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Catholicism in Context: Religious Practice in Latin America[1]

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Norma, who lives in the city of Córdoba, in Argentina, is a 59-year-old Catholic woman. She did not finish primary school and has worked for most of her life cleaning houses. With her husband who passed away a couple of years before our meeting, they were able to buy a piece of land in the east part of the city. They built a house in the rear end of the property, and later one of her two daughters built an apartment for her own family in the front. In total, there are eight people on the homestead. Norma has another daughter who lives nearby, so on Wednesday, her day off, Norma takes care of some of her grandchildren and sometimes her two great-grandchildren.

She identified as Catholic. She does not miss the Christmas Mass in the nearby church, and often goes on pilgrimages to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, near the city of Alta Gracia, about 20 miles away from Córdoba. When she does not have money or time, she goes to pray to a grotto that is on a public square, some two miles away from her house. She has a replica of a Lourdes grotto at home, and also has an image of St. Expedite,[2] that a friend gave to her some time ago (see Figure 1).

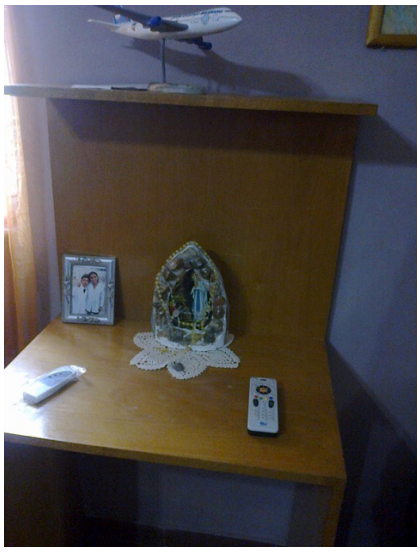
Figure 1: Norma identifies a mix of religious and non-religious objects as meaningful in her life. An image of St. Expedite shares the top shelf with an audio system.

She showed the researcher a Pentecostal book of prayers from a nearby church (Figure 2), pointed to a wall clock with a Jewish *hamsa* (Figure 3), and to her altar.

Her altar consists mostly of a little grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes decorated with rosaries (Figure 4). She also placed there a picture of two of her grandchildren,

1 This article extends research initially presented in Gustavo Morello, SJ, "Lived Religion in Latin America," in *Perplexed Religions*, eds. Miriam Diez Bosch, Alberto Melloni, and Josep Lluís Micó Sanz (Barcelona, Blanquerna Observatory, 2009), 149-158.

2 St. Expedite, more commonly known as San Expedito, was an Armenian-born Roman centurion and martyr. He is known as the patron saint of "urgent causes" and is especially beloved in Argentina. For more information on devotion to San Expedito, see the Catholics & Cultures entry, "Feast of San Expedito" at https://www.catholicsandcultures.org/feasts-holy-days/san-expedito-argentina.



Norma also shares: Figure 2: A Pentecostal book of prayers; Figure 3: A clock with a Jewish *hamsa*; and Figure 4: An altar with a grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes.

dressed up with the uniform for Argentina's public school (the white smock). Two remote controls were on the same table, where she has also a model airplane on the top shelf. On another shelf in her living room the audio system shares space with St. Expedite (Figure 1).

INTRODUCTION

Norma is a Catholic woman who practices her religiosity in an unorthodox way—if we look at her practices from a Catholic theological perspective. In this article, I would like to explore what Norma's religiosity tells us about a Latin American way of practicing religion, rather than assessing the orthodoxy of her practices. Accordingly, I will use a sociological lens to explore the religious situation in Latin America.

Among the different ways of studying the religious, sociology focuses on the influence of religions in societies and how changes in social life affect the religiosity of people. An important transformation in Latin American societies has been the cultural trend that we usually call "modernity." In Norma's story, for example, the remote control, her sound system, and, most importantly, the picture of her grandchildren attending a public school, together represent one of the flagships of Argentina's church/state separation: a public, free and secular educational system. By modernity, in the social sciences, we usually mean: 1) the separation of social functions and specialization of the "spheres of value," that is, the definition of a specific area for the economy, another for politics, science, religion, and the like, each one with its own rationalities, rules and authorities; 2) the diverse dynamics

of capitalism (industrialization, globalization); and 3) the expansion of the ideas of human rights, either civil, political, social or sexual.

These three aspects of modernity reach different contexts in different ways, with different emphases, and through different agents. In many cases, modernity emerges as a hegemonic cultural force imposed by force, either military or economic, which belittles the recipient cultures as "backward" or "pre-modern." In any case, many features of modernity (differentiation of the religious and political systems, the growing awareness on human rights, globalization) are present in Latin America. On the continent, we tend to speak of "hybrid," "baroque," "incomplete," "forced" modernity, etc., as a way of emphasizing the fact of modernization and the differences between Latin America and Europe or the United States.[3] However, for many Latin American thinkers the substantive is still modernity; "hybrid" or "baroque" are adjectives.

How does modernity affect the religiosity of Latin Americans? A central problem regarding Latin American modernity and its particularities is that the conceptual tools we use were designed to understand the transformations that modernity provoked in European religiosity. Some researchers, for example, think that the subjects practice a religion clearly distinguishable from other religions. The categories to measure membership are the ones established by the religious institutions: surveys assume that you are either a Catholic or an Anglican, but not both. Or they consider that the good believer is the one who believes and practices the institutional mandates. The idea of an exclusive membership, measured as participation in the weekly service, and the intellectual assent to a dogmatic belief, is based on a religiosity typical of the North Atlantic region—a conception of religiosity which was applied uncritically and normatively to the rest of the world. These concepts do not allow us to apprehend the daily religiosity of Latin Americans. As it is the case with Norma, she identifies as Catholic, but goes to a Pentecostal church, and observes some Jewish traditions at home.

3 Darcy Ribeiro, *El Dilema de América Latina: Estructuras del poder y fuerzas insurgents* (México D. F.: Siglo Veintiuno, 1971); Bolívar Echeverria, *La Modernidad de lo Barroco* (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, 2000); Néstor Garcia Canclini, *Culturas Híbridas: Estrategias para Entrar y Salir de la Modernidad* (Buenos Aires: Paidos, 2001).

STUDYING LIVED RELIGIOSITY IN LATIN AMERICA

Studies of the religion of Latin Americans have largely explored national cases, investigating what institutions did in certain historical circumstances, and measuring the religiosity of the population through surveys.[4] While some anthropologists have explored religious practices among particular groups, we do not know how ordinary, urban Latin Americans practice religion.

This question of "how?" is typical of qualitative studies, but there are not many comparative, regional studies that answer it. To fill this gap, a group of eleven researchers from four universities (Boston College, Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, Catholic University of Córdoba, and Catholic University of Uruguay) funded by the John Templeton Foundation conducted between 2015 and 2018 a study of religion among Latin Americans in their daily lives. The study placed emphasis on how religion is practiced rather than what is believed.

In this research, we paid attention to the aspects of beliefs and practices that believers consider important in their lives. For example, we did not focus on what Norma does not do (go to church every Sunday), but in what she actually does. We attempted to make visible the aspects of Latin American religiosity that have not always been evident when we apply the traditional scientific tools established by the "Theory of Secularization." The religiosity lived by the subjects is untidy, multifaceted, eclectic, and expressed in diverse practices where believers involve their own bodies and emotions. Many times, these practices originate in a religious tradition but are adapted, modified, recreated and mixed by people in religiously meaningful ways.[5]

4 Latinbarometro, accessed December 1, 2014, en: http://www.latinobarometro.org/latNewsShow.jsp; John Lynch, *New Worlds. A Religious History of Latin America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); Gustavo Morello and Hugo Rabbia,"Cambios Religiosos y Dinámicas Demográficas: Más allá de la Teoría de la Secularización. El caso del catolicismo en la ciudad de Córdoba, Argentina," *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 69 (2019): 14-27, https://doi.org/10.7440/res69.2019.02; Catalina Romero, ed. *Diversidad religiosa en el Perú. Miradas múltiples* (Lima: El Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 2016); Pew Research Center, "Religion in Latin America: Widespread Change in a Historically Catholic Region" (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2014).

5 See Nancy Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Meredith McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

We wanted the study to be, in addition to qualitative, comparative. That's why we selected three South American cities (Lima, Peru; Córdoba, Argentina; and Montevideo, Uruguay) and in each of them we interviewed about 80 people from different socioeconomic status (two groups: upper/middle and low) and different religious orientations (Catholic, Evangelical, other traditions, and non-affiliated). In total, we conducted 254 interviews. We looked for interviewees of different genders, ages and life situations (single, cohabitation, with and without children). The selection of respondents was intentional, and means that our findings do not represent the society studied. It does not tell us how many people among the general population do this or that (which is typical of quantitative studies), but it does show us what people do in that society when they practice religion. Norma, for example, in a regular religious survey, would have fallen in the category of "not practicing" Catholic, since she does not go to church every Sunday but only at Christmas. There is no room in that measurement for her home shrine, her pilgrimages to Our Lady of Lourdes' different grottos, or her conversations about religion with her friends, that have led her to visit a Pentecostal church and to obtain an image of St. Expedite.

We conducted two interviews with each of the interviewees. The first meeting gave us a general view of the daily routines and the presence or not of religious practices, their itinerary of faith, the decisions made in life, relationships with other people, what happens at work, free time, and about their social or political activities. In the second meeting, interviewees were asked to attend with an object (or photograph of it) that is meaningful in their lives. In employing this approach, we hoped to deepen conversation about meanings and emotions, through the history of those places and objects. In Norma's case, she produced photos, pointing the researcher to the objects she wanted to capture with her camera. The objects respondents brought to the interviews were also quite varied. Some brought expected things, like images and Bibles, but others brought umbilical cords, plants and computers. This allows us to speculate that the idea of distinguishing between "sacred" and "profane" spaces, objects and people does not have such strict limits among Latin Americans in their everyday life.

The attitude of the people in the interviews caught our attention from the beginning of the process. The people contacted were willing to talk. The interviews were conducted in university classrooms, offices and religious buildings, bars, markets, houses, cars and plazas. During the meetings, people talked freely about their beliefs. The meetings became a space of reflection and unusual introspection on everyday life. Many respondents mentioned that they do not usually talk about their religious concerns with their families or friends (Norma, in this sense, is an exception). Neither do they talk with religious ministers. They wanted to talk about their religiosity, and the interview was a way to legitimize their practices and beliefs in front of another person. The process of telling their story served to reflect on their lives, seeking to give coherence to different experiences; to unite narratively what seemed broken or disconnected. Several times the subjects "adjusted" their religious orientation throughout the interview so much that a methodological decision we made was to keep the self-identification declared at the beginning of the interview.

We interpret this desire to speak, and the difficulty in doing so, as a result of the lack of space to freely communicate about religion. Informants do not find, even within the churches, a place where they can express what happens to them in their own terms. People spoke about their doubts, something problematic for methodologies that emphasize what people "believe" or other intellectual aspects of religiosity (whether their ideas are right or wrong, in accordance with theological dogmas). There is a tension here with many surveys that poll people about concrete beliefs, like the literal interpretation of the Scriptures, the second coming of Jesus, or the idea of transubstantiation during the celebration of a Mass. Concrete people are on a religious journey, but they have not necessarily reached a destination of dogmatic clarity. Being a believer implies a "work in progress."

THE IMPACT OF MODERNITY: PLURALIZATION AND AUTONOMY

Almost all the interviewees, in the three cities, have had contact with a religious "other," whether they are Catholic, Pentecostal, unaffiliated, or belonging to an-

other confession. The experience of social pluralization has transformed the community and, in many cases, the family life of many respondents. In some cases, the contact with the "other" has triggered interest in knowing about other beliefs, to be better informed, and to visit other sacred places and even participate in other celebrations. This was the case of Norma, who visited a Pentecostal church with her friend. However, for other interviewees the way to handle diversity has been to "not talk" about religion. Mostly, when religious plurality happens within the intimate world of family and close friends.

We also saw the experience of plurality in the subject's own life trajectory. Many interviewees have gone through various stages, from non-affiliation to active practice, from confession to disaffiliation, from Catholicism to Pentecostalism, from Mormonism to Catholicism, from Buddhism to new spiritualities, from New Age practices to Judaism.[6] Others mentioned the experience of plurality within their own tradition, narrating migrations in terms of religious conversion: "Before I practiced a way of being Catholic that hurt me. Now I practice different way that is good for me."

Among the religious pluralization of society and the pluralization of their own experience, respondents in the three cities find throughout life an important variety of "sources of meaning" to interpret what happens to them in everyday life. This is a very important transformation since until the end of the 1950s the offer came almost exclusively from Catholicism.

Another common point observed in the three cities has to do with the religious autonomy of respondents. The subject is her own religious authority. Each one decides, according to their own circumstances and life experiences, what practices and what explanations give meaning to their daily life. It is not the arbitrariness of doing what first comes to mind; the subjects articulate explanations, give reasons, express in different ways the meaning of their religious actions and convictions. Norma explains her devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes, her affection to Christmas Mass. Norma's friends were also a source of religious information: one invited her

6 Veronique Lecaros, "Estudios de Recorridos Religiosos: Los desafiliados en contexto," *Estudos do Religiao* 31, no. 3 (2017): 111-130.

to the Pentecostal gathering; another one talked to her about the devotion to St. Expedite. The perception of the interviewees is that, since contemporary life is complex, it is not easy for an outsider to give an answer to a specific situation.

This difficulty does not mean that the subjects are not related to religious traditions and organizations. That is why we prefer to speak of "autonomy" and not of "independence." Whether they be religious institutions or "spiritual tribes," communities have a role in generating, circulating, approving and rejecting symbols, practices and beliefs.[7] However, once established, it is the subjects who decide what to do with them. People take, change, and produce religious symbols and meanings. The criterion of selection, adoption and adaptation is whether this practice helps them to connect with the divinity in their concrete circumstances or not.

THE RELIGIOSITY RECEIVED

Just as the sources of meaning were diversified, so the means of accessing those sources have changed. The family circle remains paramount in the transmission, both in continuing with, and breaking from, the religious tradition. The grandparents are also important. And while in the case of the parents the interviewees mention both mothers and fathers, the figure of the grandmother is almost exclusive with respect to the grandfather. With women fully incorporated into the workforce, the role of grandmothers in the care of children has become more relevant among some Latin American communities.

The religious community continues to have a role in the transmission of the belief. It is usually the first place where subjects believe and practice religion. As in the case of Norma, for many respondents the communal aspect was the connection with friends with whom they share a religious quest. For others, religious communities are a place of interaction with peers that in many cases leave a lifelong mark. These communities they voluntarily joined are privileged spaces that are "closer" to them, more "humanized" than the institution. Some of the objects brought for interviews were photos of those groups or other types of mementos of a positive

7 Following terminology in Ammerman, *Sacred Stories*.

experience with the religious community.

For other interviewees, bad experiences in religious groups have been a cause of rupture. We saw this situation among Catholics, Pentecostals, and also among atheists, whose affiliation to a political or social group acts as a "community of belonging."

Finally, another source of religious inspiration is the media, both traditional and the digital forms. Norma, for example, and many interviewees in Córdoba and Montevideo, mentioned religious soap operas, Pentecostal Brazilian productions (like "Moses" or "Jesus") that are broadcast on primetime commercial TV. Other respondents rely on the web and social networks looking for information, inputs for their personal growth, applications to pray or read the Bible, and video calls to receive spiritual advice. We have found numerous "digital memberships," enabling subjects to participate in the celebrations transmitted through the web and, every so often, join in person after a four-hours trip.[8] And we did our research before COVID-19, the shutdown of in-person religious services, and the growing practice of religion online.

RELIGIOSITY AS PRACTICED

The range of practices considered religious by the interviewees is remarkable. Many have to do with traditional religious observances, like praying the rosary among Catholics, daily reading of the devotional among the evangelicals, or recitation of the *daimoku* of the Buddhists. However, these practices might take place in non-religious settings like a street, during trip to the workplace, in the shower, or at the office; blurring the classic distinction between public and private, secular and religious.

Several interviewees mentioned participation in community celebrations (generally with a monthly frequency, not so much weekly) and social justice activities

8 Rolando Pérez, "Apropiaciones mediáticas de la religiosidad vivida," in *La Religion como Experiencia Cotidiana*, eds. Hugo Rabbia, Gustavo Morello, Néstor Da Costa, and Catalina Romero (Córdoba: EDUCC, 2019), 119-129.

in groups (not necessarily confessional ones) as a religious practice. While some interviewees include "alternative therapies" (family constellations, reiki, etc.) as religious practices, others mentioned psychological therapy or physical exercise as part of their spiritual routines. The contact with nature is mentioned in several interviews, and by that respondents mentioned a walk in the mountains, along the seashore, watering the plants or looking at the stars with a telescope from a balcony in the city downtown. Queka, a lower socioeconomic status Catholic woman from Córdoba, Argentina is disappointed with the Pope because she understands that Francis unfairly criticized animal protectionists. The love and dedication for her pets (she has eleven dogs and four cats) connects her with God more than the papal figure. "I mean, aren't animals also my neighbor?"

One widespread religious practice, among people of different social classes, religions, sex and age, is listening to, or making, music—mainly, "profane" music that is interpreted religiously, either because the "secular" lyrics are "re-listened" religiously, or because music is used as a tool to build a space of privacy and silence. It creates a kind of liminal state to the encounter with transcendence in the case of believers, or a spiritual sphere in itself for non-believers. The experience of music becomes more intense and profound when the subjects interviewed perform the music (they sing or play an instrument) rather than just listen to it.

THE RELIGIOSITY BELIEVED

If North Atlantic societies operate within an "immanent framework"—as if God did not exist—this cannot be said of the people we interviewed in southern Latin America. Our participants state that their daily life occurs in a "transcendent framework."[9] There is no an empirical world and another supra-empirical one. There is only one world. A single human story. Everything can be a sign of the divine, and the connection with that reality can occur in any space and time. The contact with supra-human powers (divinity, significant beings, dead people) occurs all the time

9 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Peter Berger, *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age* (Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).

and in any place. These sorts of experiences are present in all socioeconomic status, confessions, sexes and ages, and is a common point in the three cities. Paradoxically, for most of the interviewees, life after death is not an important issue. It is not a key issue in its convictions or in its daily practices. In general, they believe in eternal life, but they are not interested in the matter; it's not on their agenda.

This apparent inconsistency (overwhelming presence of the divine in daily life and lack of interest in the afterlife) would indicate that eternal life is not a problem because divinity is present in all aspects of life. This world is inhabited by the divine and can be a sign of divinity. Many interviewees mentioned that they communicate with God "all the time," not at specific times or places. The idea that the divinity is not necessarily present in the practice prescribed by religions also appeared in the interviews. We saw this in the "significant objects" that people showed us. Some were religious, but many were not. Respondents brought Bibles, images of saints, crucifixes, sacred books, pictures, rosaries, and "sympathies" (objects made of cloth used by *Umbanda*[10] followers), but also computers and backpacks, umbilical cords and pipes, phonographs and telescopes, annotators and photos, teddy bears and fridge magnets. A young Catholic woman from Lima connects with God by wearing a bracelet of quartz stones made by a sorcerer from Piura, a Peruvian northern city. Norma, as we see in the pictures, mixed her shrines with a model airplane, a sound system, and placed the *hamsa* on a wall clock.

THE GOOD BELIEVER

In the three cities, the interviewees of different religious confessions tend to consider a model believer the person who does good for others in everyday life. Neither the intellectual element (in what is believed) nor church attendance (the membership) is an important characteristic of the "good believer"; they are two of the main metrics used to understand religiousness in Europe and the United States. Instead, the main barometer of a person's authenticity or commitment is their actions at home and work.

10 *Umbanda* is a religious tradition that started in Brazil in the late nineteenth century, mixing Afro traditions and Spiritist practices.

That family life is a religious space did not surprise us; although some details are new, such as the aforementioned experience of religious diversity within the family. What is particularly interesting is the presence of religion in the workplace. The economy is the secularized area par excellence, where religion has been expelled by an autonomous rationality; religion has nothing to say about market dynamics. At least, in theory. Because in the case of the interviewees in Córdoba, Lima and Montevideo, from different religious confessions, being a good believer is mainly associated with being responsible at work and respectful and in solidarity with co-workers. Work is a "public space," but religion does not stay in private.

THE CONTRASTS

We also found differences between the populations studied, which question the use of thinking about Latin America as a sort of homogenous region. While for interviewees in Lima the role of the religious community is strong, this role decreases in Córdoba and Montevideo, especially in the upper classes. In these two cities, the practice is more individualized. Even when the interviewees attend celebrations, in their narratives they explain that they do it looking more for a moment of personal prayer than for an opportunity of common celebration.

The people interviewed in Lima talk a good amount about "sin," a notion that is seldom used by interviewees in other places. While in Montevideo and Córdoba respondents mentioned psychological therapy as a spiritual practice, that was not the case in Lima. Peruvian interviewees did talk about membership to Fraternidades and Cofradias (religious associations), even among non-Catholic respondents. ("I am a Mason and of St. Jude.")

Atheism is most prominent in Montevideo, where there is a centennial tradition of secularism driven by the state.[11] But despite more than a hundred years of secular public policies, which undoubtedly have marked Uruguayan identity, the researchers had trouble finding atheists (not to be confused with "non-affiliated") in the

11 Néstor DaCosta, "El Fenómeno de la Laicidad como Elemento Identitario: El Caso Uruguayo" *Civitas* 11, no. 1 (2011): 207-220.

lower socioeconomic status. Uruguayan atheism is enlightened. Something similar happened in Córdoba, where the atheists interviewed were high-class university educated, very critical of other "non-affiliated" practitioners because these later ones were interested in new spiritualities and alternative therapies. In Lima, we found "post-evangelical" atheists—that is, people who got tired in their religious search. They are atheists because of "religious saturation," a point that brings them closer to many "non-affiliated" in the United States and perhaps to some former European Catholics.

The combination of different traditions in one's life is more frequent among Catholics, the non-affiliated and Umbandistas than among Pentecostals, Buddhists and Mormons. These latter groups tend to be stricter with their beliefs, but no more "docile" to their own religious authorities. In both Córdoba and Lima, researchers were surprised by the autonomy of Pentecostal believers with respect to their religious leaders.[12]

The lives of Peruvian migrants in Córdoba and Montevideo show the different roles assigned to religion in the Latin American public space. In Uruguay, it has been difficult for them to organize as a migrant community, because secularism prevents them from recreating the procession of the Señor del Milagro on the streets of Montevideo; a religious practice that cemented the Peruvian community in Córdoba.[13]

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE

The transformations brought about by modernity at the social and personal level have affected religious traditions and organizations as well as the ways in which

12 Hugo Rabbia, "Otredad, Diversidad Religiosa y Prejuicios en las Interacciones Cotidianas de Evangélicos/as de Córdoba, Argentina," *Sociologias* 22, no. 53 (2020): 36-63; Verónica Roldán and Rolando Pérez, "El Protestantismo Vivido: Un Estudio Comparativo desde América Latina y el Sur de Europa," *Sociologias* 22 no. 53 (2020): 20-35.

13 Valentina Pereira Arena, "Migraciones y la Continuidad o Ruptura de las Vivencias Religiosas," in *La Religieon como Experiencia Cotidiana: Creencias, Prácticas y Narrativas Espirituales en Sudamérica*, eds. Hugo Rabbia, Gustavo Morello, N. Da Costa, and C. Romero (Argentina: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2019), 143-57.

people live their religiosity. Of the many features of modernity that interact with religion in Latin America, we have highlighted two aspects: the pluralization of Latin American societies and the growing awareness of the subject's autonomy.

The question we asked ourselves at the beginning, how Latin Americans live their religion, has conditioned responses to the places and confessions of the people. We saw that they are not the same Pentecostals as Mormons, or Catholics as non-believers. But the Catholics of a city sometimes have more similarities with their Pentecostal compatriots than with co-religionists from other geographies.

Religious sources have been pluralized, Latin Americans experience a diversity in their lives that they did not know before, but they also do not know how to handle it. The family environment and religious groups continue to be important places for the transmission of the faith, but social networks and mass media have been added as venues for transmitting, modifying and recreating religious traditions.

The practices are diverse and occur everywhere. There are no spaces or specific times; religion is not circumscribed to a specific area or space. There are no sacred objects per se, but that sacredness is ad hoc; it is created in the use that is made of the crucifix, the bracelet or the computer. This permeability between the sacred and the profane makes us think that, for many respondents, there is no transcendent and immanent world, one here and one beyond. There is only one reality that may or may not be a meeting place with supra-human powers. Because eternity is defined in this life, the good believer is the one who does good in this concrete life, at home and at work.

This way of living religion among respondents, poses future questions to sociology and religious institutions. For example, that subjects handle religious pluralization by silencing the religious issue, is it a form of acceptance or rejection? Or the fact that the subject is her own religious authority in tension with the institution, does it have any impact on political life, on the relationship between a citizen and authority? Finally, the idea of the "good believer" as one who does good for others is something that has been transmitted, in Latin America, mostly after Liberation Theology and within local churches. What will happen to this "golden rule" if the

"I" is the only authority? These are questions that we cannot always answer, but that invite us to continue investigating the multiple ways in which cultures and religiosities interact.

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