

Globalization of the Catholic Church: Implications for managing a large multinational organizations for a long period of time.

By Paula Robinson

#### Author Note

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## **Type of Project: Case Study**

### **Abstract:**

Over the past year, I have worked to develop a case study that examined that globalization of the Catholic Church as a part of my Honors Capstone thesis. My initial research question was to identify what practices were utilized by the Catholic Church to successfully expand globally. This interest was spurred from my training in International Business where we learnt that when any firm goes global, it is always under pressure to localize itself to the markets it enters into. With the long standing global presence of the Catholic Church (albeit a non-profit and a religious organization – but nevertheless a large multi-national organization), how did the Church modify its practices to appeal to people from such different cultural backgrounds around the world. I believe that this study would have a implications necessary for managing a large multinational organization for long periods of time.

More specifically, I gathered my findings and put them forward as a case study that examined the localization practices of the Catholic Church in Latin America, from the early 1500s, which marked the beginning of the Spanish Inquisition, to the early 1800s, which marked the end of the independence wars.

In the following section, I elaborate on the literature review that frames the theoretical background for my study and the research methods I follow. My findings are presented in the form of a Case Study attached at the end of this document.

## **Part II: Project Proposal Scope, Focus:**

The Catholic Church holds a strong presence on a global scale. The Catholic Church is the largest and oldest multinational organization in the world. It generates revenues of about \$182 billion annually. The organization has 1.2 billion customers, 1 million employees, and locations in 179 countries across the globe (Pagano, 1). This being said, I intended on examining the expansion of the Catholic Church to uncover practices that led to its success.

The scope of this project was initially very broad, therefore, I narrowed it down to a specific geographic location and time period. Through my initial research, I have found that 40% of the world's Catholics reside in Latin America, currently (PewResearchCenter, 1). This being said, I chose the Spanish conquest of Latin America as my geographic location and time period.

The aim of this project was to develop a case study to map out exactly how the Catholic Church structured its business model to achieve its success. There are a number of different obstacles companies face when operating a business in a foreign country. It is how they are able to make their way through these obstacles that determines overall success. As times changed, the Catholic Church was still able to enforce its relevance and maintain its population, which in a business, it would be referred to as market share..

### **Part III: Research Methodology or Creative Process Approach:**

A large part of my research methodology was archival. I began my research process by first visiting the Phillips Memorial Library at Providence College. I utilized their resources to help me narrow down the scope of my study. From there, I worked more closely with the Boston College Library of Ministry and Theology, as their content was more closely related to my topic.

I supplemented my archival research with conversational interviews with students and faculty at Bryant University that grew up Catholic in Latin America.

#### **Part IV: Explanation of Data Sources:**

Google Scholar has been of great assistance throughout the study. I've utilized this database to search for scholarly articles written about a number of relevant topics. For example, a number of these articles discuss how the Catholic Church organized itself and its mission throughout its existence. I've found that they've utilized a number of different business models; the changes and transition coincided with the changes in times.

In addition to using Google Scholar, I've spent some time in the library at Providence College. More specifically, I've found Providence College's special collections inventory and staff to be most helpful at this location. This is the closest Catholic Church library to Bryant University.

I was able to nearly complete my study through research at Boston College's Library of Ministry and Theology. I found that they had a lot of texts that directly related to my studies. In addition, I was able to access the content of their library remotely through WorldCat. I built a relationship with Boston College's head librarian to order texts to be sent to Bryant.

This being said, I felt that it was necessary to add more primary sources to my collection of research for this case study. I hoped to compile a list of candidates for interviews. I felt that acquiring input from church officials will really help to cement my research findings within the databases and libraries. However, I actually decided to perform conversational interviews with the Latin population at Bryant University. For example students like Michel DahDah, Luis Garcia, and Andres Ramirez

## **Part V: Potential Research Issues & Ethical Considerations:**

One problem that I encountered was finding a person who could envision the final outcome of this project. For example, I struggled when trying to explain my case study to the staff members at Providence College. More specifically, their areas of expertise are limited to religious studies. They don't have much knowledge about business, never mind business on a global scale. I feared that this was not just an isolated situation, and that I would encounter this conflict many more times in the near future.

This being said, I worked to find a way to pitch my project in a way that would not offend anyone. I am a religious person, myself. I am not trying to discount the Catholic Religion to merely a business, rather than an entire faith. I respect its followers and believers. This project is for them; I admire the works done by the Catholic Church and I want to acknowledge their good works from a business perspective.

## **Part VI: Research Project Plan:**

As mentioned, my research began in the spring of 2016. I spent the bulk of the summer reading about the history of the Catholic Church and its many different expansions across the globe. In September, I made the decision to focus my studies on the Catholic Church's expansion into Latin America at the time of the Spanish Inquisition. The rest of the fall semester was spent editing my Literature Review to match my new focus.

This past semester, my faculty adviser hosted a weekly seminar on Mondays at noon. I met with her and some other students each week. This being said, each week I submitted deliverables in the form of research findings, templates for the case study, and modifications of

my final presentation. I was able to obtain feedback from adviser, my editorial reviewer, as well as other students to assist me in the completion of this study.

## **Literature Review:**

The scope of this project can be very broad, therefore, I narrowed it down to a specific geographic location and time period. Through my initial research, I have found that 40% of the world's Catholics reside in Latin America, currently (PewResearchCenter, 1). This being said, I have chosen the Spanish conquest of Latin America as my geographic location and time period.

The aim of this project was to develop a case study to map out exactly how the Catholic Church structured its business model to achieve its success. There are a number of different obstacles companies face when operating a business in a foreign country. It is how they are able to make their way through these obstacles that determines overall success. As times changed, the Catholic Church was still able to enforce its relevance and maintain its population, which in a business, it would be referred to as market share.

A large part of my research methods was archival. I conducted archival research on the documents of the Church and literature about its global expansions. I have already started my research on the materials in Providence College. I also visited the Library of Theology and Ministry at Boston College to collect more archival materials on the globalization efforts of the Church.

I worked to develop my research in stages. To start, I defined the problem; I identified the field that needed to be examined and went on to break it down into questions I needed to answer. This being said, I chose to focus on International Business as the scope of this assessment. More specifically, I chose to examine the practices of the Catholic Church that led to its success as the oldest and largest multinational organization in the world. However, I encountered a few issues

in the early stages of my research. For example, if I intended on developing a case study, I needed to narrow down my questioning to a specific location, as well as a specific time period. After further research, and uncovering that the majority of the world's Catholics reside in Latin America, I restructured my examinations to further study how the Catholic Church expanded its practices into Latin America, while maintaining its core values.

The second stage of developing my research was actually searching for sources. The first being what practices take place in Latin America that distinguish the religion in this region? The second question was to understand the concepts of standardization and localization and how the Catholic Church utilizes these methods in Latin America. To initiate research in these areas I've focused on researching the history of the Spanish Conquest of Latin America, considering the Catholic Religion originated in Europe and was brought over to the new land by Spanish missionaries appointed by the monarchs. Furthermore, I've conducted conversational interviews with Latin students and faculty.

### **History of Catholic Church in Latin America**

The Spanish conquest of Latin America dates back many years. The story begins with Isabella of Castile, the Queen of Castile, as well as her husband, the King of Aragon, King Ferdinand. Together the couple joined their separate kingdoms to establish what was known as the Catholic Spanish Monarch. During this time, voyager Christopher Columbus requested approval to set sail on a trip to sail west to India. His requests were granted, and the kingdom of Castile granted him the funds to embark on his journey. However, things did not exactly go according to plan (Cline, 35-36).



Instead of setting sail to India, Columbus stumbled upon modern day Haiti, now divided into both Haiti and the Dominican Republic, on his first of four voyages to take place.

Throughout efforts to conquer the new land, the Spanish were continuously put face to face with the land's indigenous people. This being said, upon their first arrival, the Spaniards were greeted by the Taino people. From there, the rest of the three voyages were dedicated to island conquests and establishment of civilization in the area. This being said, the indigenous people were incorporated into the plan, regardless of their sentiments towards the matter (Cline, 35-36).

Further into the sixteenth century, more present-day Latin American countries were uncovered. To start, Mexico was founded, and this event can be more commonly known as the Spanish Conquest of the Aztec Empire. The Aztecs were yet another group of indigenous people that greeted the Spaniards upon their arrival at the new land. This particular expedition was spearheaded by Hernan Cortes, and conquest concluded rather rapidly (Cline, 35-36).

Conquest continued well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Spanish conquistadors moved one country at a time. After Mexico, they voyaged through Peru, Paraguay, as well as Columbia. Upon arrival in Peru, they were greeted by a group of indigenous people otherwise known as the Incas. In all cases, some of these indigenous people were made a part of the Spanish establishment of civilization in Latin America (Tibesar, 377-389).

The Catholic Church's presence in Latin America was introduced throughout Spain's conquest of Latin America. The Spanish embarked on their journey to the new world for missionary purposes. As mentioned, when they first arrived in Latin America, the Spanish were greeted by the indigenous people. The missionaries worked to convert these people that actually made up about 1% of the world's population at the time. Through their efforts, they constructed towns and villages, equipped with Catholic Churches. Four groups of people served as

missionaries in Latin America during that time; these people were the Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, and Jesuits. These groups preached that indigenous practices were that of the devil. Furthermore, they rapidly worked to baptize and convert the natives, in addition to promising them political support from the Vatican.

### **Organizational concerns during processes of globalization**

Standardization can be defined as developing technical standards based on the consensus of differing parties. This being said, localization can be defined as adapting a product or service to a specific locale or market. Furthermore, localization can make a standardized product more accessible to a target audience. For example, standardization can refer to translating from one language to another, or catering to a group's customs and values. Although standardization and localization work independently of one another, they are pertinent to the success of a business once it reaches a global scale.

The question I am attempting to answer under these circumstances is how the Catholic Church was able to stay connected to its core values, while still appealing to different regions, otherwise known as markets, across the globe. Therefore, when conducting research for this study, I was able to find standardization techniques, as well as localization techniques, used by the Catholic Church.

There are many sectors that make up the core values of the Catholic Church. To start, the Bible serves as the word of the Lord. The Bible is composed of stories and prayers to guide its followers. Furthermore, there are several guiding principles of Catholicism. The first of these principles is to show respect for other people. We are all creatures of God, and God has gifted each of us with a certain uniqueness that we must value in ourselves and others. The second

guiding principle builds upon the first by encouraging us to promote family togetherness. This principle places emphasis on recognizing that we are part of a community. This being said, marriage is a sacred promise before God, and it is our duty to uphold that promise for the sake of our children who are members of our community. We need to protect our community members and help those who are less fortunate. Last, but not least, we must not be afraid to tell God what we need, and always thank Him for all that he has done (Kaczor, 1-4).

The guiding principles of Catholicism are universal and there are many stories throughout the bible that exemplify these principles. As of September of 2016, the bible has been officially translated into 554 languages to accommodate its followers and instill these values across the globe (Biblica, 1). However, many cultures have practiced localization to mold these principles to fit into their differing cultures.

Localization was most prominent in Latin America through language, traditions, and celebrations. For example, Catholicism has been carefully woven into the Spanish language. In addition, it is commonplace for a Catholic to attend Sunday mass across the globe. However, Latinos hone in on certain celebrations that they find special within their culture. For example, Catholics in Latin America place a special emphasis on Lent, Holy Week, Christmas, and Three Kings Day. Furthermore, the image of Jesus himself varies across Latin American countries to help its people better identify with Christ. For example, Jesus can be found as looking like mestizo, as well as white with blue eyes. It is common to find a portrait of Jesus with a bleeding heart and surrounded by thorns while praying, in a Latin household; something that is rarely found here in the United States. Some other common symbols of the Catholic religion in Latin America include the cross, images of saints, the rosary, and an image of Mary.

There are over 20 Latin countries in Central and South America. Each of these countries place a certain amount of emphasis on varying holidays within the religion. Each country gives special thanks to varying saints that may have originated in their region. However, each of these countries make an extra effort to commemorate the Virgin Mary in ways that not all other cultures do. This was a tradition brought over from Spain, and continues to this day. She is celebrated on varying days, but on each day there is a festival in the streets with Latin food, flowers, and plenty of music and festivity (Getfeed, 3). My findings on the localization practices are detailed in the Case Study attached with the Literature Review.

All this being said, Catholicism still upholds the same values in Latin America, as it did for the Spaniards who brought their religion with them on their journey to the new world. I want to hear from locals about their experiences growing up in this region of the world. For example, growing up in New England, we associate Christmas with winter and snow, and our traditions revolve around these conditions. This being said, summer is beginning in Latin America, as the holidays approach. I want to explore the uniqueness of the region during the time of year where the world's Catholics come together to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

## **Case Study:**

### **Catholic Church in Latin America: A Case Study of Localization Practices**

Objectives:

Over the past year, I have worked to develop a case study that examined that globalization of the Catholic Church as a part of my Honors Capstone thesis. My initial research question was to identify what practices were utilized by the Catholic Church to successfully expand globally. This interest was spurred from my training in International Business where we

learnt that when any firm goes global, it is always under pressure to localize itself to the markets it enters into. With the long standing global presence of the Catholic Church (albeit a non-profit and a religious organization – but nevertheless a large multi-national organization), how did the Church modify its practices to appeal to people from such different cultural backgrounds around the world. I believe that this study would have the implications necessary for managing a large multinational organization for long periods of time.

More specifically, I gathered my findings and put them forward as a case study that examined the localization practices of the Catholic Church in Latin America, from the early 1500s, which marked the beginning of the Spanish Inquisition, to the early 1800s, which marked the end of the independence wars. As a disclaimer, it is important to note that the following does not serve as a history report. Instead, this is a business-focused case study examining the Church's expansion into Latin America, which took place simultaneously with the Spanish Inquisition.

## Introduction

The Spanish conquest of Latin America dates back many, many years. The story begins with Isabella of Castile, the Queen of Castile, as well as her husband, the King of Aragon, King Ferdinand. Together the couple joined their separate kingdoms to establish what was known as the Catholic Spanish Monarch. During this time, voyager Christopher Columbus requested approval to set sail on a trip to sail west to India. His requests were granted, and the kingdom of Castile granted him the funds to embark on his journey. However, as we all know from history, things did not exactly go according to plan. Instead of setting sail to India, Columbus stumbled

upon modern day Haiti, now divided into both Haiti and the Dominican Republic, on his first of four voyages to take place. Throughout efforts to conquer the new land, the Spanish were continuously put face to face with the land's indigenous people. The entry of the Spanish monarchy and the Catholic Church was marked by the violence of inquisition. However, in the 1800s when the different countries in Latin America overthrew the Spanish government, they did not still overthrow the Catholic Church. Instead, these newly independent governments embraced it as their State religion. What did the Catholic Church do in these intervening years to become an attractive religion for the people?

#### The Catholic Church as a Multinational Organization

The Catholic Church is a multinational organization. From a business perspective, it is the largest and oldest multinational organization in the world. Each year the Church brings in approximately \$182 billion in revenues. The Church works to meet the needs of 1.2 billion customers, with 1 million employees, and offices in 179 different countries across the globe. The Catholic Church holds a strong presence in all areas of the world; even in locations where it is constitutional to support another religion. In addition, at the time of the Spanish Inquisition, Latin America at that time hosted just 1% of the world's population. At this moment in time, over 40% of the world's Catholic's reside in Latin America, and over 80% of the entire population in that region of the world identifies as Catholic.

#### The Catholic Church and Spanish Monarchy in Latin America

In 1492, Christopher Columbus, requested permission from the Spanish Monarch to travel by ship to India. Furthermore, permission was granted by Queen Isabelle and King Ferdinand, who combined their power to develop what was known as the Spanish Monarch. However, although they made the decision, the trip was not funded by the Spanish Monarch, but actually by the Vatican. The story goes on to tell that Christopher Columbus did not actually reach India, but instead modern-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic. This being said, three trips proceeded the initial journey. The Monarch worked to colonize the region by beginning with the islands and working their way to mainland Latin America. Groups of Catholic missionaries accompanied these journeys to take part in this establishment. Four groups of people served as missionaries in Latin America during that time; these people were the Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, and Jesuits. These groups preached that indigenous practices were that of the devil. Furthermore, they rapidly worked to baptize and convert the natives, in addition to promising them political support from the Vatican. This entry was also marked by the violent period of forced conversion through the Inquisition. Imperialism prevailed in the region; all that was done, was done for the greater good of the Spanish Monarch. It was very challenging for the local people to distinguish between the monarchy and the church in those days. Although the two journeyed to the new land together, their trajectories did not remain identical – the Church and the State adopted different practices to engage with the local populations.

Fast forward to the 1800s

Over three hundred years of Spanish Colonization continued after the initial journey to the islands. However, the year 1804 commenced a ripple effect of independence throughout the

region; more specifically this is the year the independence wars began to conclude. This period of war and independence finally ended in the 1820s. As mentioned, the local people struggled to distinguish the Catholic Church from the Spanish Monarch and the animosity for the State was often felt by the Church. In some instances within this period priests were killed and churches were burnt to the ground. However, despite some instances of violence directed towards the Church, it was still able to retain an overwhelming popularity. It was found that almost all of the newly established nations declared Catholicism as the official language of the state. I come back to my initial baffling question: What did the Church do to become so popular with the local people, when they initially had an equally violent and unpopular past?

### The Role of the Church during the Spanish Colonialism

The Catholic Church upheld a very specific role during the time of the Spanish colonialism in Latin America. After the initial waves of conversion, the different missionaries worked to establish villages in the region. These villages were equipped with churches, as well as hospitals and schools. Working for the missionaries also led to a path of upward mobility for the locals. For example, through proper education, they had the opportunity to become priests and clergymen. However, the appeal of the Church was not just the role it played for economic benefits or the eventual political actions it undertook. The appeal came from its practices and specific adaptations to the local culture.

### Localization

Localization is the process by which firms often adapt to local cultural or institutional practices that make them deviate from their standard ways of doing things. Firms can face



cultural, legal and other institutional forces in different markets where their success often is premised on the ability to bend to the local ways. In the context of any religion, it is often defined by a commonality of values, beliefs and practices. Thus it becomes even more intriguing to identify how a religion would localize as it grows across culturally different regions of the world.

The Catholic Church in Latin America worked to understand the local culture in many different areas. They made a clear set of modifications to their practices to incorporate local elements. The three key areas of modifications made were in the ways the festivals were celebrated, the use of their cultural artifices specifically in music and also through other essential Church practices such as Canonization of priests and establishment of religious stories.

## Festivals

The Catholic Church worked together with the local population to create new traditions surrounding important celebrations within the religion. These new traditions worked to resonate with pre-catholic practices that were integral in the local culture. More specifically, the Catholic Church found new ways to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ and to celebrate the Christmas season; each way was unique to a country within the region and the local people.

An important Christmas celebration in the region is the concept of posadas. Posadas are a staple in the holiday season in Mexico and Guatemala. The celebration commences nine days prior to Christmas Eve. During the celebrations children and adults dress up as Mary and Joseph; this is all done in effort to reenact their journey to Bethlehem. A procession is performed in a different neighborhood each night. The performers knock on a door of a house in the

neighborhood. When the door is answered, they sing a song asking for food and shelter. The host typically invites them in, and together they enjoy a meal consisting of tamales and bunuelos, a Mexican cookie, and finish the evening by beating a piñata.

## Music

Prior to the Spanish Inquisition, folk music was widely popular across the region. The Catholic Church acknowledged the connection the locals had with their music and utilized it as a vehicle to send their message to the region. For example, they associated the indigenous music with the Catholic Calendar, and aligned performances with holidays integral to the religion. More specifically, they taught the locals the songs sung during mass, as well as other celebrations, but allowed them to play the songs with instruments that originated in Latin America; these include maracas, tambourines, trumpets, and wind instruments.

To this day, this concept is still practiced. Local instruments are used throughout the Christmas Posadas, as well as the festivities unique to each nation during Holy Week. However a classic example of this concept is Diya de Los Reyes Magos; otherwise known as Three King's Day. This holiday is celebrated every January 6<sup>th</sup> by Catholics across the globe. However, Diya de Los Reyes Magos is a festival celebrated throughout Brazil. On this day, songs are performed to celebrate Baby Jesus. To this day, performances are done to commemorate folk music and traditional instruments like the pandeiro (tambourine) and the cavaquinho (ukulele) are used in these performances.

## Canonization

There are two different definitions of canon. The first definition is to have something in its final form. This being said, the Bible can also be referred to as a canon. However the other definition supports the process of naming a person as a saint. The second definition will be utilized throughout the continuation of the case.

Throughout the time of the Spanish Inquisition, and continuing through the period of independence, the Catholic Church worked to canonize local people. Often times the locals that went on to be saints were often those who led the battles against the Spanish Monarch, for example, St. Louis Bertrand of Colombia. A pre-catholic tradition in Chile is to pray to folk saints, also known as animas. These folk saints were often times children that died tragically; their souls were thought to be more pure, and thus prayers were more likely to reach God. In Venezuela, these sacred places of death would often be marked by the Holy Cross – an integral symbol of the Catholic Church. Thus the Church allowed the local people to use the symbols to designate everything that was considered sacred – even in such cases when they were somewhat inconsistent with the core Catholic practices.

In addition to canonizing local people as saints, many different countries in the region hosted Virgins. The Virgin of Guadalupe and her story is very sacred to Mexico. Prior to the Spanish Inquisition, the local people practiced religions that were polytheistic and worshipped many different Gods. One of the people they prayed to was the Mother Goddess Tonantzin and her temple resided in modern-day Mexico. Her name meant “our sacred mother.” During the period of the inquisition, this temple was destroyed (like many other local temples), and yet many people still went to that place to pray due to the long standing cultural practices of praying to the Goddess.

The story that the Church had about the Virgin was a little different. It goes: Juan Diego was a local man in the early 1500s and a unique experience he had one day on his journey to work. In early December, Juan was walking past the previously mentioned temple when he came across the image of the Virgin Mary. Naturally, he told the local Bishop about his experience who did not believe him. He continued to have the Vision even after it was rejected by the priest. However, after a few days, Juan's uncle, his only living relative, fell ill suddenly. Juan called the priest to come to the house to perform the last rites. However, the image of the Virgin Mary spoke to him. She instructed him to go to the top of a specific hill in the area and to pick an exotic flower; if he picked the flower he could bring it to the Bishop to prove she was real. As the story goes on, Juan was able to find the flower, and the Mother Goddess was reincarnated as the Virgin of Guadalupe. Later a Basilica Church was built at the spot of the temple to house the image. In this way, the sacred spot of the Mother Goddess Tonatzin was worshipped as the Virgin of Guadalupe – a Mother Goddess who performed miracles. The image of the Virgin was also influenced by the image of the Mother Goddess Tonatzin and is depicted as a darker female than the Virgin images that we see in that time in the Vatican.

#### Political and Economic Benefits

In addition to social and cultural localization, the Church appealed to the local people through providing them with economic benefits and political stability. For example the Church provided the locals with infrastructure like hospitals and schools. Not only did the locals now have access to primary and secondary education, this part of the world hosts some of the world's first colleges and universities. In addition to economic benefits, the church offer political stability. Although a separation of church and state did not originally exist, the church eventually

broke ties with the crown. Furthermore, post-independence, the Vatican sent diplomats to the region to assist the locals in establishing order in their newly independent nations. While the economic and the political role of the Church is often celebrated – I believe that the Church got its real appeal through the stories and symbols that were its ways of localization to the pre-Catholic forms of worship and lifestyles.

While the Church did localize in many different ways it is also important to recognize where they did not localize. For example, at the core of the Church – the key message of the Church through the Bible remained unchanged across the 300 years of the Spanish rule and after. While it kept the key religious practices such as the festivals and the forms of worship like the Mass or the architecture of the places of worship consistent – it allowed to be localized through the food in the festivals, the musical instruments used to perform the worship and the legends and stories and sacred spots where the Churches were built. It was a fascinating case of how a firm localizes in a foreign country and also keeps itself standardized in its core values.

#### Implications for the contemporary multinational company

MNOs and MNCs that wish to be successful for long periods of time in key markets can learn from the Catholic Church. Some important lessons include recognizing local talent and working to grow local talent in a way that is mutually beneficial for the region as well as the firm. However, this is not helpful unless the firm is deeply connected to its core values. From

there the firm should participate in local traditions and festivities, to create a local foundation in each region.

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