

Case study: latin america and the catholic church

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The 1983 Visit of Pope John Paul II to Nicaragua Affiliation Introduction Pope John Paul II had a pastoral visit to Nicaragua in March 1983. The visit was amidst the ongoing Contra war. It was the extreme polarization period between Nicaraguan Church popular sectors and Nicaraguan Catholic hierarchy that heightened tensions between Sandinista state and the hierarchy (Bochenski, 2013).

The Sandinista government and Nicaraguan Catholic Church eagerly anticipated the Pope's arrival as they believed that the Pope would provide a moral legitimacy to their effort to combat Sandinista government's godless communism. The government hoped for a peace process offering from the Pope by mediating and voicing his opposition towards the American aid. In his visit, the pope made it clear that the unity of the Church unity was the best significant way to prevent Nicaragua from being corrupted through "godless communism". The Pope spoke out against the increasing division within the Church (Mannion, 2008).

Additionally, some of the Nicaraguan Catholics got disappointed with the pope's position on the political action (Bochenski, 2013). It is because he spoke out to some of the Nicaraguan priests including those in government and urged them to regularize their position in the Church as they get considered as spouses and agents of the Church and Christ. He said that their responsibilities upon their ordination meant that they were not supposed to hold the political offices, especially the compensated offices and high offices. As a result, some of the Nicaraguan priests got disappointed and interrupted the Pope severally during the Mass, and their reaction made him angry.

According to Mannion (2008) the Pope's visit convinced most of the

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Nicaraguan individuals that the Vatican will not involve itself with their issue. For example, the day before the Popes visit to Managua, there was a commemorative funeral service of seventeen Sandinista supporters. The Contras had killed the seven supporters, and the funeral service happened in the same plaza where the Pope's Mass was to take place. Despite that, the Pope did not offer condolence words nor make reference to the incident. His lack of reference to the seven lives proved to them that the Pope did not put much importance on the political situation.

Following the reaction of priests to the Pope's comments, most Christians believed that the incidence would stir up opposition against the Pope, and the ripple effect be further division in the Church. They also feared that the Pope's words concerning priests holding political positions would be formulated into the laws of the church. Their fear was indeed confirmed, as until today, priests of the Church never involve in political matters.

In conclusion, the Pope's visit may have disappointed the interests of many priests and believers, but it was for the best. He proved to be a good leader and made the right decision at proposing the total exclusion of political matters from the church. His decision was the best and the most significant solution to the situation at hand- the tension of war.

References

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