

ANTHROPOLOGY

"You Are a Priest Forever": The Dual Sacramentality and Humanity of Andean Roman Catholic Priests in Talavera, Peru

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For the first time within living memory, the rural Roman Catholic parish of Talavera in the south-central Peruvian Andes features only native clergy. By placing the Talaveran Catholic priests in theological and historical context, this article shows how this current generation of Catholic priests in Talavera must be understood within the context of the post-Vatican II Catholic Church in Latin America, which explicitly encouraged the training of native clergy and recast the relationship between the sacramental and the human as mutually compatible and constitutive. Although such initiatives are generally associated with liberal parishes unlike Talavera, the *nouvelle* theology that shaped Vatican II nevertheless meant that the dual nature of the Roman Catholic priesthood—as concretely human but also ineffably sacramental—fundamentally shapes the lay relationship with the Catholic priests in Talavera, too. The resulting tension between the priest as a sacramental mediator to the divine and the priest as a human man is continually renegotiated by laity and clergy alike, and is essential to understanding Catholic priests in Latin America and how lay parishioners experience the Catholic priesthood.

Por la primera vez que se recuerde, la parroquia rural de Talavera en los Andes del centro-sur de Perú se presenta con un clero nativo. En este artículo, se pone los sacerdotes católicos de Talavera en un contexto histórico y teológico, y así muestra cómo entender esta generación de curas a la luz del Concilio Vaticano II y los cambios que efectuó en la Iglesia Católica en América Latina. Dichos cambios animaron a la Iglesia que se forme un clero nativo y reestructuraron la relación entre lo humano y lo sacramental como mutuamente constituidos. Tales iniciativas se asocian normalmente con parroquias liberales y Talavera es una parroquia conservadora, pero la *nouvelle* teología que dio forma al Concilio significa que la naturaleza dual del sacerdocio como concretamente humano y también inefablemente sacramental todavía moldea la relación entre los laicos y los padres en Talavera. Esta tensión resultante entre el sacerdote como un mediador sacramental y el sacerdote como un hombre humano es continuamente renegotiado por los laicos tanto como los curas, y es esencial para entender los sacerdotes católicos en Latino América y la experiencia de los feligreses del sacerdocio católico.

Earlier that day, the parish priest of Talavera, the rural highland parish in the south-central Peruvian Andes where I carried out fieldwork from 2015 to 2016,¹ had suggested that I accompany him on a visit to his former parish, Chicmo, about a twenty-minute drive up the mountains that surrounded Talavera. I agreed—this wasn't the first time I'd gone with Father (Fr.) Simón on his trips to more rural parishes—and once we arrived, I was set to sell bilingual Quechua-Spanish² prayer books to those who wanted them. Fr. Simón

¹ Studies were approved by the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee, University of St Andrews. I carried out eighteen months of participant-observation fieldwork in Talavera, including approximately twelve months during which I volunteered as the parish secretary. This meant that I had significant, unprecedented access to the priests and to the day-to-day workings of the parish, including both the public and private discourses and attitudes of the priests as well as how laity approached and spoke about priests in a semiformal office setting.

² Quechua is the local Indigenous language.

told me to discount them if necessary—people in Chicmo were poor and primarily Quechua-speaking, and it was more important that people have a copy if they wanted one. As I sat outside the church in the afternoon with a stack of books on the table in front of me, listening to Fr. Simón recite the opening lines for Mass, an elderly woman shuffled slowly up to the church with her walking stick. Even though she was late, she stopped in front of me before entering and, looking directly at me, declared firmly but plaintively in Quechua-lilted Spanish, "We still miss Fr. Simón *very* much. We wish he would come back." She then proceeded past me into the church.

I do not remember what I said in response, if anything, but I do remember being taken aback by how emphatic she was. At that point, it had been some three years since Fr. Simón had worked in Chicmo, and they had a new priest. It was not as if the parish had been abandoned, I thought. But they still missed him, she said; they wished he would come back and be *their* priest again, instead of Talavera's.

A quick glance at the anthropological literature on the Andes would tell you that rural Andeans—as this woman was, marked both by her style of dress and her accent (see, e.g., Seligmann 1993)—are not typically known for being personally fond of their priests. In the Andes, Catholic priests have tended to be aligned with "foreign domination" (Isbell 1978), seen as "outsiders" (Canessa 2012), categorized along with the military as "white authorities" (Weismantel 2001, 224), and characterized as "secret [evil-doers] who [steal] life-giving fat from the bodies of Indians to use for [their] own nefarious purposes" (Harris 2000, 50). These perceptions continue today in the Andes, according to Burman (2018).

What was historically unusual here, however, was that Fr. Simon was celebrating Mass in his native language, Quechua. The diocese of Abancay, to which Talavera belongs, today features its first generation of native, or Indigenous, clergy, made up of men born and raised in the local area as part of agriculturalist families. The norm in the Andes has previously been white or foreign priests, often imported from Spain or Ireland, with an accompanying distance between them and their parishioners—and, often, a corresponding disdain for local Andean Catholic practices and sensibilities (Abercrombie 1998; Orta 2002; Isbell 1978). This new situation is the direct result of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) and the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín, Colombia, which followed in 1968. Together, they amplified long-standing calls for a native clergy in the Catholic Church. The first bishop of Abancay, Alcides Mendoza Castro, had himself been personally present at Vatican II (de Lubac 2007); the second bishop, Monsignor (Msgr.) Enrique Pélach Feliú, was ordained as a bishop in 1968, and in 1977 founded the seminar at which all the current priests in Talavera were trained.

Vatican II was a huge undertaking: broad, diverse, and messy. The Belgian Cardinal Suenens famously called it the "French revolution in the Church"—meaning that all subsequent Catholic history would have to be judged in the light of Vatican II. It was, in short, an opening up of the Church to the world which was acutely felt in the Andes by both laity and clergy (e.g., Piedra Valdez 2007; Dianich 1988; Gonzalez Dorado 1992; Amaladoss 1998). Scholars of Latin American Catholicism have especially paid attention to the ways in which Vatican II figured a different relationship between Andean laity and the institutional Church, particularly in legitimizing the liberal branches of the Church to promulgate liberation theology (which emphasized the social needs and political liberation of the poor and oppressed) and encourage inculturation (which, broadly, sought to reconcile Catholicism and Indigenous Andean culture) (e.g., Míguez Bonino 1977).

However, Abancay is not a liberation theology or indeed a liberal diocese; instead, it is closely aligned with Opus Dei, a notoriously conservative branch of the Catholic Church. Msgr. Enrique had been the first secular priest to ask for and gain membership in Opus Dei and had founded the Abancay seminary after an inspirational conversation with the founder of Opus Dei. Most of the priests I spoke to in Abancay were self-avowedly cautious about Vatican II and disdained liberation theology (Lee 2019a). Nor does the inculturation framework quite apply here: inculturation tends to rely on the construction of a pan-Andean identity propagated by foreign missionaries (Orta 2004), but Abancay priests have a specifically local and regional identity, tied to the diocese where they were born, raised, trained, and now work (Lee 2019b).

Both Peruvian and academic discourse have tended to treat the interests of the conservative and liberal branches of the Catholic Church as mutually exclusive. The scholar Elizabeth Olson (2006, 888) describes the Peruvian Catholic Church as an "ideologically-fragmented church, with the conservative influence of Opus Dei offset by regions ... in which liberation theology [dominates]." In the wake of the Peruvian civil war (approximately 1980–2000)—which was particularly devastating for the province to which Talavera belongs and which the diocese encompasses (Mallon 1998; del Pino 1998)—the Truth and Reconciliation Commission explicitly named Abancay as a diocese which had not "been renewed along the lines of the

Second Vatican Council and the Assemblies in Medellín and Puebla" (CVR 2003, 287), where because "the Church had not as much taken into account the changes encouraged by the Council, subversive groups found much more fertile ground in which to take root" (CVR 2003, 292).

How, then, to understand the existence of these highly conservative Indigenous clergy—who exist because of, not despite Opus Dei and other conservative forces in the Catholic Church, and who disdain liberation theology and do not approach their ministry as in the service of inculturation? My suggestion is that an essential part of the ongoing process (Lee 2019a) of decoupling the usual link between a positive view of Andean culture and liberal politics in the Peruvian Catholic Church is a simultaneously closer but also broader look at recent, post-Vatican II and post-Medellin Catholic history and theology—namely, the effects of an underlying (theological) current which unites both the conservative and liberal branches of the post-Vatican Church: how Vatican II brought new ways of thinking about and framing priests and the priesthood by reformulating sacramental theology, which sought to retheorize the relationship between the natural and the supernatural, between the human and the divine or sacramental, as coexistent and related rather than as separate. The practical consequences of this theology can be seen via an ethnographic examination of the figure of the priest, who embodies this tension between the human and the sacramental. Priests are connected to the sacramental through the sacrament of ordination and through their position as mediators to the sacraments, even while they are human, nondivine men. In Talavera, this is lived and experienced through an Indigenous clergy, who the laity relate to on the basis of a shared background, language, and culture. But the clergy are also distinct from the laity because of their necessity in providing the sacraments that are integral to Catholic life.

This article thus seeks to understand the interface between the human and sacramental status of a Catholic priest, specifically within the context of a conservative, post-Vatican II diocese in the rural Peruvian Andes with the first generation of native clergy in living memory. By drawing on ethnographic data as well as making recourse to historically appropriate Catholic theology, I seek to show how the locally native priesthood is understood both in terms of its human, social aspects (such as within the framework of Peruvian ethnicity standards) and also sacramentally (as with the role of priest as sacramental mediator to the divine).

Sacraments, Sacramentality, and the Priesthood

Although Pope John XXIII's announcement of the Second Vatican Council came as a shock to the world, the forces that drove Vatican II's theological and pastoral transformation of the Catholic Church had already been gathering for decades prior. Theologically, Vatican II's call to engage rather than isolate was rooted in a mid-century movement called *nouvelle* theology, which had developed a sacramental ontology "at the heart of [which] was ... the desire to reconnect nature and the supernatural" (Boersma 2009, 5). In doing so, *nouvelle* theology was reacting to the neo-Thomism which had then dominated Catholic thinking for decades. Since the late nineteenth century, neo-Thomist Catholic scholars had "tried to be faithful to the theology of Thomas Aquinas (1224/5–74), and they believed that this could be done only by maintaining a strict separation between the natural and supernatural realms" (Boersma 2009, 4). In particular, they argued that "in the supernatural realm, faith accepted the Church's teaching as divine revelation coming from the outside or from above" (2009, 4)—that is, that the supernatural is strictly external in character and origin; that what is divine is absolutely separate from what is human.

Existing anthropological analyses of Andean Catholicism have tended to reflect this neo-Thomist separation between the natural and supernatural. When it is discussed, sacramentality is often framed as a way for the Church to keep itself to itself, to separate the natural from the supernatural—the sacraments are assumed to be inherently exclusionary, a way to separate the "really Christian" (that is, the sacraments) from the "non-threateningly non-Christian" (most of what is not a sacrament) (e.g., Salas Carreño 2014). For example, in analyzing the Lord of Qoyllur Rit'i—one of the oldest and most important Andean Catholic pilgrimages—Salas Carreño (2014, S200) describes the notion of the sacraments as "privileged rituals, objects, moments, places through which God relates to humans." This allowed the Jesuits in charge of the site to distinguish "between religion and culture, where the former is assumed to be universal and refuses to be place bound, while the latter is understood as local, particular, and place-bounded (Keane 2007, 84–85), a way of considering indigenous practices as superstitious remnants of the past rather than as pagan practices to be persecuted" (Salas Carreño 2014, S200). In this view, the sacraments and sacramentality are analyzed as a way to separate "true" Catholicism from "cultural" or "popular" Catholicism. The sacraments are seen as the "authentic," "real" core of Catholicism; separate from that are popular practices, which are not "real" Catholicism.

Although, as will be discussed, this figuration of the sacraments is not the only one available, it is nevertheless rooted in the emphasis Roman Catholicism places on the sacraments as the core of the faith. The sacraments are and have long been central to Catholicism. The catechism of the Catholic Church describes the sacraments as "making the church" (Catholic Church 1994, 1118, citing Augustine); they are the "masterworks of God" (1116) around which revolve the "whole liturgical life of the Church" (1113); sacraments are "necessary for salvation" (1129), meaning all Catholics must partake of the sacraments to have the chance of going to heaven. Furthermore, within Roman Catholicism, only ordained priests can deliver the sacraments, and they are able to do so on the basis of their own ontological transformation at the hands of the sacrament of ordination. The Catholic Catechism describes ordination as conferring "a sacramental character or 'seal' by which the Christian shares in Christ's priesthood," and which, "brought about by the Spirit, is indelible; it remains for ever in the Christian" (1121). Lay friends in Talavera regularly quoted to me the Bible verse, "you are a priest forever" (Hebrews 7:17), indicative of how ordination "is not merely a symbolic rite of passage from one status to another; it effects a deep ontological change in a man's nature. In ordination a priest's body is mysteriously altered for ever in a way that is irreversible" (Mayblin 2017, 507). Such an ontological transformation is reflected in how it changes even close familial ties. For example, Fr. Simon's own siblings addressed him as Father rather than by his name, and since his ordination, tended to treat him with a level of respect (as he laughingly described, "they're afraid of me now"), which had not previously been accorded him as a middle sibling. When he visited them, they were solicitous of his comfort; he was given the best crockery and the best seat; and when he argued with them, they tended to capitulate and apologize rather than arguing back.

This essential nature of the sacraments, and thus of priests, is reflected ethnographically in the Andes, marking the importance of sacramentality even as it marks the degree to which the sacraments are woven into and not separate from social life. In Talavera, as in much of historically Catholic Latin America, sacraments such as baptism, marriage, and funerals also act as social rites of passage. Thus, priests are necessary to Andean Catholic life, performing the sacraments that mark different life stages, which Andean Catholics will go to significant physical lengths (Bastien 1978) and tolerate a great deal (Abercrombie 1998, 106) to obtain. While I was working as the parish secretary, I recorded at least one story from a woman living in the rural countryside who recounted her memory of taking her son to be baptized some twenty years ago. She vividly described to me how she had walked for hours along treacherous dirt roads during the rainy season, nearly falling into a swollen river crossing a log bridge while clutching her infant son, all to reach the priest.

Even in the wealth of literature about syncretism between Andean social practices and Catholic rituals, it is notable how prominently Catholic sacraments feature, and priests too, as a result. For instance, Abercrombie (1998, 106) recalls an incident in his highland Bolivian fieldwork site when a Catholic priest arrived and gave a sermon: "All in all, the sermon struck me as profoundly insulting and deeply ethnocentric, in which the priest painted himself ... in the well-known, patronizing pose of civilizing missionaries. Yet no one seemed to take offense. In fact, when he emphasized each point by asking his 'hijitos' if they understood him, the authorities humbly chimed, 'Sí, Padre.'" While Abercrombie focuses primarily on the condescending tone of the sermon and his bewilderment at how no one seemed openly offended, I would suggest that the lack of reaction may well have been because the villagers were likely already very familiar with the disdain of white priests for their rural Andean customs. Indeed, Abercrombie alludes later to how the priest did not ask, and the parishioners did not tell, about any unorthodox religious rituals; they were simply putting up with him so they could get a Mass, marriages, baptisms, and funerals out of it. Since within the Catholic context, no one else can deliver the sacraments, they had to have a priest. The one they had may have been awful to them, but a condescending priest to deliver the sacraments was still better than no priest and no sacraments.

It is for this reason that Talaveran Catholics I knew spoke with sadness and pity for communities, in the countryside or elsewhere, that had no priest assigned to them and were therefore unable to regularly receive the sacraments. The nuns at the convent in Talavera attended Mass at least once a day as part of their daily routine, and spoke sadly of their sister convent in the Amazon where priests were very scarce—meaning that the nuns there had to go without the sacraments, which was seen as a grave spiritual deprivation. The parish of Huancaray, a couple hours' drive from Talavera, was until recently run by nuns of an order that specialized in running priestless parishes. Even then, the closest priests available liaised with the nuns for regular visits to celebrate Mass, baptize, and deliver other sacraments.

This emphasis on the sacraments is, somewhat counterintuitively, ethnographically reflected in the ubiquity of "personalized anticlericalism" (Pina-Cabral 1986) in Talavera. That is to say, not anticlericalism in its typical sense as an ecclesiastical movement seeking to remove structural power from the priesthood, but in the form of widespread individual resentment of priests. For instance, the parish priest in the neighboring

town of Andahuaylas was reputed to be harsh, with draconian standards for who he would permit to access important sacraments such as marriage and baptism. As a result, many couples from Andahuaylas preferred to travel to Talavera for their sacraments, because they had heard that the parish priest there was kinder and more patient than the one in Andahuaylas. A man from Andahuaylas once came into the Talavera parish offices, wanting to have his wedding at the church in Talavera while I was volunteering as the parish secretary. Per the diocese's rules I told him that that would be fine, but since he lived in Andahuaylas, he would have to get a letter from the parish priest there, giving formal permission for him to be married outside of his home parish. At that, however, the man became visibly agitated and upset; he said that he had already asked the parish priest in Andahuaylas about getting married, but the parish priest had not been reasonable. He had evidently been told that he would have to choose different matrimonial godparents because the ones he had chosen were living together outside of marriage, thus disqualifying them by the rules of the diocese from serving as godparents. The man told me that he had begged the parish priest in Andahuaylas for an exception—he and his fiancée had been together for decades; it was a stable relationship; they already had children together; the proposed godparents were close family friends—but he had been refused. He complained that it was the fault of priests like the parish priest in Andahuaylas, who were simply "not *amoroso*" (loving or affectionate) and were too "strict and hard" (as he made a chopping motion with one hand), that he would have to continue to live outside of wedlock and the rules of the Church.

This problem was one with wide-ranging consequences. For example, under the current rules, couples who are living together outside of marriage are not typically allowed to take communion. But it is notable that this man's complaints were aimed at priests on an individual level; that is, he did not criticize the existence of or sacramental power held by the priesthood. His method of accessing the sacrament he wanted was to ask another priest, not to dispense with the priesthood or to downplay the importance of the sacraments. In such a deeply religious milieu, priests are, as a class, indispensable (Christian 1989). They are gatekeepers to the Catholic sacraments, which are woven into the fabric of social life in Talavera, as they are in many Catholic communities throughout Latin America. Anticlericalism takes the form of personalized rather than institutional critique, because "a more radical attitude, which would attack the Church as an institution, would be against [their] own interests" (Pina-Cabral 1986, 212). The predominance of personalized anticlericalism over (structural) anticlericalism indicates how the sacramentality of the priesthood is central to Talaveran understandings of priests.

Sacramentality and Humanity

At the same time, a priest's humanity is crucial, too. After Vatican II, the framing of how priests should relate to and work with the laity changed significantly, as did the appropriateness of incorporating and considering local cultural norms in setting out guidelines for Catholic life, especially with regard to the rituals surrounding the sacraments. Vatican II is perhaps best known for its change to a vernacular liturgy, away from Latin. It is a direct result of this that today in Talavera, baptisms, marriages, and Mass are all often carried out in Quechua, especially in the rural countryside, explicitly so that the laity may understand. However, that is only a small part of how Vatican II transformed the Church.

Vatican II's general shift in attention toward history and culture was built on another aspect of nouvelle theology: its "more historically conscious, spiritually and liturgically oriented, and existentially focused style of thought" (Daley 2011, 334), coupled with nouvelle theologians' conviction that the separation between the natural and the supernatural, was the cause of the "rupture between theology and life" (Daniélou 1946, 6). For instance, Rousselot (1990, 34; emphasis removed) argued that "the natural and the supernatural, [should] be neither opposed nor disparate. The one must encompass and transcend the other, deepening and perfecting it from within." De Lubac (1999, 202) argued for a sacramental link between Eucharist and Church, Church and Christ, and Christ to God: "The Church is a mystery; that is to say that she is also a sacrament. She is 'the total locus of the Christian sacraments', and she is herself the great sacrament that contains and vitalizes all the others. In this world she is the sacrament of Christ, as Christ himself, in his humanity, is for us the sacrament of God." Distrusting interpretations of the sacraments as occupying a distinct middle ground between natural and supernatural, de Lubac did not see sacraments as intermediates but as mediatory, as "sensible bonds that *united* the transcendent to the immanent, the supernatural to the natural" (Boersma 2009, 257, emphasis mine). God, the divine, was not separate from the natural world, but part of it. Similarly, then, per nouvelle theological ways of thinking about the world, the supernatural and the sacred do not stand outside the natural world but are rather part of it.

The concerns of nouvelle theology for connecting the natural and the supernatural—to make sense of history and culture through the eyes of faith, and vice versa—are manifested in the major Vatican II

document *Gaudium et spes*, a pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world. *Gaudium* was strongly concerned with social justice and the moral responsibility of Christians for this, which struck a chord in Latin America and especially in the Andes, where Vatican II had roughly coincided with major land reforms in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. As a result, scholars have written about mid-twentieth-century watershed of "Vatican II, liberation theology and the agrarian reform" (Lyons 2001, 7). The 1968 episcopal conference in Medellín further prioritized the issue of Catholic social justice, and legitimized the hitherto controversial liberation theology (Early 2012) and the "preferential option for the poor."

However, "as with all such bureaucratic documentation, the continuing problem was its implementation by Catholic bishops, priests, and laity" (Early 2012, 130). Vatican II and Medellín's documents reflected a number of compromises between conservative and liberal (particularly liberation theology) priests. In 1960s Chimborazo—an Ecuadorian Andean province known for its liberation theology bishop, nicknamed "el Obispo de los Indios" (Lyons 2001, 7)—the Church "shifted from a socially conservative, other-worldly theological orientation focused on salvation of the soul through the sacraments to a discourse first of development and then of liberation" (Lyons 2001, 14); yet this was far from the case in Talavera, where the diocese was and continues to be at the other end of the political spectrum from liberation theology. Priests today disdain development initiatives and openly dismiss liberation theology.

Yet, it is not quite that they did not take up Vatican II in Abancay. The development of this first generation of Indigenous clergy is the direct result of Vatican II, too. Like the bishop of Chimborazo, Msgr. Enrique is today well known in Talavera for being friendly toward local Andean culture and faith. In his memoirs, he spoke of how he was inspired and deeply moved by the devotion of local Catholics to the Lady of Cocharcas—a specifically local and regional Marian devotion—after whom he named the seminary. He learned to speak and write Quechua to fluency, compiling and writing the now locally ubiquitous bilingual prayer book *Rezar y cantar* (*To Pray and Sing*), which is now in its seventh edition. Msgr. Enrique was himself ordained as a bishop in 1968 (Pèlach Feliú 2005), a scant few years after Vatican II; this engagement with local people and local culture and history was directly related to the Council.

Rather, it is that Vatican II was so broad in its effects—both pastorally and theologically—that there is space for both liberal and conservative dioceses to have been reformed in the "spirit of Vatican II" (although what that means in practice tends to differ). This is visible particularly in the figure of the priest, whose dual humanity and sacramentality is a deliberate echo of the doctrine of Jesus's own simultaneous humanity and divinity, and this tension is key to both Vatican II and *nouvelle* theology. The *nouvelle* theologians who shaped Vatican II often employed the figure of Jesus Christ to connect the supernatural and the natural—as befitted his dual divine and human nature. Thus, Hans Urs von Balthasar drew on the "image of an 'hourglass,' whose two contiguous vessels (God and the creature) met at the narrow passage at the center (Jesus Christ). Revelation was primary, supernatural in character, and did come from above. At the same time, the gift of supernatural revelation through Christ made it legitimate to turn the hourglass upside down, so that nature, too, made its genuine contribution, in and through Christ" (Boersma 2009, 5). Accordingly, per *nouvelle* theological ways of thinking about the world, the supernatural and the sacred do not stand outside the natural world but are rather part of it. Therefore, a priest's sacramentality is not separate from his human nature; his sacramental actions go hand in hand with his human ones. This is reflected in the current generation of Talaveran priests, where the fact that they are themselves of Quechua descent—like their parishioners—is essential to their ministry, alongside their sacramental nature. In such a way, priests are not just deliverers of sacraments but people, distinguished by personal traits as well as products of specific cultural backgrounds and embedded in kinship networks.

This is ethnographically borne out in Talavera. Andean ethnography often elaborates at length on the importance of kin relationships for positioning people in highland communities (Canessa 2012; Abercrombie 1998; Bastien 1978), and so the local backgrounds of the current generation of priests locates them in a deep and dense web of kin relations unique to them as individuals. Parishioners often shared acquaintances or kin with the priests, which was a source of pride and status. My goddaughter's mother was pleased that she knew a few of the parish priest's cousins, since she had lived for some time in his hometown before moving to Talavera. Priests also were known to come from the same families. I knew at least two pairs of brothers who were both priests in Abancay, as well as a priest whose sister was a nun in a local order.

None of the priests in Talavera worked in their natal communities, but they visited their families there regularly. The parish priest Fr. Simón visited his father in his rural natal village, about three hours' travel, every month; the curate Fr. Juan often escaped during weekday afternoons to see his family in his hometown an hour's drive away and help them with farm work; and Fr. Daniel, Fr. Juan's successor as curate, regularly drove the hour and a half journey to see his parents when he felt homesick. In turn, the priests also drew on

these kinship relations as resources, as is common in the Andes (Canessa 1998). Fr. Simón's eldest brother partially financed the publication of a new edition of a Quechua-Spanish prayer book which he had been working on, while Fr. Daniel's personal car was a gift from his parents.

These relationships with one's community were also reciprocal, as the Andean ethnographic literature emphasizes (Canessa 1998). When Fr. Simón hired an expert woodworker to carve a new altar for the church, Fr. Daniel took advantage of his presence and also hired him to carve a new altar for the church in his hometown, even though he was stationed in Talavera at the time and not involved in the governance of his home parish. Likewise, for the duration of my time in Talavera, Fr. Juan and his brother, Fr. Marcial, were in the process of building churches for two different neighborhoods in their hometown—"like good sons of [their hometown]," as Fr. Simón put it—even as both of them were living and working in other parishes. As men native to the local area, priests are situated by their kin and located by their backgrounds, even as they are priests, ontologically transformed by the sacrament of ordination.

Nevertheless, their ethnicity does not homogenize or reify the effect of a native clergy. In particular, on a structural level, as men native to the rural Andes, they are enmeshed in wider Peruvian race and ethnicity paradigms, and their own positioning and choices within this system can have outsized effects on their rural Andean parishes. To illustrate this, I next offer a case study of a parish over the course of two priests in recent memory.

Case Study: Santa María de Chicmo

Chicmo, as it is referred to locally, is located about a twenty-minute drive up the mountains from Talavera. It is a rural town with about half the population of Talavera (INEI 2007), located about 3,300 meters above sea level (approximately 500 meters higher than Talavera). According to the priests in Talavera, the parish was closed in the eighties due to unrest and protests from local evangelical Protestants. From then until it was reopened in about 2006, the parish of Chicmo had not had a resident priest but instead was looked after by the priests in Talavera, who worked and lived in Talavera but traveled up to Chicmo when necessary to celebrate Mass and deliver the sacraments. In 2006, Fr. Simón was assigned to Chicmo as its first resident priest since the 1980s. He was transferred to Talavera around 2013, and Fr. Basilio was his replacement.

Chicmo is not a wealthy town, and most residents depend on agriculture for their living (INEI 2007). In the Andes, the higher altitude means increased racial stigmatization—townspeople had a reputation for being "cold" and "hard," as per stereotypes of rural highland Andeans which equate temperament with living conditions (Canessa 2012). The financial, material, and social environment was expected to be difficult, and so it was not considered a desirable parish to be assigned to.

Fr. Simón knew well the stigma attached to rural communities such as Chicmo and had been determined to combat it, motivated by a sense of pride in his own rural background. When he first moved to Chicmo, he found the presbytery and the church in disrepair, with many valuable items missing or damaged—markers of the neglect and lack of attention paid to Chicmo as a rural parish. He told me emphatically that people in Chicmo may seem "hard" and "cold" at first, but once you got to know them, they were "good people, really good people," and he invested personal money (including taking out a personal bank loan, which as of 2015 he was still paying back) in refurbishing the church and the presbytery, with the explicit aim that Chicmo might be seen by other priests as a desirable parish in which to live and that Catholics in Chicmo might have an appropriately dignified environment in which to receive the sacraments. He installed new parquet flooring in the presbytery and bought new liturgical garments and equipment for the church—efforts which visibly demonstrated his investment in the long-term future of Chicmo to the residents. Furthermore, drawing on his familiarity with the rhythm of life in agricultural communities, he would tailor parish activities to the knowledge he had of local families and of rural agricultural life. He told me that one year at harvest time, to raise money to pay the electricity bill, he sent volunteers to each of the households in town with a formal letter, signed and sealed by him, asking for donations of corn from their fields. Although cash was hard to come by in Chicmo, at harvest time it was not a particular hardship for families to donate some of their crops. After the corn was collected and the kernels removed and dried, he stored it in sacks until the dry season, when prices were high. He then sold the corn, thereby circumventing Chicmo's lack of cash wealth, which had put off other priests from living there.

In this way, he became very familiar with a number of the local families, and indeed a number of the local families counted him as a close personal friend. Locals I spoke to in Chicmo recalled with emotion how Fr. Simón used to work alongside them in their fields, and how much he enjoyed eating their food with them at their own tables. On return visits to Chicmo, he would always visit the same families, who plied him with his favorite foods to take back to Talavera with him. When I visited Chicmo, people who knew that I had come

from Talavera would give me bags of food to take back to him. They had remembered his preferences for years, down to the amount of salt he liked in his cheese and the kind of corn he favored.

Furthermore, these favorite foods—fresh cheese made with milk from their own cows, not too heavily salted; toasted yellow corn; guinea pig—were all typically highland Andean foods, signaling his active affinity for a rural Andean identity. By the accounts of residents of Chicmo whom I was able to talk to, this had paid off for Fr. Simón in the form of a renewed and vibrant parish community during his tenure. Dormant parish groups had revived and expanded, alongside the introduction of new parish groups. Evidently, this revival had accelerated as a significant number of evangelicals, attracted by the increase in parish activity, began returning to Catholicism—to the point where an incensed evangelical pastor reportedly barged into Mass during Holy Week in an attempt to force various members of his congregation to leave and return to his church.

By the time of my arrival in Talavera, Fr. Basilio was parish priest of Chicmo. Although he shared a similar rural Andean background with Fr. Simón, he had a different relationship with this background which manifested in a more distant approach to the parish and parishioners. He did not live in Chicmo but instead in his own house in Andahuaylas; the implied judgment of urban Andahuaylas as “better” than rural Chicmo would not have escaped the parishioners. When I visited the presbytery with Fr. Simón, it had once again fallen into disrepair. There had been a leak in the ceiling, so the parquet flooring was water-stained and had come loose, and the house was visibly dusty and unkempt. I heard from parishioners that under Fr. Basilio, parish life was dwindling again due to the lack of attention from a resident priest. One of the catechists in Chicmo, a teenager named Teresa, showed up in the offices in Talavera in tears just before Christmas, pleading with Fr. Simón for help with throwing a small Christmas celebration for the children in her Sunday school classes. She said that she had asked Fr. Basilio for monetary assistance, or help with acquiring toys to give away, or simply some snacks, but he had refused.

Although the existence of a native Andean priesthood holds the promise of a class of priests who feel at home and willingly engage with rural Andean parishioners, the nature of the Peruvian ethnic system provides strong incentives for individual Andeans to internalize and collude in their own structural oppression (Gill 1997; Alcalde 2007). Within Peru, ethnicity is determined significantly by markers such as speech, behavior, or education (Weismantel 2001). As men born and raised in Quechua-speaking farming communities, the priests would be considered campesinos or ethnically Indigenous by default. But their training as priests—the many years of education they received, in seminary but also many of them in postgraduate courses in Peru as well as abroad; their fluency in Spanish; the table manners and forms of dress which were taught to them in seminary as appropriate for future priests—would mark them as mestizos, or ethnically white or mixed race. The priests in Talavera are afforded the possibility of ethnic mobility through rejecting or hiding their pasts. Fr. Simón and Fr. Basilio may have shared similar ethnic backgrounds and upbringings, but the effect they had in Chicmo was very different due to their own positioning within wider ethnic and racial structures—and the parishioners in Chicmo had, as a result, very different experiences of the Catholic Church.

The Sacraments and the “Second Evangelization”

The efforts of priests like Fr. Simon to reach out to and rejuvenate Catholic life in communities like Chicmo are as part of the “second” or “new” or “re-evangelization” of the Andes, a term which references a “contemporary period of reanimation in the Church, dating from the 1950s, accelerated by the ‘opening’ of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) and enabled in large measure by the coalescence of the ‘Latin American Church’ as evident in key meetings of the Latin American Episcopal Conference in the 1960s, ’70s, ’80s, and ’90s” (Orta 2002, 721). This second evangelization has generally been analyzed in conjunction with liberation theology in the postwar period, and acculturation from the 1980s onward (Orta 2004), but the original impetus behind the movement had been “politically and institutionally conservative” (Orta 2004, 80).

One manifestation of this has been that Vatican II’s call for priests and other such figures to “promote an explicit, discursive understanding of the doctrines underlying Catholic rituals and to re-center the laity’s attention on Jesus and the Bible in place of the saints and festivals ... gave a new impetus to pastoral agents’ rejection of much of the fiesta system” (Lyons 2006, 274). As a result, post-Vatican II priests in the Andes have sometimes been marked in the ethnographic literature by their disdain for Andean parishioners’ clinging to sacramentality above all else—the endless requests for Masses to be celebrated, for example, for every feast day. Orta (2004, 27) quotes a foreign priest working in the Bolivian altiplano field site, complaining about the “‘excessive’ value Aymara place on sacraments: fiestas, masses, etc.,” which the priest blamed on the incomplete/shallow evangelization carried out by colonial missionaries.

There is today a "new evangelization" happening in Talavera, as the priests and other lay members of the parish community try to reach lapsed Catholics, or evangelical converts, or simply attempt to develop a new and deeper faith in people—an effort inspired by Vatican II, with its emphasis on the laity reflecting on the Bible and understanding theology for themselves. New church movements and parish groups such as the Catholic Charismatic Renewal or John XXIII (named after the pope who opened Vatican II) are working hard to teach members how to read the Bible and to bring otherwise ambivalent Catholics into the church community. But the "condemnation of both 'traditional' Catholicism and of 'popular' or folk Catholicism, seen as an amalgamation of indigenous tradition and colonial Catholicism" (Orta 2004, 82), and the initiative to "minimize traditionally ritualistic styles of worship, promoting instead a rationalized, text-centered, discursive style of worship centered around small community-based worship groups (CEBs) and a transformative educational process (*concientización*)" (Orta 2004, 82), which have been recorded in other (more liberal) new-evangelization parishes, have not happened in Talavera in quite the same way.

Abancay is a socially and theologically conservative diocese, and one manifestation of this has been that the emphasis on sacramentality has remained a very important part of lived Catholicism, among both priests and laity. Talaveran priests did sometimes complain about the number of Masses they were called on to perform, but by and large they understood the local need for these sacraments and obliged—especially for rural requests—and would go to significant personal lengths to deliver the sacraments in the awareness of their importance. Fr. Basilio was known—and criticized—for only celebrating Mass when someone had paid him to do it; I once heard Fr. Simon criticize a priest in another parish for not celebrating Mass in one of the rural annexes on a particular feast day, as the day was locally significant and would have drawn people into the church. During the summer of 2017, there was a *paro* (strike) in Talavera and the surrounding area: roads in and out of Talavera were blocked, and it was not safe for anyone to drive anywhere. It was during this strike that a man from Lima came to ask Fr. Daniel (then the only available priest) to celebrate Mass for a *cargo* (ritual festival obligation) in his natal village of Poccontoy, perhaps half an hour's drive from Talavera. He had brought toys and hot chocolate for the villagers, he said, and new statues for the church, just as he did every year on this particular feast day. Fr. Daniel initially refused, but when the man, distraught at the prospect of not being able to have Mass, began to cry, Fr. Daniel relented and agreed to walk to Poccontoy on foot, as it was the only way to bypass the roadblocks. The journey took around five hours total, at night, along a rural road where armed drug-traffickers were known to pass.

This awareness and prioritization of sacramentality extended to the laity, too. Two of my friends, Malú and Silvio, once had a spirited discussion in the plaza over the correct way to frame their personal relationships to Fr. Simón. Both of them were close friends of his, and Silvio had been commenting laughingly to Malú and I that he only went to confession when he traveled, because he didn't want to confess his sins to someone who knew him, like Fr. Simón—at which Malú pulled up short and promptly scolded him, saying that there was no reason he shouldn't confess to Fr. Simón because they were friends; to the contrary, in fact! She argued that the gift of having a priest for a friend meant that you *should* confess to him—because no matter what, a priest is a priest first and a friend second, and the personal relationship you have with a priest would only improve the spiritual guidance you would receive when you confess.

This same issue—of the degree to which their sacramentality should trump or take priority over their humanity—was not dismissed by the clergy, but was instead a matter of active negotiation and management among them through their actions in the diocese. Because, as the catechism says, priests hold in common an indelible sacred nature and the sacraments are the same received from one priest as the next, they are to a degree meant to be interchangeable and somewhat impersonal. The bishop reassigned priests to different parishes in the diocese on a regular basis to prevent overattachment to specific people or specific parishes. Parish priests changed every four years or so, and when it came time for them to leave a parish for another, none of them carried out formal farewells. Instead, the priests customarily simply vanished overnight without telling anyone that they would be going, to the dismay of parishioners who had become attached to them—and a significant break with protocol in the Andes, where greeting and bidding farewell to people is fundamental to basic politeness (e.g., Lazar 2008). Fr. Simón warned repeatedly against the dangers of a priest becoming too personally invested in any given parish group, saying that he had repeatedly seen a priest become too invested in one particular group, which fell apart as soon as the priest in question was inevitably transferred to another parish. Thus, he sometimes deliberately did not show up to meetings he had been scheduled to attend, to foster independence and self-reliance in the groups. He enforced this policy with his curates as well, trying to ensure that they all took turns with the various groups, and that none of them had particular favorites among them.

This provides another view of the "new evangelization" of the Andes, in which conservative priests retain the emphasis on the sacraments and sacramentality but are also actively negotiating and managing the way in which their parishioners view them as human. Their humanity is a key part of their evangelization, and they do not expect or wish their parishioners to treat them purely in their sacramental capacity. But it is also expected that the tension between the two aspects be continually negotiated, either personally among the clergy or among the laity as well.

Conclusion

The tension between humanity and sacramentality, fundamental to Catholic theology and a deliberate mirror of the doctrine of Jesus's own simultaneous humanity and divinity, is why Fr. Simón made such an impact in Chicmo: not only because he was a priest, nor purely on the basis of his own personal investment, but because in him, the person who celebrated Mass on Sundays, who baptized their children and married them, who gave the last rites to the ailing elderly, was also someone who lived and ate with them and worked in their fields alongside them. Talaveran priests are simultaneously human *and* sacramental, with both aspects being crucial to their priesthood and ministry.

Theology is put into practice and action through priests. Catholic priests complete seminary with the equivalent of a master's degree in theology, and they continue to read and study theology after they complete their training. In Abancay, all the priests meet every month for a spiritual retreat. At least once a year, they have an extended spiritual retreat at which the diocese brings in speakers on various theological topics, as part of their continued training.

"In the spirit of Vatican II" is often used as a euphemism for left-wing sympathies in the Catholic Church, as seen in the CVR report, but the entire Church reformed in the wake of and in response to Vatican II, conservative factions included. Many of the efforts of Vatican II—such as the training of a generation of native clergy—are only coming to bear fruit now, fifty years later.³ What we see today in Talavera is directly related to the theological reforms of Vatican II, translated into Andean practice and experience of the Catholic priesthood. A careful consideration of greater theological and institutional shifts as seen through the personal and local allows us to synthesize the connections between the local, the translocal, and global nature of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as between other branches of Christianity (e.g., Larson-Miller 2016).

Vatican II shaped the diocese through an avowedly conservative bishop and his initiatives. It is as a result of Vatican II that the liturgy for Mass was translated into the local Quechua dialect, for instance, and that the complete Catholic Bible was translated into Quechua for the first time, a project which Msgr. Enrique spearheaded. It is because of Vatican II, as well, that the current generation of native Andean priests exists, trained by Msgr. Enrique and his fellow priests who had taken up the call of Vatican II to engage with rather than isolate themselves from the wider world. The priests in Talavera are the first generation to have been born after Vatican II. Although they are conservative priests in a conservative diocese, their ministry and their priesthood still must be understood within the context of the changes wrought by Vatican II, especially in Latin America. They may say themselves that they approach Vatican II with caution—deeming "too far," for instance, nuns who have given up the habit post-Vatican II and now only wear a crucifix as a sign of their status—but the legacy of Vatican II is far broader and more complicated than that. Fr. Simon, for instance, openly derides liberation theology but enthusiastically supports and seeks to advance the vernacular liturgy, one of the classic legacies of Vatican II.

In the very bodies of these native Andean priests is manifested the articulation between Catholicism as profoundly local and Catholicism as a global behemoth. Catholic priests in Talavera are inescapably human: their individual humanity, their Andean ethnic backgrounds, their attitudes toward their own ethnic backgrounds, are a fundamental part of how their priesthood is experienced and related to by their parishioners. Catholic laity in Talavera, as elsewhere, know their priests are human men and manage their interactions with the priesthood accordingly. Yet, at the same time, Catholic priests are men who have undergone an enduring and permanent ontological transformation through the sacrament of ordination, which made them into priests: "You are a priest forever" (Hebrews 7:17). The priesthood overshadows everything else; a priest's personal relationships are necessarily eclipsed by the sacraments, by the divine.

In looking to *nouvelle* theology as a guide for anthropological frameworks (after Robbins 2006), I am writing against models that would frame the tension between sacramentality and humanity as simply not meant to make sense, a demonstration of how the analysis of "daily practices" and the "discourses of

³ For comparison, see Bruneau (1973), writing less than a decade after Vatican II, who takes a rather muted view of how much change Vatican II had actually managed to effect.

theologians" (de Theije and Mariz 2008, 34) are separate endeavors. The incorporation of historically specific and regionally relevant theology offers anthropological studies of Catholicism a prime avenue by which to speak analytically to the interface of intensely local relations and dynamics, such as the intimate ways in which rural Andean Catholics relate to their priests, and hugely global institutions and movements, like the sea changes wrought by Vatican II in doctrine, practice, and theology. In turn, such an examination provides an ethnographic illustration of how Andean Catholicism is Catholicism in its own right—not simply syncretic, or a passive victim of Eurocentric religious doctrine. In this sense, I am following in the spirit of the arguments set out by Marisol De la Cadena (2010) and making a parallel argument to hers—that through taking seriously the ontological transformation of Andean men into Andean Catholic priests, it is perfectly possible to synthesize the seemingly contradictory ontological spheres of the Andean and the Catholic, the natural and the supernatural, the human and the divine.

In recent years, some efforts at what one might think of as a typical, liberal-leaning attempt to draw on a pan-Andean identity to promote Andean Catholicism have emerged in Talavera. For example, in 2017 the priests dressed Joseph and Mary in traditional Andean clothing—a poncho for Joseph, a traditional shawl and skirt for Mary—for the Nativity scene. At one religious retreat in a rural village, a small statue of Mary—dressed like a rural Andean woman in her hat, shawl, and skirt—was processed around the participants while they prayed the rosary. Although this latter effort met with some bewilderment—one of the nuns, who grew up in a rural community just outside Talavera, commented somewhat bemusedly that she had not recognized the statue as Mary when she was dressed like that—it is clear that Talaveran Catholicism, and the tactics of the priests, continue to develop. However, the priests by and large continue to be staunchly conservative in both their theology and their pastoral intentions. This means we must also understand the underlying theology and its intentions in order to understand its effects and how it is understood and conveyed locally.

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