

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

August 5, 2014 at 9:28am

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## Three cheers! Pope Francis reinstates Miguel D'Escoto as a priest

by Maureen Fiedler

NCR Today

I can hear my friend Bill Callahan, formerly of the Quixote Center, cheering from his perch in heaven at the news that Pope Francis is reinstating Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann as a priest. Bill knew Miguel D'Escoto, a member of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, personally when Miguel was the foreign minister of Nicaragua during the days of the Sandinistas (1979-90). They were friends and allies, both opposed to the Reagan wars in Central America, both deeply concerned about the poor.

That was when the Quixote Center, where Bill was a co-director, was shipping millions in humanitarian aid to Nicaragua under a program called Quest for Peace, a program that continues today. That aid was designed to counteract President Ronald Reagan's Contra war by matching congressional appropriations of "Contra aid" with humanitarian aid. U.S. citizens did it, with a \$227 million match in humanitarian aid.

I suspect Pope Francis would have resonated with Quest for Peace. His emphasis on social justice and the needs of the poor would have given him a more progressive outlook on the work of the Jesuits in Central America. He may not have been 100 percent sympathetic to liberation theology, but he may now be rethinking that position.

Bill Callahan himself was ousted from the Jesuits at about the same time Miguel was ousted from Maryknoll, ostensibly because he refused to leave the Quixote Center and because he publicly favored the ordination of women. However, those of us who worked alongside Bill were strongly suspicious that his work with Nicaragua was ultimately behind his suspension and ouster. Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo, the archbishop of Managua in those days, was not favorable to the Sandinista movement in spite of its service to the poor. He was, to put it mildly, in tension with the Jesuits in Managua in those days -- and in tension with Miguel D'Escoto.

Bill died without being reinstated, though he exercised his priesthood "informally" for years. But today, I'm sure Bill would be cheering Miguel's reinstatement as a priest. And so am I.

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