto:rmendez@student.ctu.edu) or at 210-857-4417. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact Prof. Scott C. Alexander, administrator of the Interschool Institutional Review Board (IRB) at +1 773.580.7239 or via email at [scalexan@ctu.edu](mailto:scalexan@ctu.edu).

Participants will be offered a copy of this consent form.

### **Statement of Consent**

I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person obtaining consent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of person obtaining consent \_\_\_\_\_

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for five years beyond the end of the study.

\_\_\_\_\_

Consent form for Spanish speaking participants

### **Adoración Eucarística Nocturna: Latinamente; Formulario de consentimiento**

Le pido que participe en un estudio de investigación titulado “Adoración Eucarística Nocturna Latinamente”. Le describiré este estudio y responderé cualquiera de sus preguntas. El asesor académico de este estudio es Scott C. Alexander Ph.D. Director, Programa Interescolar de Doctorado en Ministerio en CTU.

#### **De qué se trata el estudio**

Este estudio trata de crear una comprensión respetuosa de las prácticas religiosas populares de la comunidad hispana, en este caso la Adoración Nocturna Mexicana, hacia los líderes de la iglesia, especialmente hacia nuestros sacerdotes y diáconos. Con la esperanza de demostrar a los líderes de la iglesia, escuchándolos a ustedes y sus necesidades, es la mejor manera en que pueden acompañarlos en su viaje espiritual y es necesario que lo hagan

#### **Qué te pediremos que hagan**

Lo que te pediré es que compartas tu viaje en Adoración Nocturna Mexicana. Nos reuniremos cuando le convenga, probablemente en la iglesia o donde se sienta más cómodo. La reunión será individual y grabada, con su permiso. Te haré preguntas sobre

la Adoración Nocturna Mexicana y tu viaje espiritual. Nuestra reunión debería durar entre 60 y 120 minutos, tal vez más si se siente cómodo con eso y podemos reunirnos más de una vez, todo según su conveniencia.

### **Riesgos e incomodidades**

No anticipo ningún riesgo al participar en esta investigación

### **Beneficios**

En lo que a beneficios se refiere, no los hay, excepto el posible entendimiento cultural y solidaridad entre otros miembros de su comunidad eclesial.

### **Incentivos por participación**

No hay incentivos involucrados, ni dinero ni regalos por su tiempo.

### **Grabaciones de audio/video**

Grabaré en audio nuestra conversación, con su permiso. Estas grabaciones me ayudarán a mantener los hechos reales de nuestra conversación. Nadie más que yo tendrá acceso a estas grabaciones y las grabaciones serán destruidas una vez finalizada la investigación. Para su protección y privacidad y sus nombres no serán utilizados

Por favor firme a continuación si está dispuesto a grabar el audio de esta entrevista. Aún puede participar en este estudio si no está dispuesto a que se grabe la entrevista

- ☐ No deseo que se grabe el audio de esta entrevista.
- ☐ Estoy dispuesto a grabar el audio de esta entrevista:

Su Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Privacidad/Confidencialidad/Seguridad de datos**

Tu privacidad es importante. Usaré nombres falsos que se le asignarán a usted, solo tendré acceso a su verdadera identidad y esta información se mantendrá separada de todos los demás documentos de investigación en los que trabajaré y que son necesarios para este proyecto de investigación. Su verdadera identidad estará escrita a mano de modo que no se pueda acceder a ella a través de Internet ni de ningún otro medio electrónico.

### **La participación es voluntaria.**

Participar en esta investigación es voluntario, no es necesario que participe y, si aceptó ser entrevistado, puede cambiar de opinión y decidir que no desea ser entrevistado por

ningún motivo en cualquier momento, incluso después de que comencemos la entrevista. También puede negarse a responder cualquier pregunta que le resulte incómodo responder.

**Estudios de seguimiento.**

Es posible que nos comuniquemos con usted nuevamente para solicitar su participación en un estudio de seguimiento. Como siempre, su participación será voluntaria y le solicitaremos o podremos solicitar su consentimiento para cualquier estudio de seguimiento. ¿Podemos comunicarnos con usted nuevamente para solicitar su participación en un estudio de seguimiento? Sí No

**Si tiene preguntas**

El investigador principal que realiza este estudio es Rodolfo Méndez, estudiante de doctorado de la Catholic Theological Union. Por favor haga cualquier pregunta que tenga ahora. Si tiene preguntas más adelante, puede comunicarse con Rodolfo Méndez en [rmendez@student.ctu.edu](mailto:rmendez@student.ctu.edu) o al 210-857-4417. Si tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud sobre sus derechos como sujeto de este estudio, puede comunicarse con el Prof. Scott C. Alexander, administrador de la Junta de Revisión Institucional Interescolar (IRB) al +1 773.580.7239 o por correo electrónico a [scalexan@ctu.edu](mailto:scalexan@ctu.edu).

A los participantes se les ofrecerá una copia de este formulario de consentimiento.

**Declaración de consentimiento**

He leído la información anterior y he recibido respuestas a todas las preguntas que hice. Doy mi consentimiento para participar en el estudio.

Su Firma \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha:

\_\_\_\_\_

Su Nombre (impreso)

\_\_\_\_\_

Firma de la persona que obtiene el Consentimiento \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_

Nombre impreso de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento

\_\_\_\_\_

El investigador conservará este formulario de consentimiento durante cinco años después del final del estudio.

## Appendix C

### Adoración Nocturna Mexicana Forms

- Attendance
- Disciplinary
- Prayer intentions
- Membership
- Registration
- Transfer
- Transit

Attendance form:

**¡ADORADO SEA EL SANTISIMO SACRAMENTO!**  
**¡AVE MARIA PURISIMA!**

**SECCION ADORADORA NOCTURNA**  
DE .....

Número ..... Clase ..... Turno Núm. ....

Nombre ..... Domicilio .....

Fecha de ingreso ..... Cuota \$ ..... Fecha de distintivo .....

Fecha de baja ..... Causa ..... Fecha prom. a Veter. ....

Edad ..... Estado ..... Fecha Prom. a Veter. Constante .....

Observaciones ..... Profesión .....

Fecha de Título .....

Vig. Ant.	AÑO DE .....												TOTAL			
	Enero	Febrero	Marzo	Jueves Santo	Vigilia Pasc.	Abril	Mayo	Junio	Julio	Agosto	Sept.	Octubre	Nov.	Dic.		
Aniversario .....				San Pascual .....				Corpus .....				Difuntos .....				Fin de Año .....


Vig. Ant.	AÑO DE .....												TOTAL			
	Enero	Febrero	Marzo	Jueves Santo	Vigilia Pasc.	Abril	Mayo	Junio	Julio	Agosto	Sept.	Octubre	Nov.	Dic.		
Aniversario .....				San Pascual .....				Corpus .....				Difuntos .....				Fin de Año .....

Vig. Ant.	AÑO DE .....												TOTAL			
	Enero	Febrero	Marzo	Jueves Santo	Vigilia Pasc.	Abril	Mayo	Junio	Julio	Agosto	Sept.	Octubre	Nov.	Dic.		
Aniversario .....				San Pascual .....				Corpus .....				Difuntos .....				Fin de Año .....

Vig. Ant.	AÑO DE .....												TOTAL			
	Enero	Febrero	Marzo	Jueves Santo	Vigilia Pasc.	Abril	Mayo	Junio	Julio	Agosto	Sept.	Octubre	Nov.	Dic.		
Aniversario .....				San Pascual .....				Corpus .....				Difuntos .....				Fin de Año .....

Nota: La asistencia a las Vigilias que se especifican en esta tarjeta se computan para la verificación.

**Disciplinary form:** For *adoradores* who frequently fail to attend vigils.

 ¡ Adorado sea El Santísimo Sacramento, Ave María Purísima !

## ADORACIÓN NOCTURNA MEXICANA

### CARTA PARA DESERTOR(A)

Del Consejo o la Sección de \_\_\_\_\_

emitida el día \_\_\_\_\_ del mes de \_\_\_\_\_ del 20 \_\_\_\_\_

Hno. / Hna. \_\_\_\_\_

Domicilio \_\_\_\_\_

Ciudad \_\_\_\_\_ Estado \_\_\_\_\_

Querido(a) Hermano(a) en Cristo:

Hubo un día en que juraste bajo la blanca bandera de la Adoración Nocturna Mexicana, a Jesús Sacramentado, ser fiel a tan hermosa corporación. *¡Día bendito, día de paz y de gracia para tu corazón, en que llevaste a tu hogar y a los tuyos, las bendiciones que a torrentes brotan de Jesús Eucaristía!*

Ahora, todo ha cambiado para ti. Tu ausencia ha dejado un hondo vacío en el Corazón de Jesús y del tuyo, quizá se ha ausentado la paz, la verdadera paz del Hijo de Dios; y como el profeta puedes decir: *"Destrozado está mi corazón porque me he olvidado de comer mi pan"*.

Si, querido(a) hermano(a), te has olvidado de tu juramento y has dejado de acompañar en buen Jesús en su Sacramento de Amor. ¿Habrás dejado también de recibir el Pan de los fuertes? ¿El Pan que te da vida y bendición, a ti y a todos los tuyos?.

Reflexiona, medita y decídate a volver a la Adoración Nocturna, a la casa paterna, a tu casa, la Casa del Padre, de Nuestro Buen Padre, que todas las noches te espera para fortalecerte, para consolarte, para darte la dulce paz que solo en Dios podemos encontrar...

¡Ven luego a su presencia; no sea que algún día te pese no haber cumplido tu juramento!.

Tus hermanos te esperamos con los brazos abiertos.

SELLO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Presidente del Consejo Directivo

**Pray Intention form.** The form is used for personal and communal prayer intentions which is filled out by each member and placed in the prayer basket that is placed at the foot of the altar.

**HOJA DE INTENCIONES**

Dios Nuestro Señor no necesita de memoriales escritos para despachar nuestra súplicas; pero nuestra memoria flaca ha de menester nombres que le recuerden las necesidades por las que debe pedir, éste es el objeto de la Hoja de Intenciones.

Al fin de cada renglón, debe anotarse la suma de intenciones que se encomiendan a Jesús Sacramentado. Este mismo antes de hacer las anotaciones bueno será decir lo siguiente:

¡Jesús Mío! Sugieridnos Vos las peticiones que deseáis despacharnos favorablemente y que el Espíritu Santo ore por nosotros con gemidos inenarrables.

CRISTO ¡OYENOS!

HOMBRES _____	ATRIBULADOS _____
MUJERES _____	SACERDOTES RELIG _____
NIÑOS _____	COMUNIDADES _____
JOVENES _____	ESCUELAS _____
PARROQUIAS _____	PRIMERAS COM _____
FAMILIAS _____	CASAMIENTOS _____
CONVERSIONES _____	OBRAS PIADOSAS _____
VOCACIONES _____	GRACIAS TEMPORALES _____
ENFERMOS _____	GRACIAS PARTICULARES _____
DIFUNTOS _____	ACCION DE GRACIAS _____

1.- LA INTENCION GENERAL de la Vigilia será la que señale «La Semilla Eucarística» del mes \_\_\_\_\_

2.- LA INTENCION ESPECIAL será la que ordene el Director Espiritual o el consejo de sección \_\_\_\_\_

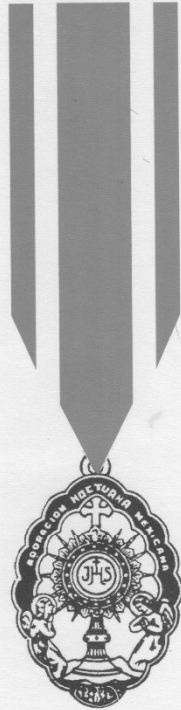
3.- LA INTENCION PARTICULAR será la propia del adorador \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

LAS DOS PRIMERAS DEBEN SER ANOTADAS CONFORME A LA INDICACION VISIBLE DEL PIZARRON, O VERBAL DEL JEFE DE TURNO O DE QUIEN HAGA SUS VECES.  
La INTENCION PERMANENTE la marca el Art. 94 y no se escribe porque la indica ya el ritual.

## Membership Form:



*¡Adorado sea el Santísimo Sacramento!*

*¡Ave María Purísima!*

### ADORACION NOCTURNA MEXICANA

A la Sección Nocturna Adoradora.....  
de.....

Queridos Hermanos:

Queremos agradecerles la presencia de su Bandera en Nuestra Vigilia Solemne de ..... Aniversario.

Su participación oficial en este Acto de Homenaje Eucarístico, es un nuevo juramento de amor y de fidelidad que su Sección y cada uno de sus Adoradores hace a nuestra Obra y a Jesús Sacramentado. El Hermano Abanderado cumple una consigna importante representándolo dignamente: "donde está la Bandera, allí está la Sección".

Que nuestro Señor los inflame cada día más en fervor eucarístico y en fidelidad de amor y adhesión a nuestra amada Obra; y que por la Inmaculada Santa María de Guadalupe, Estrella de la Evangelización, permanezcamos siempre fieles a la Palabra de vida.

### "HABLA SEÑOR, QUE MEXICO ESCUCHA"

México, D.F. a..... de ..... de .....

Recibieron Distintivos:	Activos.....
Comuniones .....	Tarsicios .....
Banderas .....	Ineces .....
Sección .....	Honorarios .....

Director Espiritual

.....

Presidente

Secretario Cont.

Tesorero

.....

.....

.....

**Registration From:**

Esta solicitud se anexa al acta del Turno No. . . . . del mes . . . . .  
de . . . . . de 20 . . . . . Srio. Turno . . . . .

¡Adorado sea el Santísimo Sacramento! ¡Ave María Purísima!

**ADORACION NOCTURNA MEXICANA**

Al Consejo Directivo de la Sección:

Don . . . . . que nació  
en . . . . . Estado de . . . . .  
el día de . . . . . del año de . . . . .  
y fue bautizado en la Parroquia de . . . . .  
. . . . . de estado civil . . . . . de profe-  
sión . . . . . y que habita en la calle de  
de . . . . . Num. . . . . , declara que es  
católico, apostólico Romano; que ha cumplido con el Precepto  
Pascual y quiere, en caso de enfermedad grave, recibir antes del  
cuarto día los sacramentos de la Penitencia, Viático y el de la  
Extremaunción, cuando aún tuviere sentido; que es devotísimo  
del Santísimo y Augusto Sacramento del Altar, y que descan-  
do servir a su Divina Majestad hasta la muerte, según el Regla-  
mento y prácticas de esta Cofradía, que conoce, acepta y pro-  
mete cumplir, SUPLICA al Consejo se digne admitirle en la  
Sección como adorador . . . . . ofreciendo  
como limosna mensual la cantidad de \$ . . . . .

Dios Guarde a ustedes en su santa gracia

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lugar y Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre del Presentador


\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Presidente

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Solicitante

ADVERTENCIA: Para que los adoradores activos puedan ganar las indulgencias es necesaria la imposición del distintivo, y para recibir éste el aspirante debe conocer el Reglamento, el rezo del Ritual y dar muestras de puntualidad y de piedad, de lo cual dará testimonio el Jefe de Turno respectivo. Las personas que por ceguera o por no saber leer no puedan rezar el Ritual, serán dispensadas por acuerdo del Consejo Directivo.

Si el solicitante ha sido ya adorador activo anótese en dónde y su fecha de ingreso, aunque sea aproximada . . . . .

**Transfer Form:** When transferring from one section to another.

 *¡ Adorado sea El Santísimo Sacramento, Ave María Purísima !*

## ADORACIÓN NOCTURNA MEXICANA

México; a \_\_\_\_\_ de \_\_\_\_\_ del 20 \_\_\_\_\_

La Sección Adoradora Nocturna de : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, establecida en la Ciudad de : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, Estado de : \_\_\_\_\_ ; se dirige a usted,

Sr. Presidente : \_\_\_\_\_ de la Sección de : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ en la Ciudad de : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, Estado de : \_\_\_\_\_

, con el motivo de la presente:

### CARTA DE TRASLADO

El nombre de nuestro(a) hermano(a) adorador(a) es : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, tiene la edad de : \_\_\_\_\_ años,

con número de registro : \_\_\_\_\_ y es originario(a) de la Ciudad de : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ en el Estado de : \_\_\_\_\_

La ocupación de nuestro(a) hermano(a) es : \_\_\_\_\_ y, su ingreso a esta Sección fue el día : \_\_\_\_\_ del mes de : \_\_\_\_\_ del año : \_\_\_\_\_


Desde su ingreso y hasta este día, ha asistido a : \_\_\_\_\_ Vigilias, ha faltado a : \_\_\_\_\_ Vigilias con justificación y, ha faltado a : \_\_\_\_\_ Vigilias sin justificación.

El cargo, o cargos que ha desempeñado en esta Sección, ha(n) sido : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ y, nuestro(a) hermano(a) ha mostrado una conducta : \_\_\_\_\_


Nuestro(a) hermano(a) de esta Sección, va a esa población, en donde reside la Sección a su digno cargo. Esperando no existir inconveniente alguno, le suplico atentamente, admitirlo(a).

Agradeciendo a usted por el tiempo y la atención prestada, ruego a nuestro Rey, Jesús Sacramentado, lo guarde en su Santa Gracia y que, por la Inmaculada Virgen Santa María de Guadalupe, permanezcamos en el Corazón de Cristo.

 SELLO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Presidente de la Sección

**Transit Form:** When attending another section other than your own, and to show that you fulfilled your monthly vigil attendance while traveling or for any other reason.

 ¡ Adorado sea El Santísimo Sacramento, Ave María Purísima !

## ADORACIÓN NOCTURNA MEXICANA

México; a \_\_\_\_\_ de \_\_\_\_\_ del 20 \_\_\_\_\_

La Sección Adoradora Nocturna de : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, establecida en la Ciudad de : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, Estado de : \_\_\_\_\_, en el año de : \_\_\_\_\_; se dirige a usted,

Sr. Presidente : \_\_\_\_\_ de la Sección de : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, en la Ciudad de : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, Estado de : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, con el motivo de la presente:

### CARTA DE TRÁNSITO

El nombre de nuestro(a) hermano(a) adorador(a) es : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, tiene la edad de : \_\_\_\_\_ años,

con domicilio : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ en el Estado de : \_\_\_\_\_

La ocupación de nuestro(a) hermano(a) es : \_\_\_\_\_ y, pertenece

al Turno : \_\_\_\_\_ de esta Sección.

Por motivos de : \_\_\_\_\_, nuestro(a) hermano(a)

(trabajo, proyecto escolar, vacaciones, etc.)


se encuentra lejos de su Sección de origen; pero, con motivación y deseos de realizar su Vigilia Ordinaria de Turno en la Sección Adoradora que está a su digno cargo, por lo que, le pido cordialmente su permiso y aprobación para su cumplimiento.

De la misma manera, pido su apoyo notificándome a continuación con sus observaciones:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_


\_\_\_\_\_



SELLO  
Sección  
Origen

\_\_\_\_\_  
Presidente de la Sección de Origen

\_\_\_\_\_  
Presidente de la Sección Destino



SELLO  
Sección  
Destino

Importante : La presente Carta de Tránsito deberá ser devuelta, firmada y sellada, al portador o a la portadora, para que sea entregada al Presidente de la Sección de Origen.

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Adorador(a) en Tránsito

## Appendix D

### Spanish to English translations

Most of the original context was in Spanish and translated to English with the use of Google Translate, Word Doc. Translate and my knowledge of the Spanish language. Listed below are the Spanish words used throughout the thesis in alphabetical order.

- *Acto de reparación al Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* - Act of reparation to the Sacred heart of Jesus
- *Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* – Mexican Nocturnal Adoration
- *Adoradores, adorador* – worshipers, worshiper or adorer/s
- *Altarcitos* or *Ofrendas* - home altars
- *Cristeros/as* – Was the name given to the peasants and those who fought against the Mexican government during the Cristero war to preserve their Catholic Christian rights.
- *Cristiada* - Mexico's Cristero War
- *Curos* – Priests
- *Desvelada* - a physical tiredness that comes from staying awake
- *Día de los Muertos* – Day of the dead
- *Distintivo* – insignia
- *Él es el máximo* - He is the maximum
- *En el nombre del Padre y el Hijo y el Espíritu Santo* – In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- *Esquipulas of Guatemala* also known as *El Cristo Negro de Esquipulas* – The Black Christ of *Esquipulas*.
- *Expiación* – atonement
- *Las Posadas* - The inns, lodging, referring to Mary and Joseph searching for a place to stay.
- *La Morenita* – Morena/o means dark-skinned person. Replacing the a/o with “ita” makes it a term of endearment. Referring to Our Lady of Guadalupe.
- *La Virgen de Guadalupe* – Our Lady of Guadalupe, literally, The virgin of Guadalupe
- *Latinamente* – As seen by the Latino
- *Lo cotidiano* – everyday life, daily life,
- *Mestizos* – Mixed-race
- *Mi gente y mi cultura* - my people and my culture.
- *Milagros* – Miracles
- *No vas a creer lo que me pasó* - you will not believe what happened to me
- *Ovejita/s* - little lamb/s

- *Ritual Oficial de la Adoración Nocturna Mexicana* – Official Rites of Mexican Nocturnal Adoration.
- *Sagrario* – tabernacle
- *Tarsicios and Ineses* - names inspired by Saints Tarcisius and Saint Agnes, martyred children of the early centuries of Christianity
- *Turno/s* – shift/s
- *Viva Cristo Rey* - Long Live Christ the King
- *Via Crucis* – The way of the Cross; the passion of Christ

## **Appendix E**

### **Questions to the lay (*Adoradores*) and clergy participants**

#### *Adoradores*

1. Tell me about how you became an adorador(a). Who invited you? Why did you accept?
2. Tell me about your experiences in nocturnal adoration.
3. What is it about nocturnal adoration that inspires you to spend, with others, a full night of prayer and companionship?
4. How has this method of worship influenced lo cotidiano (the everyday)?
5. How are other members of the larger community aware of your presence as individuals and as a community of adoradores?
6. What have Church leaders done to encourage others to participate in Adoración Nocturna Mexicana?
7. Tell me about your experiences with priests or deacons who oversee the parish where you participate in adoration. How have they been supportive? How have they not been supportive?
8. How does praying before the Blessed Sacrament differ from other forms of prayer or compare to praying at home, at Mass, or before or after Mass?
9. Tell me what it is that you believe about the Blessed Sacrament.
10. Tell me about the history of Adoración Nocturna as you understand it.

#### Clergy:

1. Tell me about your experiences with the Adoración Nocturna Mexicana and its members.
2. How have you participated in their rituals and practices? How has this impacted your own spirituality and pastoral leadership?

3. What are the challenges you have experienced? What are the blessings you have experienced?
4. How has Adoración Nocturna Mexicana impacted the larger parish community? Has it fostered unity, or is it a source of tension?
5. How has Adoración Nocturna Mexicana affected you spiritually and culturally?