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Liberationist Perspectives on the *Misa Criolla* by Ariél Ramírez

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Abstract: The *Misa Criolla* by Ariel Ramirez is a symbol of liberation theology in South America. Written between 1963–1964, this musical work is the result of the decisions made on the sacred liturgy at Vatican II and the Indigenous Movements of the 1960s and 1970s. It became popular around the world and helped bring attention to the indigenous poor of South America through its indigenization of the Roman Catholic Mass text and music directly after the Second Vatican Council. The *Misa Criolla*, however, can only be fully appreciated by understanding its process of localization, from its historical context, theological underpinnings to its musical attributes. From a liberationist perspective, it represents the compromise of the openness, liturgically and theologically, of Vatican II and more conservative movements afterwards through the localization of the Catholic Mass liturgy.

Keywords: *Misa Criolla*; liberation theology; Vatican II; Pope Francis; Ariél Ramírez

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The *Misa Criolla* by Ariel Ramírez is an important work of musical literature for its place in the history of the church. It represents the culmination of generations of struggle within the Catholic Church in how it regards indigenous people, engages the vernacular language, and unifies with culture. The Catholic Church has had difficulties in its past papal documents which endorsed the enslavement of indigenous peoples, and has since tried to rectify its mistakes. Therefore, the Second Vatican Council is important for its openness in engaging the cultures of the world in order to inculturate local practices with the gospel message as a means to authentically foster Christian belief. The *Misa Criolla* localizes Spanish in the Mass as something useful for uniting Latin American people precisely for its foreign and imported history. Since its first performance, the *Misa Criolla* has gained more prominence and relevance, as Pope Francis has called for more equitable treatment of the native population. In this article, I discuss the inception of Ramírez's Mass, its historical context, and how its liberationist themes continue to be important in South America through the indigenization of the Spanish language and localization of various musical styles of South America into a singular work for use at Mass.

1. History of the *Misa Criolla* and Ariel Ramírez

In 1959, Pope John XXIII called for the Second Vatican Council, which allowed for the mass texts to be translated into any language. In light of this, Ariel Ramírez was able to compose his *Misa Criolla*. Ramírez was born in the Provine of Sante Fe, Argentina on 4 September 1921 and learned piano from an early age. The pianist, Arturo Schianca, encouraged him to study piano in the Province of Cordoba where he met the great Argentine poet Atahualpa Yupanqui, "who found in Ramírez a sensitive soul for folk music" (Escalada and Mitchell 2008). Yupanqui encouraged him to study the people and folk music of Argentina. Ramírez then traveled to Europe, where he performed many concerts at notable universities; he had also "been granted a scholarship from the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica for the purpose of studying the oral tradition of Spanish music" (Ibid.). He returned to South American in 1954 and founded the Compañía de Folklore Ariel Ramírez while also traveling around South America (Ibid.).

The idea of creating a religious work came to Ramírez after traveling to Holland, where he had met Father Wenceslao van Lun, who introduced Ramírez to two nuns, sisters

Elizabeth and Reigina Brückner. The sisters told Ramírez of how there was a house in the neighborhood of the convent that was used as a concentration camp during World War II. The sisters would leave food in small packages underneath the prison fence for prisoners until the package was no longer taken, signaling to the sisters that something must have happened to the prisoners. Ramírez was touched by the story and its themes of charity to the degree that his sights were set on how his music could also be of service in the church.

Ramírez then met with Father Osvaldo Catena, who translated the Latin Mass to Spanish and encouraged Ramírez "to compose a Mass in the rhythms and musical forms of Argentina" (Ibid., p. 28). Father Osvaldo Catena in 1963 was the President of the Comisiòn Episcopal Para Sudamérica. This commission was tasked with the Spanish translation of the Latin text of the Mass per the directives of the Vatican Council of 1963 presided by Pope Paul VI. Father Catena invited Ramírez to compose a Mass that used indigenous instruments and style after serving the poor in Santa Fe, an area outlined by railroad tracks, garbage dumps, and caves near the Rio Saldo. The choral arrangements were by Father Segade. The Mass was first recorded in 1964 by the Philips label and was first performed publicly on 20 December 1965 in Mercedes, Uruguay.

2. Perspectives on Catholicism and the Colonization of Latin America

The history of colonization in South America is complex, and there are many thorough resources on the subject, such as *The Indian in Latin American History: Resistance, Resilience, and Acculturation* (Kicza 1993) edited by John E. Kicza, and *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History* (Moya 2011) edited by Jose C Moya. For the purposes of this work, the author focuses on some of the papal documents that helped provide the framework behind Christendom and how it influenced how indigenous peoples were treated in South America as a result.

Pope Nicholas V issued papal bull *Dum Diversas* on 18 June 1452, which "authorized Alfonso V of Portugal to conquer 'Saracens (Muslims) and pagans' in a disputed territory in Africa and consign them to 'perpetual servitude'" (Gill 2021). The same Pope then wrote *Romanus Pontifex* on 5 January 1455, which extended the dominion of the Catholic nations of Europe over the non-Christian nations, and called for the enslavement of the native peoples of Africa and the Americas. This particular bull allowed for King Alfonso "to invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever . . . to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit" (Romanus Pontifex 2021).

Charles I of Spain wrote his *Requerimento* in 1514 and expanded the authority of the papal bull by Pope Nicholas. This document utilizes just war theory, which was originally proposed by Augustine. The document called for the right to enslave natives by invoking three requirements for just war theory: rightful sovereign, just cause, and righteous intent. Each reason, as defined in Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* published in 1485, is addressed in the *Requerimento* by invoking the crown, evangelization, and the will of God. This last point is critical because, despite many Franciscans and Jesuits advocating for the rights of many indigenous peoples, the idea of hierarchical Christendom was strong among the Spanish as a whole, and they did not want to risk their privileged positions of power by granting power to the indigenous peoples. Considering that the natives could not read Latin, they found themselves enslaved without ever having understood the document. The disparity between the Spanish and the natives is further exacerbated due to the final paragraph of the *Requerimento*:

> If you do not do this, however, or resort maliciously to delay, we warn you that, with the aid of God, we will enter your land against you with force and will make war in every place and by every means we can and are able, and we will then subject you to the yoke and authority of the Church and Their Highnesses. We will take you and your wives and children and make them slaves, and as such we will sell them, and will dispose of you and them as Their Highnesses order. And

> we will take your property and will do to you all the harm and evil we can, as is done to vassals who will not obey their lord or who do not wish to accept him, or who resist and defy him. We avow that the deaths and harm which you will receive thereby will be your own blame, and not that of Their Highnesses, nor ours, nor of the gentlemen who come with us. (Council of Castille (Spain) (1510))

It is no wonder that, in the 1490s, the colonization of the Americas began with Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1500. Chasteen describes the religious implications of the colonization: "But we should not underestimate the religious mystique that also surrounded the Spanish and Portuguese monarchs. Isabel was above all a Catholic monarch. Centuries of reconquest had created a true crusading mentality in Iberia, and the monarchies used this fervor to justify their increasingly absolute power." (Chasteen 2016, pp. 26–28).

Portugal used the indigenous people as cheap labor when they established sugar plantations. The Portuguese used force against the natives, which drove them further inland. As a way to try and regain control of Brazil, the king "had parceled out enormous slices to wealthy individuals, called captains, who promised to colonize and rule in his name" (Ibid., p. 32). The Tupi were a native population that rebelled against the Portuguese rule, but were eventually destroyed by, among other things, the disease brought by the Europeans; to help replace the lost Tupi people, the Portuguese brought over Africans and enslaved them.

The mixing of indigenous peoples, enslaved Africans, Spanish, and Portuguese meant that people of mixed races began to emerge. The rise of mestizos meant that transculturation was inevitable, especially for those in the lower strata of society. Chasteen writes:

> Transculturation and race mixing went together (though, naturally, transculturation can occur without any mixing of genes, and vice versa). The urban working class and the free peasantries of colonial Latin America were multihued, and intermarriage among very poor whites, blacks, and indigenous people was common, as were consensual partnerships. Often *not* consensual, or only superficially so, were the sexual encounters between social unequals of different race, as when "gentlemen" hired prostitutes or forced themselves on enslaved women. (Ibid., p. 84)

The merging of races and peoples in different strata of society also meant that a hierarchy was established between the different classes of people, with the wealthy white Spanish and Portuguese at the top. Any perceived threat from the indigenous class was immediately dealt with, usually harshly or by force. The Iberian crowns established a caste system in which indigenous people would be in one category, whites would be in another, and different categories were created for mestizos, allowing for up to sixteen other castes. More wealthy people from indigenous castes could apply for an official exemption to make them "legally white", so that they could take up positions of distinction and authority (Ibid., p. 88). Still, the indigenous caste was the lowest and prevented indigenous people from becoming priests, attending university, owning weapons, and wearing silk, among other things (Ibid., p. 87). The influence of the indigenous was seen as a threat to the hierarchical system.

An example of this was during the Inquisition trial of Francisco de la Cruz. A prominent Dominican in Peru during the late sixteenth century, De la Cruz was "accused of organizing a millenarian cult in Lima that predicted the imminent destruction of Christendom in Europe and the establishment of a new, pure church in Peru under his leadership on the eve of the Apocalypse" (Durston 2007, pp. 59–60). It is also well known that the indigenous population in colonial Peru responded positively to the sounds of music in their worship. De la Cruz, therefore, took issue with the church at the Second Lima Council when it prohibited the performance of taquis or native song-dance genres "and of funerary and initiation rites, claiming that these were not necessarily idolatrous and that the prohibition was alienating the Indians from Christianity" (Ibid., p. 60). De la Cruz was seen as a threat to the established order of the church through his invocation of the sovereignty of the

indigenous people; he was arrested in 1572 and then burned at the stake in 1578 (Ibid., p. 59).

3. Indigenous Movements

The Indigenous Movements in Latin America are complex. Rather than discuss the entirety of colonial history in the Americas and Africa, the author indicates some of the uprisings in the Americas that drew so many indigenous peoples. For the Quechua, Aymara, and Guarení people, it started about 200 years earlier with a 109-day "siege of La Paz that rattled Spanish colonial rule" (Dangl 2019, p. 3). This indigenous insurrection was launched from Cuzco and Potosi in 1780 by Túpac Katari, Tomás Katari, and Túpac Amaru. The siege left over 15,000 dead, and Túpac Katari was eventually captured by the Spanish and quartered by four horses. The Spanish placed his limbs on display throughout the region in order to instill fear among the indigenous from repeating another insurrection. These events would inspire new groups in the 1960s and onward.

In the 1960s, Fausto Reinaga became an important philosopher and voice for the indigenous people. Dangl writes, "Through an integration of Marxist and indigenous worldviews, his writing reflected his own lived experience as an indigenous man living through the tumultuous periods of the Chaca War of 1928 to 1935 and the National Revolution" (Ibid., p. 35). Many Aymara youth would come to his home to hear him lecture, and his books can be found all over Bolivia and other Andean regions. Reinaga, in effect, sparked several initiatives in the following decades that would honor the indigenous people of the Andes.

4. Language

While the use of indigenous instruments and performers marks Ramirez's Mass among other Spanish Mass settings of the time and as a liturgical work compared to the Latin Mass prior to Vatican II, there is the question of why Ramírez used Spanish for the Mass as opposed to Quechua or another indigenous language. After all, the Spanish language can be seen as a relic of colonization, and it would seem that its use might mean that the natives were under continued oppression. The complexity of this situation can partially be explained by looking at the late twentieth century and at the relationship between language and socioeconomic status. María Elena García writes:

> For indigenous leaders working toward self-determination for their communities as for bilingual activists, the link between language and both cultural and national identity is clear. But while defending, maintaining, and preventing the "deterioration" of Quechua is of vital importance to bilingual-education activists, acquisition of Spanish—as the language of wider social accessibility—is essential for the social advancement of indigenous highlanders. (García 2003)

The issue of bilingual education in Peru to which the quote above refers is helpful in contextualizing the state of language hierarchy in South America in the midtwentieth century, similar to the history of the English language in North America. The Spanish language, as a result, had become fully adopted by the majority of people of South America, excluding Brazil (Portuguese), Guyana (English), Suriname (Dutch), and French Guiana (French). The transnational acclaim of Ramírez's Mass attests to its success in indigenizing the Spanish language, which can be explained in the context of Scruggs' definition:

> Successful indigenization of a more recently arrived religion must sufficiently emasculate the ties that bind local musical aesthetics to previously existing belief systems so that in a "neutralized" form they can be utilized to express the tenets of the new religion. (Scruggs 2005)

No longer viewed as an oppressive force, the Spanish language allowed for the *Misa Criolla* to transcend national boundaries.

The Spanish language functioned both as indigenized language, transcending the local population for a few reasons. In the established sixteenth century encomienda system in

which wealthy Spanish and Portuguese landowners ruled, assimilating the natives was more about securing their productive labor. Thomas J. La belle and Peter S. White write:

> Rather than investing money for schools for Indians, which most Europeans in the New World saw as only contributing to native insolence, the colonial landowning and mining interests relied heavily on an intermediate class of native language interpreters, usually *mestizos* or *mulattos* (mixed bloods) from each area. (La Belle and White 1978)

The use of language as a means to separate the natives was meant as a way to control them and keep them from government interactions. To learn Spanish was to empower the native person with the same tools as the elite which was seen as a threat. In the nineteenth century, there was a shift from "a rural agricultural base to an urban industrial-commercial one" (Ibid., p. 254). As workers came into industries that required more supervision, and more contact with Spanish, more natives became familiar with the Spanish language; a sector emerged that included small urban industries, related tertiary (i.e., service) activities, and a growing white-collar bureaucracy" (Ibid., p. 256).

Although these "middle groups" came to propose "wide-spread primary education as the most efficient means of achieving controlled social assimilation of the Indian" (Ibid.), it was not meant for all natives. La Belle and White write, "Instead, the educational goal of these groups was a *limited* assimilation of the Indian, focusing principally on the spread of an essentially middle class, nation-oriented ideology, i.e., 'changing the customs of the Indians' and promoting an identification with the wider society" (Ibid., p. 257). The Spanish language empowered the native population and was indigenized through schooling and labor. It transcended the native population by allowing for them to participate in affairs that were historically reserved for Spanish-speaking Europeans.

Ramírez maintained the Latin names for the movements of the Mass. This was used "perhaps as a nexus between the pre-Conciliate tradition and its post-Conciliate version" (Escalada and Mitchell 2008). This is significant in symbolizing the continuation of the core of the Mass liturgy, albeit changed, and is another example of language being used to transcend national boundaries; in this particular case, however, it was used to participate in an imagined global Catholic community.

5. Instrumentation and Harmonic Language

The text of the *Misa Criolla* is from the Mass ordinary approved by the second Vatican Council. Ramírez used instrumentation and harmonic language to speak to the spirit of the indigenous people who up to the 1960s had by and large celebrated Mass using the Latin text. The Kyrie, for example, uses two genres of native music, the baguala and the vidala. The baguala is based on a tritonic (Westerners might hear this as a major triad) scale that is "characteristic of the region of the South American Plateau" (Ibid., p. 30), which includes southern Bolivia, Northern Chile, and the Argentine northwest. The instrument that best captures this scale is the erke or corneta, classified as aerophones, which are found in the Andean region; the same instrument is called the trutruca in the more southern regions. Although these instruments are not specified in the score, their idiosyncrasies are clear in the triadic melodies sung by the soloist in the Kyrie.

The Gloria uses the carnavalito, which is a dance used throughout the Andean regions. Instruments typically used to accompany the carnavalito are the quena, erkes, pinkullos, sikus, bombo (percussive instrument), chaschas (percussive instrument made of of goat nails tied up in a cluster), and charango (Ibid., p. 34). For the Sanctus, Ramírez uses the carnival cochabambino, "a group dance of joyful character, whose origins are found in the native groups (black or Indians)" (Ibid., p. 41).

6. The Local Community

The *Misa Criolla* is an example of Catholic inculturation as opposed to contextualization. Ingalls clarifies the contexts of these terms and why the distinction is important for the purposes of this study:

> Inculturation, the preferred term within the Roman Catholic Church, is often concerned with the relationship between the church as an institution or codified tradition and local contexts. Discussions of contextualization within Protestant circles, by contrast, are usually concerned with how the Christian message is translated into different cultural contexts and take a particular understanding of the Christian scriptures, as opposed to centralized church traditions or church hierarchy, as the ultimate source of authority. (Ingalls et al. 2018, p. 7)

This perspective places the *Misa Criolla* in all its text and performance practice under the central authority of the Catholic hierarchy. The authentic expression of the Catholic liturgy through local indigenous instruments and common daily vernacular are all adherent to Catholic authority, and are theoretically subject to change and removal. Realizing the evangelical power of an indigenized liturgy, however, the Catholic Church utilizes this not only to evangelize more fully non-Christian indigenous peoples, but also to embed Catholicism within the local culture, thereby making the distinction between sacred and secular vague and indistinguishable.

The *Misa Criolla* becomes locally useful as an amalgamation of the many indigenous cultures of Latin America, each movement being distinct and important to particular cultural continuities. The Mass also transcends national boundaries through its localization of Spanish dance. For example, the present-day rhythms in the Argentine zamba, the Peruvian marinera, the Chilean chilena, and the cueca of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile all have roots in a Spanish dance. The musical meters common to these dances "consist of the juxtaposition and/or simultaneous use of 3/4 and 6/8" (Escalada and Mitchell 2008, p. 29). Each dance in the Mass is a localization of Spanish dance.

In regard to instruments used in Ramírez's Mass, the caja represents a transnational continuity and localization of instruments. A "tubular membranophone with two leather heads and a wood body of hollowed tree trunk, with leather tuning ropes bound to the heads of a zigzag fashion . . . it is played with a stick or mallet, serving as an accompaniment for the baguala, vidala, vidalita, and carnavalito" (Ibid.), all of which are used in the *Misa Criolla*. This instrument, unlike the Spanish origin of the dances, is pre-Columbian and likely has roots with membranophones from Africa (Ibid.).

7. *Gaudium et spes* and Vatican II

At the Second Vatican Council, the documents *Gaudium et spes* and *Lumen gentium* speak to the equitable inclusion of indigenous peoples. *Gaudium et spes* in particular was important in elevating human solidarity; the dignity of the person is at the heart of the document and through human solidarity, people were expected to uphold this truth. It reads:

> There are many ties between the message of salvation and human culture. For God, revealing Himself to His people to the extent of a full manifestation of Himself in His Incarnate Son, has spoken according to the culture proper to each epoch. (Vatican II 1965)

The document understands the role of the human person in the mission of the church to transform the world. This is an entirely different tone from the papal documents of the fifteenth century which sanctioned the enslavement of natives; the document continues:

> Likewise the Church, living in various circumstances in the course of time, has used the discoveries of different cultures so that in her preaching she might spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, that she might examine it and more deeply understand it, that she might give it better expression in liturgical celebration and in the varied life of the community of the faithful. (Ibid.)

Gaudium et spes also speaks of a "new humanism" that John O'Malley describes as a "far cry from so-called secular humanism" (O'Malley 2010, p. 267) and is "based on a human nature created by God, infused with the Holy Spirit, and destined for God" (Ibid.). It was meant to appeal to all people "of good-will," calling for the respect of those not

Christian. *Gaudium et spes* was unprecedented for calling on the church to also learn from the world, not just sitting at the top in a hierarchy; the top–down function of the church now also had a level of influence from the bottom–up. Keen on the relevance to human solidarity, O'Malley writes: "It called on wealthy nations to help the poor ones, and it called on Catholics to cooperate with others in international organizations working for peace and justice" (Ibid., p. 266).

8. Liberation Theology

With *Gaudium et spes*, Vatican II became a force for granting all peoples a place at the table for cultivating the Catholic faith within their cultural context. Liberation theology comes to mind for its focus on advocating for the historically oppressed, especially in Latin America, and was popularized by theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez, Leonardo Boff, and Jesuit priests Juan Luis Segundo and Jon Sobrino. For Gustavo Gutierrez, the Incarnation displays "*anthropological aspects* of revelation" (Gutierrez 1988, p. 6), revealing the human in "our situation before the Lord and with other humans" (Ibid.). In other words, the anthropological aspects of revelation are evident in the Incarnation in that God reveals what it is to be human through Christ; it is in the example of the Incarnation that God becomes fully human and for the indigenous, this meant that their oppression was analogous with the human suffering of Christ. The theme of liberation from oppression, therefore, became applicable for both the indigenous peoples of Latin America and Christ as their suffering became analogous to His suffering.

Liberation also speaks to the indigenous person by exploring the relationship between the historical process of human liberation and salvation (Ibid., p. 32). Gutierrez writes:

> If we look more deeply into the question of the value of salvation which emerges from our understanding of history—that is, liberating praxis, we see that at issue is a question concerning *the very meaning of Christianity*. To be a Christian is to accept and to live—in solidarity, in faith, hope, and charity—the meaning that the Word of the Lord and our encounter with that Word give to the historical becoming of humankind on the way toward total communion. (Ibid.)

The Mass by Ramírez and other indigenous vernacular Masses, therefore, can be bridges of solidarity between indigenous and nonindigenous people in hopes to build more authentic communion.

The liberation movement brought together the sacred and temporal spheres, the church and the world. Historically, the church and the world were brought together under Christendom since the edict of Milan under Charlemagne in the fourth century. However, salvation was at the exclusive center of only the church as first stated in the Letter LXXII of Cyprian of Carthage in the third century: "salus extra ecclesiam non est" ("there is no salvation out of the Church"). Therefore, the responsibility of the laity was to aid the ecclesial institution in an auxiliary way that inevitably led to hierarchy in society. It is for this reason that early Christendom was closely tied with theocracy.

The French Revolution, the ideas of philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), and the Second Vatican Council, among other events, all contributed to the end of historic European Christendom and paved the way for a new conception of Christendom in which the church and world are autonomous. In this new system, priests serve only as the conscience and inspiration for the temporal sphere (Ibid., p. 37.). These roles, with salvation centered in the church, are distinct. However, the distinction was not so defined outside of Western Europe, as Latin America still had a system where both the church and social order were merged and part of daily life. In Latin America, this merged society is precisely the reason why liberation theology has such application and practicality for the Catholic church there.

9. Other Vernacular Masses

Other vernacular Masses were composed around the same time as the *Misa Criolla*. The *Misa popular nicaragüense* (*Nicaraguan Popular*, or *People's Mass*), for example, was composed in 1968 and in 1975, the *Misa campesina nicaragüense* (*Nicaraguan Peasant Mass*) was com-

posed, both in Spanish (Scruggs 2005, p. 96). The *Misa campesina nicaragüense* (Nicaraguan Peasant Mass) invokes liberationist imagery, especially in the *Santo*, which reads:

> Por todos los caminos
> Veredas y cañadas Diviso Jesucristo
> La luz de tu verdad
> Vos sos tres veces Santo,
> Vos sos tres veces Justo . . .
> Libéranos del yugo, danos la libertad
> Vos sos el Dios parejo,
> No andas con carambadas,
> vos sos hombre de ñeques, el mero tayacán . . .
> Vos sos tres veces Santo,
> Vos sos tres veces Justo . . .
> Libéranos del yugo, danos la libertad
> Through all roads,
> paths and valleys
> I see, Jesus Christ, the light of your truth.
> You are three times holy.
> You are three times righteous;
> release us from our yoke, give us freedom.
> You are a fair God
> You are not foolish,
> you are a man of strength,
> a true leader.
> You are three times holy.
> You are three times righteous;
> Release us from our yoke, give us freedom.

Never officially used by the Catholic church in any official way, the Nicaraguan Peasant Mass was still popularly performed in Nicaragua by the peasant class, as it brought attention to the poor in Nicaragua who historically were the exploited Miskitu people (Ortiz 1987). In her thesis "Empowered by Song: The Relationship Between *Misa Campesina* and Peasant Involvement in Nicaragua's Revolution", Mery A. Pérez cites composer Mejía Godoy in her interview with him:

> When I write the Mass, I cannot ignore that we are a multi lingual, multi racial and multi ethnic country and that's why I incorporate the Miskito Lawana instead of the Agnus Dei as a song that is born out of the vital experience of the Atlantic Coast. And the different rhythms from the North and the Pacific are all represented there, for example: Pascua Son, Mazurca, Vals, Polka, Nica Son, Bull Fight Son, all from the Pacific and the North and the Miskito Lawana Son represents the presence of the Atlantic Coast in the Peasant Mass. (Peréz 2014, p. 61)

The first stanza of the Miskito Lawana of the *Misa campesina nicaragüense* reads:

> Miskitu nani ba won dara walaia
> Swak sakan storka na pain wali bangwaia.
> Won Aisa purara ai kupia pihni ba
> Miskitu nesanka ban yamni munisa.
> Miskitu brothers, we must reflect,
> This is the story of our salvation.
> Let us ponder that our Celestial Father
> Gives the Miskitu people his blessing. (Gordillo 2021)

Although the *Misa campesina nicaragüense* is not an authorized translation of the Mass, there are similarities with the *Misa Criolla* in how they localize transnational musical styles.

It was not authorized by the Catholic church, however, for two reasons: (1) the words stray from the authorized Spanish translation, and (2) for its explicit lyrics that portray class struggle. The Catholic Church had by 1975 begun to portray itself as neutral within class struggles.

10. Opposition

In 1983, Pope John Paul II spoke to Latin American bishops and called for "a new evangelization: new in its ardor, its methods, and expressions" (John Paul II 1984a). This New Evangelization called for the conversion of all Catholics and responded to the liberation movements since the 1960s. The church had felt threatened by the "radically historicizing consequences of the Second Vatican Council" (Peterson and Vasquez 1998) and felt the need to reassert the hierarchical structure. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and chief architect of the Vatican's conservative realignment, claimed that doing so requires "a search for a new equilibrium after all the exaggerations of an indiscriminate opening to the world" (Ratzinger and Messori 1985). In essence, Ratzinger called for an adaption of liberationist ideas while avoiding class exclusivity, specifically exclusive preference for the poorer class.

Part of this effort of equilibrium came in the form of two Vatican documents, *Libertatis* Nuntius (1984) and the *Instruction on Christian* Freedom and Liberation (1986). While the first document was critical of the liberation movements in Latin America, the second sought to incorporate some of its themes by expressly lifting up the poor as a preferential option for the church. By expressing this option for the poor in broader and apolitical language, the church felt that it was able to avoid class politics and appeal to the Masses by defining "poor" as those who are in need of Christ. The *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* reads:

> The special option for the poor, far from being a sign of particularism or sectarianism, manifests the universality of the Church's being and mission. This option excludes no one. This is the reason why the Church cannot express this option by means of reductive sociological and ideological categories which would make this preference a partisan choice and a source of conflict. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1986)

Another adaptation of liberation theology directly after Vatican II was the idea of social or structural sin. Instead of structural sin being represented in systems of oppression as purported in liberation theology, Pope John Paul II claimed, "All situations of social injustice are first of all the result of the accumulation and the concentration of many personal sins" (John Paul II 1991). The key difference here is the change from systemic or structural to personal. Pope John Paul II writes,

> The real responsibility, then, lies with individuals . . . So true is this that even when such a situation can be changed in its structural and institutional aspects by the force of law or—as unfortunately more often happens by the law of force, the change in fact proves to be incomplete, or short duration and ultimately vain and ineffective—not to say counterproductive if the people directly or indirectly responsible for that situation are not converted. (John Paul II 1984b)

Part of the problem with this statement is that although a social movement may lead to incomplete change, such as with the lingering racism that continues to this day after civil rights in the United States and the indigenous movements in Latin America, progress toward a fuller communion through solidarity is still made, albeit not immediate. In essence, social movements can generally be sacramental in the sense that they signal God's grace outwardly. These social movements, therefore, can become catechetical and formational in encountering Christ with the the Mass by Ramírez as a possible catalyst. Pope Francis abandonrf some of the apolitical language of his predecessors in *Fratelli Tutti* by addressing the injustice against migrants and encouraging more specific language in addressing injustice. The *Misa Criolla*, therefore, reflects this compromise of incorporating liberationist

themes with the more conservative New Evangelization movement by maintaining the approved text for the Mass while rejecting additional text such as in the liberation Masses of Nicaragua.

11. *Amazonia Querida* and *Fratelli tutti*

In February, 2020, Pope Francis introduced *Amazonia Querida*, the postsynodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, written in response to the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region held in Rome in October 2019. It is an important document and precursor to *Fratelli tutti* because it upholds the Amazon tainforest as integral to the peoples it sustains. It is a culture. Its worth, in other circles argued to be self-evident, is, for Pope Francis, tied to its people. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Pope Francis had the *Misa Criolla* performed at St. Peter's Basilica on 12 December 2014 for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which became a clear signal to the indigenous peoples of Latin America of his intentions by tying the vernacular Mass to the patron saint of the Americas. He writes in *Amazonia Querida*:

> Efforts need to be made to configure ministry in such a way that it is at the service of a more frequent celebration of the Eucharist, even in the remotest and most isolated communities. At Aparecida, all were asked to heed the lament of the many Amazonian communities "deprived of the Sunday Eucharist for long periods of time". There is also a need for ministers who can understand Amazonian sensibilities and cultures from within. (Francis 2021)

An advocate of the sustainability of cultures that surround the Amazon, Pope Francis offers more incentive for the continued performance and utilization of the *Misa Criolla*.

Pope Francis spoke more broadly on fraternity, mentioned in his *Amazonia Querida*, in his *Fratelli tutti*, published in October of 2020. In this document alone, Pope Francis writes plentifully about the marginalized that one could write an extensive separate piece on the theology of suffering and liberation. For our purposes, only a few passages are mentioned as they pertain to the elevation of indigenous people and offer more incentive for the continued performance of the *Misa Criolla* today. Pope Francis writes on human dignity:

> On the other hand, if we accept the great principle that there are rights born of our inalienable human dignity, we can rise to the challenge of envisaging a new humanity. We can aspire to a world that provides land, housing, and work for all. This is the true path of peace, not the senseless and myopic strategy of sowing fear and mistrust in the face of outside threats. For a real and lasting peace will only be possible "on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility in the whole human family." (Francis 2020, p. 76)

Pope Francis' statement unpacks two ideas. First is the idea that a "new humanity" is possible through the intentional work of recognizing the worth of human dignity in every person. This particular theme is not new and can be seen in the writings of indigenous authors in the midtwentieth century, particularly in those of Fausto Reinaga. Reinaga's popular book *La Revolución India* (The Indian Revolution), published in 1970, invokes the idea of an ideal society that has no hunger or murder, as embodied in the pre-conquest society of Tawantinsuyo, otherwise known as the Inca Empire (Dangl 2019, pp. 36–37). For Reinaga, Tawantinsuyo was the new humanity. This idea, alongside his concept of two Bolivias, where one country would be governed by the indigenous people, and the other by those of European descent, was popular among the Quechua people of the 1960s and 1970s. Pope Francis' theme of a "new humanity" has parallels with that of Reinaga, albeit in broader and less exclusive terms.

Imbedded in the quote from *Fratelli tutti* is again the idea of human solidarity. This is key to understanding the responsibility of the church in its ongoing work toward restoration and reconciliation with marginalized peoples. Such ongoing actions are motivated by the idea of social sin or collective sin in which personal sins become collective through active

participation. The Bible accounts for social sin in the way that Israel struggles to remain faithful according to the ancient covenant and in Luke 4: 18–19 as Jesus calls for the release of captives and the liberation of the oppressed. Gutierrez also writes:

> But in the liberation approach sin is not considered as an individual, private, or merely interior reality—asserted just enough to necessitate "spiritual" redemption which does not challenge the order in which we live. Sin is regarded as a social, historical fact, the absence of fellowship and love in relationships among persons, the breach of friendship with God and with other persons, and, therefore, an interior, personal fracture. (Gutierrez 1988, pp. 102–3)

The historical and contemporary aspects of sin, according to Gutierrez, are binding among all peoples. This is important when considering the papal documents of 1452 and history of colonialism that was sanctioned by the Church. Pope Francis recognizes the importance of human solidarity in this regard to the extent that past sin must not be forgotten, lest humankind impede their own progress. Pope Francis writes: "We can never move forward without remembering the past; we do not progress without an honest and unclouded memory" (Pope Francis 2020, p. 141).

12. Conclusions

Ariel Ramírez's Mass was internationally recognized and revered as a masterful work, not least of which for its ability to represent indigenous communities in Latin America. It is the embodiment of past and present, of the age of colonization in the late fifteenth century and Vatican II. It is a culmination of localization in music, language, and culture. It comes from the people, not seeking to rectify the past in a single action but as a symbol of the continued Catholic responsibility to learn from it and equitably empower those who have historically been silenced because of it. Pope Francis continues in this tradition through his writings *Querida Amazonia* and *Fratelli tutti*, calling for more attention to how the work to empower the indigenous and enslaved voice is not yet completed. This is what gives the *Misa Criolla* continued relevance, and it will continue to enjoy popularity in Latin America and the world so long as the struggle for dignity of all peoples is at the forefront of the Catholic community.

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