

STATISTICAL REALITY OF THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE WITHIN THE EVANGELICAL POPULATION OF IBERO AMERICA (I)

Por Mario Zani

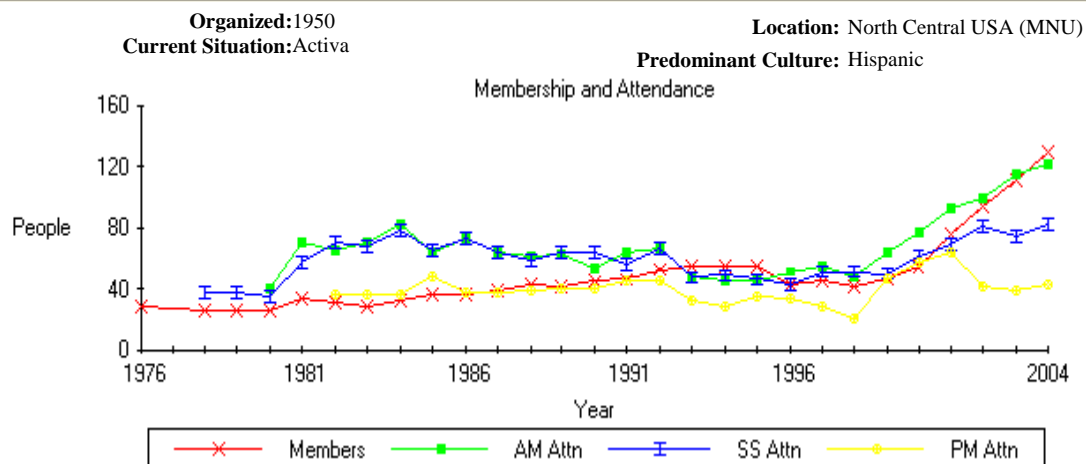
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To determine the statistical reality of the Church of the Nazarene in the context of a comparative study with the rest of the Evangelical church in Latin America is a monumental task for just one person and even for a committee that could dedicate time and sufficient resources for such a purpose. On the other hand there are statistics in and outside of our denomination that can be of help and even be like an X-ray of the area where we minister, particularly our local church. Such information can help with many purposes, and if it is used as a tool it can help a congregation project itself better in their planning in context for the future. At the end, I will mention some aspects of every church that could be realistically considered if the desire exists to obtain concrete benefits and not only an ephemeral comparison without immediate application.

As I said, our denomination makes available statistical information and this can serve—among other functions—to give orientation and annual tendencies of new members, members in good standing, attendance at Sunday activities, funds collected and a reminder if the budgets have been paid or not (with the exception that this column could be or not be current). For example and in the case of the church that my wife pastored in Kansas City a few months ago, the denominational statistics looked like this:

Summarized Report ¹ **Kansas City Spanish, Kansas City District**



¹SOURCE: General Secretary's Annual Reports, compiled by the Research Center, Church of the Nazarene.
<http://map.nazarene.org/scripts/ChurchSummary.exe>.

Decadal Information (1994-2004):									
Membership Growth in the Decade:130.36%					Membership Growth for Year:10.09%				
Sunday Morning Attendance:168.89%					Growth Sunday Morning for Year:11.07%				
Sunday School Attendance:67.35%					Increase in SS for Year:5.92%				
Year	New Nazarenes	Full Members	Sunday Morning Attendance	S.S. Attendance	S.S. Enrollment	Sunday Evening Attendance	S.S. Teachers and Officers.	Total Raised	Budgets Paid
1976	0	29	0	0	0	0	0		
1977	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
1978	0	26	0	38	71	0	7	\$15,288	
1979	0	26	0	38	71	0	7	\$15,288	
1980	0	26	40	35	46	0	2	\$12,249	
1981	0	33	71	58	106	0	8	\$16,170	
1982	2	31	66	71	95	36	7	\$24,185	Y
1983	5	28	71	68	87	36	6	\$16,044	
1984	4	32	82	79	95	36	7	\$17,360	
1985	4	36	65	66	114	48	7	\$21,951	
1986	0	36	73	73	145	38	3	\$17,922	N
1987	10	39	64	64	90	38	10	\$19,501	N
1988	4	42	62	59	81	39	6	\$19,450	Y
1989	4	41	63	65	86	40	2	\$21,700	N
1990	5	45	54	64	103	40	9	\$25,169	N
1991	0	47	64	57	86	45	7	\$36,267	N
1992	4	53	67	67	95	45	8	\$45,678	Y
1993	3	56	48	48	97	32	9	\$31,274	N
1994	0	56	45	49	89	29	7	\$29,790	N
1995	0	56	45	46	111	35	0	\$31,078	Y
1996	15	42	51	42	93	33	7	\$31,227	N
1997	2	45	55	51	81	28	7	\$43,127	N
1998	0	41	48	51	59	20	7	\$40,439	N
1999	6	46	64	50	85	46	8	\$43,023	N
2000	15	56	77	62	106	58	8	\$51,841	Y
2001	26	76	93	70	70	64	0	\$46,449	Y
2002	15	94	99	81	150	41	14	\$81,444	Y
2003	7	111	115	75	77	39	10	\$107,640	Y
2004	10	129	121	82	86	42	13	\$137,050	Y

These same statistics, along with those of all the churches on the district, can give and enlarge the panorama in relation to district strategies and programs. In the same way they can be the procedure in which national leaders can evaluate and elaborate strategies for their countries where these churches and their districts are located. The fields that include these countries and then the regions that include these specific fields can also work with the information in these statistics and use them as strategic tools. However, since the information is mostly administrative, it will not reveal strengths, opportunities, weakness and threats. Leadership on local, district, field and region will need to determine, if they want to take better advantage of their resources, what are their realities and possibilities, to work effectively and progressively in the integral growth of their congregations. Here I want to add a personal thought that my wife

and I have used in our pastoral ministry in Argentina and in the United States. When we were assigned or elected we always assumed that the pastorate was not just within the four walls of the church building, but in the community and the city where the church was. So, with prayer, we considered ourselves pastors of the city and not just the 20, 30, 50, 132 members that we had. They were also responsible to pastor with us. But, let's return to the topic at hand...

Because we are talking about 25 countries in the World Mission Regions, and also the Hispanics in the United States and Canada,² with histories, cultural components, and diverse possibilities—in which exist a series of variables—this will require much more than a paper to do justice to the title of this presentation. I repeat this because it is important, it has to be done, but there is much more than one reality. Each church comparatively in its context and as it invests in Biblical-theological formation and evangelistic commitment, will offer varied responses to specific situations according to its country, context and denomination (I mention this aspect because the intention was to place or compare our denomination in the context of others), type of administration, along with the socio-economic, political, historical, cultural, geographical, and doctrinal profiles. Another observation. I have visited various Nazarene churches during the past four months. Some of them are growing, but some are at the point of closing or are closed. The saddest thing about these latter ones is that they are closing or closed not because the community is persecuting them, throws tomatoes at them or threatens the members. On the contrary, on going out and walking in the area around the church one finds a surprising friendly openness, and even desire to know more about our faith. The problem, on first glance, was not an aggressive community, but the absence of pastors committed to the Great Commission, and a decimated and discouraged congregation. I am not trying to place blame but rather change mentalities and hearts to respond to the open doors and specific needs that are reflected in the evaluations, including statistics, interviews, community studies and specific strategies.

The title worries us enough to not be content with excuses for not assuming the challenge of discovering our statistical reality that should reveal the cries of those who are waiting for the Gospel. Personally, the statistics concern me enough—because it is about these people—at least to try to understand the other papers presented during this conference.

A WORLD REALITY

As interesting facts, I want to call attention—selectively—to this information that later will facilitate laying out problems or evaluative questions that are related to our immediate context. Among many other questions, for example, we could ask the following: What does this information say to me as a pastor and member of the local church to which I belong? What truths do these numbers reflect if I interpret them in the perspective of my community and city where God has placed me as pastor and my church as one who proclaims and intercedes? What do they tell me as one who forms pastors, educators and theologians?

² **SAM Region:** Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela. **MAC Region:** Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama. **Caribbean Región:** Cuba, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic. **Eurasia Region:** Portugal y Spain. **Africa Region:** Ecuatorial Guinea. **Regions in North America:** The countries of the United States and Canada.

The Challenge of Worldwide Population³

Year:	1900	1970	Mid-2000	Trend	Mid-2004	2025
World Population						
1. Población Total	1,619,625,000	3,690,924,000	6,056,715,000	1.25	6,364,317,000	7,936,740,000
• Urban inhabitants	232,695,000	1,353,051,000	2,882,917,000	1.94	3,113,253,000	4,660,918,000
• Rural inhabitants	1,386,930,000	2,337,873,000	3,173,798,000	0.60	3,251,064,000	3,275,822,000
2. Adult population (15 years or more)	1,073,621,000	2,312,833,000	4,241,648,000	1.40	4,484,258,000	6,004,953,000
• Can read	296,258,000	1,475,194,000	3,261,345,000	1.76	3,497,306,000	5,046,637,000
• Cannot read	777,363,000	837,639,000	980,303,000	0.17	986,952,000	958,316,000

At first glance, a general analysis of the numbers in the previous table reveals the profile of a world that has changed considerably in little more than a century and it shows us what we can hope for until 2025. Some aspects that should be considered in three dimensions of the statistics:

1. **The past:** In 100 years the world's population has grown from 1.5 billion to more than 6 billion and in the following four years—until the middle of 2004—250,000,000 more people were born. Those of us who are 50 or older have seen more people than have been seen in all previous generations. In 35 years, the world's population will have doubled.
2. **The present:** Urban population has increased more rapidly than rural population. 100 years ago, the rural population was 5 times greater than the urban population. At the end of 2004 the projections indicate that the urban populations will almost 1.5 billion more than the rural. Three people work the fields so that seven can eat bread, milk, meat, vegetables and beans—and every other agricultural product.
3. **The future:** The adult population (those who are 15 or older) who are illiterate started to decline in 2004. The projection is that by 2025 the number will reduce by almost 30 million individuals.

If we use the world statistics to comparatively analyze our denomination's statistics—until the end of 2003—we can get a corporative analytical overview that, among other things, will allow us to understand some specific denominational challenges.

³David B. Barrett & Todd M. Johnson, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 2004.

The Challenge of Nazarene Population⁴

	2003	2002	Increase or Decrease	% Increase or Decrease	1993	Decadal Increase or Decrease	% Increase or Decrease
Total Membership	1,435,780	1,466,920	-31,140	-2.12%	1,104,694	331,086	29.97%
United States	621,048	643,649	-22,601	-3.51%	591,134	29,914	5.06%
World Misión	802,108	810,598	-8,490	-1.05%	502,201	299,907	59.72%
Canada	12,624	12,673	-49	-0.39%	11,359	1,265	11.14%
New Nazarenes (worldwide)	117,296	111,526	5,770	5.17%	76,110	41,186	54.11%
By profesión of faith	100,469	96,313	4,156	4.32%	68,976	31,493	45.66%
From other denominatio ns	16,827	15,213	1,614	10.61%	7,134	9,693	135.87%
Organizad Churches	13,259	12,977	282	2.17%	10,882	2,377	21.84%

Without doubt the statistics shown above lead us to ask many questions. We will leave for now the analysis and conjectures for discussion during the conference. We will continue for now with some concerns that the statistics closer to us could bring up.

A NEW IBERO-AMERICAN REALITY

Together—from Spain to Latin America—for almost 25 years we have lived social, political and religious changes that we can not ignore.

For example, in 1977 in Spain, the opposition groups against Franco were legalized and elections were established giving way to a new constitution and the existence of a parliamentary monarchy without an official state religion. This also gave relative autonomy to 17 regions into which the country remained divided. In 1986 another interesting variable was added when Spain, along with Portugal, entered the European Union. To these aspects one must add the growing migratory flow from Baltic and Latin American countries that now give new tendencies and opportunities for the evangelization of the great cities of Spain and the rest of the European continent. On the other hand, and although there are better opportunities for a harvest, talk of growth will not be easy if we maintain some conventional strategies like, for example, obtaining buildings in which to establish congregations. However, the rural reality of Spain is not the same or proportional to the possibilities of growth of the church that the urban population presents. The religious tradition and the flow of immigration, for example, are different in each context.

The Peruvian theologian, Samuel Escobar, calls attention to the recent changes in Latin America, showing that this has surprised sociologists as well as theologians from the developed world, and adds:

⁴General Secretary's Annual Reports, Research Center, Church of the Nazarene, www.nazarene.org.

The liberating effects of conversion and worship in the lower classes have brought self-realization and social legitimization [of the evangelicals]. With their growing number and upper mobilization, evangelicals have entered the political arena, they have gotten involved in basic matters of justice, feeling capable to do so from a Christological perspective in the conflict between evil and the kingdom of God....⁵

Escobar has shown that this new evangelical power has not always been positive. But again, in the statistical analysis we must keep that in mind, along with considerable political changes that have occurred and are occurring in Latin America for the past 25 years. It is interesting to me, from an evangelical standpoint and as a tendency to study the statistics of the Nazarene movement and evangelicals in general, the influence or lack of influence a Nazarene governor in the State of Chiapas, Mexico, has had since December 8, 2000 until the present. Some concrete elements are or have been an opportunity or not an influence to growth or non-growth of the church.⁶

RELIGIOUS REALITY IN LATIN AMERICA

In the context of the previous observations, I think it is important to review some of the tendencies Patrick Johnstone and his center of investigations of WEC International have emphasized about the past two decades (if we have not taken into account these changes and/or the presence of):

1. The democratization of Latin America that has accelerated, putting aside authoritarian regimes [which, as a personal observation, also transfers the center of the organizational structure of the church].
2. The reduction of revolutionary guerrillas.
3. Drug traffic empires that are part of the reality where some of our churches are established (or where some of our churches could be established),
4. Regional economic alliances, which allow us to realign strategies, (for example: freely cross borders, interchange leadership, missionary service, etc.).⁷

Immediately, Johnstone points out that in the area of religion—as we well know—in 1900 in Latin America “almost the entire population considered itself Catholic.” But he adds something that perhaps some have not thought about very deeply. He shows that “the changes since then have been incredible: from a closed traditionalism, with strong opposition to Protestant missionary activity, to freedom to worship and accelerated evangelical growth.” In this sense, we need to understand that the Catholic Church has not remained indifferent. Just the opposite, “it has responded with vigorous effort to stop the defections and retake the initiative and the hearts of the people.” Catholics today represent about 80%, but—as the author points out—“many have been baptized Catholics, but are actually spiritists or Christian pagans.

⁵ Samuel Escobar, en “Mañana—Discerning the Spirit in Latin America”, paper presented to the Theological Consultation, in London, England, April 9-14, 1996.

⁶ Dr. Pablo Salazar Mendiguchía, member of the 3rd Church of the Nazarene, along with his family who are founding members of that congregation.

⁷ *Operación Mundo*, 4th ed. (London: Centro de Literatura Cristiana), 50-51.

Defections to other denominations or religions add up to more than 3.7 million yearly or 10,000 per day.”⁸

The snare of these statistics is that can make us so happy that we simply use them for comparison and to feel satisfied. The call to attention is that we see the fields ready for harvest. We look, and again I make this observation, and see “flat” churches or ready to be closed. We see how many young people in my local congregation are responding to the call of God to go into the ministry. We see the lack of theological and teaching materials, the help that every congregation should have.... And if they have materials, what are their tendencies? We see the words of the songs and choruses that are sung in the congregations. We see how the church has decentralized to the houses of the members to form cell groups. We see how many of those are being trained to be instruments of reconciliation of their lives with God.

A bit of reflection. A few days ago, on a Sunday, I visited a church in Chile where the building is located on some land that had been given as a concession by the municipality more than 20 years ago. About two months ago, the church was requested to return the property to the community—and it will be returned—because, in the words of one of the municipal leaders, “*You have done little or nothing for the population.*” The evidence was in plain sight. Attending this church service, including my wife and I, were seven people.

Retaking the thread of progress of the gospel in Latin America, we cannot help but highlight the cooperation and collaboration—harmonious work of national and international leadership—that has existed and should continue to exist as an essential element in growth. In the United States one can already see and one sees more and more among the Anglo Nazarene districts a desire to integrate into their district teams Hispanic leaders so that they can serve as coordinators of Hispanic ministries, making the evangelization more effective in this growing minority group in the United States.

The numbers in Latin America indicate the following:

Ecclesiastical Groupings	Congregations	Members	Affiliated
Protestants	270.000	23.700.000	50.000.000
Roman Catholics	31.634	197.450.000	316.100.000
Orthodox	1.600	290.000	519.000
Marginal	26.400	2.364.000	5.000.000

Some of these numbers can be subdivided. For example, for the term “Protestant” in *Operation World*, the totals are divided into “Evangelicals” (21,370,000) and “Pentecostals” (16,840,000). The same happens with the Roman Catholics that includes 1,200,000 Charismatics.

I insist that the numbers say very little or nothing if we do not open our eyes more to the immediate realities of our context. My responsibility, as a leader and member of the local

⁸ Ibid.

church, is to frequently ask myself, what do I need to know about my context? How can I elaborate statistics that speak specifically to me and contribute to the vision that I have and to the mobilization of my congregation? What truths do other statistics reflect in relation to the community and the city where God has placed me as a leaders and my church as intercessor and proclaimer of the Good News of the Gospel?

MY REALITY

The panorama presented above brings me to say two things and to give a job to each leader present here and to those who access the papers from this conference.

First, statistics are an important tool to discover the reality of the context where God has placed me and raised up our local congregation.

Second, if I do not make the effort to discover the contextual identity and the profile of my city it will be like trying to navigate a boat in the fog without a compass; without certain direction, in the absence of an important—and I would say crucial—instrument that gives direction as statistical tables and the information that they can directly give.

How can I discover the reality of my world and that of my congregation in the context of other churches and my community? If I want to help myself, then I could start with the elaboration of a small comparative graph, which could look like the following:

The Reality of My Context and Local Church⁹

Year:	1990	2000	End of Statistical Year 2004	Projection 2010 ¹⁰
POPULATION				
In the city or town where my church is located				
• Rural population				
• Urban population				
Evangelical population in my community				
• Baptists				
• Methodists				
• Assemblies of God				
• Other evangelical groups				
Aspects of particular interest of my church				
• Membership				
• Sunday attendance				

⁹ By you.

¹⁰ This projection are the goals that should be established with a strategy of participation of the congregation (discipleship classes; emphasis like “Every One Win One”; tools like the JESUS film, etc.).

• Ministerial students				
• Sunday school teachers				
• Cell groups				
• Total of baptisms during the year				
• Total new members during the year				

Other statistical details of interest could be added to the chart according to the needs of each person. For example, the average age in your community and their schooling level. Also, while I do this brief statistical study, I can ask: in what manner do the members and the friends that attend my local church reflect my city's or community's population?

Thank you very much for allowing me to share this topic with you.

APPENDIX

(Added by the Editorial Committee)

The most recent version in English of Patrick Johnstone¹¹ provides the following information for Latin America and the Caribbean (including countries that do not speak Spanish):

Total Christian population: 476,600,000 that represents 91.65% of the population.

If this number of the Christian population is analyzed more in detail, there are:

- Catholics:408,908,000.....78.77%
- Historical Protestants, Anglicans and Independents:61,569,000.....11.87%
- Orthodox:.....533,000.....0.10%
- Marginal Christians:9,150,000.....1.76%
- Not affiliated:17,106,000.....3.30%

It is necessary to subtract from the total about 20,708,000 due to double affiliation, which represents 4.00% (leaving the total of all the percentages mentioned at 91.65%).

On the other hand, when considering the statistics from our own denomination, according to a 2003 report, we have 1,435,780 members worldwide. The 2002 report indicated that 55.25% of this amount was located in regions outside of the United States, which equals 810,598 members. The data from the latest report (2003) show that members from the Caribbean total 17,000; MAC Region 121,936; and the SAM Region 157,631 that together make a total of 296,567 members. Crossing this data with the 61,569,000 (11.87%) Protestants, Anglicans and Independents in Latin America and the Caribbean, Nazarenes constitute 00.48% of the Protestant population of these areas, or less than one half of a percentage point. This realistic perception of

¹¹ P. Johnstone & J. Mandryk, *Operation World*, 21st Century Edition (Atlanta: WEC/Paternoster Lifestyle, 2001), 33.

Statistical Reality... I (Mario Zani)

our demographic gravitation within Protestantism in our regions should also lead us to a series of questions in respect to the strategies that we should take into account when thinking of the evangelical contribution to the evangelization and transformation of our societies.