

and challenges every place where the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached and acted on. It is the story of every parish, *especially* those parishes located in our own affluent First World.

To me it is abundantly clear now that the lessons learned from the institutional conversion of Most Holy Name and its ministers apply especially to parish life in the United States. Through the experience of a decade as pastor of this suburban parish in Lima, Peru, I learned that no Christian organization—be it diocese or parish, religious congregation, parochial or diocesan school, Bible group or intentional community, or the people who belong to them—exists for itself. The church at every level of her life and in every one of her members is there on behalf of and in service to God's Reign of universal dignity and justice, called to announce joyfully all that heralds the coming of that Reign and to denounce clearly what stands in its way. I came away from my eleven years as pastor of Most Holy Name with the deepest possible conviction that to make anything less of church institutions is to betray the gospel message for which those institutions exist in the first place. After my return to this country I found that too often our U.S. churches err by neglecting or ignoring this prophetic mandate and become unexamined, unchallenging comfort zones for their members. The lessons I learned at Most Holy Name taught me that this is the antithesis of what the gospel calls for and has become a scandal in our time. In addition this failure runs the risk of making the church in this First World increasingly irrelevant. People will not take a church seriously that does not come to grips with the real world of suffering, injustice, wars and ecological devastation.

My entire purpose, therefore, in attempting to tell this story is a hope that it will serve as both a challenge and an encouragement for making all our Christian institutions and the people who belong to them as prophetic as they are pastoral. My experience in Peru brought me to the conviction that such a gospel mandate is not only necessary but absolutely doable. It just takes vision and fortitude, gifts of the Spirit.

Notes

¹This theological and ultimate human question will receive extensive attention throughout this narrative.

CHAPTER 1

A Parish Is Born

It began with a traditional Sunday Eucharist on a sun-drenched summer morning in February of 1964. As the newly appointed founding pastor of Most Holy Name Parish in a newly developed suburb of Lima, Peru, I celebrated the Mass on a makeshift altar in an open field where a year later the parish house would stand. I remember the glare of the sun in my eyes during the liturgy and how much I had to squint in order to focus on the book and the altar vessels placed on the white linen cloths.

During the month or so since my arrival in Peru I had driven around and left written announcements about the inaugural Mass in most of the few dozen homes that comprised the new parish, so that about thirty or forty people showed up at the appointed hour. In typically Peruvian style they were very cordial, and of course they were curious about the new parish and its priest.

That first Mass was pre-Vatican II in every sense. We would hardly recognize it today. I recited the ancient Latin prayers of the Roman rite standing with my back to the congregation, and using the stylized, formal gestures of the Mass which were so familiar to all of us in those days, and entirely obsolete just a couple of years later. Indeed, everything about the gathering spoke of church life as it had been for centuries, with the priest as the central actor of the Mass and the people as bystanders. I preached a sermon centered on the Eucharist and the other sacraments in which I invited the parishioners to unite with me as I led them in building the parochial community. I conveyed a strong and comfortable sense of my call to lead the new parish, something which was no doubt accepted by everyone present. In

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those days no one would think of questioning or objecting to those sorts of words because that's the way it was with the church. I would be in charge, hopefully in a friendly and inviting way; the people needed simply to help out wherever they could. All very neat and traditional, all on the verge of collapse.

By early 1964 the Second Vatican Council was at its halfway point with two sessions still to come. We were only beginning to feel the profound changes, which the Council would bring to every level of church life. In the minds of our little group gathered there that February morning, there was not the slightest inkling of the Latin Americanization that would soon sweep across the Peruvian church and radically challenge our understanding of God, faith and church. The great Medellín Conference, which four years later would prophetically apply the teachings of Second Vatican Council to the realities of South and Central America, remained a distant dream in the minds of a few visionary church people.

During the sermon and after the service I told the folks that this Mass was the definitive beginning of Most Holy Name and that Sunday Eucharist would be celebrated each week thenceforth. I made no mention of Peru's social realities, of the grinding poverty experienced by most people there, because I didn't know anything about those issues and they didn't occupy much of my thinking. Five years later, given what Most Holy Name Parish would become, this oversight would seem incredible. After the Mass, the people and I stood around for a while and chatted. People complimented me on my facility with the Spanish language and there were wishes for success and promises of help whenever and wherever it might be needed. I asked each one's name and promised to visit their homes before too long. As I drove back to where I was staying, I felt that all in all it had been a successful, if modest, first step. Most Holy Name Parish was on its way.

The Pastor

On that February day in 1964 I was thirty-one years of age, having spent six years a priest, four of them in my Franciscan Order's Bolivian mission. When my superiors informed me that I was being sent

to Lima, Peru, to begin a new parish, I told them I thought they were crazy. I was too young, I said, too inexperienced; someone older should be given the assignment. That was what I really thought. But in my heart of hearts I was thrilled to have this opportunity and brash enough to think I could do a credible job of getting this new ministry off the ground.

Something of my own background is relevant here at the beginning of this story and I offer it in the hope that these references do not come across as self-serving or self-centered. But the way in which the new parish began and developed was influenced both positively and negatively by my history and personality. More importantly, the personal and pastoral style of this young, pre-Vatican II priest—me—became a major part of the story I wish to tell in this book. Most Holy Name Parish and I began under one paradigm, one set of rules, one very narrow world view, and in a few years moved to entirely different ones.

As a member of Holy Name Province of the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor with headquarters in New York City, I had studied a theology in the U.S. which we would describe today as conservative, other-worldly, defensive, abstract—the reader can choose the adjective. Human problems had ready-made, one-size-fits-all solutions, with an accompanying spirituality that was tied to each person's relationship with God. Very little of the church's social teaching made its way into our studies, so my generation came to priestly ordination without the benefit of a wider pastoral view other than that of the individual person pretty much in isolation from his or her historical surroundings. It was a "God and me," "God and you" outlook. We did, however, receive excellent Franciscan training and example with regard to the compassion and kindness with which we were expected to treat people in our priestly ministry. And so we emerged from our five or six years of seminary studies as "all-purpose priests," ready and more than willing to take on any ministry we were given, good with people, though quite bound by the rules and regulations of our 1950s church—and totally ahistorical.

During my seminary years I had looked forward to the occasional visits from our Franciscan missionaries and felt a stirring within me when one of them told us to nurture any thoughts of a missionary

calling which we might feel. Without talking much about it during those years of study, I did just as that missionary had urged. So it wasn't surprising that I volunteered (in the Franciscan Order no one gets sent to an overseas assignment unless he volunteers) for my province's mission in Bolivia shortly after ordination to the priesthood. I was young, athletic, in excellent health, and our Bolivian mission had the reputation of being particularly challenging. Our men who had already gone to Bolivia came back with stories of long treks over rugged terrain, outdoor living, dangerous river crossings or precarious mountain roads and above all ministry to indigenous peoples in remote Andean villages where the priest might show up once or twice each year—just the right stuff to spark the imagination of a twenty-something newly ordained Franciscan. I left New York in January of 1960 full of excitement about the world that awaited me.

Years later a member of my family said that the day I boarded that plane for Latin America marked a break with everything I had known, and he was absolutely right. I would never be the same again. Every missionary experiences it. Some call it “being spoiled for life” in the sense that one's ideas about God and church, about life and what is important, get turned upside down. My experience in this regard underlies much of this story.

For four years I worked in that high Andean country, traveling around by jeep, by mule and on foot, trying to “bring Jesus” to its Indian subsistence farming populations. The experience taught me much about myself—my strengths and weaknesses—because our Franciscan mission in Bolivia at that time was in every sense a “desert experience” for those who volunteered. I came to know how much loneliness I could stand as I worked, often by myself, among people who were vastly different in terms of education and life experience. For example, I don't remember ever seeing an Indigenous woman caress or play with one of her children—perhaps due to embarrassment in the presence of a North American man, or perhaps because of some cultural reticence which I never understood. The contrast with my own culture was profound and often unsettling.

My major assignment in Bolivia took me to a frontier gold-mining town called Caranavi, where nobody cared about religion or spirituality. Making money was the god. Indeed, gold fever there was

at such a high pitch that an Italian Franciscan who preceded us Americans in the area had taken one particular gospel mandate quite literally, and shaken the dust of Caranavi from his sandals never to return. Weekend after weekend during those four years I drove by jeep the three or four hours from the mission center where I lived to the Caranavi area. There I celebrated Masses and the other sacraments in three separate locations beginning at 7:00 a.m., often not finishing until 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon. (It was rough duty, not helped by the fact that all of us pre-Vatican II priests observed the church's rule of that time, fasting from solid food until the last Eucharist was celebrated.)

My most vivid memory of that raw frontier town of Caranavi was the indifference of the people to my agenda. We operated on different wavelengths—they were exploiting the large deposits of gold in the area; I was trying to build a faith community among them. Arriving there one Sunday morning for the second Mass of the day, I found that the little chapel I had built had been taken over by town officials for local elections. An appeal to those in charge of the voting booths and then to the police got me nowhere (except for a warning by the gendarmes, locked inside their headquarters: “It's not safe out there today, Father”).

I spent my first Christmas in Bolivia celebrating Masses in the three pueblos under my care. Three different communities, three Eucharistic celebrations of the Lord's birth—and only one person received Holy Communion. It was unlike anything I had ever experienced in the U.S.

Still, I cannot say that my four years in Bolivia were unhappy. All my brother Franciscans working there were about my age, contemporaries in our studies for the priesthood back in the States and now working together on this Bolivian challenge. Close and lasting friendships were forged among us, precisely because of the goals we shared and the hardships we endured in that rugged country. The mission house where I lived, situated in a place called Coroico on the eastern slopes of the Bolivian Andes, housed seven of us. Every weekend we went out in different directions to the surrounding pueblos and Indian populations, often staying out for days and weeks, doing catechetical and sacramental work. But there were times when sev-

eral of us would find ourselves back in Coroico at the same time and the sharing and camaraderie we enjoyed are among the happiest memories of my life.

I also had the good fortune to work with women religious during those four years. We spent many hours together in jeeps or on mule back getting from place to place, hours of good conversation and shared impressions from our so very different backgrounds. Most of these women were young members of a Colombian missionary congregation, with wonderful training in the kind of catechetical work we were doing with indigenous Bolivian populations. From my first extended trip with the sisters, I realized that they were really in charge of things: my job was to stay out of their way and be as helpful as I could. Not a bad lesson for a young, North American male cleric. (On that first mission trip with the sisters, one of them asked if she could receive the sacrament of reconciliation, confession. In those days Canon Law forbade any celebration of this sacrament outside of the traditional confessional, and here we were probably one hundred miles from the nearest church. Naturally, the sister and I celebrated the sacrament and I learned a lesson about the applicability of Canon Law in that part of the world. A bishop some years later confirmed that lesson when he said, perhaps only half-jokingly: "Canon Law does not work higher than 5000 feet above sea level.")

It was also thanks to these Colombian sisters that I learned to speak Spanish well. Most of us Americans had gone to Bolivia with barely a smattering of the language, which was an indication of the linguistic and cultural ignorance of so many North Americans who were coming to the Latin American countries in that period. I remember a few weeks after arriving in Bolivia crossing the plaza in Coroico one afternoon accompanied by two young boys. One of them said to the other: "*Este padre, él no sabe nada*" ("This priest, he doesn't know anything"). The youngster of course was referring to the fact that I could hardly say my name in his language. Initial experiences like this got me moving on the language so that I could communicate with the people. I set myself to learning Spanish with an intensity I had rarely brought to other studies before that. In this I had the enormous advantage of regular contact with those women religious from Colombia. When they saw my interest in learning to speak, they made

it their business to instruct a willing pupil in the language they were so proud of (it is sometimes said that Colombians speak the best Spanish in Latin America).

In the beginning my struggles with Spanish proved painful, sometimes humiliating and often hilarious. The Colombian sisters insisted from the start that I preach as often as the occasion presented itself, and there were many opportunities for *la charla* (a little talk) during the visits we made to the scores of "pueblos" we had to visit. They would sit near the front of the church or chapel and begin writing down my mistakes almost as soon as I began speaking, a disconcerting experience for this American learner who couldn't help notice the religious in front of him marking down grammatical errors as he was making them. When the sisters couldn't stand it any longer, they would bolt out the door of the chapel, choking with laughter over my stream of malapropisms—laughter which of course I could hear through the open windows as I continued my talk. Then they would return for more. Afterwards the sisters regularly went over the long list of my mistakes, which did not exactly embolden me to try it again at the next pueblo. But time after time these demanding young taskmistresses would insist that I preach. Under that "tough love" I learned the language.

Thus, another lesson I learned in Bolivia was, if not humility, at least the ability not to take myself too seriously. Making mistakes and forever getting corrected pulled me down several pegs on my clerical ladder, and in the end resulted in a good grasp of Spanish and a respect for anyone who tries to learn and use a foreign language. The eventual facility I gained in Spanish, together with all the humiliations I experienced in learning it, stood me in good stead during the rest of my years in Latin America.

I look back on these four years as a difficult, instructive and ultimately happy time, during which I carried on rural ministry among some of the world's poorest and marginalized people. Bolivia is considered the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere (after Haiti), and at the time I was there it was estimated that barely 11% of the Bolivian people engaged in the economic life of the society—the rest operated on informal barter systems. I came to love the country, but my time there ended abruptly. One afternoon in July of 1963,

without any warning, a telegram arrived in Coroico from my Franciscan superiors in the United States naming me as the founding pastor of Most Holy Name Parish in Lima, Peru.

The New York Franciscans had responded to a request from the cardinal of Lima, also a Franciscan, to staff a new parish. They wanted to show support for His Eminence, who was a friend and frequent visitor to our provincial headquarters in New York, and they were also looking for a place of rest and recreation for us Bolivian missionaries at a lower altitude (Lima sits on the coast of Peru). For the New York province the parish was a new venture in a country where none of us had worked, and for unknown reasons they chose me for the job. So, without any preparation for the culture I was about to encounter or for the urban ministry among sophisticated Peruvians which awaited me, but with the self-confidence which often goes along with youth and ignorance, I flew alone from La Paz to Lima in the last days of 1963 to begin what would prove to be a great opportunity and a life-changing experience for me.

In those pre-Vatican II days it would never have occurred to me to refuse or even call into question a directive (we called it an "obedience," a direct reference to one of the three vows taken by women and men in religious life) of this sort. In the Franciscan Order, as in all the others, you did what you were told. However, as I mentioned, a short time after my arrival in Peru my New York superiors took the trouble to inquire about my reaction to this new and enormously challenging assignment. I replied that I thought it was a mistake ("crazy" was the word) for them to place so much responsibility on my shoulders. After all, I said, I had no experience either in Peru or in a modern Latin American city like Lima; I was exceedingly young for such a responsibility; and I was alone in a new country. Whether it was true or not, the superiors reassured me that everyone connected with the province's leadership had confidence in me and that in fact I would need all of the youthful energy I could muster for the task ahead. In this sense the superiors proved incredibly prescient. For my part, despite the misgivings I expressed to the Provincial superior, I jumped into this new assignment right away. For better or worse I possessed a good self-image, nurtured by a loving family, and I felt confident that I could probably handle whatever lay ahead.

With regard to self-image, the way I saw my priestly persona was at once central to how I would undertake this new ministry and perhaps not so far from the perceptions many American priests of that time had of themselves. (This priestly self-image, I believe, is still very much with us.) As a fairly typical North American clergyman I saw myself as the "nice guy" who would influence people with an outgoing personality, together with genuine pastoral concern and attention. I would be the principal "cheerleader" for the new parish community, a propagandist for God and for the local church being established in the area assigned to us by the hierarchy of Lima. Later recollections by some of the original members of Most Holy Name verified the image I had of myself. They remembered the young American priest who showed up one day and began to make friends with everyone. The fact that I (sort of) played the guitar, they recalled, reinforced my image as a kind of clerical "Joe Cool" in the eyes of those early parishioners. (I relate this matter of self-image with some embarrassment, because in retrospect the "nice guy" approach to the pastoral situation I was thrown into had severe drawbacks, as will become abundantly clear as the story of Most Holy Name Parish unfolds.)

Everything in my background, especially my formation in religious life and priesthood, had pointed me in this pastoral direction. The best of pre-Vatican II seminary training, especially in the United States, emphasized the personal touch in its clergy and our approach to ministry. Not incidentally, we were told that this emphasis was the way to avoid the deadening anti-clericalism which gripped other countries of the world. ("There has to be clericalism before there is anti-clericalism" was the way they put it.) In our Franciscan training we heard over and over that kindness had to be one of the highest priorities for a priest: "Treat people as you would want your mother treated." We had a very good model for ministry, but it was so incomplete. It was totally on the level of care for each individual, lacking in any social analysis or the challenges of the church's social teaching. It would be only very slowly that these broader ideas and prophetic ways of ministering would change and expand me and many others of our generation—but change and expand us they would.

I don't remember feeling any serious misgivings as those very early

weeks and months of Most Holy Name Parish unfolded, except a sense that there would probably be too few hours in each day to accomplish everything that had to be done. In this and in many other ways I was typical of most missionaries coming from the United States to Latin America during that period.

A Significant Moment in History

As the parish got underway early in 1964 the church in Peru was functioning as it had for centuries. It was Eurocentric, still very much in the mold of the Spanish culture, in particular, and of theological approaches which the colonizers had brought in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Soon after the Second Vatican Council ended, for example, the cardinal of Lima invited dozens of Spanish priests to conduct a city-wide mission. One of them told me that as they took off from the airport in Madrid these modern "conquistadors" sang in unison a traditional hymn to Mary. They were going to bring the Cross to "New Spain," as their forebears had done ever since the time of Columbus. Not surprisingly, as it turned out, that mission pretty much failed. An era was fast coming to an end.

During this time the Peruvian church was increasingly influenced for better or worse by the growing influx of religious and clergy from the United States and Canada. At a meeting on the campus of Notre Dame University in 1962, a representative from the Vatican called on North American religious congregations to send ten percent of their personnel to Latin America. The Holy See, it was said, was worried about the scarcity of native-born religious and priests in Central and South America and thought they saw a solution in the overflow of religious and priestly vocations then at their peak in North America. One U.S. prelate put the problem and the solution in terms of specific—and outlandish—numbers. 70,000 clergy and religious would be needed to "save" Latin America, he said. (What we were "saving" it from was not all that clear. However, communism certainly had to have been very much in his mind.)

Beginning in the early 60s, then, sisters, brothers and priests from the United States and Canada poured into the countries to the south,

bringing with us many of the good aspects of our home churches and much that was less favorable. We arrived in Latin America with great enthusiasm and genuine concern for the people we had come to serve, qualities which made us welcome as we took up ministries all across the continent. However, most of us North Americans tended to judge success in quantitative terms—buildings constructed, numbers of people attending Mass and receiving the sacraments, the multiplication of catechetical programs. But many of us had little or no preparation for the culture of Latin America, and it was not uncommon to see good-willed sisters, priests and brothers from the north attempting to replicate the United States church in the new environment.

An exaggerated example of this religious imposition came to my attention while still in Bolivia. An Irish-born priest from a diocese in the U.S. told a group of us that he really didn't need to learn Spanish. "I thunder out the Ten Commandments in English," he said, fully expecting, it seemed, that the decibel level of his preaching would offset any language barrier. The same man spoke of sitting on a white horse at the head of annual St. Patrick's Day parades around his rural village. As noted, his case was an exaggeration, but one which points up the problems connected with throwing numbers of foreigners at complicated cultural situations.

The futility of this numbers solution to Latin American problems did not escape observation. Efforts were made, principally by the legendary Monsignor Ivan Illich at an orientation center in Ponce, Puerto Rico, later moved to Cuernavaca, Mexico, to prepare the growing numbers of missionaries from the North with language skills and cultural sensitivities. A lesser-known center began in Brazil under the guidance of a veteran Franciscan missionary from the U.S., John Baptist Vogel. These initiatives met with modest success in sensitizing some of the large numbers of North American church people heading south into entirely different social and ecclesial realities.

Illich's approach was born of his own multicultural background and a natural sense of respect for culture, together with a horror at what he saw as yet another imposition of foreign religiosity on people who were already oppressed. His in-your-face courses on topics like "Cultural Imperialism" in Ponce and Cuernavaca shook to their roots many of the fairly naïve North Americans who had volunteered to

“save” Latin America. The Monsignor also alienated U.S. and Canadian religious leaders in particular through a scathing article published in the Jesuit weekly *America* magazine, entitled “The Seamy Side of Charity.” In it he seriously questioned the attempt to populate the church in Latin America with foreign personnel. There is a famous picture of Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston waving a rolled up a copy of *America* as he railed against Illich’s criticism. The Monsignor did not remain long in the hierarchy’s good graces and eventually left the priesthood to engage in other pursuits.

A more creative response to the arrival of the North Americans came from the South, where some of the more insightful Latin American religious decided to welcome the “gringos” and convert us from unreflective proponents of a North American style church and society to critical social analysts, fully in touch with both Latin American realities and with the enormous influence of the United States on those realities. It was said that in answer to Illich’s concern about the North American religious avalanche falling on the church in the south, the “Latinos” told him: “Let them come and we’ll convert them and send them back to change North America.” For many of us, their strategy worked very well.

Due to a lack of preparation and the unrealistic goals set for them, a large number of the religious and priests who had been inspired by the Vatican’s call to service in Latin America returned to the U.S. after a few years, disillusioned with the frustrations of living and working in an unfamiliar and, to their minds, hostile environment. Still, despite their shortcomings, many of the North American religious who went to Latin America got high marks for pastoral and educational initiatives that were proving popular there. The parish schools headed by North American religious women became wildly popular with the local people, as did the range of spiritual and social activities which the U.S.-type parish provided for every age group in the community. In many places, the people thought of a parish as successful or not according to how it compared with those run by the North Americans.

Another factor which favored the numerous American missionaries arriving in Latin America during those years of the early 60s was the “Kennedy phenomenon.” The young Catholic president was greatly

loved by the Latinos, who thought of him as their friend as well as a fellow church-member. Kennedy’s assassination in November 1963 intensified for a time feelings of good will toward this country and the religious from here who were moving into Latin America.

A strange little meeting I had with an influential Spanish-born priest of the Lima Archdiocese within days after my arrival in Peru underscored for me this attraction of our North American way of parish life. Without much of an introduction, he gave me what amounted to a command that I immediately begin a parish school at Most Holy Name. He knew that the style of parish I had come to start would have its parochial school, conducted by U.S. sisters, and he had taken the liberty to promise some of his wealthy friends several coveted placements for their children in its first classrooms. The priest went so far as to hand me a list of their names.

I objected, telling him that starting the parish community was my first order of business and that the school would come only later. Incredibly, the Spaniard took the matter all the way to the cardinal and when the cardinal questioned me about it, I repeated my order of priorities and that any move toward a parochial school would follow as part of the overall parish plan. The prelate agreed and I heard no more from the Spanish priest or his friends. However, the experience highlights the popularity of our pastoral approaches, as well as the expectations placed on arriving U.S. religious and clergy.

It was into this historic reality that I stepped during that Peruvian summer of 1964. Indeed, I was part of it.

First Steps: Construction

The inaugural Mass described above was a direct result of consultations I had with several veteran Maryknoll missionaries upon my arrival in Lima. It seemed a most natural thing that I should check with that group’s sisters, priests and brothers before beginning the work at Most Holy Name. The Maryknollers already had years of experience in Latin America after their dismissal from Japanese-occupied China in the 1940s, and later from China under the communists. They established missions—U.S.-style for sure—in many

rural areas of Latin America and in cities like Lima. For this young Franciscan, a visit to Maryknoll pastors in the three parishes they conducted in Lima was a must—and I was not disappointed. One of them took me on a kind of reconnaissance trip around the extensive area of my new parish, pointing out places where I might eventually build satellite chapels. When I asked a second Maryknoller what was the first thing I should do as the founding pastor of a parish, he advised me to build a makeshift altar where the parish center would later stand and begin celebrating the Eucharist for the parishioners. I followed this advice to the letter.

Guided by the advice and example of these long-time missionaries, I sketched out in my mind the construction timetable I would follow. First of all, there was a mandate from my superiors in New York to build a combination parish house and rest-and-recreation facility for our Bolivian missionaries. Next I would begin the construction of the parish school, adding classrooms as needed. This undertaking would be followed immediately by a parish center for the celebration of Sunday Mass as well as for the various parish gatherings which would follow. I was confident that this building program would serve as the basic infrastructure for the first years of Most Holy Name. These various construction projects, undertaken in the first year, would also indicate clearly, I felt, that these Franciscans from the United States were serious about our new parish venture.

The North American religious who went to Central and South America during those years arrived with significant economic backing from their dioceses and congregations back home, enough money to support all their pastoral initiatives—many of which were not needed. Someone said years later that the Latin American landscape was dotted with buildings erected by these North American missionaries, representing resources which might better have gone to more pressing human needs.

While understandable in light of enormous enthusiasm and support in the U.S. for the hundreds of clergy and religious answering the Vatican's call to "save" Latin America, the injection of large sums of money into the church there on the part of the foreigners was questionable on at least two counts. First, it made us look to the local people very much like our U.S. counterparts in the business and po-

litical world—sort of ecclesiastical high-rollers with deep pockets. Far from behaving as servant-missioners who had come to do what might be asked of us by the local church, most of us arrived on the scene like religious entrepreneurs, constructing and presiding over impressive physical plants. Second, the resources available to the U.S. missionaries tended to diminish the poorer and materially limited Latin American religious and clergy in the eyes of the people. This had repercussions on many levels: it led to something of a fascination with the "big spenders" from the North and perhaps to some lessening of respect for the national church people; it risked making the "North American" (read upwardly mobile) form of priesthood and religious life very attractive to young Latinos who might be considering such a vocation; and finally, it tended to engender in us missionaries a sense of accomplishment based more on "brick and mortar" than on pastoral considerations.

In the matter of full economic support from the U.S., Holy Name Parish was no exception. Even before the first parish Mass, I had already commissioned a noted Peruvian architect to draw plans for a parish house, to be followed by outlines of the first classrooms for the parochial school and a large all-purpose auditorium. These were my initiatives. Neither the fifty or so families who made up the new parish, nor even the church hierarchy had any say in these undertakings. The money came from my Franciscan sponsors in New York and I felt free to dispense it as I saw fit. No one challenged the arrangement.

I think back on this system of absolute autonomy and I cringe. What a violation of local sensitivities and of the local church! Where did I, where did any of us North Americans, get the right to roll into the Latin American church scene and implement our ideas and plans regarding the religious expressions of those unique faith communities? Yet I do not remember any discussions among us of the anomaly we represented. Nor did any challenge come from church officials where I was. They seemed to accept my high-handed way of proceeding as a price to be paid for the "benefit" of having our community serve there. And besides, what I was doing at Most Holy Name in forging ahead on my own with construction projects, my fellow American missionaries were doing all around me.

First Steps: Pastoral

In addition to the building program, I had the goal—really much more important to me—of getting acquainted with every household in the parish. My daily routine during those first weeks and months always included time to drop in on the families living within the geographical limits of Most Holy Name, with special attention to new arrivals. At first these informal and spontaneous visits seemed to come as a surprise, even as an intrusion, for the more sophisticated social sector of the parish population, who, as we shall see, made up a significant portion of the parishioners. The middle and upper middle class of Peru operated with considerable formality in its business and social dealings. One usually phoned, wrote a note or sent a *tarjeta* (business card) to inquire about the feasibility and convenience of a visit on a certain day and hour. On many occasions during those ground-breaking months in Most Holy Name I would be greeted at the door or on the intercom of a parishioner's home with: "What is it that you want?" or even more pointedly the maid would inform me that "the Señora says she is not at home." Gradually, however, the impromptu visits of the new North American pastor became an acceptable, even sought-after, part of parish life. More important, I succeeded in getting to know virtually every person in Most Holy Name Parish by name. My "nice guy" reputation began to soar.

At that point in my personal history, and indeed in that of most American religious and clergy in Latin America, any prophetic or conflictive role—one which might challenge lifestyles or social structures—remained entirely outside of my field of vision. The occasional exception to this unquestioning and increasingly popular expression of ministry would show itself when the need arose to deal with the occasional "stray sheep" who needed a little push toward Mass attendance or reception of the sacraments. However, my overriding pastoral concern remained on the level of personal morality, each one's relationship with God through the church.

In the light of the subsequent historic events which would overtake the Peruvian church and Most Holy Name during the next eleven years, my memories of this traditional and intensely personalistic be-

ginning seem remote, strange, even somewhat incredible. Still, seeds were sown at the beginning which would later bear fruit in ways no one could have imagined in those first weeks and months. The new parish had no entrenched traditions or customs to change or overcome—it was all new, everything was a fresh start. One significant segment of the parishioners, including the pastor, was made up of young middle-class folks, open to new ways of experiencing church. The reduced numbers of parishioners at the start gave the parish a wonderful sense of community, where everyone knew each other's name. And the hierarchy of the church in Lima, out of conviction or necessity, maintained a "hands-off" policy and an attitude which, for all the abdication of responsibility it represented, allowed for a climate of freedom as Most Holy Name Parish began to take shape.

Birth of a Church

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