

Article

# Cultural Diversity and Religious Reflexivity in an Intercultural Chilean Parish

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**Abstract:** This research aims to analyze cultural diversity and its relationship with the personal belief in an Immigrant Parish. The discussion is framed within the topic of intercultural churches and parishes, although in a setting that has not been researched (Santiago, Chile). The research was carried out in the Latin-American Parish placed in Providencia, Santiago, and a qualitative framework was used to obtain and analyze the data. Cultural diversity is understood concerning religious reflexivity and under the idea that pluralism leads to a weakening of religious conviction, as Peter Berger argued. The theoretical framework makes the difference between the vision of Berger on cultural pluralism (pluralism inter-religion) and the viewpoint by Charles Taylor (pluralism intra-religion). On the contrary to Berger, the findings of this research showed that cultural diversity and pluralism are elements that produce a strengthening of individual beliefs.

**Keywords:** cultural diversity; religious reflexivity; intercultural parish; Latin-American parish



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## 1. Introduction

The global flows of migration in Western Europe and the USA, as well as the Global South (Saunders et al. 2016) and in Latin America (Cerrutti and Parrado 2015), have meant increasing cultural and social diversity. This diversity can be seen in the fact that some countries are dealing with flows of immigrants that produce a pluralization of the cultural realm; for example, the Haitian migration in the region and Chile has produced a diversification in terms of cultural and ethnic characteristics. Concerning religious issues, migrant newcomers are playing a vital role in the diversification of mono-cultural churches because they are diversifying the ways of being church, worshipping, practicing faith, praying, and so on, “migrant newcomers create capacity for new and shared expressions of their faith” (Snyder 2016, p. 8). Migration is a key phenomenon in religious change since it “exposes migrants to new ideas, challenges the power of control and religion in their places of origin and raises profound questions of community, personal identity, and affiliation” (Cruz 2008, pp. 365–66).

The migration phenomenon has produced a diversification within churches; it has led to the intercultural church (Brazal and de Guzman 2015; Cruz 2008, 2013, 2014; Moyaert 2015). In other words, it is possible to identify a steady diversification in the composition of churches; this can be seen in the fact that some Catholic churches that were mainly composed of Chileans nowadays include churchgoers from Haiti. Even so, this latter group has increased and established a pastoral group (Aguirre 2017) in some of these churches and parishes.

Catholic migrants have spread throughout the world. This movement of people makes churches and parishes receive new churchgoers, and therefore new religious practices can coexist in a newer diversified (Pasura and Erdal 2016) and intercultural church (Brazal and de Guzman 2015, 2016; Cruz 2014; Moyaert 2015). In this sense, migration and diversity are the source of religious change. In the light of migration flows, people bring with them diverse forms of associations and beliefs, and it is through this interaction with native people that the basis of religious change is established (Pasura and Erdal 2016).

As an illustration of religious change, a twofold tendency can be identified: (a) a multinational church that receives churchgoers from different countries in the region and further away from Latin America, and second (b) Catholic churches that have diversified their composition with the inclusion of migrants into the regular flock. This research is aimed at the first type of church, the fieldwork was carried out in an intercultural parish; the article aims to research the cultural diversity and religious reflexivity among parishioners in an intercultural parish. The specific objectives are as follows: (a) To investigate the cultural practices developed by the communities that are part of the same parish, (b) To comprehend the role of cultural diversity in the individual belief.

In the case of Catholic churches, and as an example of the impact of cultural diversity, there is evidence of the impact that Latinos have on the Catholic churches in the US. Until now, the model of social integration (through religion) of immigrants was conceived as assimilation. In other words, the different generations of migrants will have assimilated into American society through the abandonment of their language and cultural practices and the further adoption of the English language and American cultural and social practices. It was the classic model. However, US Catholic churches are adopting a bicultural and bilingual experience as a result of Latino practitioners (English and Spanish language) (Ospino 2016). Moreover, these churches include some Latino religious practices such as the devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe (Marquardt 2005). Therefore, instead of the classic assimilation model in the religious life of immigrants, the current model—through the interaction between the Latino culture and mainstream Catholic churches—can be understood as a cultural process of *mestizaje* (Ospino 2016). A key aspect of Latino Catholic churches is the willingness to embrace in a broad community diversity of churchgoers the independence of their national origin. To put it another way, “Latino communities normally do not exclude other Latinos, whether US-born or immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean” (Ospino 2016, p. 193). In this way, Latino Catholic churches and parishes provide spaces for participating in the Church’s sacramental life (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist) and in reproducing traditional cultural activities and use of Spanish; for example, different Marian devotions, processions, feast days, and family rituals (e.g., quinceañeras—a celebration of the fifteenth birthday for girls) are performed within the church and parish communities (Ospino 2016).

Moreover, Catholic churches and parishes deal with cultural diversity and religious identity in a way that appreciates the homeland’s religious and cultural features. The homeland religious practices are reproduced in host countries among Catholics. Catholic religiosity is experienced twofold: first, through the recognition of the diversity within Catholicism and the adoration of Marian figures across Latin America. The Catholic churches search to perpetuate a link with the homeland culture and religious practices, so there are devotions to different Marian figures, and these can find a place at the altar. A celebration day is commemorated on each anniversary of these figures (Odem 2004). Second, through a religiosity that is experienced in the reproduction of home altars and shrines. In these home altars, Catholics are looking to reconnect Latinos abroad with homeland religious practices (Calvillo and Bailey 2015). The Catholic attitude about cultural diversity and homeland religion might be labelled ‘retrospective’, that is to say, “bridging to and positively valuing homeland and ethnic culture” (Calvillo and Bailey 2015, p. 64).

These churches are practicing a liturgical inculturation in which elements of the local cultures are integrated into the texts, symbols, and rites of the worship (Cruz 2014). In the case of the church researched here, in a point reviewed further, it can be seen liturgical inculturation in the different Marian devotions—from countries throughout Latin America—that form part of the Sunday worship. It is important to highlight that inculturation in the liturgy is possible to evidence in churches with cultural diversity because, in churches with a significant presence of an ethnic group, inculturation in the liturgy chiefly happens (Cruz 2014). On one hand, the intercultural church practices a transnational expression and cross-cultural application of Catholic worship. On the other hand, this church is profoundly rooted in a parochial and local context (Harris 2016b). In

effect, “liturgy is rarely . . . bound to or by a particular local culture, however significant complementary ‘contextual’ dynamics might be in the embodied, enacted, patterned events that constitute liturgy in any given place” (Kim-Cragg and Burns 2016, p. 116).

### *Religious Reflexivity*

Current migration and cultural diversity in Catholic churches can be understood in the context of modern means of transport, technology, and communication. To put it another way, migrations and diversification of religious communities have been present since ancient times and since the origins of the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, in modern times, and due to technology and faster means of transport, worldwide and continuous migration has effectively been possible. These phenomena have produced a social and religious pluralism in western societies (Berger 2014), which has motivated a new attitude aimed at choice.

However, the relationship between the Catholic Church and the modern world has been problematic, at least since the beginning of modernity, because

On the one side there is a universe governed by scientific and technical rationality, in which the assertion of individual and institutional autonomy undermines the theological and political foundations of the social order and leads inexorably to the consignment of religion to the private sphere; on the other there is the Roman system, which affirms the organic unity of religion, morality and the social order, to counter the ‘individualizing’ threat posed by Reformation and then of resisting the new order arising from the French Revolution. (Hervieu-Léger 2009, pp. 446–47)

In effect, the modern situation of cultural diversity and pluralism regarding religious options has transformed the status of the believer from a traditional religious model that imposed a normative code in the faithful to other modern situation in which the believer can choose by himself on religious issues and regarding his meaning and experience (Hervieu-Léger 2009). In the same fashion, it is possible to identify the introduction of a new religious time system within Catholicism. It can be seen in the fact that religion is decoupled from everyday life and its rhythms, and it is further associated with exceptional experiences (Hervieu-Léger 2009). In this way, “religion tends to be seen . . . as offering situations that might recreate a sense of ‘ourself’ that transcends our normal fragmented experience” (Hervieu-Léger 2009, p. 454) because the believer on those occasions is free of mundane concerns and can reach a higher level of personal fulfilment beyond everyday life. This phenomenon has produced a change from everyday religion to one of “special occasions” (Hervieu-Léger 2009).

This new attitude towards the church has been translated into a new believer who demands the option of choosing their community, where he/she can find the most favorable conditions and people with whom to share his/her personal religious experience (Hervieu-Léger 2009). At the same time, an attitude of the individual choice has reached the religious field as well. Therefore, it is self-evident by a newer group of people that they must choose about religion (Hervieu-Léger 2006). This current attitude will be researched and commented on further. It is part of the process of “reflexivity” that spread throughout high modernity.

Furthermore, in the high modernity, the risk has spread throughout social and individual life and an attitude of ‘do-it-by-yourself’ is imposed on individual identity because of the absence of traditional sources of certainty such as closer communities, traditional religion, lifetime marriage, permanent job, traditional education, and so on, has disappeared. Nowadays, individuals spend their lives among losing their jobs, divorce, flexible entrepreneurship, and permanent self-praise (Beck 2010). As a result of the loss of traditional sources of certainty, individualization as the cultivation of an independent will has been institutionalized (Beck 2010; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002). In effect,

Institutionalized individualization is reflexive in the sense that individuals engaged in constructing their own lives and their social and biographical identities cannot appeal to pre-existing models. They are forced to learn how to create

a biographical narrative of their own and continue to revise their definition of themselves. In the process, they have to create abstract principles with which to justify their decisions. (Beck 2010, pp. 123–24)

In religious terms, this process can be understood as “religious reflexivity” (Marti 2015) in which the certainties provided by traditional religion and communities have been transformed into individual choices in a context of religious, and cultural diversity and pluralism (Berger 2014; Marti 2015). People in current times should choose between different options in social, educational, economic, and even religious realms. The reflexive principle means that people are oriented by selections in various spheres of social and individual life as a result of the advent of modern life.

Moreover, from the sociology of religion standpoint, the individuation and reflexivity—like the imposition of selection—have been originated by modern pluralism, in the theory by Berger (2014). It is important to realize the fact that pluralism is not only a social phenomenon. At the same time, there is pluralism in mind (Berger 2014). This pluralism affects the convictions of the believer and weakens his religious principles. In Berger’s words “as a result of pluralism [and cultural diversity], religion tends to percolate . . . in the consciousness of individuals, from the level of certainty to the level of opinion” (Berger 2014, p. 29) and “the believing individual finds him- or herself facing the possibility or doubt, on whatever level of sophistication” (Berger 2014, p. 31).

At the same time, cultural diversity and religious pluralism can be understood in another way. For example, in the viewpoint by Charles Taylor, pluralism has no effect on the individual conviction under some circumstances:

The fact that this . . . multiplicity of faiths has little effect as long as it is neutralized by the sense that being like them is not a real option for me. As long as the alternative is strange and the other, perhaps despised, but perhaps just too different, too weird, too incomprehensible, so that becoming that isn’t really conceivable for me, so long will their difference not undermine my embedding in my own faith. (Taylor 2007, p. 304)

That is to say, when people think to change their religious affiliations “they shift their views between already formulated possibilities . . . they move within positions already in their repertory, between points already within their horizons” (Taylor 1999, p. 168). Indeed, the argument by Taylor (1999, 2007) is clear: cultural otherness is not a threat to the believer. Nevertheless, what happens to cultural diversity within the same religion in terms of the believer?

It is essential to realize that Berger and Taylor are referring to two types of pluralism. In the former case, religious reflexivity and the weakness of religious convictions are produced by the exposition to pluralism inter-religion. In other words, pluralism (based on the knowledge of different religions with different worldviews) undermines the basic religious knowledge that until modernity was taken for granted. This produces a new situation in the individuals in which they must reflect and make choices between different religions (Berger 2013). However, Taylor (2007) writes on religious pluralism that does not produce any effect on the individual believer because he/she does not consider the other religious traditions as real options. In this sense, this statement can lead us to think in the case of pluralism intra-religion that is present in the intercultural church (Brazal and de Guzman 2015, 2016; Cruz 2008, 2013, 2014; Harris 2016a, 2016b; Kim-Cragg and Burns 2016; Moyaert 2015). To put it another way, how does pluralism intra-religion relate to the individual believer?

In the same fashion, the existence of two types of pluralism can be argued: endogenous and exogenous (Gorski and Guhin 2017). The former is produced by the functional differentiation of the religious system from other social systems in modern societies (it can be linked with the social process of secularization), while the globalization process produces the latter form, that is to say, the current movement of people, ideas, things, etc. Nevertheless, “the effects of the two types are not necessarily the same. While endogenous pluralism may indeed weaken or fragilize ‘plausibility structures’ [the ideas and knowledge that is taken

for granted], exogenous pluralism often leads to a deepening, sharpening, and hardening of beliefs. Immigrant religiosity is a key example” (Gorski and Guhin 2017, p. 1124).

In this way, the intercultural church or parish is a key place to research religious reflexivity and pluralism intra-religion because in these churches/parishes the individual believer is in contact with people from different national or cultural origins. Religion is a social phenomenon, and an intercultural parish can show diversity within religion. This type of parish would produce evidence about a diversity of cultural expressions themselves, the religious activities performed by a multicultural flock demonstrate a plurality of ways to relate with religious issues.

## 2. Materials and Methods

Cultural diversity has arrived in some Chilean Catholic churches. Nowadays, some multinational churchgoers effectively diversify the Catholic flock. For example, the Latin American parish placed in Providencia, Santiago, is full of people of diverse national origins every Sunday. The overwhelming majority of parishioners are from Latin America and the presence of European or African parishioners is very scarce. It is important to realize that this church will be researched due to its cultural diversity. In detail, it will be researched in its Sunday Mass and the cultural activities developed after the Sunday Mass. The priest is from Brazil, the deacon is from Venezuela, and the seminarian is from the Democratic Republic of Congo. I stress the nationalities of the religious leaders because they and the parishioners are immigrants. There are a few Chileans at the Latin-American Sunday Mass. This Latin-American Parish began its activities at the beginning of 2000 when it was the only parish for immigrants<sup>1</sup>. The Latin American parish is placed beside INCAMI (Instituto Católico Chileno de Migración)—an organism founded by the Chilean church in 1955 for assist in migratory, labor, housing, and social issues to immigrants. The beginnings of INCAMI are related to the attention of the Chilean church to the immigration flows towards Chile and under the influence of the pope Pío XII’s Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia*<sup>2</sup>. At the beginning of the XXI century, the SJM (Servicio Jesuita a Migrantes), an organism of the Jesuit order, was founded to help the immigrants in the insertion process to Chilean society. The Chilean church, through the actions of both INCAMI and SJM, has helped immigrants in the initial steps of their involvement in Chile since decades ago and nowadays, with the current immigration, these organisms are key actors in the experiences of many immigrants in Chile.

In the first place, it is important to stress that the viewpoints of both religious leaders and parishioners are of interest in the present research. It seeks to understand the religious experiences of the leaders and parishioners from their viewpoints. The purpose is to research the parish in its own setting (Lareau 2012) and through its activities, and members. The research techniques are qualitative interviews and participant observation. The former is used because it is of crucial interest to research the religious reflexivity from the viewpoint of parishioners themselves. So, “the interviews give voice to common people, allowing them to freely present their life situations in their own words” (Kvale 2006, p. 481). The latter technique will be used from the active participation in the Sunday Mass and cultural activities.

The interview scheme will be ordered according to five themes:

- A. Religious Participation and Continuity Practices.
- B. Social and Spiritual Services Provided by the Parish.
- C. The Catholic Sermon to a Diverse Community
- D. The Effect of Cultural Diversity in Personal Belief.
- E. The Role of Religion in the Migration Process.

The fieldwork, qualitative interviews, and participant observations were conducted by the author himself. The interview guide was ordered on the above five themes to identify

<sup>1</sup> Interview with the priest.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://incami.cl/historia/> (accessed on 13 January 2021).

the key aspects to answer the research objectives. The interviews were tape-recorded and conducted by the researcher himself. The participation observation was developed through the participation in the Sunday mass and involvement in the procession or the religious and social activities that take place the Sundays after the mass.

The sample was 15 churchgoers and the three religious leaders of the Latin-American parish. The interviewees were identified by pseudonyms. The sample of parishioners is composed of the “core” of the regular flock. That is to say, by people that attend the Mass every week regularly, who are involved through active participation and have been part of the parish for months or years. They read biblical passages during the Mass or participate in activities such as spiritual or group prayers. They identified themselves as both very active parishioners in the Mass and in the activities of the parish. Moreover, the members of the sample are from different national origins. These parishioners are of interest because they represent continuity in the flock; they are strong believers and followers of Mary. It can be seen in their testimonies of devotion and their strong involvement in the Mass. They were selected because represented a diversity of nationalities and continuous participation in the parish life. Therefore, they were interviewed because the role of cultural diversity in people that are exposed to a variety of practices and cultural pluralism within the church for a regular period (months or years ago) can be analyzed. In this sense, it is possible to research religious reflexivity through people that are parishioners in a constant way and through an active participation. Otherwise, it would be difficult to research the presence of cultural diversity among parishioners that have only recently been involved in the Latin-American parish because they have not been exposed to contact with cultural diversity and pluralism (in ways of expressing religious convictions) so much.

Concerning the participant observations, these were carried out every Sunday mass from March to July 2018. At the same time, participant observation was conducted, in some religious processions (such as the one in honor of the Virgin of Chuapi, from Peru) and some local religious celebrations (such as the one in honor of John the Baptist, from Venezuela). In both cases, the observations were realized to identify the dynamic of participation of the attendees, the message of the religious leaders, the decoration and dressing of attendees, and the religious motives of the activity.

On the one hand, the interviews seek to analyze the trajectory of participation, the individual motives that underlie the participation in the parish, to comprehend the relationship between cultural diversity and individual belief, and the role of religion in the immigration process. On the other hand, the observant participations wish to know the Latin American Mass, in terms of the place of the different national communities in the building, the message from the priest, the religious songs, the decoration of the parish, and so on. At the same time, the observations in the religious processions and social activities aim to identify the interrelationship among different national communities or the involvement by only one community.

Furthermore, the Grounded Theory approach of interpretation of data—these are being interpreted throughout the research process—is used in this research. However, the aim of the research is not to produce a theory from the object of study. The Grounded Theory is an empirical approach to study social life, and usually, the Grounded Theory is done through observant participation and qualitative interviews (Clarke 2007). This approach is not only a description of social life but also interprets why, when, where, what and how the different events of social life are occurring (Strauss and Corbin 2002).

About the data treatment, it is essential to specify that important segments of the interview transcripts and descriptions of observant participation should be analyzed and chosen. Therefore, the codification of this information is a crucial process. The codes are understood as linking different examples or segments from data. The codes unify these segments about the common property (Coffey and Atkinson 2003). The development of categories and concepts arise from the comparison of data, for example, the comparison of interviews. The formulation of new knowledge begins through the contrast between the new data with the categories (Soneira 2006). There is a transition from the description to the

formulation of categories and concepts that allow comprehending the social phenomenon under research (Charmaz and Mitchell 2007).

About Ethical Issues, the role of the researcher is of a ‘faithful reporter’, that is to say, the aim is to illustrate a social context in which the subject of research can speak for themselves. To obtain viewpoints from the research subjects, the researcher should engage with the context that is being researched (Blaikie 2007).

Moreover, this research adheres to the principles of procedural ethics (Tracy 2010). The former involves the ethical actions developed by organizations, institutions, and organisms; among its patterns, there is no hurt, to give consent with information, to secure privacy and confidentiality to the subjects of research. In this sense, “procedural ethics also suggest that research participants have a right to know the nature and potential consequences of the research -and understand that their participation is voluntary. Such procedures not only attend to ethics but also lead to more credible data” (Tracy 2010, p. 847).

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Interviews

All the interviewees were religious people before they arrived in Chile (Theme A). They were religious in their home countries, and they are faithful in Chile. The search for a church to continue the religious practices was argued as one of the main reasons for being part of the Latin-American parish. Indeed, in the interviewees of this research, the migration process was not an incentive for joining this parish. They recognize the important role of the parish in their migration process, but the search for a church is connected with the will of continuity in their religious lives, instead of a religious ‘activation’ that begins in Santiago and after their placement in the city. For example, María (from Venezuela) answered the question “why did you join the Latin-American parish?”, in the following terms: “because I needed the presence, I needed to pray, I needed to share. Here in the parish, I am in a [religious group]”. Indeed, participation in the Latin-American parish is a way of continuity to the religious life, in the viewpoint of José (from Paraguay). In his view, participation in this parish is a way of living his faith. Although, he stresses that a key aspect in his decision to join this parish was the opportunity to meet more immigrants like himself, more people from Paraguay. Other interviewees (Luis, from Venezuela) recognize that his participation and contact with this religious community is because the parish is aimed explicitly at immigrants. Therefore, as he is an immigrant, this parish is a crucial place for sharing with people from different countries. However, Luis claimed that in Santiago he has been participating in the religious life of the parish more actively than in Venezuela. He was religious there, too; but in his view, the experience of inhabiting a foreign country and the possibility of meeting people with the same national origins (and from different countries as well) has encouraged his participation.

There are some cases (for example, Carla from Paraguay, Claudia from the Dominican Republic, or Pedro from Brazil) that began their religious participation in other parishes. However, in the case of Claudia and Pedro, the active participation of the parishioners in the mass and the warm way of interacting with newcomers and other parishioners were elements that motivated the decision to join the Latin-American parish. In their views, this parish is a livelier community than the other parishes that were frequented by them. Furthermore, in Carla’s opinion, an important reason for joining the parish was the presence of a local Virgin of Paraguay (Caacupé). In her view, she was looking for this Virgin throughout different parishes until she found it in the Latin-American parish. Pedro adds that he could know about different Latin-American devotions (virgins) through his participation in the parish.

In the same fashion, about similarities or differences in the church in the home country and Chile, interviewees identified that the Catholic rite is the same everywhere. For this reason, there are not many differences in the rite in Santiago or Bogotá. However, some interviewees (for example Pedro from Brazil and José from Paraguay) affirmed that the Latin-American parish has a particular way of living and exercising the faith (more active

about the church than in the home country, in José's viewpoint) because it is a parish of immigrants. "Here, the community celebrates with more enthusiasm, more energy and stronger, I identified with that" claims José. Moreover, the deacon claims that the Catholic rite is the same everywhere, for example, if a Catholic believer who knows the structure of the Catholic mass travels to China and he attends a Catholic mass there; he can understand the logic of the rite.

The social and spiritual services provided by the parish (Theme B) are medical services, psychological counselling, and rooms for homeless immigrants, among others. However, a vital aspect of the parish is the maintenance of cultural patterns for immigrants and their children, in the priest's view. In his vision, the role of the parish has a twofold aim: culture and religion. The former is reproduced through the local celebrations from different countries, and to reproduce the same as much as possible like in the home country. A special dedication is put on the dress and national food. The main idea is that children do not lose the cultural features of their parents' home countries. The idea is that children feel a sense of belonging to the local culture of their parents. For example, it can be shown in the celebration of local home country parties in Chile (in the Latin-American parish). The seminarian adds that the parish offers courses on practical issues such as training on cooking Chilean food, caring for older people, searching for a job, and so on. At the same time, through the parish, it is possible to access both psychological and religious counselling. These are important resources for people who are experiencing hardship in his/her process of adaptation into Chilean society. It can be a useful resource because, in the opinion of some interviewees, there are several differences between Chilean society and other Latin-American societies. For example, Luis characterizes that food in Chile is different, people speak lower than in Venezuela and the Caribbean region, Chileans are not so expressive in their attitudes as Venezuelans, Chilean slang is difficult to understand, and so forth.

In the deacon's viewpoint, the parish has developed a space where immigrants can meet and participate in their ethnic groups. This space is where activities and celebrations are organized. At the same time, he argues that the parish provides spiritual counselling according to the necessities of the immigrant communities and their religious expressions.

About the sermon to a diversified cultural community (Theme C) the priest argues that the message is oriented towards the immigrants. In other words, the priest takes the "Cross of the immigrant", that is to say, he identifies with the immigrant and migration process (it is important to specify that the religious leaders of the Latin-American parish are all immigrants themselves). He preaches for people that feel a lack of money, that is being employed in precarious jobs, that are waiting for immigration documents and visas, and so on. Therefore, the sermon is aimed at people who have moved from their home countries. At the same time, in his view, God expresses himself in every culture. The Catholic doctrine is not a homogenous message that uniformly spreads throughout the different cultures. God and the sacred reveal to the indigenous people in their language (such as in the cases of the Virgins of Aparecida and Guadalupe). God reveals to people in every culture, and the migration process spreads the Catholic message. That is the richness of the migration process, the possibility of communicating and spreading God's message.

The deacon affirms that the sermon is based on the Holy Scriptures and in this sense the message is universal (because the Scriptures are the same everywhere). However, every believer or community interprets or understands the message and the Scriptures in their way. With this in mind, the deacon adds that the message is understood about the "religious depth" of every immigrant community. In other words, there are communities with more religious formation, more knowledge on ecclesial issues, such as the Venezuelan, Colombian or Bolivian communities, and this "depth" impacts the way they interpret and comprehend the Catholic message. In the same fashion, the seminarian identified that the message could not be homogenous because it is understood and adapted according to the local context. The message is always adapted to the people, in his view. He identifies that the policy of the parish is to act under the principle of "unity within diversity", the

view of the Church is one and universal. The church (and the parish) recognizes that there are different devotions (Virgins) according to the cultural context. These local devotions demonstrate that the Catholic message is approached locally.

The presence of cultural diversity in religious belief (Theme D), in the parishioners and religious leader's viewpoints, strengthens the individual belief. For example, when the parishioners express their religious celebrations and participate in the celebrations of other immigrants, they can feel more energy, their faith "takes life", in the view of the priest. It can be shown in the fact that the cultural diversity and the participation in different religious celebrations (such as the different Virgins of Latin America) make that parishioners practice their faith in an active way, through this action they share their faith and other immigrants incorporate this external expression in their own belief and religious life, in his vision.

José's (from Paraguay) opinion is that cultural diversity produces a twofold effect: first, a strengthening of the individual belief, because variety shows how people express their local religious celebrations and through it, the believer is made aware of the vitality of the Catholic faith. Second, diversity produces a valorization of one's local traditions and religious celebrations. Personal religious identity is constructed about different cultural expressions. Therefore, cultural diversity makes the effect of identifying the features of the own identity in the religious realm, in his view.

Carla (from Paraguay) has claimed that every country has its own Virgin, although the Virgin Mary is only one. However, the local virgins throughout Latin America are key examples of how every country expresses and celebrates the mother of Jesus. The participation in a diversified cultural community makes her individual belief stronger because the presence of different Virgins either means that Mary is worshipped everywhere on this continent and it is proof that the "we Catholics speak the same language", in Carla's words.

Furthermore, Sandra (from Colombia) has argued an interesting point about participation in a parish with cultural diversity: it is a difficult task to organize and to coordinate so many people from different national origins. In her view, there must be an "equilibrium" among the different communities. It means that it is necessary to clearly distribute the local celebrations of different communities to avoid the powerful presence of one community and the diminishing presence of the others. In this situation, Carla claims, the religious leaders of the parish should find equilibrium among communities for including all local celebrations. They should balance the presence of different communities.

Claudia (from the Dominican Republic) states that cultural diversity has produced an effect in her faith (the different expressions of the same faith make the individual believe stronger) and in her personality. The latter is argued because she has become a more tolerant person due to contact with people from different origins, the connection with them, their gastronomy and celebrations have produced the sense that diversity is a positive characteristic. She has included this as a positive value in her relations with other people.

Finally, in relation to the Role of Religion in the Migration Process (Theme E), María (from Venezuela) shares her testimony: "there are difficult times, there are moments of anxiety, but when I began to pray to the Holy Spirit. I feel calm, and I began to think that I will have my opportunity, only the Lord knows when I will have my opportunity". There are hard times about the insertion into Chilean society. The lack of work and money (and sometimes there is money, but it should be sent to a family abroad) produces stress and uncertainties. At this moment, she prays to the Lord, and the trust in him can make that better times and opportunities appear in the immigrant's lives.

In the same way, Luis stated the power of prayer. In his experience in hard moments or when he needed to find a job through praying, he got it. However, Luis pinpointed that praying is a psychological mechanism for dealing with difficulties or in the absence of family. Praying helps to mitigate the burden that the migration process means for immigrants. Even more so, for those that are living without documents or with less economic resources. In his view, praying in hard times (for example, when he needed to

find a job) was a mechanism for overcoming the problems; and through praying, he could manage successfully with difficulties.

José (from Paraguay) identified that, through participation in the Latin American parish, people conform to a community, and it can be a mechanism for diminishing the stress and the impact of the migration process. Through this community, they can share a sense of belonging and participate in local celebrations and religious festivities from countries different from their own. In this community, they can remember some parties from their home country and cook national food, as well. "It is wonderful to find a place [the parish] where people from different national origins can meet with other immigrants and be part of a warm community", in his view.

The priest in the Latin-American parish provides an important viewpoint. In his view, religious belief is fortified by the migration process. In this migratory experience, people see how they change or are modified by some important relations, the family (or even the children) is far away, money is scarce, sometimes people are living alone in a foreign country and, in this difficult situation, they find help in religion and God, because "all things pass . . . but not God". Moreover, the deacon claims that religion is strengthening in the migration process; the religious life of the believer is accentuated by migration. According to the numerous cases of immigrants in the parish and his personal experience, the deacon states that religious life is being reinforced under the migratory experience.

### 3.2. Observations

The Latin-American parish is placed in Providencia, Santiago, beside INCAMI (Instituto Católico para las Migraciones). Inside the church building, the figure of Jesus stands out above the altar. He is in a welcoming attitude; his arms are open as if he is waiting to hug someone. This Jesus is different from the traditional crucified figure on the cross. Here, he is waiting for an immigrant parishioner, and it seems like he wants to hug him/her. Beside the altar, on the right side of the building, there are some flags, the Italian flag (of the Scalabrinian order from Italy) and a Chilean flag. Moreover, there is a little altar for putting the devotions (Virgins). It is important to specify that the devotions placed on this little altar changes about weekly and national religious celebrations. Near the entrance hall, there is a little room, which contains several devotions (Virgins) from all over Latin America, it is possible to find the Virgin of Guadalupe (Mexico), Coromoto (Venezuela), Urkupiña (Bolivia), Copacabana (Bolivia), de la Purísima (Nicaragua), Caacupé (Paraguay), de las Mercedes (Peru), Luján (Argentina), Suyapa (Honduras), Nuestra Señora Aparecida (Brazil) and Chapi (Peru).

The Mass follows the formal structure of the Catholic Mass, with religious songs, reading of the Scriptures, the consecration of the Host, and so on. However, the sermons of the priest are in tone with immigrant issues, about the different home countries and their social and political situations, and therefore the community at which it is aimed changes from one week to another. For example, there was a particular reflection for Venezuela and its presidential elections, or there was a special sermon for the problematic situation in Nicaragua. At the end of the Mass, the seminarian mentions the different immigrant communities present in the parish every Mass and the communities respond cheerfully.

As shown above, the sermons were aimed at different national communities. For example, in a Sunday Mass with a strong presence of the Venezuelan community, the priest preached about the Fact of the Apostles and made a comparison between the apostles and the Venezuelan people. The sermon referred to the sadness that the apostles felt after the death of Jesus and the disbelief that they experienced about the rebirth of Jesus. This skepticism is similar to the current spiritual situation of the Venezuelan community in the diaspora, in his words. They are feeling a lack of signals of the presence of the Lord (due to the social, economic, and political turmoil present in their home country). They are waiting for the Lord, and the hope should be kept at this moment. The priest says that they should pray in the current difficult times like the apostles prayed while they were waiting for Jesus. The Venezuelan community must learn from the case of the apostles because

the Lord showed himself to the followers of Jesus. The Lord showed his power in difficult times, and he will show his power and love to the Venezuelan community, that are living difficult situations outside their home country. At the same time, they can pray the Virgin of Coromoto (a national devotion from Venezuela) to feel the presence of the Lord.

In the same fashion, when the Mass was oriented towards the community from Nicaragua, the reading was again the Act of the Apostles. On this occasion, the parable of the vine grower and his grapes was the theme of the message. The priest preached that it should be kept at a distance the good grapes from the bad grapes. At the same time, the vine grower should care and protect the vineyard from getting good wine. The Lord recognizes that all his children could experience awkward moments in their lives, although the Catholic community must strengthen their spiritual life in the Lord. They should develop a strong relationship with the Lord as the vine grower who cares and protects the grapes in its development. The priest emphasized that all the community should preach for Nicaragua and its difficult moments.

It is essential to mention that the end of the Mass does not mean the end of activities every Sunday at the Latin-American parish. After the Mass, there is space for a lunch that is made by each community every week. For this reason, there are Sundays when there is a Peruvian lunch, or a Brazilian lunch, and so forth. This space for sharing a national lunch is placed below the church building, in a big saloon. The national religious celebrations take place in this same place. For example, the celebration in honor of John the Baptist (Venezuela) was placed here. On this occasion, the saloon was full of people that were dancing and listening to music from different musical bands on the stage. People were eating Venezuelan national food, and most of them were participating in a lively way. The celebration was concentrated on the dancing and the music from the bands. It was challenging to understand the message because the songs were sung in Venezuelan slang incomprehensible to outsiders. The saloon was decorated with Venezuelan flags, and there were some religious images on the stage.

Moreover, a prominent place, within the celebration, was kept to a female dancer that was moving according to the music from a personal band that followed her everywhere. This female dancer and her band inaugurated the celebration and after a moment, and when the attendees began to dance, they left the saloon. All attendees paid attention to the movement of the dancer. Finally, it is essential to specify that this celebration was made up mainly of Venezuelans. It can be inferred by the participation and knowledge of the dancing and songs by the audience.

However, religious celebrations are performed outside the parish as well. For example, the procession in honor of the Virgin of Chuapi (Peru) began with a Mass in her honor and there were present the parishioners as well as members of the Peruvian army and diplomacy. The figure (statue) of the Virgin of Chuapi is placed beside the altar, it is a high figure which is dressed in a gold dress, and a lot of flowers are put around it. The mass began with a special message to the Peruvian community, and the history of the Virgin of Chuapi is told. The figure of the Virgin was transported across a desert zone in the 18th century (near 1740) and fell into the sand from the hands of the group which was moving the figure. After this fall, the group of devotees could not raise again the figure, and it did not move from this place. In this zone, a town was built after this event, and while the builders were working in the buildings, they felt the hot weather and scarcity of water in the desert. At this risky moment, one builder prayed to the Virgin for water, and the Virgin made available water in the middle of the desert. This action is recognized as the first miracle of the Virgin of Chuapi, and this Virgin is the mother of Peru, in priest's words.

At the end of the Mass, a group of men held the statue of the Virgin on their shoulders from inside the church building to the street. They held the statue throughout the square around the church building. Besides them, a music band was playing Peruvian songs in honor of the Virgin, and this band followed the Virgin in its route around the church. At the beginning of the procession, a big group of parishioners surrounded the virgin; although when it was in the street, the people in the procession decreased steadily. However,

throughout all the route, a small group of women were praying the rosary while men held the statue. Here a clear division of roles regarding gender can be seen: men hold the statue and women pray the rosary. This is a celebration composed of adults mainly, it can be seen in the scarce presence of children who are in the procession, and it is possible to identify only a few children with their parents.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

The above viewpoint by Luis (from Venezuela) regarding the usefulness of praying can be understood in a twofold way: first, it is important to highlight the comment, “praying is a psychological mechanism for dealing with difficulties”, because it is in tone with the “methodological atheism” proposed by the sociological theory by Berger (1992, 2004, 2013, 2014; Porpora 2006). In this, the supernatural is excluded from a sociological explanation of religion. Second, praying is a mechanism for dealing with difficulties, for example, when Luis could not find a job. In this way, praying can be interpreted such as “methodological agnosticism”. In other words, “the acknowledgement that there might really be a supernatural source for transcendent experience” (Gorski and Guhin 2017, p. 1127; Porpora 2006). This trend towards a “methodological agnosticism” can be a useful resource for understanding the religious leader’s viewpoints as well. The references to God made by the priest, for example, that God expresses himself in every culture, can be understood under this methodological position. In other words, the above theophany might be interpreted under the sociological standpoint, however, from a methodological position that allows the existence of a supernatural force; this analysis can be enriched with a transcendent/supernatural dimension. Under these circumstances, the religious phenomenon itself in its social aspects can be approached—or as a social phenomenon—and about the supernatural being or force through the mediation of the sacred or religious expressions.

At the same time, a finding of this research is the fact that participation in a parish with cultural diversity produces a strengthening of the belief. The different religious celebrations and immigrant communities that interact in the Latin-American parish have meant a revalorization of the own religious identity, in the interviewee’s viewpoint. They recognize that through diversity it is possible to appreciate the features and the richness of the other communities as well as their community. It is important to stress that this opinion was shared among the immigrants that were interviewed.

The above finding can be interpreted at two levels. First, in relation to modern pluralism, Berger (Berger 2014) argued that pluralism is either a social and individual phenomena, because (a) it means that people should choose in different spheres of social life and (b) at an individual level people recognize the presence of different religious worldviews and this produces a relativization of their own religious belief. The latter idea can be understood as pluralism in mind (Berger 2014). The presence of different religious worldviews is pluralism inter-religion and it was out of the scope of this research. However, pluralism in mind can be analyzed from the findings of this research. Instead of a relativization of religious belief due to the exposition to cultural pluralism, the Latin-American parish can show that parishioners reinforce their belief and religious convictions due to cultural pluralism. In contrast to Berger (2014), cultural diversity and pluralism do not mean a threat to the individual religious belief. On the contrary, individual belief is enriched by diversity.

Second, the pluralism intra-religion—from a personal reading of Taylor (2007)—means a positive experience in the individual belief. It can be shown in the valorization of the foreign religious celebration and in the identification of the cultural features of the own religious celebration. Therefore, pluralism intra-religion, in which there is cultural diversity within the same faith, provides a richer religious experience for the parishioners.

The religious reflexivity is viewed through the decision of the interviewees to join the Latin-American parish. It is a way of continuity with a religious life present since their lives in their home countries. Instead of choosing another religious tradition or abandoning

the Catholic faith, the interviewees have reinforced their individual beliefs through their participation in this parish. The imposition of selection, in this case, can be viewed in the continuity and participation in a diversified cultural community. Through it, the individual belief is exercised regularly and actively and there is attention to transmitting the cultural features of the immigrant parents to their children. The parish is a space for “reproducing” the home country’s cultural aspects, as can be shown in the national religious celebrations. At the same time, they feel part of a community in which there is an “unity within diversity”, and the continued participation of the parishioners can be shown as a religious life that is in opposition to the religion of exceptional experiences (Hervieu-Léger 2009). In this way, the parishioners have chosen a Catholic parish to continue with their religious life, and they have chosen to participate continuously in a culturally diversified community.

In summary, the results show that the parishioners participate in the Latin American parish as a way of continuity with a Catholicism practiced in the homeland. Moreover, the participation in a parish with cultural diversity reinforces a revalorization of the national religious practice and higher tolerance and enrichment in spiritual terms, in the individual belief. This revalorization and tolerance are evidence to the vigor and force of the Catholic faith and the national Marian devotions in different latitudes mean that the Catholic message transcends any geographical or cultural boundaries.

Finally, cultural diversity does not mean a threat to individual beliefs. It strengthens the personal religious conviction from a pluralism intra-religion or pluralism in the mind perspectives. At the same time, from the findings of this research, religious reflexivity does not mean changing one’s own religion; instead, it means continuity within the same religion.

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