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**Vatos Sagrados: Cursillo and a Midwestern Catholic Borderlands**

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**Abstract:** This article uses a gendered religious borderlands perspective to analyze the Cursillo experiences of Latino Catholic deacons in the Diocese of Cleveland (OH) and the Diocese of Toledo (OH), who trace their family histories to Texas, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. By considering experiences of religious ecstasy, male social bonding, and spiritual activism as a result of Cursillo participation, this article attempts to provide insights into the complex relationships among gender, race, and religion. Joining other recent scholars who have conducted intellectual inquiries toward gendered borderlands literature, my drawing, based on semi-structured interviews and archival research, attempts to demonstrate the significance of the Cursillo experience in the changing narrative of Latino men as borderland gendered subjectivities, and specific to a Midwest experience.

**Keywords:** Cursillo, Permanent Diaconate, Masculinity, Religious Borderlands

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The premier apostolic movement among Hispanics is the *Cursillo de Cristiandad* (Matovina, 109), "short courses in Christianity," referenced more frequently in the shorter "Cursillo." A movement founded in Spain in the mid-1940s, for purposes of developing and training Catholic lay leaders, it took on impetus in this hemisphere with the spiritual and structural Church renewal of Vatican II. An intense weekend program of training that emphasizes personal spiritual development, Cursillo retreats are followed by structured group reunions called *ultreyas* (Spanish for “onward”) to extend the sharing of spiritual insights and experiences.

Since the post-Vatican II period of Catholic Church renewal, a number of scholars have noted the influential role of Cursillo in the development of a Latina/o Catholic laity (Marcoux, 1982; Hinojosa, 1994; Nabhan-Warren, 2010; Matovina, 2012). However, far less has been written about the role of Cursillo in the historical development of a Latino permanent diaconate. One of the legacies of Vatican II was its restoration and encouragement of the permanent diaconate following a near four-hundred year absence. A Catholic permanent deacon is a man at least 35 years of age or older who is ordained into the holy orders, and therefore a cleric by Canon Law, but who can also marry. Deacons perform a broad range of sacramental ministry including, non-exhaustively, reading the Gospel and delivering homilies, celebrating baptisms, witnessing marriages, and presiding over funerals and burials. The first permanent deacon in the Cleveland Diocese was ordained in 1971, and in the Toledo Diocese in 1973.

According to Jaime R. Vidal, “The emergence of the permanent diaconate, which has no celibacy rule and whose training is within the reach of persons with only a high school education, allowed many of the leaders who had emerged from the Cursillo and Charismatic movements to seek ordination” (141). That Cursillo played a significant role in the journey to ordination for Latino deacons in Cleveland and Toledo is unquestionable. A review of diocesan personnel files and obituaries reveals noteworthy, pre-ordination involvement in Cursillo. In his handwritten letter of application, Deacon Macedonio SanMiguel, born in 1926 in Agua Dulce, Texas, stated, “In my religion I was never very active. I used to go to Mass just a few times a year.” SanMiguel, who was ordained in the Toledo Diocese in 1976 and passed away in 1994, added, “I went and have my crusillio [sic] 1969 [and] from then on I have try [sic] to live in the grace of God.” A particularly powerful account is in Deacon Tito Ollervides’ handwritten letter of intent for deacon candidacy. Ollervides, born in 1928 in San Benito, Texas, and ordained in Toledo in 1980, described the influence of another now-deceased deacon, Cándido Deanda (born in 1925 in Alice, Texas):

Then in 1974, he invited me to live my Cursillo weekend. It was there that something happen[ed] to me. My eyes were open and all at once I found out that the Lord I had been searching for was right there in front of me all the
time and I didn’t know it. How blind I had been … When I realized the importance of this, that I had found out that Jesus was there among us in spirit in each and every one of us, I jumped with joy and happiness and I cried all day.6

In the Cleveland Diocese, the obituary for Deacon Prudo Vicens specifically cited his involvement in Cursillo. Vicens was born in 1920 in San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico, migrated to Ohio in 1952, and was ordained in the Cleveland Diocese in 1986. Similarly, the obituary for Deacon Alfonso Rodriguez references his participation in Cursillo. Rodriguez was born in 1928 in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, migrated to Lorain, Ohio in 1951, and was ordained in Cleveland in 1986. The background and testimonials of these men point to the significant role of Cursillo in the spiritual lives of Latino men who settled in the Midwest, and further, their role as deacons, rooted in a borderlands’ migrant experience.

The first Cursillo weekend in the United States took place in Waco, Texas in 1957, even earlier than Vatican II, in evidence of movements of renewal that preceded the Council (1962-1965), and spread rapidly during the 1960s to dioceses across the country, including Cleveland and Toledo. Writing in 1969 to Reverend Juan Hervas, Bishop of the Diocese of Ciudad Real, Spain (who is often credited as founder of the Cursillo Movement), Father David D. Liberatore of the Cleveland Diocese writes, “The movement is in its seventh year of development. Having come into the diocese in 1962, through the migrations of Spanish-speaking peoples, it spread very effectively through English-speaking communities.”8 In the Toledo Diocese, as the vignettes of the deceased deacons highlights, involvement among Latino men is evident as early as 1962.

Building upon these archived accounts, which point to a strong historical relationship between Cursillo and Latino permanent deacons, I will examine and develop the border-crossing narratives of a group of Latino permanent deacons in northern Ohio whom I interviewed between April and December of 2010 as part of my dissertation research. My emphasis will be on the gendered aspects of their participation in the ethno-religious space of Cursillo, and the ways in which said experience helps expand the working definition of what it means to be a man. As Table 1 indicates, sixteen of the eighteen deacons interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Year Ordained &amp; Diocese</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Birth Year</th>
<th>Settled in Ohio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>1973/Toledo</td>
<td>Taylor, Texas</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1949</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pablo</td>
<td>1976/Toledo</td>
<td>Brownsville, Texas</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1955</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anastacio</td>
<td>1979/Toledo</td>
<td>Carrizo Springs, Texas</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>1952</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vicente</td>
<td>1979/Toledo</td>
<td>Havana, Cuba*</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro</td>
<td>1980/Toledo</td>
<td>Mexico City, Mexico</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1980</td>
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<tr>
<td>Felipe</td>
<td>1981/Cleveland</td>
<td>Manhattan, New York**</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>1962</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isidro</td>
<td>1982/Toledo</td>
<td>Mexico City, Mexico</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1969</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juan</td>
<td>1982/Toledo</td>
<td>Weslaco, Texas</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>1965</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gonzalo</td>
<td>1983/Toledo</td>
<td>Van Wert, Ohio***</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domingo</td>
<td>1986/Cleveland</td>
<td>San Turce, Puerto Rico</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco</td>
<td>1986/Cleveland</td>
<td>Yabucoa, Puerto Rico</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernando</td>
<td>1987/Cleveland</td>
<td>Guanajuato, Mexico</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>1991/Toledo</td>
<td>Laredo, Texas</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tomas</td>
<td>1992/Cleveland</td>
<td>Cuamo, Puerto Rico</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pascual</td>
<td>1995/Cleveland</td>
<td>Hatillo, Puerto Rico</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>1972</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guillermo</td>
<td>2002/Cleveland</td>
<td>Barranquitas, Puerto Rico</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1956</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jose</td>
<td>2006/Cleveland</td>
<td>Lorain, Ohio **</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis</td>
<td>2007/Toledo</td>
<td>Mercedes, Texas</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Did not complete a Cursillo  
** Parents migrated from Puerto Rico  
*** Parents migrated from Texas
migrated to Ohio, and seventeen of eighteen completed at least one Cursillo weekend (it is important to note that Cursillo is not a requirement for ordination into the permanent diaconate). This complex interweaving of ethnicity, gender, migration, and religion reveals a paradoxical life across and between structural (socio-economic/political), discursive (racial, gender/sexual, and religious), and geopolitical boundaries. I argue that these Latino deacons with family histories of migrating to this Midwestern setting have functioned in spatial, gendered, and spiritual borderlands that structure their lives and identity.

A BORDERLANDS CATHOLICISM

To pursue analysis of the creation of a gendered, ethno-religious experience, I apply the religious perspective of Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). Anzaldúa’s text ushered in a new feminist theoretical framework that transcended the boundaries of the U.S.-Mexico geopolitical border, expanding the term “border” to signify a range of boundaries including the political, psychological, sexual, religious, racial, cultural, linguistic, and ideological. According to David Carrasco and Roberto Lint Sagarena, “many scholars and writers have focused on ethnic, gendered, and political elements of the space she describes. But we believe that the heart of her portrayal of the borderlands is articulated, and must be understood, as a religious vision” (224). For Anzaldúa, a “borderland” is an ambiguous, in-between, emotional space created by the existence of such boundaries. Similarly, the ethno-religious and gendered spaces of Cursillo and the Latino diaconate are marked with ambiguity and contradiction.

The title phrase “Vatos Sagrados” (translated from Spanish as “Holy Guys/Dudes”) reflects the gendered, ethno-religious contradictions of the Latino deacon and summons the border narratives of José Limón (*Dancing with the Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican-American South Texas*, 1994). Meditating on the gendered, folkloric discourse of South Texas, Limón considers the Catholic Church’s role in the emergent postmodern culture of South Texas as one providing instruction on the “devil” and accompanying evils with a “singular focus on personal conduct” while ignoring “the evident evil expressed in the social treatment of the barrios it ostensibly served” (ix).

Additionally, the devil’s appearance in narratives of class and race resistance was predicated on gender domination as the U.S.-Mexico border served as a site of ritualizing a form of masculine honor among Anglos and men of Mexican descent alike. In addressing the latter, Limón provides two examples in South Texas—the sexualized male humor amongst a group of *batos*, or *vatos* (“guys, dudes”) as evidenced in the ritual of the male barbecue; and secondly, the lower class Mexican male discourse tradition or cult of machismo. Limón critiques the intellectual construct of Samuel Ramos’ prototypical *pelado* and Octavio Paz’s *pachuco*, which “perhaps unintentionally, help[s] to ratify dominance through [their] negative psychologistic interpretation of the Mexican male lower class and their language” (*Dancing with the Devil*, 124).

For numerous deacons in my study, Cursillo functioned as an ethno-religious site at which many grappled with *machista* narratives encompassing gendered humor, marital difficulties, fear of emotional vulnerability, and alcohol abuse in a spiritual and religious setting. In the context of today’s Church, it is useful to consider the deacon’s “devil dance” not only as one traversing Latino masculinity, but, following ordination, as a cleric positioned to speak for and act on behalf of the Church on such gendered issues as marriage, abortion, abstinence, and appropriate gender roles.

That only men can become permanent deacons reminds us that ordination provides access to patriarchal holy orders and civic standing as formally recognized religious leaders, while denying the same to women. Similarly, for Cursillo, one of the rules of initiation is the separation of the sexes (Marcoux, 49), and the movement has been criticized for presenting religion as a manly activity. Yet Cursillo and the Latino diaconate are often as near to the dynamics of the peace and civil rights movement than traditional Catholic orthodoxy. The Latino diaconate has been rooted in a border consciousness sensitive to the deep realities of a Latino subaltern, and the diaconal ministry was meant to address two specific areas:

The first is the ministry to migrants, the “forgotten Americans” … The second peculiar area of ministry will tax the openness of bishops still more. This is in the area of “La Causa.” Because of the position of the Spanish-speaking as subjects of
discrimination, second-class citizens, as persons lacking in human dignity and representation, a primary scene for diaconal activity should be in this area, where struggle is bitter (U.S. Bishops’ Committee on The Permanent Diaconate, 17).

This call to respond to local needs and to change conditions that breed racism reflected the significant Church renewal of the post-Vatican II period. Cursillo also declared that Catholics “cannot disregard the fact that changes in Catholicism have left many individuals caught in post-Vatican II practices with a pre-Vatican II mentality,” and “Many … are straddling both worlds; some are tottering at best” (Marcoux, 112-113).

That Latino deacons have been required to straddle these worlds reflects the tolerance for ambiguity characterized in Anzaldúa’s border consciousness. In this way, we can begin to better appreciate the in-between nature of the Latino deacon and cursillista (participant in Cursillo). Additionally, as clerics positioned to incorporate a Latina/o popular religiosity into Catholic orthodoxy, through such ethno-religious practices as the quinceañera, posadas, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Cursillo, Latino deacons were positioned to challenge and reinforce a rigid Catholicism. For Anzaldúa, challenge and transformation entails movement from a static, rigid Catholicism (Alvarez, 63). For the Latino deacon, resistance and reform might be exercised while functioning within the Church institution. Cursillo is a method that differs from the traditional Catholic approach and “involves an attack on the very language and programs assessed as unsuccessful in Catholicism” (Marcoux, 42).

MACHISMO & SPIRITUAL BORDERLANDS

Anzaldúa’s concept of a spiritual borderlands speaks to the existence of machismo in a religious context. In highlighting the three directions to which a woman of her culture could turn—the Church as a nun, the streets as a prostitute, or the home as a mother—Anzaldúa positions religious life within a patriarchal system, one that enforces machismo. The Latino deacon is a cleric positioned to speak for and act on behalf of the Church on a range of gendered issues—marriage/divorce, abortion, abstinence, appropriate gender roles (particularly while officiating the quinceañera)—that highlight the importance of scripts of what it means to be a Latino man. For numerous deacons in my study, Cursillo functioned as an ethno-religious site and/or experience where many grappled with machista narratives encompassing gendered humor, marital difficulties, fear of emotional vulnerability, and often, alcohol abuse.

In this section, I account for and examine responses in my interview data that link notions of machismo with the Cursillo experience. Machismo is the conventional term for the codes, ideals, behaviors, and appearances by which masculinity is structured and assumes meaning in Latin American and Latina/o societies (Allatson, 2007). All deacons in this study were married at the time of their ordination. Of those interviewed for this study, fifteen deacons remained married, two deacons identified as widowers, and one deacon indicated that his marriage had been annulled. Overall, the majority of deacons revealed feelings on the difficulty in balancing the responsibilities of two vocational sacraments—Matrimony and Holy Orders—and the demands of church work and subsequent time away from family and home often served to reinforce the wife’s domestic role with regard to household duties and child rearing.

A number of the deacons told me that they were quite hesitant to participate in Cursillo, having heard about its emotional/ecstatic character from male friends. Such was the case for Deacon José, who was born in Lorain, Ohio in 1955, and ordained in the Cleveland Diocese in 2006. José told me that he was so hesitant to attend Cursillo that his wife had to stop him from sneaking out of their home just a few minutes before he was picked up by his Cursillo sponsor. José’s fear was that the experience would “turn me into some kind of Jesus freak or something.”

He also described a spiritually deficient pre-Cursillo life when I asked him when he first thought about becoming a deacon:

Well, the whole conversion process started right after Cursillo. When I went to Cursillo, I was not a practicing Catholic. I was actually not going to any church. I was married. I had three children. My life consisted of me going to work, coming home and doing what I wanted to in the garage. I didn’t care about anybody or anything else. I would play with my kids and
José describes feelings of discontent in his pre-Cursillo life, perhaps deriving from a perceived lack of power in controlling and/or obtaining the material resources that a hegemonic masculinity might symbolize.

In discussing power and masculinity, Michael Kaufman (1994) stated, "Men have come to see power as a capacity to impose control on others and on our own unruly emotions. It means controlling material resources around us" (145). However, as Kaufman further comments, "in societies based on hierarchy and inequality, it appears that all people cannot use and develop their capacities to an equal extent" (145). José seems to have come to the realization that, despite the exercise of masculine roles—father, husband, worker—he has limited control or power.

Interestingly, José's garage, which for so long was a place of retreat and isolation, served as the location where he was approached about Cursillo by a neighbor who participated in his wife's prayer group:

And right across the street from me was one of the guys that was part of that group. Well, he took it upon himself to, like, become good friends with me and get me to do jobs for him because I did bodywork and painting on the side. So I was doing work for him and stuff like that. It wasn't until later that I figured it out, that the only reason he was doing that was that it gave him reason to come in the garage and talk to me about stuff. Him and another gentleman down the street are the ones that got me to do Cursillo.13

José's garage, as a site of male bonding, also brought access to the spiritual, facilitating discussions with male friends that led to his participation in Cursillo.

Deacon Luis was born in Mercedes, Texas in 1948, and ordained in the Toledo Diocese in 2007. As we began the interview, I reminded Luis that in advance of my visit I had invited him to share a personal item. Luis asked me to follow him upstairs to a study that was once his sons' bedroom. Luis directed my attention to a wall that held several group pictures from Spanish-language Cursillos. Luis pointed to one of the participants and told me that he had delivered a rollo (structured talk) about his mother that made all of the men emotional. "Man, he got to them every time," Luis stated. In another picture, Luis was wearing an apron and he told me that the men in aprons did the cooking over the retreat weekend and were referred to as "cha-chas" (abbreviated from "mucha-chas") in joking fashion by the other men. This mutual mocking experience harkened Limón's discussion of male self-deprecating humor in terms of gender, indicating that normative notions of masculinity were transgressed as well as replicated and maintained.

Deacon Pablo was born in Brownsville, Texas in 1931 and ordained in the Toledo Diocese in 1976. In response to my pre-interview request to bring a personal article of significance, Pablo presented two items: an album holding pictures from the many Cursillo weekends he had attended, and a scrapbook that contained hundreds of Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) newspaper clippings, flyers for union activities, resolutions, and marketing materials. Grasping the Cursillo photo album, Pablo directly attributed his status as a deacon to his participation in Cursillo: "I worked in 39 Cursilos. I made mine in '69
and seven years later I was a deacon … If I hadn't made a Cursillo, I don't think I would’ve been a deacon.” I asked Pablo why he felt this way and he added,

When I was younger, I didn’t care about going to church that much. Maybe once in a while my mom would make me. But I was always Catholic. Finally, one of my friends invited me to go [to Cursillo]. I made my plans to go and I got sick. But I wasn't really sick, I didn't wanna go. So I kinda lied. Second time, the same thing. The third time I got sick again and there were no more Spanish Cursillos so I had to go in English. I was the only Hispanic who made a Cursillo in English at that time.

As was the case with Deacon José, Pablo’s church participation was infrequent, and he was also hesitant to attend Cursillo. Pablo went on to discuss an evolving fraternity of Latino deacons, formed largely through participation in Cursillo: “We had twenty-nine Hispanic deacons at that time … When you see one of your buddies, ‘De Colores hermano,’ he’s your brother in Christ. It helps remind you, even if they’re not Cursillistas, they’re still your brothers. It makes a strong community.” Pablo and a number of other deacons I spoke with cited Cursillo as one of male bonding, with subsequent and ongoing characteristics of loyalty and fellow feeling that transcended a paradigm of brotherhood or comradeship, in which participants described significant, first-time moments of male intimacy at the Cursillo ethno-religious site.

Pablo shared that he had actively engaged with machista tropes related to alcohol consumption, parental detachment, and religious disengagement:

I never really got active in the Church until I made my Cursillo. I come to a point and my wife says you know what, you stop your drinking and take care of your family or I’m gonna leave you. So then I said well, I gotta make an adjustment. Go straight from now on and do my best. And I’ve been doing my best for the last thirty-some years. I’m still a sinner, you know, I’m not perfect. But I do my best.

Many of the deacons interviewed revealed revealed attitudes and behaviors around alcohol consumption that speak to the negotiation of gender and power dynamics within such contexts as marriage, close male friendships, and public perception. Yet it was clear that Cursillo became a key moment from which a good number of Latino deacons emerged less constrained by previous gendered behaviors.

**CURSILLO AS SHAMANIC SPACE**

According to Marcoux, Cursillo remains aligned with traditional Catholicism by being couched “in the shadow of an authorized Catholic experience” (72). Marcoux intimates that Cursillo is on the fringes of Catholicism, criticized as merely “inciting an emotional conversion, not a deeper and more lasting conversion that encompasses the intellectual, moral, faith, and affective dimensions of the person” (Matovina, 112). Anzaldúa describes life on the borders as “life in the shadows,” and Carrasco and Sagarena (2008) argue that these “shadowy places in Anzaldúa’s thought deserve critical exploration” (224). These scholars build upon the shadowy qualities of Anzaldúa’s borderlands to frame shamanic experience that contains tremendous personal suffering, sustained ecstasies, and moments of “illumination and healing” (225).

In this section, I argue for the Latino deacon Cursillo experience as a shamanic one, where a different quality of knowledge is achieved through ecstatic trance states. These ecstatic states have been largely ignored by scholars of Anzaldúa’s work (Carrasco and Sagarena, 224). This Latino shamanic religiosity has ample manifestations and can include encounters with sacrality based on mutuality, deep friendship, and love—all often experienced in Cursillo, attaining new levels of intimacy with or between men. Deacon Domingo shared highlights of his first Cursillo experience with me:

The greatest experience for me in Cursillo was the table, the table I belonged to. As I have said before when I’ve given talks at Cursillo, everything that happens, happens at that table … the intimacy is at that table. That’s the group of guys that you share the most
with. Our group went into the chapel … We got on our knees, five or six of us. We were on our knees and holding hands before [Domingo pauses and begins to cry] … before Jesus.²⁰

What followed was one of the longest pauses in any of the interviews I conducted. Domingo’s soft crying turned into heavier sobbing. I reached across the table and placed my hand on his shoulder. After a few moments, Domingo continued:

It was a great experience, I’m telling you. Having the strength to reach out. Having the freedom to pray what you needed and to talk to God and to open your heart and your mind. And to have those guys there support[ing] you and hugging you. And for me to be able to do the same thing for them.²¹

For Domingo, Cursillo was a profound experience in the way he encountered God with a group of men. It was an experience of male bonding not previously experienced, particularly in a religious context. Domingo’s experience reveals Cursillo as an intimate ethno-religious site where machismo, masculinity, and Latina/o spiritual and religious values are questioned and re-worked (León, 2006).

In responding to my question about his Cursillo experience, Deacon Anastacio’s reply effectively reveals a shamanic quality in his observations of another deacon who happened to be his interviewer’s father:

And then your dad did it to me. He did it to me big time. He didn’t say anything, all he did was look at that crucifix. He held that prayer book in his hands.” And I said “what the hell is he looking at? What does he see that I can’t see? And that taught me that Jesus loves me, that God loves me. Your dad was a pachuco [Anastacio laughs]. He had the long sideburns and the mustache … I knew he drank, well I drank too. I was a bad dude at one time, too. But what was he seeing that I can’t see? And I asked God in prayer those days, those evenings, as I looked at him sitting in that cot. And he was looking at that crucifix and looking at that pilgrim’s guide, smelling it and touching it, like it was something he had never known in his life. And the way I describe it, God touched him. And it wasn’t the stuff I was studying. It was God touching him because God touches every one of us.²²

Anastacio (born in 1946 in Carrizo Springs, Texas) observed in Deacon Bautista²³ (born in 1939 in Sandia, Texas) a shattering of the macho/Marian binary he knew, his witness of the transformation of a vato, in fact, a former “pachuco,” in a moment of religious ecstasy, caressing a crucifix while being “touched” by God. The pachuco, a political cultural icon, and symbol of Latino masculinity and deviancy, is converted to a religious-political figure who now exists in blissful union with God, knowing and loving God and his Cursillo brothers.

Here we reconnect with the deacon as border-crosser through the pachuco figure, whose style originates in being neither, but representing both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, and who has migrated north to the Midwestern United States. The persona of the pachuco (and perhaps the vato as well), his fetishistic attitude toward clothing, drinking or other deviant habits, and border language, shifts in a hybrid fashion: an identification of virile Latino persona now fetishizes the religious, as the sacred joins the profane: “Border crossing becomes a religious ritual, patterned by Christ himself” (León, 160).

CONCLUSION

The goal of this article has been to develop the border-crossing narratives of Latino deacons in the in-between space of the permanent diaconate, the migration experiences of the deacons interviewed, and the shadowy Cursillo experience, to help advance a Midwestern borderlands framework. For the Latino deacon in this study, Cursillo is a gendered ethno-religious experience where machista narratives are confronted and/or reinforced. The shamanic Cursillo experience is often one where, for the first time, he is able to express emotions without restraint, to escape gendered expectations and
"experience an emotional borderland where there is room for experimentation" (Nabhan-Warren, 114). In Cursillo, the hegemonic masculine discourse that rigidly defines relationships between men is less policed, and gender roles less sharply polarized. The intimate male experience shapes social and spiritual consciousness.

Cursillo has certainly served as a springboard for church involvement and advancement into the permanent diaconate for the majority of the deacons considered in this study. And further, in the process of Cursillo, the vato sagrado experiences of spiritual ecstasy and personal transformation have led to affirmation as a male religious leader. And while it is difficult to overestimate the significance of Cursillo, which revitalized the faith of numerous grassroots Catholics and their parish communities (Matovina, 112), when pursuing the study of transformational qualities in the Latino deacon experience, the gendered and patriarchal aspects of each—Cursillo and permanent diaconate—must be considered.

ENDNOTES
1 “Hispanic” is the term of usage by Matovina in his text in which he examines the significance of the Latina/o presence in the U.S. Catholic Church. I will more frequently use the term “Latina/o” as a broad pan-ethnic identity term as this study utilizes data from interviews with proportionate numbers of deacons of Puerto Rican and Mexican descent. Latina/o is also generally considered the preferred term of many Latina/os when adopting a pan-ethnic identification of speaking of self and community (Allatson, 2007).
3 Full names are provided for deacons who are deceased. Pseudonym-first names only are used for deacons I interviewed, in order to protect identities.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 I find it important to apply a borderlands perspective as there are few in-depth studies that do so. The lack of a border narrative in the heartland is consistent with a lack of insufficient research on Midwestern Latino experience.
8 Father David D. Liberatore, Letter to Most Reverend Juan Hervas, April 24, 1969.
9 In my larger dissertation study, I make the case for an evolving Midwestern borderlands Catholicism due to significant Latina/o migratory patterns; insufficient Catholic Church resources with accompanying concerns over Protestant outreach to migrants; tensions between a preexisting Anglo-Catholic orthodoxy and a new Latina/o popular religiosity; discriminatory practices and poverty; and a growing Latina/o lay activism made possible through new apostolic movements that helped ensure that the spiritual needs of Midwestern Latino Catholics were addressed. This article will focus on Cursillo as one such movement that nurtured a grassroots Latina/o leadership from which a number of Latino deacons progressed.
10 Deacon José, Personal Interview, 26 Jan. 2011.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Deacon Pablo, Personal Interview, 22 Apr. 2010.
15 Ibid. Cursillo weekends occur in English- and Spanish-language versions.
16 “De Colores,” Spanish for “in or of colors,” is a song widely used in Cursillo. Though conveying a sense of sadness by melody, the lyrics express joy through the notion of colors in the vibrancy of God’s creation. This song was also associated with the United Farm Workers Movement.
17 Deacon Pablo, Personal Interview, 22 Apr. 2010.
18 Ibid.
19 This quote is located on the first, unpaginated page of the “Preface” of Gloria Anzaldúa’s Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza (1987).
20 Deacon Domingo, Personal Interview, 10 Jul. 2010.
21 Ibid.
22 Deacon Anastacio, Personal Interview, 27 Apr. 2010.
23 It is important for me to recognize my relationship particularly with the Diocese of Toledo. My father, José Bautista, was a permanent deacon in the Toledo Diocese from 1982 until his death in 2001. I was also a seminarian for the Toledo Diocese for a period of my undergraduate years.
WORKS CITED


Liberatore, David D. April 24, 1969. Letter to Bishop Juan Hervas, Cleveland Diocese Archives Office.


Father Arthur Poulin, *Twilight*, acrylic on canvas, 72” x 36”, 2008