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## What price have you paid for your faith?

by Michael Sean Winters

NCR Today

Today's "Morning Briefing" includes a link to an article in yesterday's Washington Post about Fr. Miguel Lopez, a Mexican priest whose care of souls extends to a patch of that magnificently beautiful country that has been made exceptionally ugly by warring drug traffickers. I had to read the article twice it was so compelling. And, so humbling. What price have you or I had to really pay for our faith lately? This poor priest risks not only his life, but the life of his soul, confronting evil in one of its purer forms.

What price have you or I paid lately? The question haunts. At the very least, the misery that drug traffickers are causing to the civil society in Mexico is cause for Americans to get serious about our nation's drug habit. Those drug traffickers are not getting rich selling to their own. Those drugs feed America's relentless hunger for drugs. The next time you hear of someone caught doing so-called recreational drugs, or party drugs, note that the area where Fr. Lopez risks his life is dotted with crystal meth labs. My dancing days are behind me, but I am told that this is the drug of choice in America's clubs and bars. Shame on anyone who uses it. And, when you here someone say that such recreational drug use is a "victimless crime" think of Fr. Lopez.

The problem of America's relationship with our southern neighbor, which was the focus of a summit attended by President Obama in Guadalajara, is complicated and I fear that the Catholic church has not done enough to help shape that relationship. Yes, we have a second collection for the Church in Latin America. But, it is more than 10 years since the Synod of the Americas was held in Rome. That synod held out the vision of seeing the hemisphere as one church, breaking down the artificial political divisions the way Pope John Paul II envisioned pulling down the Iron Curtain and seeing Europe again as one cultural entity. Some parishes have sister parishes; all should. There are modest educational exchanges, but the network of Catholic universities should be aggressive in promoting cross-cultural exchanges. More needs to be done.

Fr. Lopez is doing his part, but I fear the rest of us are failing.

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