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The 1961 Call to Latin America: a Chilean Holy Cross Response

by Rev Robert Pelton, CSC

[Note: There wasn't any formal paper read or submitted. Bob Pelton offered a series of comments. These are notes taken by Chris Kuhn, CSC]

In 1961, the Vatican asked religious orders to send 10% of their membership in the 1961-1971 decade to Latin America. This paper will focus on the CSC response or call in going to St. George's College in Santiago, Chile.

The best book on contemporary Latin American Church about the action of Fr. John Considine, MM, which influenced Pope John XXIII's call in 1961 is Robert Hurteau's book, "A Worldwide Heart."

Bishop Ivan Illich (Austrian) who was bishop of Puerto Rico, criticized Considine's approach and said it would lead to an "Americanization" of the Latin American Church.

But the Medellin Conference disagreed, saying that this approach helped the Latin American Church to follow Vatican II responding to the signs of the times, which seems radical.

In 1966, Fr Jerry Whelan (the Prefect of Studies) is given the Ministry of Education's approval for an experimental program at St. George's.

Fr Jorge Canepa's paper at the 1993 Holy Cross History Conference ("*The History of St. George's College, 1943-1993*"), reported the history of the crisis at St. George's when the Pinochet Government declared it Marxist.

The Pinochet regime took over St. George's in October 1970. It was only the Catholic high school seized. Three universities were seized, including the Bishop's University.

There is a DVD ("Machuca") which tells the story of the conflict over St. George's when boys from the barrios were brought into the school. Many wealthy parents objected.

A 'Theological Studies' article (December 2013) by Bob Pelton fills out the picture of the Chilean Church to follow up an early Chilean account of the St. George's crisis.