

Persecution of Catholic Church in Cuba diminishes

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

Quito, Ecuador--Repression against the Catholic church in Cuba has diminished, but the church is at about the level it was when the evangelization of the Americas began 500 years ago according to Fr. Augustin Roman, Auxiliary Bishop of Miami.

"If the church in 1995 is not permitted to participate in the life of its country or to offer its message via the mass media, the church is as it was in 1492 when Columbus discovered America," the bishop said.

Roman was speaking at the opening of the annual meeting of "Bishops and Catholic Priest in exile" which was held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Thirty delegates from the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean attended the meeting July 11-13.

The bishop said that the Dominican Republic was selected for this year's meeting because this year marks the 100th anniversary of the "Montecristi Manifesto" with which Cuban liberator Jose Marti launched his struggle for independence along with the Dominican born Maximo Gomez.

"Repression against the church in Cuba has diminished," he said. "Today the church is able to do more than what it could do in the first years (of the revolution)."

But, Roman said that the indirect repression, the silencing (of the church) has not ceased in Cuba. He said that the church continues to carry out its work in the midst of what he called "tremendous limitations".

"The church is not allowed to do what it is able to do in any other country of the hemisphere. For example it is not able to use radio, television or the press. Therefore, at this moment, it is not free," Roman said.

Roman also met with Monsignor Eduardo Boza Masvidal, the archbishop of Los Teques, Venezuela who convened the first meeting of exiled Cuban priests and bishops 21 years ago.

Since then, the priests, who serve in various parts of the hemisphere, have met annually in the United States, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Costa Rico and the Dominican Republic.

"These meetings are held to coordinate the evangelization of the diaspora, to share our work, and to analyze and determine what we are to do," Roman said.

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