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THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CUBA TODAY

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**Commentators:**

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. PICCONE: Hi. Good afternoon, everyone. Buenas tardes. I'm Ted Piccone. I'm a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy program here at Brookings and very happy to welcome you all here today for a discussion on Cuba and the role of the Catholic Church, and we're very fortunate to have with us a special guest to join us for the discussion, and I will go through some introductions and get us going and hopefully we'll have time for an engaging and rich conversation.

I think for all of you here, if you haven't been following it, you'll learn quickly how interesting and exciting things are in Cuba these days and the church has -- Catholic Church has something to do with that. For the last several years, the Catholic Church has played a dynamic role at the leadership level as well as at the local level in breaking new ground, in having conversations and promoting discussions and dialogue about the future of Cuba, and in particular, commenting on the scope of reforms, the shape of reforms that are already underway that the government of Raul Castro and the Communist Party have been promoting for the last two years, and we're going to hear more about that this afternoon.

Our featured guest is Orlando Marquez Hidalgo. He is the editor and director of *Palabra Nueva*, which is a magazine of the archdioceses of Havana, and he was the founding director of the

magazine since April 1992. He also has been recognized with a number of awards for his work. He's done a tremendous amount of work around the communications and social media roles of the archdiocese of Havana and has many years of education, including in architecture, but also in conflict resolution, including from universities in Sweden and the UK.

He will make some opening remarks for about 15 minutes, and then we will turn to our two guest commentators, and we're very fortunate to have them as well.

We will start with Tom Quigley. Tom is probably known to many of you for his many years of work with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as a senior policy advisor on Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asian affairs. As you know, the role of the Catholic Conference here in Washington is to be an important voice of the Church in analyzing and commenting on and trying to influence public policy, particularly as it relates to justice and human rights.

He also is an adjunct professor at Georgetown University, which leads me to our third guest, Eusebio Mujal-Leon, who is a professor at Georgetown and recently served as Chair of the Department of Government at the School Foreign Service, I believe, and he's also director of their Cuba 21 Project.

Professor Mujal-Leon has a long record of publications,

books, and articles, on a range of topics, great interest to those of us who work on foreign policy including Spain, European socialism, the role of the Soviet Union in Latin America, and, of course, many, many articles regarding Cuba.

He's currently working on the political role of the Catholic Church in Cuba, the role of civil society, and some comparative work around Cuba, China, and Vietnam.

We will hear from Tom and then Eusebio after Orlando's remarks, and then we'll have a little discussion up here, and then we will open it up for questions and answers and at that time there will be a microphone floating around and we'll get into that discussion.

So, with no further ado, welcome, and let me ask Orlando to make his presentation. Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. HIDALGO: I would like to start expressing my gratitude to Brookings Institution for this opportunity for inviting me here this afternoon to share with you my experience and thoughts regarding my country and the church, my church, in Cuba.

I would like to say also, from the beginning, please forgive me because -- just any mistake because of my English, but I will try to do my best.

You should know, the first, and probably only mission, the only one mission of the Church is to announce the gospel and to evangelize, but it doesn't mean to be to ignore the situation in the context where the Church is working or developing its mission. That is the case that we are seeing right now in Cuba, a church that, for many years, was separated from the society, living in -- trying to survive within the walls of the temples, and one day decided that it is time to go out, to (inaudible) the society, to (inaudible) this society, to (inaudible) the people who lives in this country.

But also, keeping the independence from all the social structure, the government, or we can talk about today about the opposition movement or any other institution who would try to mark the life of the Cuban society.

This independence of the Church makes possible to get in touch with everybody, with every actor in the society. That made possible also the role of the Catholic Church, especially during the last three years with the process of the prisoners -- the political prisoners.

I want to say that it is a perfect role, it's a just role -- imperfect role, of the institution who decided it's good to be involved trying to solve problems not to stay in the bell tower watching what is going on down.

Having said so, I would like to start talking a little bit about this dialogue between the church and the society. The Church has no access to the media. Nevertheless, in the last years, has been developing some own medias, magazines, mostly we don't have access to radio or TV. From time-to-time, in special period of the liturgical calendar, Christmas, Easter, et cetera, the government gives the opportunity of delivering some messages to the population, but it's not -- it's just in those special moments.

We have created these magazines and being Catholic, these magazines, we consider talking about religion is not good enough. We can talk about religion, but we must include also other topics, which are in the interest of the population, so we can write about economy, we can write about the society, we can write about sports, science, life, the everyday life of the Cubans -- the hopes, the expectations, their frustrations.

There are other steps taken by the Church. For example, during the last years, some parishes have developed a kind of sort of complementary scholar or educational programs, complementary educational programs to help children to improve their knowledge on grammar or math, languages, computer, et cetera, and also during the last two years in Havana, the archbishop of Havana reached an agreement

with the University of Murcia in Spain to hold a masters degree, an MBA, for the first time, non-governmental system prepared and held and give this masters degree to a group of Cubans, about -- in these two programs, about 100 Cubans have received a masters degree from Murcia.

It's good to say that even this, and the others in the parishes who are improving their abilities in grammar, language, et cetera, most of them are non-Catholics. Most of them are maybe even non-believers at all. They don't pay anything for that. It's free. And also in the last year, taken into consideration the process of reforms, economical reforms that the government of Raul Castro has put in practice, the Church has also prepared some fast courses to help the new entrepreneurs who want to create their own businesses.

We are doing that in Havana, but also other dioceses are doing the same, so the Church is trying to occupy a space -- its space, his or her space in the society, to help to improve the life of the Cubans.

On the other side, we have the dialogue with the authorities. For many years, the Church was trying to develop this integral dialogue with the government, a dialogue in which the main topic wouldn't be a religious topic, but the life, the necessities, and the situation of the Cuban population.

The Church, as you know, is spread across the country and

we have priests, nuns, layperson, so the Church is well informed on what's going on in the country.

The office of the Church of this dialogue between the government and the Church is an office that is the office for religious affairs. This office belongs to the parliament of ideology of the central committee of the Communist Party. It means that - and according with the Cuban constitution, the Party is in church is responsible leading the process, the society, the government, and everything in Cuba.

My interpretation of this is that the relationship is not exactly between the Church and the government or any governmental institution, it's between the Church and an ideology that usually perceives or sees the religion as a weakness and the Church a potential enemy that is trying to compete, is trying to take away some achievement of the Revolution or is trying also to appoint -- make criticism on what is going on.

I don't think it is exclusively a situation for us in Cuba. I think I'm not blaming those who work in that office. I think they are just following the manual or what's written. The same happens in many other countries in Eastern Europe in the past and the former Soviet Union.

Despite all that, it is possible to develop a dialogue between the government and the Church. Three years ago, Raul Castro overstepped the ideological obstacles and decided to have direct dialogue



with the Church, at the moment with Cardinal Jamie Ortega, the archbishop of Havana, and also Monsignor Dionisio Garcia, our bishop of Santiago de Cuba.

Raul has also done the same in other issues. He has overstepped other rules of the (inaudible).

The step -- the dialogue, I'm sorry, the dialogue -- as a result of the dialogue, we can see that the Cuban government granted this parole to the 52 political prisoners that remained in jail from those 75 that were put in jail in 2003. Most of them left the country, about 11 decided to stay in the country.

But actually it's true that the office that belongs to this department of ideology is still working there, it's still functioning, and all Cuban institutions who need or want to make contact with the Church, must go first to this office in order to get permission to approach or to sell, for example, a copier machine to the Church. This is still working.

Nevertheless, the dialogue has brought the situation between the Church and the government to a higher level and we hope that this dialogue will continue to improve.

Raul Castro also has recognized publically the role and the importance of the spiritual life of the citizens. He hasn't declared himself a believer, I don't know if he is a believer, but he publically has stated --

based on a statement regarding the importance of the Church and religion in the Cuban society.

On the other side, I can talk a little bit about the current movement of the reforms. Probably you have heard about the reforms put in practice by Raul Castro during the last years since he took the government. Yes, economic reform is not all that we expect to see in the coming future, but these have been good because I think that for many years there were too shameful restrictions to the freedom of the Cuban citizens because of the conception of the socialist system and the conception of the person.

And probably you have heard about that the Cubans can now buy cell phones or can sell or buy houses, cars, or go abroad without an exit permit that was so shameful. It is happening right now. And it is good. Of course, everybody is -- it is making easier the life of the citizens.

For many years the Church has claimed and has expressed his or her position regarding these topics, asking for more opportunities for the Cubans, asking for more freedom for the Cubans, because for the Church, it is known whenever we write or we talk about the wrong things, it is not about -- because a choice, a theological choice between socialism and capitalism, because you can find in every society mistakes, not like this, other mistakes, but it is because we think that in the top of every

priority should be the person, the human being is the most important subject in the society.

And now, since we have been for many years asking for these reforms, now the Church has expressed his support to these reforms and he's trying to encourage these reforms. Not everything is good, not everything is the best, but it's a good -- these are good steps, we hope to see other steps.

Even with this dialogue some bishops have had the opportunity -- even the whole Cuban Conference of Bishops had the opportunity of meeting the man who is in charge now of this reform, (inaudible) about two years ago and he talked to them about the plans of the guidelines, the plans of the government to -- the economic reforms that the government wanted to implement, and he heard the perceptions of the bishops. They talked to him about what they have heard in their own (inaudible) or places, the concerns of the farmers because of the tax system, or those who want to start with a new business but they have to pay from the beginning, et cetera, and high levels of taxation, he listened to all of them and they are having other opportunities to talk a little bit about that.

So, for the first time in about 50 years, the Church has been recognized as an internal -- I don't know the word -- interlocutor -- is okay?

Okay, as a valid, internal interlocutor for the first time in almost 50 years. This is new. This is something new. This is a new situation that we are facing now.

We are not living in a honeymoon, I'm not talking about that, I'm talking about the new situation that we are facing in Cuba right now.

In order to finish this presentation I would like to say that our hope is to see a reconciled society in the coming years. The best that might happen to us is that all this process, which is not clear for us, the end of the process -- not the ending, we will never see the end of the process, but the horizon of the process, it is not clear yet for us, but we think that -- we hope that this process will bring a more reconciled society, a more open society, and more sustainable -- not only socialism, because the government says that this reform is in order to get -- the aim is a sustainable socialism in Cuba. What means that we were living in an unsustainable socialism in the past, but beyond that we hope to have also sustainable spiritual improvement of our society.

We would like to see that more people are free to choose and even to be heard. We have also claimed for the right of those who have a different perception of the society or a different political choice, the right to be heard, the right to be heard and to express their ideas and to be recognized within the country.

We hope this better opportunity for the Cubans. We would like to see that all the problems are solved peacefully and through civic institution. We will also see that if the church now acted in the past regarding this process with the prisoners as a bridge between the Ladies in White and the government because both of them wanted the Church to do so. We would like to see that there will be a day that no bridge is needed at all because the Cubans are ready to exchange (inaudible) to each other.

I will also -- I can't avoid to say this -- I would also like to see that Cuba will be able to sustain not just harmony environment within the country, but also a harmony and good environment with its neighbors, including, of course, (inaudible) has been, for many years, the -- at one time, the closest and also the farthest neighbor, I mean, the United States of America. So, those are my -- this is my presentation. I hope you have been able to understand what I said. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. QUIGLEY: I don't think it will come as a surprise to anybody that I find myself in complete agreement with everything that Orlando has said, but I'm just a casual observer of Cuba and the Church in Cuba, and it may be that we'll hear a more critical analysis from one of this country's most astute scholars of Cuba, Eusebio Mujal-Leon.

I'll take my allotted time in filling in a few personal observations about -- on what Orlando has laid out, possibly offering some comments that he, as the official *vocero*, official spokesperson for the archdioceses of Havana would wisely refrain from.

Orlando stressed the role that dialogue, various dialogues with other sectors of society plays in the life of the Cuban Church today. I'm reminded of the many times that visiting U.S. bishops, particularly Cardinal O'Conner of new York, urged Fidel Castro to allow for dialogue between the Cuban Church and the government. As you may know, Castro had absolutely no contact with any of the Cuban bishops from the time of the triumph of 1959 to 1985 when the first delegation of U.S. bishops went to Cuba.

At that time, he invited the bishops to meet with him, they agreed, but they stipulated that they would like to meet with their fellow bishops from Cuba, the leadership of the Cuban Bishops Conference, and so they did. When, in later visits, foreign bishops pressed the matter of dialogue, they were met with the assurance that there was no need for such, since if the pastor needed cement or new tiles for falling down church roof, all they had to do is check with Jose Carniado, at that time, head of the Cuban *Asuntos* -- Religious Affairs Office, or today, Caridad Diego.

That was the extent of dialogue that Fidel felt had any place, not the dialogue that the Cuban bishops wanted about the nature of the Cuban society and the role of faith in the institutions of religion might play within that society.

Orlando highlighted two areas of recent progress, as the Church seeks to reach out to the larger society-- the matter of media access, essentially that of being able to freely produce publications, and secondly, the matter of education.

Early in the revolution the government shut down Catholic publications, notably the quite popular Franciscan *La Cincina*, and far more importantly, the extensive network of Catholic, indeed, all private schools from Kindergartens run by the sisters to the great secondary schools, like the Jesuits Belen that both Castros attended, and the Christian Brothers, La Salle, to the University of Santo Tomas de Villanueva.

The issue of publications is especially interesting. Many of you may be familiar with the Pinar del Rio Center for Civic and Religious Formation directed by Dagoberto Valdes, and his bimonthly magazine *Vitral*.

Dagoberto, who lost his agronomics job because of his religious activities, was reduced to gathering up the yaguas from the palm

fields, published articles in each issue of *Vitral* that it was said drove Caridad Diego up the wall. But because he enjoyed the patronage and protection of his Bishop Siro Gonzalez, Dagoberto seemed untouchable.

For six years he was a member of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in the Vatican, but in 2007, Bishop Siro, now 75, tendered his resignation. It was quickly accepted, and a new bishop was named, and the new bishop, Jorge Serpa began publishing a less confrontational *Vitral*.

But other publications, now by electronic means as well, have come to the fore. In my view the two principle ones are *Palabra Nueva*, which Orlando edits, and (inaudible), together with the website (inaudible), which Dagoberto helped to bring into being, these three expressions of vigorous dialogue are among the clearest signs of the renewal that has quietly been taking place in Cuba.

On education the Church has long sought the ability, even just a little space, to resume at least part of its long tradition of educating people in the faith. Whether it will ever again be able or even want to staff the many parochial and congregational schools that once provided an excellent education to many is doubtful, but it has begun, because of the dialogue, to take several initiatives in the field of education including what might be called adult or civic education.



In 2011 the government allowed the church to open the Centro Cultural Padre Felix Varela, in the former and historic Seminary San Carlos in San Ambrosio. The Center conducts multifaceted programs where critics, as well as proponents of the government can freely express and debate their views. It also hosts the MBA program that Orlando referred to, an academic degree program affiliated with the Catholic University of Murcia in Spain. And even earlier, the parish church of San Juan Letran was able to provide courses in computing and related skills through its (inaudible) de las Casas Center. And the previous year, 2010, saw the completion of a promise made to Pope John Paul during his 1998 papal visit to Cuba, that the cornerstone he blessed at that time would find its conclusion with the inauguration of the New Seminary of San Carlos and San Ambrosio. Dedication ceremonies were accompanied by major figures in the government including President Raul Castro.

So, the dialogue with the government, all these developments have been made possible because of the ongoing dialogue with the government, which there is no denying, had been facilitated by the fact of Raul Castro assuming the presidency fully in 2008. It is doubtful that they could have happened had a vigorous Fidel Castro still been in power. And it is precisely this dialogue, which the church has been asking for for decades, that has brought out the most vigorous and

vicious attacks on the Church, and especially on Cardinal Ortega, since the early days of the Revolution.

The attacks aren't coming from the Party or the government, but chiefly from certain sectors of the Cuban community abroad and from conservative commentators in the United States. These attacks were particularly vigorous at the time of Pope Benedict's visit in March of last year. It was that visit, by the way, which was an indirect cause of the election of Pope Francis and of that pope's marvelous words and actions last week in Brazil. One could almost say that Cuba was responsible for the abdication of Pope Benedict I.

I witnessed the vigorous presence of John Paul in Cuba in 1998, but also witnessed the frail, slow, largely inaudible presence of Pope Benedict last year. When he returned to Rome, his doctors strongly urged that he make no more international trips. He had gone to the Madrid World Youth Day in 2011 and spoke of looking forward to the Rio meeting in 2013. But it was not to be.

So, back to the 2012 papal visit to Cuba. The trip had hardly begun with a conservative chorus began carping at every detail, even denouncing the fact of the visit. The attacks were emotional, ill-informed, based on false premises, and they were intense. They were especially directed at Cardinal Jaime, but also at the Pope and his advisors.

“Benedict Bombs in Havana”, said *The National Review* online. The visit was, “A failed and tone deaf pastoral mission that did PR wonders for the Brothers Castro.” *The Washington Post* decried the Church’s, “Coldness toward peaceful, pro-democracy activists” and accused Cardinal Ortega of becoming, “a de facto partner of Raul Castro”.

Elliot Abrams, George Weigel, radio and TV Marti all piled on. Carlos Garcia Perez, director of Radio and TV Marti, whose salary is paid by the U.S. government, called the cardinal, “a lackey”. Particularly disgraceful was the burst of crocodile tears shed for the poor Damas de Blanco who asked for “only a minute of the Pope’s time”. First, there’s no such thing as a minute to (inaudible) the several, indeed, many minutes that would have to be found in such a highly scripted program as a papal visit. The Damas had no more right or reason to demand it than the many other more representative groups who also did not meet with the Pope -- the congregations of religious men and women, the seminarians, the ecumenical and interfaith representatives, indeed, any of several other highly -- other human rights advocates.

They would tell him nothing that he was not already well aware of, they had full and continuous access to the bishop’s conference, whose headquarters was located in the same Church of Santa Rita, from which they emerge from Sunday mass to carry on their silent procession

along the Quinta Avenida.

More to the point, they owed their ability to march unmolested most days to the intervention of one person, Jaime Ortega. After the Damas had been viciously attacked by organized goons, the Cardinal wrote to Raul Castro, a meeting was had, and the attacks ceased mostly. There have been further incidents, but the Damas themselves have not been entirely without fault, and there was absolutely no reason for them to have been granted time with this aged and soon-to-abdicate Benedict the 16<sup>th</sup>.

As to the Pope meeting with the Brothers Castro, it was absolutely de rigueur for the head of state and his family to meet with a visiting head of state, the Pope. For those who saw the repeated loop of Fidel at the (inaudible) looking for all the world like a doddering and confused old man needing the constant help of his handlers, no further explanation of Raul's taking over was necessary. And one can be cynical about the democratic credentials of the current head of state, and more important, head of the real power in the country, the (inaudible), the armed forces, still it has been Raul's decision to bring parts of civil society, including the Catholic Church, at least part way in from the cold.

Whatever the future portends, that at least has to be seen as an advance. One could even call it a reform. Orlando used the word

reform, but the government does not do reform, they do updating, but there is updating (inaudible) going on and, to me, that's a fair imitation of reform.

I'll conclude now picking up on Orlando's final points about the desirable future, which ought to include, as he said, a reconciled community which includes those who live abroad. The Church in Cuba, more than any other entity, is deeply serious about reconciliation among all sectors of the Cuban family, all who dwell in Casa Cuba, and very specially those who live abroad. These are the people the Church seeks to engage in dialogue.

It hasn't been easy not once over these past six decades, but there have been more advances than backward moves. We'll have to see what the future advances may be at hand. Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. MUJAL-LEON: Well, thank you very much for the invitation and I was really looking forward to this event, particularly because Orlando was speaking and I can say in all truth that I think that he's one of the most lucid analysts of Cuban reality. I recommend to you an article that he presented first at the Latin American Studies Association last year and then that was published in (inaudible), which is, I think, very much to the point, succinct, and I think quite thorough in looking at it --

sorry, in *Palabra Nueva*, of which he is editor.

But in any case, there's much to comment and I must, at the beginning, at the outset, say that I am not a specialist on the Catholic Church, although I have, over the course of the last year, been doing a lot of reading on the Catholic Church because I'm trying to write an article, and I stress the "trying" -- trying to write an article on the political role of the Church in Cuba.

It's quite an undertaking and obviously involves a very complex and almost moving motion picture.

I think that the political role of the Catholic Church, about which both speakers, in a sense, have touched, but I'm going to be even more focused on the political, I think the question of the political role of the Church has to be understood in a dual context, a dual political context, of a weakened state, that is, a less capable state, (speaking Spanish), than what it was 15 -- well, 10 years ago, 15 years ago, 20 years ago, and secondly, of a regime that is undergoing substantial transformation.

We don't know where it's going, but we do know that it is in process and that Raul is trying to shepherd it to the post-Castro period, which, I suppose, looms large both for his brother and for himself in the not-too-distant future.

First a few words about the ruling coalition to try and put this

in context, and these are impressions, they are -- I can provide evidence. I think that the younger Castro, who has clearly taken over from an aging/aged older brother, manages what, to me, is an increasingly fissiparous coalition. I think that we're used to thinking about these regimes as particularly autocratic regimes, as being centralized, as being solid, as having no fissures, no tensions.

I think it is a coalition and it's a coalition dominated by the military, one sector, those who have command over troops, and secondly, technocrats, who have taken over many, if not most, ministries and joint ventures. And that military stands in uneasy contraposition to hardliners and bureaucrats who oppose the real, though still tentative reforms, of Raul Castro.

In fact, I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that the opposition to Raul Castro, the strongest opposition to Raul Castro and his reforms, are actually within the Communist Party.

There are also younger party (inaudible) who formed the pool from which the provincial party secretaries are selected, but they are a very secondary actor to this military alliance that supports Raul Castro.

What Raul has attempted to do is -- or, I should say, Raul is in control, but he understands that the legitimacy of the system has been significantly eroded on the one hand, and that he has to try to re-legitimize

it, on the other. And I think that's his dilemma. And it's in that context and in an effort to both strengthen institutional capacity and ensure continuity and stability into the post-Castro era, that Raul has sought areas of common ground -- I don't want to say "partnership", but common ground -- with the Catholic Church.

Second general point that I want to make is in terms of a comparative reference. Cuba is neither -- one could go on and compare -- but Cuba is neither Spain nor is it Poland. Cuba is Cuba. The Spanish case is really not apposite, even as the Catholic Church in Spain, under Cardinal (inaudible) in the 1970s tried to move to a position of neutrality after having sided with the nationalist insurgents in the 1930s, and having actually been within the regime during the 1940s and the 1950s.

Poland is also not, in a way, an apposite comparison, because the Catholic Church in Poland had a nationalist legitimacy for very deep and varied historical reasons that the Catholic Church, I don't think, has had, it may come to have, but has not had in Cuba.

Catholicism was the hegemonic religion in Poland and under its inspiration and guidance, a worker's movement, solidarity emerged. Even so, there is the myth and then there is the reality. As you look at the Catholic Church in the transition in Poland, there was a great deal of complexity and internal divisions. Not only did Cardinal Wyszynski and



Cardinal Wojtyla not look at the world in exactly the same way, just as Wojtyla -- by then John Paul II, did not look at the world the same way as Cardinal (inaudible) the primate, but there was also a group in the Polish church -- just to provide the layer of complexity -- called the Packs group, which actually had parliamentary representation, and worked actively with the government against the interests of the Church.

Cuba, I think, is different and interesting because it is less a transition -- what we are seeing is less a transition from Communism and much more a transition from a virulent form of centralizing nationalism that captured the Revolution in 1959 to 1961, and I stress that because this issue of nationalism and national identity and the legitimacy of institutions in relation to the trajectory of the nation are very important to understanding the Church's position, are very important to understanding the conflicts between different sectors of exile, sectors within Cuba, opposition within Cuba, opposition, dissidents, et cetera.

Compounding the problem is that Fidel, whose relationship with the Church was briefly touched on by Tom, was not only Fidel, Fidel and Castroism, in fact, became political religions in the 1960s and in the 1970s, and in that sense, not only was there a battle over nationalism, there was also a battle over religion.

I understand that this may be somewhat controversial, at

least difficult to understand, but I think it's very important because the transition from Fidel to Raul is precisely the shift from an advocate of political religion to someone who does not look at the world at all in the same way, and is thus able, for whatever sets of reasons, to negotiate with the Church in a different manner than Fidel Castro had done before.

What about the Church and its strategy? Raul had opened the door to change in July of 2007 when he called for Cambios (inaudible), a marvelously elliptical phrase under which you could fit whatever you wanted, and as little, in a sense, that you wanted. But what was clear was that Raul Castro understood that he could not govern in the same way as his brother, and more importantly, that he had to try and stabilize and ensure continuity for the post-Castro era.

Cardinal Ortega, I think, had the sense to see that there were greater negotiating opportunities under Raul Castro, that the regime was weaker, and that the regime actually needed the Church, not just to provide spiritual sustenance, but also as a quasi-political partner, quasi-political ally in this phase of transition.

I think that perhaps there was also the sense that Raul and his generation had Catholic roots that were unlikely to be found in the next generation of Communist leaders that were going to take over in five years time, so that if there was ever an opportunity that was ripe, this was the

moment.

The accession to power of Raul Castro also, I think, gave Church prelates the opportunity to leapfrog the Office of Religious Affairs under Caridad Diego because obviously Raul was willing and able to engage in direct negotiations, and I think that from an institutional point of view, as you can probably tell from sort of the subtext of the presentation that Orlando made, this was symbolically very important in terms of the recognition of the Church as a social actor, not to mention, of course, the successful negotiations for the liberation of prisoners, which came at the price of praise, if you can imagine, from Raul Castro in the opening speech at the Sixth Party Congress in April of 2011 where he said that the Church and Cardinal Ortega and Archbishop Garcia had contributed "to the defense of the unity of the nation".

You wonder exactly what were the intentions in saying that, because it obviously put things in a frame that was, perhaps, inaccurate, but certainly was also highly political.

I could go on, but I want to try and cut to the chase and talk about two things. One is, how do you evaluate this period of the last 10 or 15 years? And what do we see going forward?

It's mixed. I remember a friend of mine -- an old friend of mine who actually was a politician saying to me once -- not about Cuba,

but about other latitudes -- "to engage in politics, to act, is to make mistakes". So, we should assume that people in complicated situations will make mistakes and hopefully the successes will be greater than the mistakes. You could pass, you could do that examination of Cardinal Bergoglio during his tenure in -- sorry, the cardinal, of then Jesuit Provincial Bergoglio, in Buenos Aires during the Dirty War. You could do this about anyone in complicated situations. You could do this about Ortega, and obviously, with a mixed and complicated picture.

But what are the successes? And let me just enumerate them. And they're successes not only of Ortega, but of the episcopate, although I think that we should not assume that that episcopate is so tightly united, single-minded in its evaluation of a complex Cuban reality.

I think one of the most important things that the Catholic Church has done in the last 15 or 20 years, and an important role was played in this by John Paul II and by the episcopate and by the cardinal, is the validation of Felix Varela as an alternative symbol of national discourse and legitimacy. I think this is extraordinarily important because they have managed to place Varela on an equal standing, not with Marti, because he was antecedent to Marti, but of an equal standing with Fidel Castro after 1959. And I think that that ideological spiritual positioning is very important.

Secondly, the vibrancy of the debates in (inaudible), in the Church publications, which although online and thus relatively limited, are really remarkable in terms of what is said in those pages and how people criticize and make demands and try to define what democracy should look like in Cuba. This, if you think about what, 20 years ago, or 15 years ago, or 10 years ago, was the cultural political terrain in Spain -- in Cuba, is really quite remarkable -- the restoration of the former seminary, the liberation of the prisoners, and the expanded, though still limited reach, into society through the work of its charitable organizations.

These are very positive developments and they are pluses for the tenure of Ortega as cardinal, though not primate -- primate is (inaudible) Garcia and Santiago de Cuba.

This is not the place for an extended discussion of Cardinal Ortega and his views. I'm certainly probably not competent for this. It's quite clear that he's conservative from a theological point of view, he's conservative from an administrative point of view. He eschews a prophetic role noting, in a speech that he gave in Germany in 2012, that the early Christian martyrs proclaimed their faith "rather than attacking the structures of power". So, quite clear justification and explanation and framing of this posture.

He has also been, and this is -- well, not unusual, but

interesting -- pointedly critical of Afro-Cuban religion. He may not have intended to do this, but he commented that Santeria "does not make great moral demands on its practitioners and its magical elements give tranquility or security as soon as they are practiced", and then he went on to say that there were many people "who live off Santeria". You know, just to position him, in terms of some of the issues in Cuban life, I think that the strong line under Ortega, and I think that what will certainly continue, is the identification with Cuban nationals, and that, I think, is one of the great developments of the last 20 years and it helps to flavor some of the conversation and the controversy about the papal visits and the like.

What about the future, just telegraphically? New pope, probable new cardinal, and a government without Castro, with a Castro at its head, this is what we'll probably see within the next three or four years. Cardinal Bergoglio is still filling out his public profile and we shall see the role that he plays and the person that he picks for the future Archbishop of Havana because Cardinal Ortega has submitted his resignation. He is to be replaced and will, probably, within the next year.

A new generation of ecclesiastical leaders is about to enter the scene, a new generation of political leaders is about to enter the scene, and in the last years of the Raul Castro government, we are probably going to see not great steps in economic reform, although it is

possible, but a debate taking place behind closed doors but that will continue and perhaps intensify as his tenure comes to an end, about whether to embark on limited political reforms. And the most important of the political reforms that I can envision within the boundaries of a system that does not want to change is a reform of the electoral law and a reform of the parliament so that you can have multi-party competition.

And I think -- and here I'm speculating, I'm clearly going out on a limb -- I think that one of the great choices that the Church is going to face over the next couple of years, were such a scenario to spin itself out, is whether the Church decides to support, to encourage, to accept, a putative or possible left Catholic party that might engage in the elections, and that, I think, will, if anything, intensify the debate over the role of the church and the future of transition in Cuba.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. PICCONE: Thank you. We're going to get mic'ed up here. Just give us a minute. But while we're doing that, you know, this was an incredibly rich and interesting conversation, it covered a lot of ground, so I'm looking forward to your questions. We have a lot of experts in the audience. But in sitting here reflecting on the different scenarios and the current realities, what struck me was how the Catholic Church

currently views its field of play. In other words, you have, as Eusebio mentioned, a weaker state, you have other forces in society like evangelical and protestant movements that are flourishing as you see in other parts of Latin America, and you have, of course, secularism, which is an important -- has, for many years, played an important role.

How do you see the Catholic Church reaching out to bring new and more people into its constituency for the future? That would be my first question for you.

MR. HIDALGO: The Church is facing many challenges, not only with this society, but also religious challenges, one of those is this about the presence of other religions or the secularism or the Santeria -- but with Santeria, or (inaudible) it's not easy to define exactly what is the meaning of all that.

Santeria is called those who believe -- come from Africa, it's regions in Africa, but you know, for those who practice Santeria, for them to be initiated, they must be baptized in the Catholic Church. So, there is a singularity regarding this situation, the Santeria, not in other churches, but the Catholic Church is the closest church for them, so they know Catholic Church players, they went, they asked for masses for their beloveds death, so, they are not so far away from the Catholic Church.

Nevertheless, it's a pastoral challenge because we -- the



Church is supposed to (inaudible) them the person of Jesus Christ, but they know, as I said, the praise of the Church, they may believe in Christ, they also may believe in Orishas, as they call it.

We, probably the Catholic Church is the majority of the strongest presence of any churches in Cuba. According to our findings, about 60 percent of the Cuban population has been baptized in the Catholic Church, but the practice is very, very, very low. The practice has nothing to do with this 60 percent of those who have been baptized as Catholic.

We have said -- we mentioned here -- what I mentioned here, our work with magazines or trying to reach the society, even trying to present the society a different point of view or to denounce, but at the same time announcing something different because it's not about only to denounce what is bad, but at the same time to present what can we do with you.

So, that is what Pope Benedict the 16<sup>th</sup> used to call a significant minority. So, we are a minority within the society, but we are trying to fulfill our place, our position in the society. We're trying to develop this dialogue with the whole society.

Nevertheless, it is difficult -- we haven't been success with ecumenical dialogue, it's true. It's another challenge. The ecumenical

dialogue has not reached the level it's supposed to reach. It's another challenge for the Church. It's very difficult to explain why -- the reasons probably behind that, but for many people it is due to some political stance. Not all the Protestant believers, but some leaders of churches historically have been closer to the Cuban Revolution or to the Cuban government more than the Catholic Church.

And there is sort of -- we are seen now a kind of mistrust that is necessary to (inaudible), we must (inaudible) with the situation.

There is nothing else with your question?

MR. PICCONE: Well, I think I was going to ask a subsequent question, which relates to the -- we talked about the importance of the Cuban military and the whole power structure in Cuba. What do you find -- and the pulse that the Catholic Church may have on what's going on in society throughout the island. I'm just wondering if you have any reflections on whether -- what role the Catholic Church plays in individual military's thinking about the future? I mean, are there, for example, active members of the military who are also active members of the church?

MR. HIDALGO: I don't know about any member of the army attending masses or going to church. Probably a retired one, maybe, but I don't know any officer of the army going to church. I can say this because

I saw it, before that (inaudible), I am not a specialist in the political issues, but I'm not so sure we are seeing in Cuba a weaker state, but I don't think it's the same, an exhausted model of the society -- I don't think that the state is so weak at the present moment. I don't know. But it's not the point. But I remember this because, you know, about -- end of the '80s of the last century, there is a governmental institution that made a survey across the society, the whole society. Still, at the time, the Soviet Union was there in Europe, and that survey was made in 1989. About 90 percent, according with this survey made by governmental institution, about 90 percent of the Cubans were believers. It means 30 years after the Revolution, 30 years after atheist program, the vast majority of the Cuban people believe in God or something beyond the project that was presented, because also this project, the socialist project, also not only demanded the strength of the people to carry on this process, but also demanded the heart, the soul, everything. It was like a new religion. I demand all from you. You have to put all your confidence on me so we can create a new society, a new man, a new world, a new something.

It's a competitive role with religion, but it failed because you cannot assume this role. But I remember, it's an anecdote, during the last -- there was a huge parade in the whole country for the 400 years of Our Lady of the Charity, the patron of Cuba. This statue of the Virgin went to

everyplace on the island, the country, in the cities, in the mountains, on the plains, everywhere, and I remember because when we went to Isle of Pines, which is called today the Isle of Youth, the southernmost island, small island at the south of Havana, and we were moving from one town to another town with the caravan. Everybody knew that the Virgin was there, and we went -- we passed in front of military camp, barrack, and the soldiers there came out, so we had to stop the caravan, and they gathered around the truck, this little truck with the Virgin, the statue of the Virgin, and the auxiliary bishop of Havana, Monsignor Juan de Dios Hernandez, who was leading the group, he started praying with those members of the army, and even some of them -- this, like this, and prayed, and they said Hail Mary and Our Father who aren't in heaven -- some of them did it inside of the Virgin.

So, I think that there are -- despite the tough moments that we have lived so far, there are a lot of good citizens within the Cuban people, within the Cuban citizens, and these citizens are expecting the best moment to spring out. It happened with the Pope, both visits, and it happens whenever they have the opportunity.

If Raul Castro, defends, for example, what happened two years ago, because some -- a woman, member of the government in Pinar del Rio, she was separated of her position because she attended religious

service, she's a Protestant, she attended religious service, she was separated of her position, and he decides it publically because she managed to send (inaudible) to him and when he knew that, he decides it publically, said that the state has no right to intervene in the private life of the citizens.

Even despite these economical reforms, updating of the process, I remember one of his statements, which is to me one of the most important statements in order to -- a political change. He said, in one of these appearances during the National Assembly that, you know, gathers just twice a year, he said, wait, the state has no right to intervene in agreements between individuals. The state should rule the relations between the state and individual, but not between individuals. This is not our role. This is new because the Cuba is always saying what you have to do.

So, his stance is -- his position is different so far. But I don't know how -- if the army, beyond that, I don't know.

MR. PICCONE: Thanks. That's great. Do you all have any quick comments on each others' before I take it to the --

MR. QUIGLEY: May I just make a couple comments about some of the things that you both have raised? One is the question of the Pentecostal movements, which are growing in Cuba, more than the

traditional historic Protestant churches, this church is of the reform. I just did a couple interviews on Pope Francis in Brazil and the first question journalists want to ask is, what about the tremendous number of people who are leaving the Catholic Church and going to the Evangelicals, especially the Pentecostals?

That seems to be the major issue of interest to journalists, I apologize to any journalists who may be here, that it's the market share issue. Are you getting, are you losing? And when they hear the word "new evangelization" that the previous Pope made his main theme, it doesn't mean going out and trying to convert people into the Catholic Church. Evangelization is preaching the gospel to let the -- the whole lived gospel as Pope Francis today so eloquently expresses.

A friend of mine who deals with ecumenical issues and the church said that if people find Jesus, they're not finding Jesus in their own church they were baptized in, but they find Jesus in the Baptist Church or the Pentecostal churches, they're finding Jesus, so that's all right. You don't have to worry so much about that.

But there's questions about the effective organization of some of these churches that depend more on loudspeakers and entertaining kinds of services.

One thing that I would say about the ecumenism in Cuba,

Carlos Manuel de (inaudible) is sort of the leading figure of the old generation, he was the vocero for the archdiocese for the Bishops Conference for many years when the -- at the time that Fidel wouldn't meet with any of the bishops, Carlos Manuel did have access to the government.

His view is that prior to 1959, Cuba led Latin America in ecumenical relations. It was better ties between Catholics and Protestants and Jews in Cuba than there was in almost any other country in Latin America. That's changed very markedly in the last 50 years, some 60 years, partly, as Orlando mentioned, because of a seemingly political attachment by many of the churches that have seen -- attached themselves to the government, has been a way of raising themselves out of the ghetto, in a sense, of a largely catholic, and in some sense, country, they were the minority. They are now being received, there was a famous meeting between Fidel Castro and the leaders of the Protestant Church some many years ago.

One can only hope with the change of attitudes in the government and in the church that will soon be changed.

One word about Santeria, during the time of Pope John Paul's visit in '98, he met with different groups, with the interreligious and Protestant Church, and so on. He didn't meet with the Santeros. Why?

Well, because, as Jaime Ortega said, they're Catholic. They may not practice the same way that we do, but if you go to mass in any downtown Havana church, you will see Santeros standing all in white throughout the whole mass. They go to mass, and they are all, as Orlando said, all have to be baptized in the Catholic Church, so in one sense, they are Catholics, but in another sense there's a very sharp distinction between that kind of practice and that of the traditional Catholic Church.

MR. PICCONE: Great. Very brief, and then we'll turn to --

MR. MUJAL-LEON: I thought your question was very important and I think Orlando has tried to answer it. It is very -- I think it's very difficult to ascertain both what religiosity means in Cuba today, and what space the Church has today and what the Church may have.

There are many routes to post-modernity. In Cuba, the route that you may be seeing, it may not be so different than the one that you're seeing in the United States, which is high levels of religiosity, but declining levels of adherence to institutions, and that is, I think, the challenge that Pope Francis very clearly understands and is trying to address.

MR. PICCONE: Well, let's take some questions from the audience. I see a bunch of hands and there should be a microphone coming down. If you just come on down to my right, just past this gentleman. Behind you.



MR. RENNER: Phillip Renner, American University. First, let me thank Orlando Marquez for being here. You're a symbol -- your personal courage and wisdom has been really quite important in transforming both the Church and relations between the Cuban government and the Church. It's a great honor to have you here.

If the United States policy in promoting democracy is to promote civil society and the church represents civil society, what single thing could the United States do to help promote the Church in Cuba?

MR. PICCONE: And before you answer that, let me take one other question. This gentleman right there.

SPEAKER: (off mic)

MR. PICCONE: Oh, I'm sorry, it was the gentleman right behind you. I'll get to you in the next round.

SPEAKER: Pedro (inaudible), (inaudible) Consulting. Orlando, one of the things, in the context of providing some view about the potential of the Church, is the size of the Church in terms of religious people in Cuba.

Could you speak a little bit in terms of the size? Because one of the things that I think a lot of people do not understand, and the comparison was made with Poland, is how small physically the church is in number of priests, number of nuns, and stuff like that, compared to the

size of the population. And just kind of as a second question is, could you talk a little bit in common about things that Vice President Diaz-Canel has been saying about the need for spiritual life and values, and the meetings that he's had with the Church, if you could elaborate of what that bodes for the future of the Church in terms of the younger potential generation of political leadership?

MR. HIDALGO: Phil, the question is, what can the U.S. do --

MR. RENNER: To support the Church.

MR. HIDALGO: -- to support the Church? With all due respect, I do believe that the Church in Cuba doesn't need such support. I mean, we have had good relations with the Bishops Conference in the United States and we may come to with those who work at the U.S. intersection in Havana meet with exchanges, ideas, et cetera, but, as you know, this -- I'm not too familiar, but I have read it a bit -- the dual track is isolating the government and promoting the civil society and the Church, et cetera. And the Church cannot be included in such a policy. This is not the best for the Church, neither for the country. This is a political issue. I'm not avoiding the political issue, I mean it, this is -- or in the interest of -- this is the policy of the U.S. toward Cuba, but cannot decide who is or who is not in such a policy in this -- in my way of approaching the Cuba situation.

I wanted to see a better relationship between the two countries, I think that is the better -- to help the Church is to help the Cuban citizens or the Cuban population. It will be the best for the Church and also for the country.

I don't know if -- Phil, that's okay?

MR. RENNER: Yes, sir.

MR. HIDALGO: Regarding the figures, in 1959 there were about 700 priests in Cuba and about 1,300 nuns, something like that. In 1961, many of them were expelled and some were expelled, others left the country because the government intervened in schools, hospitals, et cetera. And in a couple of years there were only 200 priests in Cuba.

Right now, there are maybe 340, 350 priests in Cuba. Most of them, about 51, 52 percent, are not Cuban native, those who (inaudible), but for us, they are members of the Church, it's not -- but I just want to put this in -- clear. There are much more Cuban priests outside Cuba than we see in Cuba, not because they were expelled, because many of them were ordered outside Cuba. Others, many others, left the country once they were ordained within Cuba, because this is another kind of bleeding of a church in Cuba. When you prepare people, lay, nuns, priests, the Church doesn't -- is not immune to this immigration process.

So, many, many Catholics, and also members of all other

churches, leave the country in order to get -- for them it's a better opportunity. So, we are facing all that. That's why during the Policy (inaudible), for example, you may see an increasing participation in the Church, and then after that you will see a kind of (inaudible), you know, top, that's it, and then small decrease. New people come to church, new conversions, adult conversations, but all of the sudden you may see that there is again decreasing because people left the country. According with this program, U.S.-Cuba program for immigration, immigration program, 20,000 people leave the country legally, get visa every year to come to the U.S., so imagine during the last five years, ten years, legally, without counting all those who go through Mexico or any other country to leave the country.

In the middle of this critical situation, I cannot forget to tell you this, because I've heard that during these training programs that we have in Havana or in other churches in the country, for the first time, I have heard young people saying, with these new opportunities, now I'm considering to stay in my country -- young people. This is also something new, not because -- just because they think that for the first time they have a new opportunity of creating something for themselves.

MR. PICCONE: Great. Let's take a couple more hands. Why don't we start with you, Lorenzo, and then we'll come around this

way.

MR. PEREZ: Lorenzo Perez, retired from the IMF and occasional contributor to *Palabra Nueva*.

MR. HIDALGO: Yes. Thank you very much.

MR. PEREZ: Orlando, what would you say are two or three areas, actions, initiatives that the Catholic Church would like to implement or address in Cuba in the foreseeable future? For example, one thing that occurred to me is try to get more visas for priests to come to Cuba. That would be one, given what you just said about the scarcity of priests, but in that sort of area of evangelization, what would you say the Catholic Church would like to get done in Cuba with the goals?

MR. PICCONE: And just before -- let's just take a couple more even if you don't have time to answer them all, just so we get them out there. This gentleman right here and then this gentleman here.

SPEAKER: Hi. I study the history of the Catholic Church in Poland, actually, I teach at Maryland and I'm also a scholar at the Wilson Center. I was very interested to hear Poland play such a role in the discussion today. I want to sort of ask two very fast questions. The first is, two things that I think actually are relevant, even though, of course, I agree that Cuba is not Poland, the idea of Catholic social teaching didn't really come up today. Right, when we talk about evangelization, if you

look at socialism at the ideological level, competing claims about social justice, in Poland this was always the strongest motivating factor for mobilization within solidarity around Catholics, basically that Catholicism has its own social teaching, which even for non-Catholics, works better than socialism.

To what extent is that a factor in Cuba now?

And then the second issue has to do specifically with the Office of Religious Affairs, because the way that it seemed sort of that it's been left -- the topic has been left, is that it's basically irrelevant today given the personal initiatives taken by Raul Castro. I'm just curious if you would agree with that, because Poland and in the other communist countries, offices of religious affairs served, for a long time, a monopolistic function in terms of creating official and often academic knowledge about religion, and that didn't disappear, even within one generation. Thanks.

MR. PICCONE: And we just have time for one more question. This gentleman right here.

MR. GUGGENHEIM: Hi. Jim Guggenheim, retired economist. In May I had a wonderful three week visit to Cuba and the Cuban people, and one of the questions I had then and still now is, what is the extent to which there are independent views expressed other than the Catholic Church in terms of the mass media, newspapers, magazines,

independent thought, blogs on the Internet, expressing different political views or public policy views? And how has that changed lately? And what do you see in the future?

MR. PICCONE: Thank you very much. So, we just have time for just brief comments. Orlando, we'll start with you and come down. Just answer what you can.

MR. HIDALGO: Lorenzo, I would like to see, not also the Church, but would like to see get more and more involved in the problem, but many people in the society, even known Catholics, would like to see that the churches, Catholic Church and all the churches, get involved in the process.

For example, the education issue. We have not schools, so I don't think in this moment the Church is ready to manage their own schools, but I think there could be a way of participating in the educational system. For example, Pedro, I forget to answer him, not only Diaz-Canel, but Raul himself, in one of the last speeches, he called for the religious institution and churches to get involved in this crisis of values that the country is facing at this moment. So, this is also something new.

I think that that will be part of the dialogue. It would be nice to ask the (inaudible), say, well, what can we do? Because we don't have too many means to fulfill that.

This office is still in place, despite this dialogue at the top level, the office is still there and not only for the Church, but as I said before, any governmental institution who is planning to get in touch with the Church, for selling a car or for selling a copy machine must ask and obtain the permission from that office, otherwise we cannot buy a pen.

And, I mean, we can buy a bottle of water, but not something like this, like a copy machine or something like that, or a car for a priest.

And the social media, well, I think that we have referred a lot of time, sometimes, to this point, the access to the media and the access - - for example, probably this is a little bit difficult to understand since when we started with our magazines, since there are not other independent magazines and publication and media, some people thought that these magazines could become the opposition media of the government, because there is not opposition recognized or opposition media recognized. It's difficult, but we said, no, this media belongs to the Church.

Of course, one of the missions of the Church is the prophetic mission and to be -- and to pay attention what is going wrong -- what is wrong in the society, but this is not for promoting, for example, the ideas of the program of the opposition movement, one side. On the other side, because you may find Catholics in different opposition movements, so



which one are you going to choose for your magazine?

But of course, recently, the other magazine -- Catholic magazine in Havana (inaudible) presented an important work with the criteria of many, many people, or some important academics in Cuba, expressing the ideas about the official media -- the lack of freedom of the official media, the limits on the sources to access for the journalists, the lack of resources.

And so, even the journalists themselves, they have complained because of the limitations they are suffering every day. So, we would like to see much more opportunities regarding that.

Now, a few weeks ago, for the first time we have seen open Internet in some cities, in some places. That's good. It's the best. We are living in 21<sup>st</sup> century thinking that we are in the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century. It doesn't make sense.

MR. PICCONE: Final reflections --

MR. QUIGLEY: Just to get up on that same last point about the access to the Internet, that is going to be critical for the fuller expression of reading about other views and expressing them. There's so little of that today, but directly to the question of how do different views get expressed, (inaudible) and *Espacio Laical* are two great vehicles for that kind of expression as Orlando just mentioned about *Espacio Laical*, but

not enough people can access the computers to see those things.

Just one word on priests; visas for priests, no, that was a big issue 30 years ago. It is not a big issue today. For a time there was (inaudible) of 200 priests. A couple died, a couple more were led in from religious orders, mainly.

Today, the question is not -- there isn't a surplus of priests around to come to Cuba. There's a shortage of clergy all over Europe, all over North America, and to a lesser extent, Latin America and in Africa and Asia, but still there are not very many priests who are going to be coming into Cuba today. So, that issue of the numerous (inaudible) that was established by Castro to let only a certain number of priests in and religious -- that's pretty much gone.

Just one joke about -- not a joke, but a little anecdote about the question of the visas. During the time of Sandinista Nicaragua, the first Sandinista, Miguel d'Escoto a Maryknoll priest was their foreign minister, and he and his friend, Fidel Castro, decided that they ought to be able to bring in some American priests, North American priests. None were allowed in. There was one Capetian Franciscan who was kicked out. And so d'Escoto provided that his own order, the Maryknollers, would be training some priests to come into Cuba. And that was going forward, they identified three priests who were going to come in, but the then

Cardinal Archbishop of Boston, who was not a good friend of Miguel d'Escoto, that's Cardinal Law, learned of this and he put the kybosh on it. They were no longer going to be there. He was going to have the site of St. James the Apostle a (inaudible) group of clergy in Boston who went to work in Latin American, mostly working the Andean region of South America.

And so they trained and trained and trained and then the friend of mine who worked at the Bishops Conference kept going over to the intersection to see if the visas had come through. No, they haven't come through yet but I'm sure they'll be just another week or so, another week, and so on, finally it never happened, so those priests never went to Cuba.

MR. PICCONE: Okay. I think many of us have experienced visa problems in trying to connect with Cuba. Eusebio, final word?

MR. MUJAL-LEON: Well, I'm struck by how much Cuban society has changed and how little the government has changed over the last 20 years, and I think that that is going to -- there's going to be a tremendous test over the next three or four years because you get the impression that Cuba operates on a different clock than most of the rest of the world, and so that what we would think and that Orlando has expressed as logical demands, logical requests, that one would say, well,

why not, are just not moved on and are just not implemented as quickly as one thinks.

Part of it is, I think, Raul Castro's style, but again I go back to what I said before, I think that Raul Castro is managing a motley crew, not all of whom actually agree with his still-too-timid reform politics.

MR. PICCONE: Well, there's no question that change is underway in Cuba, and we heard a fascinating slide of it, the Catholic Church, and we'll continue to invite you to future occasions to talk about what's happening in Cuba.

In the meantime, please join me in thanking our panel.

(Applause)

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