

Kristina Boylan
St Cross College, University of Oxford

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**"THEY WERE ALWAYS DOING SOMETHING"¹: CATHOLIC WOMEN'S
 ACTIVISM AND ACTIVITY IN JALISCO, MEXICO, IN THE 1930s**

The Catholic Church in Mexico has had a long history of social activism and of conflicts with successive secular governments.² As a consequence of previous Church-State conflicts, the Revolutionary Constitution of 1917 aimed to eliminate the Catholic Church's broader cultural and spiritual hold over Mexico, going far beyond governmental attempts of the previous two centuries to target Church property and judicial privileges. The 1917 Constitution not only nationalized all Church properties, but declared the state's ultimate control over all education, the civil registry, and even the distribution and organization of the clergy in Mexico, by providing for ample legal restrictions and asserting the right of the individual states to mandate the number of ministers of all Churches according to population and local necessity.³

Catholics protested against these constitutional provisions and their enforcing laws, passed at the insistence of the avidly anticlerical president Plutarco Elías Calles in 1926. This prompted both nonviolent protests from the Mexican Church hierarchy and from men's and women's Catholic social action organizations, and the outbreak of religiously-motivated armed uprisings, principally in the central-western region of Mexico, collectively known as the Cristero Rebellion.⁴ The *arreglos*, 'arrangements' negotiated between the Mexican government and the Catholic Church hierarchy in July 1929 did not heal the breach between the Church and the State, in which Mexican Catholics were caught. They were a temporary arrangement—and widely recognized as such—designed to end the military conflict and economic boycott.⁵

During the 1930s, the Mexican state consolidated its control of political organization, labor, education, and social services. Secular and religious social

¹Francisca Barba Brisio (b. 1929), interview with Kristina Boylan, Juanacatlán, Jalisco, Mexico, 12 Mar. 1997.

²Alfonso Junco, "Sociología: El Problema Social," *Christus*, I: 4 (Mar 1936), pp. 237-238; Jean Meyer, "Una historia política de la religión en México," *Historia Mexicana*, 42: 3 (1993), p. 740.

³ *Constitución de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos* (México, DF: Editorial Trillas, 1985): passim. (Note: many of these articles have since been amended.)

⁴John W. F. Dulles. *Yesterday in Mexico: A Chronicle of the Revolution, 1919-1936* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), pp. 312-315. The terms "Cristero Rebellion" and "*Cristiada*", are derived from the phrase "*¡Viva Cristo Rey!*," the last words of Father Miguel Pro (Miguel Enghien), S.J., executed in 1927 for his alleged participation in an attempted political assassination as well as for performing illicit religious services. Pro's martyrdom was well popularized and became a rallying symbol for Mexican Catholics, both during and after the rebellion.

⁵Marta Elena Negrete, *Relaciones entre la Iglesia y el estado mexicano, 1930-1940* (México, DF: El Colegio de México y la Universidad Iberoamericana, 1988), p. 338; Roberto Blancarte, *Historia de la Iglesia católica en México* (México, DF: El Colegio Mexiquense y el Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992), p. 20; Elwood Rufus Gotschall, "Catholicism and Catholic Action in Mexico, 1929-1941: A Church's Response to a Revolutionary Society and the Politics of the Modern Age," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1970/Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1971), p. 86.

institutions vied for the exclusive loyalty and support of the Mexican people, yet neither the Catholic Church hierarchy nor that of the Mexican State enjoyed overwhelming success. Throughout the decade, contests raged regarding government restrictions of religious practices, education, organizations and activity, and Catholic attitudes toward Mexican law and the government's legitimacy. Arrests, deportations, closures of churches, confiscation of property, and anticlericalism in curricula and propaganda were carried out by the federal, state and municipal governments. Vociferous protests, boycotts, demonstrations, riots and new outbreaks of armed conflict, known as the *Segunda Cristiada*, led many partisans to believe that the Catholic Church and the Revolutionary regime could not coexist peacefully.

Yet communications and negotiations continued between the federal government and Church leaders, and it seemed that an understanding had finally had been reached at the end of the decade, publicly signified, for example, by Archbishop Luis María Martínez counseling Catholics to patriotically support President Lázaro Cárdenas' nationalization of Mexico's oil industry in 1938. The resolution of the ideological battles of the Revolution appeared to be the establishment of a mutually supportive system between the institutions,⁶ with a tacit understanding that conflict would cease and that in general, the government and the Church would cooperate ideologically in order to maintain law, order, and the peace in which to operate their institutions. And, as has been the way so often in Mexico, enforcement of anticlerical laws and provisions were relaxed in response to grassroots organization and popular pressure long before the formal revision and repeal of some of those laws.⁷

At the time of the *arreglos*, the Catholic Church hierarchy sought to reconcile itself somehow with the ruling, secular State and to make secure its position as one of the principal influences in the civic and private lives of the Mexican people. Mexican Catholic activists worked to counteract the 'secularization' and 'de-christianization' of society threatened by representatives of the revolutionary regime. Some threats, such as Calles' 1926 claim that the population of Catholics would be reduced by two percent per month that Mexican churches were kept shut, seemed as implausible then as they do to the historian examining Mexico now. It is clear that the "recalcitrant people" of Mexico, to use Alan Knight's phrase, resisted the radical ideological shifts required of them by the "revolutionary project" with a significant degree of success. Catholic and secular activists were considerably less successful in their attempts to stop the flow of the ideals of individualism and consumer culture which surged in postrevolutionary Mexico due to economic, demographic and cultural shifts, which compelled them to

⁶Peter Lester Reich, *Mexico's Hidden Revolution: The Catholic Church in Law and Politics Since 1929*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995, p. 55 and pp. 72-73.

⁷For example, the elimination of the controversial call for "socialist" education in Article 3 of the Constitution in 1943, and, much later, the legal reforms passed in 1992 during the Salinas de Gortari administration (1988-94) which formally loosened restrictions on the Church's (or any religious organization's) ability to open and administer schools, charitable institutions, and other enterprises, and restored full civil liberties to clergymen, nuns and minister, denied them by the 1917 Constitution.

adapt to or accept, in some form, what they could not halt or change in their compatriots, or what they chose not to completely reject themselves.⁸

This paper will examine how Catholic women activists played a significant role in this process. Not only were they recalcitrant resisters to changes imposed from without, but they were pro-active participants in the social debates of postrevolutionary Mexico. I will first describe the normative 'theory' of Acción Católica (the organizational framework for Catholic social action endorsed by the Mexican Church hierarchy, which had been designed in Europe and endorsed by Rome before being brought to Mexico). I will then concentrate on the organization of Acción Católica and events which took place in the diocese of Guadalajara, which lies principally in the state of Jalisco, during the 1930s, in order to take a closer look at the composition, motivations, and actions of Catholic women activists, as well as the results they obtained.

Most literature concerning Catholic social activism in Mexico during the Revolutionary period concentrates on the activities of the Central Committees of Catholic social action organizations and of the Mexican Episcopate, which were based in its capitol, Mexico City. I chose to study the diocese of Guadalajara in order to examine a region outside Mexico City, how extensively the orders and messages given by the center were followed—whether to the letter or adapted to local circumstances—in another region, and how that region's organization interacted with the center. Guadalajara and its environs have a strong historical tradition of Catholicism, dating from the colonial era and from the structural revival of the Church in Mexico in the late nineteenth-century; it was also a major center of Catholic labor and other social organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though not the capitol, Guadalajara was not a remote backwater; it was and is one of Mexico's largest cities. The region has had considerable political and economic importance, and events there had some importance outside of the region.

Examining only the official literature of the Papacy and the Mexican Episcopate, one could conclude that the work conducted by Catholic men, lay and clerical, dominated the postrevolutionary period.⁹ But the composition of the what the Church called its "apostolate in society," although described by lay and clerical authors with strictly delineated gender roles, did not exclude women. Women Catholic activists, young and adult, were encouraged to educate themselves diligently, as they had to have a clear perception of social issues and the work of the Church in order to participate in its campaigns. Furthermore, the need for women's labor in the Catholic social action movement had always been made clear, and the areas which could benefit from their participation were not circumscribed to the home and the Church: prayer,

⁸Alan Knight, "Revolutionary Project, Recalcitrant People: Mexico, 1910-1940," in Jaime E. Rodríguez O., ed., *The Revolutionary Process in Mexico: Essays on Political and Social Change, 1880-1940*. Los Angeles and Irvine: UCLA Latin American Center Publications (University of California, Los Angeles) and Mexico/Chicano Program (University of California, Irvine), 1990. p. 246 for Calles' claim, passim (pp. 227-264) for overview.

⁹Elwood Rufus Gotschall, "Catholicism and Catholic Action in Mexico, 1929-1941: A Church's Response to a Revolutionary Society and the Politics of the Modern Age," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1970/Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International., 1971), p. 37.

charity, evangelization, the Catholic press, the "maternal care dedicated to childhood" and the formation of good Catholics and good citizens also took place in the schools, in the streets, in offices and factories, and in society at large.¹⁰

Women had participated in the Church's Social Catholicism movements since the late nineteenth century. The Unión de Damas Católicas Mexicanas (hereafter, UDCM), founded in 1913, became the organization through which Mexican Catholic women coordinated campaigns nationally during the Revolution and through the early 1920s. As in times past, with its male leaders exiled and their public influence curtailed, the Catholic Church called upon its women members to mobilize for the preservation, defense and propagation of Catholic doctrine and practice. Having learned from the Cristero Rebellion that independent organizations such as the Brigadas Femeninas could become difficult for the hierarchy to control,¹¹ the Church encouraged women to join the Acción Católica, founded by the Mexican Episcopate in 1929 to coordinate the activity of lay Catholics. It was primarily through the Unión Femenina Católica Mexicana (hereafter, UFCM), although not exclusively, that much of women's concerted efforts in support of the Catholic Church were carried out. Their records, examined along with those of the federal and state governments, as well as Catholic normative literature and Church archives, demonstrate that their actions contributed to the gradual cessation of government attacks on the Church.

Like the Acción Católica as a whole, the UFCM was coordinated from a Central Committee, consisting of lay members and an ecclesiastical advisor (a priest appointed to supervise the group), based in Mexico City. Each diocese was to have its own coordinating committee, organized with similar components, to promote Acción Católica locally, carry out practical projects and, with the Central Committee, study problems and act as an advisory resource. Within the diocese, each parish would have a chapter of the UFCM, with the parish priest as its ecclesiastical assistant. The work of the UFCM on all levels was to be carried out in "sections," to enable women to concentrate on one of the activities or areas pronounced appropriate for women. The

¹⁰Joaquín Azpiazu, *Manual de la Acción Católica*, Madrid: Editorial "Razón y Fé," 1930, p. 87. Azpiazu cites an address of Pius XI to the Union of Catholic Ladies of Rome (30 Jun. 1926), one to the Catholic Young Women (19 Mar. 1927); on p. 199, Azpiazu cites the address of Pius XI to the Union of Italian Catholic Ladies (Sept. 1928).

¹¹The *Brigadas Femeninas* (BF) was an entirely secretive Catholic women's network established in 1927 to serve as an auxiliary to the Cristero rebels. The BF coordinated the supply of arms and ammunition, smuggling arms from the U.S.-Mexico border through to the central-western countryside, and provided espionage, nursing and food supply services. Despite the BF's extreme effectiveness, it was one of the autonomous groups attacked by the Mexico City-based Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa (National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty—LNDR) in its efforts to gain monopolistic control over the Cristero movement. Leaders of the LNDR claimed that the women were violating Catholic doctrine by maintaining total secrecy (i.e. circumventing even the confessional and their subordinate place to husbands, fathers, or in the case of nuns, their religious superiors), despite the BF's policy of maintaining careful records of their activities. As a consequence the BF was dissolved shortly after the end of the rebellion (one of the causes of which was a shortage of ammunition and supplies to the Cristeros), despite the proposals of several of its organizers to utilize its network for peaceful pro-Church activities, and its archives were deliberately burned by Father Miguel Darío Miranda, on the order of Archbishop Pascual Díaz Barreto. See Jean Meyer, *La Cristiada*, México, DF: Siglo XXI, v. 3, *Los cristeros*, pp. 120-133; Barbara Ann Miller, "The Role of Women in the Mexican Cristero Rebellion: A New Chapter," Ph.D dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1981 (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1981), pp. 48-51 and 60-107; Jim Tuck, *The Holy War in Los Altos: A Regional Analysis of Mexico's Cristero Rebellion*, Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1982, pp. 100-103.

four principle sections, which every group was to have, were: Religious Instruction, a Pro-Seminary section, a Mothers' section, and a section for "Enthronements" (ceremonies involving blessing and dedicating a household to a particular sacred figure in the Catholic Church, such as the Virgin of Guadalupe or the Sacred Heart of Jesus—which often involved considerable 'missionary' effort beforehand). Additional sections were optional, such as one dealing with personal piety and charitable works. As the UFCM's work became more attuned to the ideological and social conflicts existing in Mexico during the 1930s, the above sections were adapted and other mandatory ones created to address them: the Pro-Seminary sections worked to support priests and seminary students to either study secretly in Mexico or abroad; Schools sections were begun to organize clandestine Catholic schools as an alternative to state schools; and Pro-Campesina and Pro-Obrera sections were created to compete with state programs for rural and urban working women. The UFCM was also assigned the sponsorship of the Juventud Femenina Católica Mexicana (hereafter, JCFM), the association of the Acción Católica for younger and unmarried women, and a general concern for the morality and comportment of Catholic girls and young women.¹²

The UFCM in Guadalajara¹³: A Case Study

The Diocesan Committee of the UFCM in Guadalajara first met on June 16th, 1930, in the house of a former member of the UDCM, Miss Severa M. Rivas. Rivas and nine other women had been invited by the office of the Archbishop, Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, to form the first committee and to work with the Jesuit priest Salvador G. Quintero, who had been appointed general director. Quintero explained to the women that they, as part of the Acción Católica, they would be continuing the work of the Apostles themselves as they helped the Church carry out its missions; they would be, he said, "the extension of the Ecclesiastical hierarchy in the civil order." The women were to study the new statutes sent from the Secretariado Social Mexicano (hereafter, SSM)¹⁴ to see how the four divisions of the Acción Católica, of older men and women, and younger men and women, were to work together; how the Acción Católica as a whole and the UFCM within it would be organized, and what their duties as adult, lay Catholic women were to be.¹⁵ The Guadalajara chapter of the UFCM, was one of the

¹²Universidad Iberoamericana, Archivo Histórico, Fondo UFCM (hereafter UFCM-Ibero), Sección Correspondencia, Serie Asambleas Generales, Caja 4, Carpeta 25, "III Asamblea General de la UFCM, Oct. 1936"—"Informe del Comité Central."

¹³The archdiocese of Guadalajara oversaw the dioceses of Tepic (Nayarit state), Colima, Aguascalientes and Zacatecas as well as the previously mentioned territory, but in the interests of time, I chose to examine only Guadalajara, in order to be able to work thoroughly in one diocesan archive and compare that from the government records from one state archive.

¹⁴ The Mexican Episcopate had initially founded the SSM in 1922 to coordinate Catholic trade unions and rural credit cooperatives on the national level, but as the Catholic union movement gradually lost its strength during the Cristero rebellion, the SSM's network of national contacts was seen as an ideal coordinating mechanism to maintain the necessary degree of doctrinal parity and control among the Catholic social organizations.

¹⁵ Archivo de la UFCM, Comité Diocesano de Guadalajara, Nuño de Guzman 477, Guadalajara, Jal., "Actas: Libro No. 1. Unión Femenina Católica Mexicana, Comité Diocesano. 16 de Jun. de 1930 á 8 de Aug. de 1935, "unpublished manuscript (hereafter UFCM-Guad., Actas I), pp. 1-2 (16 Jun.1930). Directive committee: President Severa M. Rivas; Vice-President:

largest of the UFCM. In 1932, out of the 17,132 members of the UFCM, 1,135 were from Guadalajara (exceeded only by four out of the 23 other diocesan chapters), organized into over 70 parochial groups.¹⁶ In 1940, the Guadalajara chapter of the UFCM had 20,014 members, out of the 149,504 UFCM members nationwide (the third largest of 33 diocesan chapters), organized into 153 parochial and sub-parochial groups.¹⁷

The diocesan committee in Guadalajara identified the coordination and consolidation of women's efforts to support the Church as one of the first areas in which to work. Within two weeks of the committee's inception, members had visited several parishes in Guadalajara to assist in the formation of sub-committees in the city, which according to their ecclesiastical assistant, Father José Toral, was "almost complete" by the end of October; at the same meeting, Rivas reported that there were parochial groups established in 26 parishes throughout the diocese.¹⁸ Over the decade, many more were established and some reestablished, having lapsed due to continuing violence which occurred in the countryside, lack of funds, or lack of interest.

The UFCM had to deal with disorganization among the Catholics in the area and the confusion as to what the *Acción Católica* was. After all, earlier Catholic social action groups like the UDCM had been active in Guadalajara, and Catholics in Guadalajara had coordinated numerous efforts to support the Church and the Cristeros during the late 1920s. For example, although the UFCM subcommittee in the parish of Analco (in the city of Guadalajara) was founded in October 1930, the president wrote to the diocesan committee in 1932, asking if the study groups their priest was organizing for young people was part of the *Acción Católica*; the diocesan committee replied in the negative.¹⁹ The parochial group in Tepatitlán complained in a letter to the Diocesan committee that they could not work as they wished, because the people confused the *Acción Católica* with the old popular Catholic movement, and had very little confidence in it.²⁰ At a meeting of the diocesan committee in June 1933, their ecclesiastical assistant, Father José Toral, blamed the confusion on the fact that the Statutes of the *Acción Católica*, and the UFCM in particular, had not been studied sufficiently, which made the progress of the UFCM "more difficult." Furthermore, Toral continued, there were still persons who believed that the UFCM was the continuation of the *Unión Popular* (UP), the association which had aided the Cristeros. To prevent confusion, he concluded, it "had to be explained to them... that *Acción Católica* is a purely religious undertaking, with religious ends, and that it is a pontifical

Esther Franco de Martínez; Secretary: Dolores Orendain; Pro-Secretary: Ana Aldrete; Treasurer: María Castañeda; Pro-Treasurer: Ignacia Calderón, Members-at-large: Paz González Rivas de Castellanos, Elena G. Arce, María Bermejillo.

¹⁶Elena L.de Silva, "Informe que presenta la Presidenta del Comité Central a la Primera Asamblea General de la 'UFCM'," *Acción Femenina* (México, DF) 1933, I, 1 (1 Jan. 1933), p. 15; "Fundaciones: Comités Diocesanos de la UFCM," *Acción Femenina* (México, DF) 1933, I, 1 (1 Jan. 1933), p. 23.

¹⁷Juana P. de Labarthe, "Informe que presenta la Presidenta del Comité Central, ante la V Asamblea General de la UFCM," *V Asamblea General* (México, DF, 1940), p. 23.

¹⁸UFCM–Guad., Actas I, p. 9b (22 Oct. 1930).

¹⁹UFCM–Guad., Actas I, p. 76 (2 Jun. 1932).

²⁰UFCM–Guad., Actas I, p. 82 (4 Aug. 1932); foundation: UFCM–Guad., Actas I, p. 18 (16 Dec. 1930). Tepatitlán is located in Los Altos, the territory in eastern Jalisco state which had been one of the strongholds of the Cristeros.

institution"—meaning that unlike the UP, the AC had the Pope's approval and would not be dissolved for actions contrary to church doctrine.²¹ Interestingly, Toral's successor, Father Vicente Gutiérrez, found that in 1939 there was still a group of the old Damas Católicas (the UDCM) meeting in Guadalajara; though members of the last women's group which the Church had endorsed, they still had not joined the UFCM, which he opined that they should do.²²

Relations between the Church and the Mexican government soured following the 1931 celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the apparitions of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Repercussions were felt in the diocese of Guadalajara the following year, as the government began to enforce federal and state religious laws more strictly. Local manifestations of religious fervor, such as the festivities accompanying the yearly pilgrimage to the Virgin of Zapopan, also contributed to the Jalisco state government's increasing severity; by 1931, only 13 priests were allowed to officiate in the state, at a ratio of about one per one hundred thousand inhabitants.²³ The UFCM in Guadalajara consistently followed the directives of the UFCM Central Committee, as well as those from the ecclesiastical advisors and bishops, and emphasized the work of its Pro-Seminary section.

The Guadalajara UFCM went one step further than supporting local priests and raising money for the Montezuma seminary in Arizona. In early 1934, the women began to raise money, gather supplies and foodstuffs, and make arrangements for a clandestine seminary to prepare young men for further religious study abroad or elsewhere in Mexico. At first, members of the UFCM took seminary students into their private homes. As the numbers of students grew, they first used a house owned by a local UFCM member, Señora Tomasa Robles, and then rented a second house from a 'reliable person', for the students who were coming from all over the archdiocese to Guadalajara. Other members made contacts or offered their own residences as collection points for supplies. The UFCM sustained the seminary financially throughout the decade, and there is no report of the seminary being found out by the authorities in the diocesan committee's archives. The rumor of another seminary being founded in San Juan de los Lagos, in Los Altos, was mentioned in a March 1937 circular from the federal ministry of the Interior which was directed to the state government and to local officials; local officials could not (or, perhaps, would not) provide evidence to substantiate the charge.

Salvador Sandoval Godoy, who came from El Teul, Zacatecas, to study in the seminary when he was a teenager, told me that he did indeed remember the women of the UFCM—they ironed his shirts, did his laundry, cooked for him and housed him while he studied. Sandoval Godoy chose not to join the priesthood, but has remained an adamant Catholic. Several of Sandoval Godoy's family members had died in the Cristero rebellion, and for him, there was no question of attending state schools—he

²¹UFCM–Guad., Actas I, p. 97 (13 Jun. 1933).

²²UFCM–Guad., Actas II, p. 111b (17 May 1939).

²³USDOS 812.404/1074 (1931), p. 6; Aida Urzúa Orozco y Gilberto Hernández Z, investigación, compilación y notas. *Jalisco: Testimonio de sus Gobernantes. Tomo III: 1912-1939*. Guadalajara, Jalisco: Gobierno de Jalisco, Secretaría General, Unidad Editorial, 1988: p. 731. The population of Jalisco in 1931, according to a government census, was 1, 235, 895.

emphasized that without the support of the women of the UFCM, the seminary would not have been there to provide a Catholic alternative, which was run clandestinely in Guadalajara until seminaries could operate more openly in Mexico.²⁴

In October of 1932, Governor Sebastian Allende ordered the dissolution of any convent that might still remain in the state and the immediate dispersion of all nuns. José Garibi Rivera, Guadalajara's auxiliary bishop²⁵ asked the UFCM to find housing for the religious women and to provide them with food, so that from these "secure houses," they could resume their schedules of prayer and their work. A 1937 report from a state inspector noted the "rumor" of nuns who were not only living in Los Altos, but were again operating small schools in flagrant violation of the law.²⁶ Although the normative literature coming from the Episcopate rarely, if ever, mentioned the needs of religious women, the UFCM continued to concern itself with those who remained in Jalisco as part of their work to protect the interests of the Church.

Throughout the decade, the diocesan chapter of the UFCM in Guadalajara identified providing Catholic education for children and adults as one of its primary tasks. The secular education provided by the state was quickly identified as an impediment to their goal of "the moralization of all the social classes. At a meeting in November 1930, Toral encouraged the women to fight the influences of the secular school and Protestantism; it was their task, he continued, to "win over the teachers." Toral acknowledged that some parents, for financial reasons, had no choice but to submit their children to the 'dangers' of what he called the "centros protestantes" so that they could receive an education, but if the teachers (whom he consistently referred to with the exclusively feminine term "profesoras") were allied with the Church, then even the secular school could collaborate in the mission of the "moralization of the working class."²⁷ One of the UFCM's first projects in Guadalajara was the establishment of an Academy which would offer vocational and catechism classes to both housewives and working women. By October 1930, the women had arranged for a location, teachers, internal regulations and students, and awaited only sufficient funding; the first *Academia* opened in the Santuario parish in February 1931.²⁸ Later on in the decade, several of the subcommittees in the city of Guadalajara began their own academies for women, as did several of the parochial groups in the outlying towns.

²⁴UFCM–Guad., Actas I, p. 108b (25 Jan. 1934); UFCM–Guad., Actas I, p. 110b (22 Feb. 1934); UFCM–Guad., Actas I, p. 112b (12 Apr. 1934); Archivo Histórico de Jalisco (AHJ), fondo Gobernación, Sección 4 (Iglesia), Caja 342, Exp. G-4-937/21.60/3 (letter, from A. García Toledo, Oficial Mayor, Depto. de Gobernación, México, DF (exp. 2/347(11)17608) to Governor of Jal., 20 Feb. 1937; letter from the General Secretary of the Interior (Gobernación), Mexico, DF, to the Municipal President of San Juan de los Lagos, Jalisco, 26 Feb. 1937; letter, from J. Jesús Escote P., Municipal President of San Juan de Los Lagos (Secretary) J. Jesús González Montoya, to Governor of Jal, 1 Mar. 1937); Salvador Sandoval Godoy, (b. 1929) interview with Kristina Boylan, 14 Jun. 1997, Guadalajara, Jalisco.

²⁵The archbishop, Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, was at the time resisting the third exile ordered for him by the Mexican government after the Guadalupan celebrations by remaining in hiding within his archdiocese.

²⁶UFCM–Guad., Actas I, p. 86b (24 Oct. 1932); AHJ, fondo Gobernación, Sección 4 (Iglesia), Caja 342, Exp. G-4-937, report dated 3 Jun 1937.

²⁷UFCM–Guad., Actas I, p. 15 (25 Nov. 1930),

²⁸UFCM–Guad, Actas I, p. 3b (2 Aug. 1930); p. 5 (20 Aug. 1930), p. 7 (1 Oct. 1930); p. 25 (first Tuesday, Feb. 1931).

The UFCM also began sponsoring religious instruction groups and catechism classes in the parishes, and encouraged younger women to work with children's groups. This work quickly evolved into the organization of alternative primary schools for Catholic children. The Church's attitude toward secular schools hardened with the reform of Article 3 of the Constitution and the implementation of the governments programs of 'socialistic' education. The members of the UFCM were advised to collaborate with the Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia,²⁹ but as individuals, rather than by subsuming their religious instruction and schools sections into the organization.³⁰ It is hard to gauge the impact of these schools quantitatively, for several reasons. First, the numerical data that the UFCM had in its archives was often incomplete, as Catholic home schools were frequently organized on a short-term, ad hoc basis. The organizers of the schools had to maintain secrecy, and the UFCM had had several incidents of their mail being lost or tampered with, for which reason they obtained a post office box and instructed their members to use the post 'discreetly'—which would rule out writing detailed descriptions of illegal work and sending them to the diocesan committee.

The problem with Catholic versus secular schools was their licensing—not only were they operating illegally, but without endorsement from the Secretaria de Educación Pública (SEP), their students could not pass from primary to secondary school, to *preparatoria* (preparatory school) or university, or, depending on one's employer, be recognized as having qualified vocational training.³¹ Catholics who did attend confessional schools either had to somehow hide the fact that they had done so, or depend on *gente de confianza*, persons whom they could trust, to help them through bureaucratic processes or simply employ them. This further obscures the ability to quantify those who obtained Catholic versus non-Catholic education.

Qualitatively, however, we can look at the experiences of those who affected by the Church's edicts. María Guadalupe Váldez de León moved from Tlajomulco, Jalisco after her father died. Váldez de León wanted to work to support her mother, but as a staunch member of the JCFM refused to partake in public education courses. It took Váldez de León almost a year to find a Catholic academy which would allow her to pay less due to hardship—which Váldez de León later defended to me as a sign of high demand for their courses—and she experienced a further delay in finding a job.³² Among their academies, the UFCM in Guadalajara had opened one for working women in January 1935 called, like that run by the state of Jalisco, the Casa Amiga de la Obrera. Both the state and the Church Casas were reported to be run down and lacking

²⁹The Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia was a secular organization founded in 1934, dedicated to resisting the Mexican government's socialistic and sexual education programs. Although not officially part of the Acción Católica, the Mexican Episcopate and the SSM supported its actions, and many lay Catholics were members.

³⁰UFCM–Guad., Actas I, p. 124(8 Nov. 1934).

³¹"Documentación Civil," *Christus* II, 25 (Dec. 1937), p. 1076, reprint of Prof. Joaquín Jara Díaz, Jefe del Depto., Departamento de Enseñanza Primaria y Normal, México, DF, Circular No. 283–214, 20 Oct. 1937.

³²María Guadalupe Váldez de León (b. 1917), interview with Kristina Boylan, Guadalajara, Jal., 5 Jun. 1997.

funds by 1938³³; it is possible that, as Church-State tensions ceased and the institutions' need for allies lessened, the interest in maintaining academies for them did as well.

At the time, many women, if they went to school at all, attended primary school only and would have been privileged to finish that. It was not a matter of broad concern whether Mexican girls, Catholic or not, had diplomas which would allow them to proceed to institutions of higher education, because the majority of women simply did not continue their studies past primary school. I interviewed two women, María Rosario Alejandre Gil and María del Rosario Ortíz de Salazar, who had attended clandestine Catholic schools as young girls. Alejandre Gil's mother was active in the UFCM, and allowed a Catholic school to meet in their home in the center of Guadalajara for some time. Alejandre Gil vividly remembers a period of panic when the school had to be dispersed and the supplies moved, and suspects that some of her father's business connections were what saved her parents from government reprisal. Ortíz de Salazar clearly remembers her teachers' instructions to leave the girls' home school which she attended in pairs, spaced minutes apart, and not to speak to anyone, to avoid suspicion; she also remembers seeing soldiers on the street several times and being absolutely terrified of being found out. It would be difficult to generalize that such formative experiences kept Catholic students in the Church; however, Alejandre Gil and Ortíz de Salazar were active in the JCFM after they finished school and continue to be active in the UFCM and in projects of their local parishes.³⁴

I was also able to interview Ortiz's mother, María Preciado de Ortiz. Originally from Rancho de Aguacate in the Juchitlán municipality, her family had been dislocated several times due to the rural concentrations which the Mexican government's army used to try to combat Cristero organization. In 1933, her husband decided to relocate their family to Guadalajara. Preciado de Ortiz claimed that as a near-illiterate peasant, she felt that she could never quite fit in a group of cultured women like the UFCM; however she had participated in prayer groups and spiritual exercises in her youth, and remembers the prayers so accurately that her children took down her recitations and had them printed as a prayer booklet. Furthermore, she worked, taking in laundry and doing other temporary jobs, to support her family. Preciado de Ortiz and her husband had allowed some of their older children to attend state schools, briefly, while living outside of Guadalajara—but with the youngest, she said, they seized the opportunity to send them to a Catholic school.³⁵

Not all Catholic women were as convinced of the virtues of the clandestine Catholic schools. Catholics in Guadalajara did not appreciate ex-president Calles' 1934 "Grito de Guadalajara" speech in which he endorsed the government's socialist

³³UFCM—Guad, Actas I, p. 129b (10 Jan. 1935); Urzúa Orozco and Hernández Z, p. 1230 (Third Annual Report of Governor Everardo Topete, 1938); UFCM—Guad, Actas II, p. 85 (8 Sept. 1938).

³⁴María Rosario Alejandre Gil (b. 1927), interview with Kristina Boylan, Guadalajara, Jal., 23 Jun. 1997; María del Rosario Ortíz de Salazar (b. 1927), interview with Kristina Boylan, Guadalajara, Jal., 7 May 1997.

³⁵María Preciado de Ortiz, (b. 1893), interview with Kristina Boylan, Guadalajara, Jal., 22 May 1997; María Preciado de Ortiz, *Meditaciones para los misterios del Santo Rosario en honor de la Santísima Virgen María, Originalmente publicados por los Misioneros del Espíritu Santo en el año de 1903*, (Meditations for the mysteries of the Holy Rosario, originally published by the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit), privately printed, 10 May 1988.

education program, and Catholics led a campaign to boycott the simultaneous demonstrations of the public school teachers' union. Despite the animosity between the institutions, there were still Catholics who worked for the public schools—many of whom were women—just as there were Catholic students in them, motivated by economic necessity and lack of availability of other educational and employment alternatives. The policy for teachers to be 'won over' was moot after statements such as Calles'—women like Teresa Michel de Barba, a Catholic who had attended the state Normal school and who was working in a public school, were told that it was a grave sin, possibly unabsolvable in an ordinary confession, to join the teachers' union, sign the government's loyalty pledges, or to attend their demonstrations. Michel de Barba, whose father was a state school inspector, debated for days whether to attend the demonstrations in June 1934, and ultimately decided not to—and lost her job. She later discovered that some of her Catholic colleagues who had gone to the demonstrations and complied with the government's demands, had gone to confession afterwards and had been told by the priest that because of their economic necessity to work, their sins could indeed be forgiven. Michel de Barba quit teaching soon afterwards, as she found employment in Catholic home schools was sporadic and underpaid. Although now a member of the UFCM, as she has been for years, Michel de Barba still finds the discrepancies in Catholic policy toward state education to be unfair.³⁶

The UFCM also developed what could be called its 'class consciousness' in increasingly politicized work to combat the influence which the Mexican government was beginning to have over working-class and campesina women, through its programs of adult education, hygiene and health services, unions and social organizations. The Mexican Church hierarchy, in great part, romanticized the past in order to criticize the present, and interpreted outward changes in women's behavior and activity as inward treason. For example, the defection of working-class women from the Church was blamed on the fact that they worked, rather than on any other need they might have had which was being filled in the workplace and through government-sponsored unions and programs. José Garibi Rivera, who was made Archbishop of Guadalajara in 1936, declared that among the Mexican government's most pernicious efforts was that

to take the woman from the home and return her to the life of paganism, the unbridled customs which tolerate public manifestations that are shameful and immoral, the effrontery with which theaters and public places display spectacles which are not only immoral but obscene, the license in reading books and publications which are causing so much harm, especially in the hearts of the young...³⁷

³⁶Teresa Michel de Barba (b. 1912), interview with Kristina Boylan, Guadalajara, Jal., 27 May 1997.

³⁷USDOS RRIAM reel #44-812.404/1912: José Garibi Rivera, Archbishop of Guadalajara, "First Pastoral Letter: Present Problems of the Church in this Archdiocese and Means Adapted to their Solution," 12 Aug. 1936 (translation sent by Fr. John Burke, NCWC General Secretary, 14 Aug. 1936).

Along with the Academías in cities and towns, the UFCM in Guadalajara followed the Central Committee's advice to begin outreach programs to rural areas. Although again, much of the focus of their work with the campesinas was catechetical, the women who worked in the Campesinas section recognized their need for material aid, and in some cases did analyze the root causes of their disadvantaged position. Clementina Trujillo Villa described her participation in the Campesinas sections one of the most "liberating" of her life. Trujillo Villa was born on a hacienda outside of Sayula, in the southern part of Jalisco state, but her father had relocated her and her sisters to Guadalajara to safeguard them from rural violence and to provide them with a more 'refined' education. Trujillo Villa relished the opportunity to travel in the countryside again, working with, or as her father chided her, "adopting" the campesinos. Trujillo Villa gave presentations at the 1937 Diocesan Assembly of the UFCM which show that she was well versed in the doctrines of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and other documents of social Catholicism. Trujillo Villa and the other women in her section continued to organize adult education classes and material aid for rural areas for several decades afterwards, long after the impetus of the Church to compete with state programs had diminished.³⁸

Towards the end of the 1930s, the Diocesan Committee of Guadalajara, following the directives of the Central Committee of the UFCM, shifted its emphasis towards campaigns for personal piety and religiosity and campaigning against intrusions by Protestant missionaries, and away from social campaigns which directly placed Catholicism and Catholic social projects against state ideology and programs.³⁹ Nevertheless, the UFCM continued to emphasize education for children and adults, principally in the form of catechism, as the way to preserve and to reproduce Catholic values and customs in Mexico. The continual focus on educating women, and mothers in particular, can lead to two conclusions: one, that Catholic leaders saw far more potential for support for the Catholic Church in its women than in Mexican men, and two, that the actual extent of women's influence and the effectiveness of their work, as well as their willingness to work for the Church, was recognized. Repeated mention is made in the archives of the UFCM in Guadalajara and in Mexico City, as well as in publications for priests such as the magazine *Christus* (distributed to Catholic priests throughout Mexico from December 1935 onward), of the need to involve Catholic men

³⁸Clementina Trujillo Villa (b. 1906), interview with Kristina Boylan, Guadalajara, Jal., 13 May 1997; UFCM-Guad., Actas II, p. 140-141b (28 Sept. 1937), "2a Sesión de la 3a Asamblea Diocesana, discurso de Srita Clementina Trujillo Villa: "Peligros a los obreros."

³⁹Comparisons can be made between the Reports ("*Informes*") and conclusions of the UFCM General Assemblies of 1934 (UFCM-Ibero, Fondo UFCM, Sección Correspondencia, Serie Asambleas Generales, Caja 4, Carpeta 25, "II Asamblea General de la UFCM, Oct. 1934") and 1936 (UFCM-Ibero, Fondo UFCM, Sección Correspondencia, Serie Asambleas Generales, Caja 4, Carpeta 25, "III Asamblea General de la UFCM, Oct. 1936") versus those of 1940 (*V. Asamblea General de la UFCM*, Oct. 1940. Leiden: InterDocumentation Company (CIDOC), microfiche #2347) and 1944 (*VII Asamblea General de la UFCM: "La defensa del hogar"* ["The defense of the home"], Oct. 1944 (Leiden: InterDocumentation Company (CIDOC), microfiche # 2336); also compare the *informes* and conclusions from the General Assemblies of the UFCM of the Diocese of Guadalajara in 1935 (Second General Assembly, 10-12 Oct. 1935; UFCM-Guad, Actas II, pp. 6-14) and 1937 (Third General Assembly, 26-28 Sept., 1937, UFCM-Guad, Actas II., pp. 142b-144b) versus those of 1939 (Fourth General Assembly, 9-11 Oct. 1939; UFCM-Guad, Actas II, pp. 126b-132).

in some sort of concrete, pro-Church project, alongside detailed descriptions of Catholic women's work.⁴⁰

Not all activist Catholic women in Jalisco were members of the UFCM, and not all participated solely in its pacific campaigns for the reorganization of the Church. Evidence exists of women participating in more violent antigovernment demonstrations such as the stoning of the municipal palace in La Barca, Jalisco, on July 30th, 1936, an action reported to be led by women, or in similar "riotous demonstrations" in the neighboring state of Colima.⁴¹ Numerous petitions in favor of the reopening of Churches and the relaxation of anticlerical laws were sent by Catholic women, either in conjunction with Catholic men or independently.⁴² The archives of the SEP contain files from every state in Mexico which hold years' worth of responses to the periodic questionnaires which were sent out to its rural teachers, to assess their work in bringing the government's educational programs to the new schools being established in the countryside. Teachers in many rural towns in Jalisco consistently answered 'yes' when asked "Do religious feast days interrupt classes?" and whether there was a perceptible "lack of cooperation" among the local population.⁴³ More seriously, federal school teachers who were sent to rural communities in the countryside often became the targets of violence when the local inhabitants rejected the government's programs of socialistic education, with which teachers were to actively combat "superstitions." The SEP claimed, in its pedagogical program, that wealthy landowners and the Church conspired to keep the *campesinos* and the Indians in subordinate positions, using excommunication and exclusion from the sacraments as threats to keep them out of state schools, where they could learn how to better their lives independently. It is true that during the first half of the decade, state school teachers in Jalisco were chased out of towns and threatened with violence by Catholic "mobs" which were reported to be comprised of both men and women. In several tragic cases, teachers were either mutilated, like Micaela y Enriqueta Palacios, teachers whose ears were cut off in a "rebel attack" in San Martín Hidalgo, kidnapped, like

⁴⁰See, for example, the article "Acción Católica" in *Christus*, I: 2 (Jan. 1936), pp. 84-93. On p. 85 priests are recommended to found committees of the UCM and to organize them well, with concrete projects to maintain interest; this is followed by a two-page description of the UFCM's program for the "education of children" and how parish priests could assist the women with their projects; also see UFCM-Guad., Actas I, hojas sueltas--27 Oct. 1933, complaints re: disorganization of the UCM in Guadalajara.

⁴¹"Mexican Women Riot," NYT 1 Aug. 1936 (I, 3) (La Barca); NYT 21 Jul. 1935 (Colima).

⁴²Petitions, telegrams and letters too numerous to catalog here can be found from Catholic women in Jalisco and in the rest of Mexico throughout the 1930s, in the files of the National Archives in Mexico, in the Presidential Branch (Archivos Generales de la Nación, Ramo Presidentes, Fondos Pascual Ortiz Rubio, Abelardo Rodríguez, and Lázaro Cárdenas) and in the Branch of the Secretariat of the Interior (AGN, Ramo Gobernación)

⁴³Secretaría de Educación Pública, Archivo Histórico (SEP-AH), Depto de Escuelas Rurales, Serie: Escuelas Rurales Federales, JAL, Caja 6783, Exp. IV/161(IV-14)/10202-El Cedazo, Arandas, Jal., "Informe Sintético de Visitas de Inspección," completed by school inspector Esteban Dueñas, 6 May 1929; Secretaría de Educación Pública, Archivo Histórico (SEP-AH), Depto de Escuelas Rurales, Serie: Escuelas Rurales Federales, JAL, Caja 6785, "Informe Sintético de Visita de Inspección," completed by school inspector Esteban Dueñas, 26-27 Oct. 1931. The SEP archives for the individual states are currently being reorganized, as material is gathered rather randomly, but a survey of the two boxes ('cajas') given to me by the archivists yielded reports from over 100 schools for the decade, many of which include some complaint of local 'fanatic' (i.e., Catholic) activism undermining the efforts of the federal public school teachers.

inspector Juan Sevilla in the Zacoalco zone, beaten and severely injured, like Primitivo Tolentino in Ahualulco and José Guadalupe Gudiño in Zapopan, or killed, like Apolonio González in Mezquitic, Alfonso Negrete in Acatic, Ramiro Martínez in San Diego de Alejandría. By 1936, the SEP and the Jalisco state secretariat of public instruction were warning teachers not to use the word "socialist" so openly, but to work to gain the trust of the residents in their school district. Nevertheless, teachers held demonstrations in the mid- to late 1930s, continuing to demand protection from the state for their services rendered, for fear of violent reprisals. Not all violent actions or "rebel attacks" can be proven to be "Catholic," as some authors have accused,⁴⁴ and physical reprisal against state employees was never endorsed by the Church, but it is true that priests and lay activists actively campaigned against the state schools in rural and urban areas of Jalisco, and that intolerance on both sides led, as in the previous decade, to violent consequences.

Reflections and Conclusions

It is important to keep in mind that not all actions of Catholic women, like those of Catholic men, were pacific, constructive, or legal. Detailed examinations of the period of Church-State conflict in Mexico such as this article reveal that the category of "Mexican Catholic women" to be much more heterogeneous than stereotypes which were contemporary to the 1930s (and which have endured) allowed, whether of troublesome '*beatas*' (overly pious busybodies) or passive, oppressed women burdened by an anachronistic belief system or imperatives from a male-dominated hierarchy.

From the minutes of the UFCM in Guadalajara and the descriptions given by members and ex-members, the membership of the UFCM in Guadalajara appears to have been mainly, but not exclusively, comprised of upper and middle class women. The records of the UFCM in Guadalajara and Mexico City demonstrate a continuing preoccupation with the finances of the organization, and there is an almost continual insistence on the payment of monthly and yearly dues (*téseras* and *cuotas*). There was a sliding scale of payment, and allowances were made for women with economic difficulties, but when one considers that 50 centavos, the monthly dues of some chapters of the UFCM was more than the average daily wage of rural workers in some parts of Jalisco state, an obvious though unmentioned limitation to the membership of the UFCM becomes apparent.⁴⁵

In the literature of the UFCM and in descriptions of its members, there is also a fairly clear divide between the 'helpers' and the 'helped.' At its inception the Mexican

⁴⁴José Ma. Muriá, dir. *Historia de Jalisco. Tomo IV: Desde la consolidación del Porfiriato hasta mediados del siglo xx.* Guadalajara, Jalisco: Gobierno de Jalisco, Secretaría General, Unidad Editorial, 1982, pp. 349-350 and pp. 548-567, esp. p. 556 (teachers attacked), p. 550 (teachers killed) and pp. 561-562 (demonstrations). Authors such as Muriá, Pablo Yankelevich (*La Educación Socialista en Jalisco*, Jalisco: Departamento de Educación Pública del Edo. de Jal, 1985) and David Raby (*Educación y Revolución en México, 1921-1940*, México: SEP, Col. SEP/70, 1974) broadly condemn the Church, blaming it for the eventual mitigation of the project of socialist education.

⁴⁵Archivo Histórico de Jalisco, Ramo Estadística, Caja 17,ES-4-930-940, "Informe del Secretaria de Industria, Comercio y Trabajo, 27 Apr. 1932," pp. 6-7 ("Jalisco").

Acción Católica, like other Catholic Action groups, was envisaged to be a trained elite, prepared to help the clergy and hierarchy of the Catholic Church in its apostolic works of evangelization, conversion and moral guidance. Women such as Trujillo Villa, daughter of a wealthy landowner, looked to the *campesinas* primarily as women to be helped back into the Catholic fold, rather than future collaborators in the work of the UFCM. As a child, Francisca Hernández Ruíz lived along with her mother and siblings in her uncle's household in Rancho de la Mota, outside of Tepatitlán, in the Los Altos region of Jalisco. Hernández Ruíz remembered her uncle providing food and shelter for members of the Unión Popular during the Cristero Rebellion. However, Hernández Ruíz also remembered the duties which the women in that household performed from morning until night. She knew that there were such groups as the UFCM and the JCFM in Tepatitlán, where she and her family went to church on Sundays. They had taken part in several of their religious processions through the town, but aside from that, had neither the time nor the money to become members.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, the UFCM and the JCFM provided opportunities for some lower-middle class, working class, and rural women to gain access to some form of education and social organization, and occasionally to become members. It is remarkable that so many women, in the hundreds of thousands by the end of the decade, were participating at some level, considering the responsibilities which women of all social classes had in their households, to care for or coordinate care for their husbands, their children, their homes and their environs. Throughout the 1930s, Catholic women participated in the UFCM and JCFM, and in pious associations in their parishes, in letter-writing and petitioning campaigns, in public demonstrations and protests, and even in "secret organizations" which conspired against the state, if the Mexican government's 1934 statement to the *New York Times* is to be believed. Both women's organizations had memberships in the hundreds of thousands by the early 1940s,⁴⁷ providing not only an extensive network through which social action projects could be successfully undertaken, but also a general recognition of the group by people who did not take part. Nearly all of the forty-four elderly people I interviewed during my field research recognized the names and terminology of the Acción Católica, and often, as one commented, remembered the women as "always doing something."⁴⁸

Something that often gets lost in the celebratory literature of the Acción Católica in Mexico is the individual personalities and beliefs of its members. Contradicting stereotypes of doctrinaire *beatas* ruining everyone's fun, or of unquestioningly obedient followers, its women members, I found, could diverge quite a bit from its prescribed doctrinal and behavioral patterns, and did so without jeopardizing the future of the Church or their own fundamental beliefs. As is demonstrated in their statements and documents, Mexican Catholic women activists did have, in varying degrees, a recognition of the problems of Mexican society and of different social groups' economic

⁴⁶Trujillo Villa, interview, 13 May 1997; Francisca Hernández Ruíz (b. 1919), interview with Kristina Boylan, Guadalajara, Jal., 26 Jun. 1997. Note: public religious processions outside of Church buildings were prohibited by the Constitution and its operating laws through the 1940s.

⁴⁷Reich, *Mexico's Hidden Revolution*, p. 102.

⁴⁸Barba Brisio, interview, 12 Mar. 1997.

needs. It became evident toward the end of the 1930s that Mexico was stuck with its Revolutionary government, which established its hegemony with a combination of monopolistic domination and local concessions. In return for the relaxation or willful ignorance of anticlerical laws, Catholics diminished their belligerent attacks on public schools and institutions, evidenced by, for example, the UFCM's initiative of September 1937 to coordinate the Asociación de Niños de la Acción Católica (ANAC), which targeted young boys to attend after school in order to receive religious instruction, rather than keeping them out of public schools.⁴⁹

The Acción Católica was not only a religious organization, but a social one as well. UFCM and JCFM members were not always preoccupied with thoughts of sin or of overturning the Mexican socialist regime, but also met to socialize with their peers. The Acción Católica often provided an acceptable venue for young Catholics, especially young Catholic women, to socialize outside their homes and away from parental supervision. Naturally, many young members sought out their future partners, who as members of the Acción Católica would most likely be acceptable to their families; some were unsuccessful, as a spinster in Cajitlán reported to a visiting anthropologist (although she added that she had particularly enjoyed the independence that participating in parish activities for youth had provided her), while others were successful, like Valdéz de León, who met her husband Alejandro León while they were both members of the youth groups of the Acción Católica.⁵⁰

Some members of the Acción Católica also proved not to be averse to occasional explorations of the secular world. Ortiz de Salazar and her friends in the JCFM diligently watched for the UFCM to post the Liga Mexicana de Decencia's lists of film ratings, which judged films on an A-to-D scale of permissible to immoral films. Ortiz de Salazar and her friends would then without fail make their way to the "D" films, as they knew that they would probably be the best ones.⁵¹

Mexican Catholic women played a large part in the day-to-day operations of the Church, as well as the larger campaigns to preserve the Church in the wake of anticlerical attacks in Revolutionary Mexico. Due in part to the Catholic campaigns of the postrevolutionary period, the Church still plays a large part in the cultural and social life of Mexico, and has even recovered some indirect political influence, as seen in its relationship with the PAN and its participation in more recent movements for social justice—though this recovery still prompts strong criticism. Mexican Catholics won concessions from the Revolutionary state, and made concessions towards it. Mexican Catholic women successfully defended their value system against the

⁴⁹UFCM—Ibero, Fondo UFCM, Sección Correspondencia, Serie Asambleas Generales, Caja 4, Carpeta 26, "IV Asamblea General de la UFCM, Oct. 1938," "Informe," p. 3. The Central Committee of the UFCM was assigned this responsibility by the Junta Central of the Mexican Acción Católica on 25 Aug. 1936, and designed and publicized the ANAC project the following year. For the adoption of the project by the UFCM in Guadalajara, see UFCM—Guad., Actas II, p. 91 (11 Aug. 1938), UFCM—Guad., Actas II, p. 89 (29 Sept. 1938), UFCM—Guad., Actas II, p. 92b (10 Nov. 1938) and ff.

⁵⁰Arnold, "Mexican Women," p. 58; Valdéz de León, interview, 5 Jun. 1997. Valdéz de León keeps a collection of their ACJM and JCFM literature, as well as their notes to each other written during their courtship, which, as she demonstrated to me, contain numerous references to their devout Catholic faith.

⁵¹Ortiz de Salazar, interview, 7 May 1997.

Revolutionary State's call for women to reject their heritage, which it condemned as anachronistic and superstitious. These women created an influential niche for themselves in the Church and in their communities. Mexican Catholic women activists used their mobilizations to circumvent prescribed behavior for Mexican women to realize their personal and—defined broadly—political goals.