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FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2005

Catholicism On The Decline in Latin America

by Michael in New York on [4/15/2005 12:12:00 PM](#)

How effective was the papacy of John Paul II? The LA Times has been running a series of articles on [the state of the Church](#). The latest looks at Latin America, where Catholicism was once so completely dominant it boggles the mind. Now evangelical Christians are growing by leaps and bounds. Per the LA Times:

In countries where Catholics once accounted for more than 90% of the population, evangelicals now constitute a significant religious minority, sometimes with social and political clout beyond their numbers.

In Chile, Honduras and Brazil, for example, about 15% of the population describes itself as evangelical Protestant. The figure rises to 22% in El Salvador; in Guatemala, it's 25%. In Mexico's southern Chiapas state, local press reports estimate the evangelical population to be 36% of adults.

Paraguay, albeit still overwhelmingly Catholic, now has its first evangelical president, Nicanor Duarte Frutos. President Alvaro Uribe of Colombia made news when he tried reaching out to evangelicals, who now make up about 10% of the country's population.

How'd they do it? Much like in the US -- the media. They've been buying up TV and radio stations, training ministers in months instead of years, capitalizing on the Catholic Church's entanglement in so many governments, and generally being smarter and more nimble.

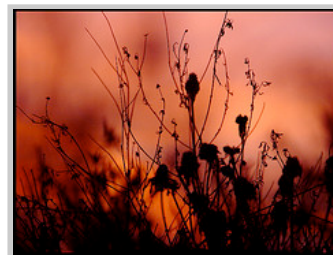
One simple fact remains: the Catholic Church grew from 750 million to 1 billion during JP II's reign. But without enough priests to minister to them (the shortage of priests in Latin America is so severe people can go six months to a year without seeing one), how will the flock be tended?




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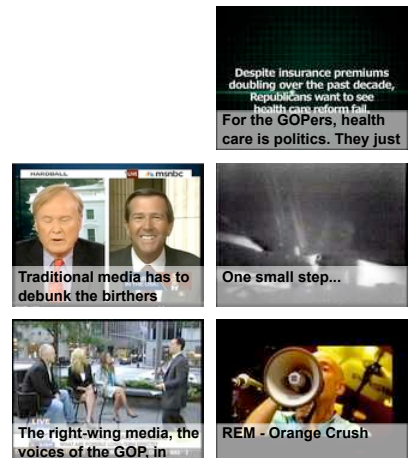
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