

Pope Going to Roots of Lib Theology

By Agostino Bono
NC News Service Analysis

Vatican City — When Pope John Paul II visits Peru Feb. 1-5, he is scheduled to glimpse the social realities which spawned the controversial liberation theology of Father Gustavo Gutierrez.

Father Gutierrez, born in the Peruvian capital of Lima in 1928, has said his attempt to form a theological response to the radical socio-economic and political imbalances in Latin America springs from working and living with the poor of Peru.

His theology is controversial not so much because of its call for drastic social reforms, but because he leans heavily on sociology and Marxist concepts to describe the root causes of injustice.

His critics include Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, who says Father Gutierrez turns social theories into theology and this constitutes "an abuse" of theology. His defenders include well-known European theologians Father Edward Schillebeeckx and Father Yves Congar.

The pope will visit Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador and Trinidad and Tobago during a Jan. 26-Feb. 6 trip to South America.

Peru is a country where per capita income is \$655, where only 64 percent of the population between the ages of 5 and 19 attends school and where a \$13 billion foreign debt has pawed much of the income from the country's natural resources to foreign financial institutions.

The papal itinerary includes a visit to the largest of the many shantytowns which have sprung up around Lima as large numbers of rural people have migrated to the city in search of better economic conditions. These shantytowns often have inadequate public services or health facilities because the government has no funds and no plan for bringing services to them.

The itinerary also includes trips to the Andes Mountains, heavily populated by Indians, where many people still live and farm as their ancestors did when the Spanish conquerors arrived 450 years ago.

For Father Gutierrez, a theology professor at the Catholic University of Peru in Lima since 1960 and a parish priest, a Christian response must start with the concrete realities which physically and spiritually oppressed people. Then comes a reflection on what the Bible has to say about salvation from spiritual and physical bondage.

To understand contemporary Latin American social conditions, he relies heavily on sociology and Marxist concepts.

"We can't be with the poor of Latin America without calling upon social analysis using terms like injustice, exploitation, exploiting class and class struggle to explain what is happening. To use certain notions to explain reality does not mean agreeing with the determined philosophical positions postulated by Marxism," Father Gutierrez has said.



Six-Hour Captive

Maryknoll Sister Nancy Donovan of Waterbury, Conn., describes her experience after being kidnapped for six hours and released by Nicaraguan rebels. She said her captors released her after she told them she was an American and holding her would probably do them more harm than good. (NC Photo)

The result is an innovative current of Christian thought which is more a theological reflection about social conditions than a traditional theology concerning itself with the academic refining of concepts contained in the deposit of faith.

Also innovative is the use of many key theological terms.

Salvation means a total liberation of man as a spiritual and physical being. Sin is applied not only to violations of personal morality, but also to socio-economic and political structures which are judged as institutionalizing oppression and domination.

Father Gutierrez has developed his views in several books and theological essays. His 1971 book, "A Theology of Liberation" is considered a cornerstone of liberation theology and a key reason for the coming of the term. However, liberation theology has many branches, including non-Marxist ones.

Father Gutierrez is the founder of a branch which incorporates Marxist concepts in its effort to seek a political revolution, according to Father Gian Battista Mondin, dean of the philosophy department of Rome's Pontifical Urban University and the author of a book on liberation theology. He said Father Gutierrez's theology sees the Christian message of liberation as fundamentally political, economic and material rather than spiritual.

Father Mondin said he criticizes Father Gutierrez because the Peruvian priest does not use the traditional academic approach of basing his theology on philosophy.

"Father Gutierrez makes a double error. He tries to use sociology to formulate a theology and then he goes and uses a Marxist sociology," he said.

Cardinal Ratzinger, in an interview last June, criticized the sociological approach because it "elevates to theology that which in reality should be a social ethic or a social theory, even if naturally these coincide with fundamental postulates of the Gospel."

This is "an abuse" of theology, he added.

"I can't deduce from the Gospel of Mark or from the letter to the Galatians what I should do in South America. This is simply a foolishness," Cardinal Ratzinger said. But he said that his comments were a criticism, not a condemnation of Father Gutierrez.

In September the doctrinal congregation issued a major document, approved by the pope, criticizing branches of liberation theology which use "concepts uncritically borrowed from Marxist ideology." It criticized the theory of class struggle and other theories which put liberation of material poverty above liberation from sin.

The document did not criticize any theologian by name. It also left the door slightly open to limited use of Marxist concepts if the theologian can show that he has stripped these of their foundations in an atheistic worldview.

Father Gutierrez has said that he is communicating with the doctrinal congregation about his writings. He also has been asked by the Peruvian bishops to write and publish an evaluation of his works in the light of the doctrinal congregation's document.

A doctrinal congregation official said the congregation is required to remain silent about the process until it has been completed and a decision has been published.

Father Gutierrez is popular in Peru. The Peruvian bishops have refrained from passing judgment on his works, and many diocesan pastoral programs are based on his ideas.

Pope's Schedule In Latin America

The schedule of Pope John Paul II's Jan. 26-Feb. 6 trip to South America. Times listed are local time with Eastern Standard Time in parentheses. Ecuador and Peru are on Eastern Standard Time.

SATURDAY, Jan. 26

- 10:20 a.m. (4:20 a.m.), Departure from Rome.
- 4 p.m. (3 p.m.), Arrival ceremony in Caracas, Venezuela.
- 6:30 p.m. (5:30 p.m.), Visit with the president of Venezuela at the Miraflores Palace.
- 8 p.m. (7 p.m.), Meeting with the Bishops' Conference of Venezuela at the nunciature.

SUNDAY, Jan. 27

- 8:15 a.m. (7:15 a.m.), Meeting with the Polish community at the Teresa Carrero Theater.
- 9:45 a.m. (8:45 a.m.), Mass for the family and coronation of the Virgin of Coromoto at the Montalban esplanade.
- Noon (11 a.m.), Angelus.
- 12:30 p.m. (11:30 a.m.), Meeting with the diplomatic corps at the nunciature.
- 3 p.m. (2 p.m.), Ecumenical meeting in the nunciature.
- 4 p.m. (3 p.m.), Departure for Maracaibo, Venezuela.
- 6 p.m. (5 p.m.), Mass at the Grano de Oro (Golden Grain) esplanade.

MONDAY, Jan. 28

- 8:30 a.m. (7:30 a.m.), Departure for Merida, Venezuela.
- 9:45 a.m. (8:45 a.m.), Mass at La Hechicera esplanade.
- 2:30 p.m. (1:30 p.m.), Visit to the cathedral.
- 3:15 p.m. (2:15 p.m.), Departure for Caracas.
- 4:45 p.m. (3:45 p.m.), Meeting with the clergy at the Teresa Carrero Theater.
- 6 p.m. (5 p.m.), Meeting with church workers in the cathedral.
- 8 p.m. (7 p.m.), Meeting with youths at the Olympic Stadium.

TUESDAY, Jan. 29

- Departure for Ciudad Guayana, Venezuela.
- 9:45 a.m. (8:45 a.m.), Mass at the Alta Visita esplanade.
- 12:30 p.m. (11:30 a.m.), Departure by car for the Orinoco Iron and Steel Works for lunch with the workers.
- 2:30 p.m. (1:30 p.m.), Departure for the Caracas airport.

- 3:30 p.m. (2:30 p.m.), Airport departure ceremony.
- 4 p.m. (3 p.m.), Departure for Quito, Ecuador.
- 5:30 p.m., Arrival at Quito airport.
- 7 p.m., Meeting with bishops and clergy in the cathedral.
- 7:45 p.m., Visit with the president of Ecuador.

WEDNESDAY, Jan. 30

- 8:15 a.m., Meeting with youths at the Atahualpa Stadium.
- 9:45 a.m., Visit to Catholic Radio.
- 10:45 a.m., Mass in La Carolina park.
- 1:30 p.m., Meeting with the bishops at the nunciature.
- 4 p.m., Meeting with Religious.
- 5 p.m., Meeting with intellectuals in the Church of the Society of Jesus.
- 6:05 p.m., Meeting with workers in San Francisco Square.
- 7:30 p.m., Meeting with the diplomatic corps at the nunciature.

THURSDAY, JAN. 31

- 8:25 a.m., Departure for Latacunga, Ecuador.
- 9 a.m., Meeting with Indians at the airport.
- 10:15 a.m., Departure for Cuenca, Ecuador.
- 11:30 a.m., Mass at Miraflores park.
- 4:45 a.m., Visit to the cathedral.
- 5:30 p.m., Departure for Guayaquil, Ecuador.
- 6:45 p.m., Visit to the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa.
- 7:10 p.m., Marian celebration at the Shrine of Our Lady of Alborada.

FRIDAY, FEB. 1

- 8:15 a.m., Visit to Guasmo, a poor section on the outskirts of Guayaquil.
- 9:15 a.m., Departure by helicopter for the Los Samanes esplanade.
- 10:15 a.m., Mass and beatification of Mother Mercedes de Jesus Molina.
- 3 p.m., Visit to the cathedral.
- 3:45 p.m., Farewell ceremony at the Guayaquil airport.
- 4:15 p.m., Departure for Lima, Peru.
- 7 p.m., Welcoming ceremony at Lima airport.
- 8:30 p.m., Meeting in the cathedral with diocesan priests, men and women Religious, seminarians and members of apostolic movements.
- 9:30 p.m., Visit with the president of Peru.

SATURDAY, FEB. 2

- 7:45 a.m., Meeting with the Polish community at the nunciature.
- 8:30 a.m., Departure for Arequipa, Peru.
- 10:15 a.m., Mass and beatification ceremony of Sister Ana de los Angeles Monteagudo.

- 4 p.m., Departure for Lima.
- 5:45 p.m., Meeting with youths at the Lima racetrack.
- 7:45 p.m., Meeting with the Peruvian bishops at the headquarters of the bishops' conference.

SUNDAY, FEB. 3

- 7:30 a.m., Departure for Cuzco, Peru.
- 9 a.m., Paraliturgical ceremony at Sacsahuaman.
- 10:45 a.m., Departure for Ayacucho, Peru.
- 11:45 a.m., Meeting with townspeople at the airport.
- Noon, Angelus.
- 12:45 p.m., Departure for Lima.
- 4:30 p.m., Mass and ordination of priests at the Lima racetrack.
- 8 p.m., Meeting with the diplomatic corps at the nunciature.

MONDAY, FEB. 4

- 7:45 a.m., Ecumenical meeting at the nunciature.
- 8:30 a.m., Meeting with the sick in Callao, Peru.
- 10:30 a.m., Departure for Piura, Peru.
- Noon, Meeting with the townspeople at the airport.
- 1:15 p.m., Departure for Trujillo, Peru.
- 4:45 p.m., Mass for the workers.
- 7:30 p.m., Departure for Lima.

TUESDAY, FEB. 5

- 8:30 a.m., Meeting with shantytown dwellers.
- 10 a.m., Farewell ceremony at Lima airport.
- 10:30 a.m., Departure for Iquitos, Peru.
- 12:15 p.m., Meeting with Indians at the airport.
- 1:15 p.m., Departure for Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, capital of Trinidad and Tobago.
- 4:30 p.m. (3:30 a.m.), Welcoming ceremony at the airport.
- 6 p.m. (5 p.m.), Mass at the stadium.
- 9:15 p.m. (8:15 p.m.), Visit with the president of Trinidad and Tobago.
- 10:30 p.m. (9:30 p.m.), Farewell ceremony at the airport.
- 11 p.m. (10 p.m.), Departure for Rome.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 6

- 1:15 p.m. (7:15 a.m.), Arrival in Rome.

Chileans Take Stand

New York — Chilean Protestant leaders strongly identify with the vocal human rights stand taken by the Catholic Church under the leadership of Archbishop Juan Francisco Fresno of Santiago, the Rev. Wilson Boots, a United Methodist minister, reported after visiting Chile Dec. 27-31. "I was quite surprised," he said, noting the Catholic-Protestant tensions of Latin America in the past. Rev. Boots, a district superintendent in the New York annual conference of the United Methodist Church, visited Chile on behalf of the U.S. National Council of Churches to express pastoral concern for churches.