

## Catholicism plays large role in Cinco de Mayo

*Native influences make religion unique*

By SEAN FRERKING  
Of The Battalion Staff

Catholicism in Mexico is an integral part of the holiday of Cinco de Mayo, said Dr. Henry Schmidt, a professor of history and author of several books studying Mexican culture and history.

Mexican Catholicism differs from the religion in Rome and even in Spain, he said. After 450 years of practice in Mexico, Schmidt said native influences have changed Roman Catholicism into a uniquely Mexican religion.

Schmidt said what separates Mexican Catholicism from the Roman type is a certain *mexicanidad*, or mexicaness. He said Mexico's history is the reason for the change in the religion.

After the Spaniards conquered Mexico in 1521, Schmidt said missionaries found it difficult to force European Christianity on the Indians who had been made into slaves or indentured servants.

The Spanish soon discovered they had to adjust Roman Catholicism to fit the needs and beliefs of the Indians, Schmidt said.

"In part, the Spaniards did bring about change in the religion," Schmidt said. "But the Indians in effect demanded, and you might say, contributed to the change in Spanish Catholicism."

Within 50 to 100 years after the conquistadores arrived, Schmidt said, the practice of Catholicism took on a Mexican character. Many of the Indians' songs and dances had become a part of the religious celebration in the Catholic church, Schmidt said.

"Perhaps the most significant symbol of the Mexican religious identity," he said, "was the re-creation of the aztec goddess Tonatzin into the Virgin of Guadalupe."

Rev. Leon Strieder, a Catholic

priest at St. Mary's church, also said Our Lady of Guadalupe is a powerful symbol in the lives of most Mexicans. Strieder said the Virgin appeared in a vision as a *mestizo*, a mix between a European and Indian



"The (Virgin of Guadalupe) was the perfect image to symbolize the birth of Mexican Catholicism."

—Father Leon Strieder,  
St. Mary's Catholic Church

genes. The *mestizo* Virgin was a perfect image to symbolize the birth of Mexican Catholicism, he said.

"The Virgin is traditionally represented as standing on the moon with sunbursts on her shoulder,"

Strieder said. "This representation signifies the Virgin is greater than the Aztec goddess of the moon and the god of the sun."

"The virgin has taken the old Indian gods' place, but she has replaced the pagan deities with a stronger and deeper meaning. "She has given their old religions life."

Schmidt said the "dark" Virgin also is one of the central themes in *mexicanidad*. She is seen as a christian protectress, Schmidt said, and a very strong influence in Mexican nationalism.

"The virgin is the heart and the soul of the Mexican people," Schmidt said.

Strieder said, like Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexican Catholicism is a mix of Christianity and old Indian religions. Christianity plays the major part, he said, but the old Indian gods still influence the lives of many Mexicans.

The Catholic saints assumed the roles of the ancient Indian gods, Strieder said, and became idols. He said the saints christianized the old gods but retained many of the same pagan characteristics as the Indian deities.

Although many of Mexico's 80 million people do not support the church as strongly as they had in earlier times, Schmidt said, Mexican Catholicism remains a very positive moral force in Mexico and an essential part of Mexican culture.

Strieder said the native traditions of Mexico are the reasons Mexican Catholicism is still a strong part of the community.

"They have their *altracitas* (little alters) and their *santitas* (little saints) in their homes," Strieder said.

"They still believe in God and practice this Mexican Catholicism in their homes. It's tradition and as you know, tradition is very strong," Strieder said.



Tito and Irma Quinones baptize their daughter, Alejandra, while god parent Carolina Quinones looks on. The baptism took place at St. Mary's Catholic Church.

Photo by Penny DeLosSantos

## Time almost up for amnesty applicants

Temporary residents should apply now at INS office in Austin

By VIVIAN ROJAS  
Special to the Battalion

Time is running out for those who want to apply for permanent residency under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

Amnesty applicants who obtained their temporary resident status between December 1987 and May 1988 can still apply for permanent resident status if they act now.

The Rev. Moses Herrera, a founder of Julia Grimaldo Herrera Amnesty Services, said temporary residents must take the next step in the amnesty process.

If temporary residents fail to apply for permanent residence within a year following their 18-

month temporary status, the residents will lose their status, Herrera said. This will make them ineligible for permanent residency.

In the first phase of the amnesty program, many services offered assistance to aliens who wanted to apply for temporary residency, Herrera said. Many of these services were not certified by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), he said.

As a result, after receiving payment for assisting the alien with the temporary residency paperwork, these services closed their doors and the alien was left unaware of the next steps in the legalization process, Herrera said.

Due to these fraudulent immigration agencies, INS designated two groups that could offer these services: lawyers and "Qualified Designated Enti-

ties" (QDEs), he said.

Julia Grimaldo Herrera Amnesty Services obtained QDE status in June of 1987.

"This means we have a contract with the INS to do this type of work," Herrera said.

Herrera said those who want to apply for permanent residency under the amnesty program must submit an application, three photographs and an \$80 money order to the district INS office. In this area that would be the Austin office, Herrera said.

The applicant must also fulfill an educational requirement, he said.

To assist the temporary resident, Herrera Amnesty Services offers legal and translation services. A ride service to the INS office and other services are offered as well, Herrera said. For more information call 775-8980.

## Publisher shares experiences

### Former student gives helpful hints

By FRANCES ALONZO  
Special to the Battalion

Move over Henry Cisneros. You aren't the only Hispanic Aggie to make it big.

Geraldo Garcia, Class of '66, has opened doors and kicked down barriers for future Hispanic journalists to build on the foundation he has created.

Garcia is the first Hispanic newspaper publisher in the country and is the chair of the Task Force on Minorities in the Newspaper Business. Currently Garcia

cia said that his first major at Texas A&M was petroleum engineering, not journalism.

Because many oil fields were near his hometown, Garcia planned to work the fields, be a supervisor and make good money. Yet like other students, his perspective changed in college.

"With the expansion of his future came the unspoken expectation that many Hispanics share, to ultimately take care of their parents in their retirement years."

"The only cause and motivation of Spanish-speaking persons of my generation was to get a good education, go back home, live in the same neighborhood with a better lifestyle and ultimately to take care of (their) parents in their retirement years," Garcia said.

He said he uses his education, motivation and experience to inform minority youth about the opportunities in the newspaper industry.

When visiting with students, Garcia said he offers advice to help students achieve their own success.

Garcia advises students to be patient and study. He said students should grow up at a slow pace and should enjoy themselves in their college years.

In order to move up the ladder, it's necessary to meet what's expected of you and to do your work correctly the first time, Garcia said.

"You are not going to be the editor of the first newspaper you go work for," he said. "You have to pay your dues and start at the bottom. All of this requires patience. You can't reach your ultimate goal in a short period of time."

Garcia said it is important to be an activist in your work, your social life and to get involved with your family. He said that it is necessary to improve yourself through taking on new assignments.

"I his doesn't mean you have to be the first one to do it, just to be better," he said. "Not in the phony competitive sense, but in improving yourself to be better



Geraldo Garcia, class of '66, is the founder and president of the NAHJ.

is the editor and publisher of the Knoxville, Tenn. Journal.

Garcia is the first minority newspaper publisher to head the Task Force. He also served as founding president of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists in 1984.

Formerly a vice president of the Gannett West Newspaper Group, Garcia began his career in 1965 as a reporter and sports editor for the Brenham Banner Press.

Garcia worked as a reporter for the Bryan/College Station Eagle and returned 20 years later to become the president and publisher in 1985.

Born in Beeville in 1943, Gar-

See Garcia/Page 4B

## A&M participates in project, recruits minority students to graduate school

By YVONNE SALCE  
Special to the Battalion

Recruitment of minority students to graduate school has become a nationwide project, and Texas A&M University is striving to do its part.

Despite the all around low number of Hispanics in graduate school, Texas A&M is doing much better than other universities, said Dr. Lawrence F. Guseman, Jr., Director of Graduate Studies.

Last fall, figures showed that of the 6,872 students attending Texas A&M graduate program, 291 were Hispanic, 143 African-American and 4,587 were Anglo.

"People just aren't going to graduate school," Guseman said. "They would much rather work."

Guseman said part of the reason for the low numbers of Hispanics is that emphasis on graduate school is low.

"We are trying to get more students, particularly minorities, interested in graduate school," he said.

In order to accomplish this task, the Office of Graduate Studies participate in two nationwide recruitment projects.

The first, "Project 1000" began about three years ago, Guseman said.

"It's goal is to get 1000 Hispanics in graduate school each year," he said.

Questionnaires are sent out to Hispanic students with exceptional grade point ratios and who may be

prime candidates for graduate school, Guseman said. A list of names is compiled and distributed to other universities involved with "Project 1000," he added.

A second program, The Western Name Exchange, is comprised of 49 universities predominately along the West Coast.

University of Houston, University of Texas and Baylor University all

participate in the name exchange.

"We use The Western Name Exchange as a recruiting device," Guseman said. Texas A&M began the Western Name Exchange last spring.

On the state level, Texas A&M and other universities throughout Texas participate in Graduate Professor School Days.

"Here is where the initial contact is made," Guseman said. General information and brochures about graduate programs at Texas A&M are distributed, he said.

"More than half the trips of this nature are predominately aimed at African-American and Hispanic stu-

dents," Guseman said.

Guseman, who completed his undergraduate and Masters degree at Texas A&M, said money should not be a problem for minorities considering graduate school.

"Money is not the reason," Guseman said. "There are fellowships and assistantships available." Texas A&M offers a Minority Merit Scholarship for up to \$10,200 a year.

courses, like math and science, at the high school level, it will be harder to fill in the gaps," Guseman said.

Guseman said to wait six or seven years before considering graduate school.

"We're seeing a lot of older people coming back to get advanced degrees," he said.

Guseman advises undergraduate students to start thinking about graduate school in their junior year. He said students should think strongly about taking the GRE in the fall of their senior year.

Most universities will look at a student's last 60 hours for determining their GPA, Guseman said.

The Texas A&M University graduate program requests the applicant's GPR over the last two years, GRE scores and three letters of recommendation.

Finally, when choosing a graduate school, Guseman said students should talk to people in their department.

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—Lawrence F. Guseman,  
Director of Graduate Studies

Yet, there are other reasons why minorities are not considering further education.

"Primarily the interest is not there," Guseman said. "Students usually go into their primary job. This is true for minorities and non-minorities."

Guseman said students often find themselves academically unprepared when they begin their undergraduate career.

"They haven't kept their options open," Guseman said. Sometimes students prefer to take the easy courses in high school instead of preparing themselves for the future.

"If you don't take those difficult