

Understanding and Building Justice from Religious Beliefs with a Displaced Population in Colombia

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More than 2 million people have been displaced in Colombia due the internal armed conflict during the last decades. Research teams from *Pontificia Universidad Javeriana* (PUJ, Bogotá) and the Jesuit Service for Refugees (SJR) have been developing a study to identify the mental representations and religious practices of those people forced into displacement in Colombia. These issues are seen in light of the biblical categories of hope, theological worlds and *imago Dei*, in order to, in one hand, clarify the role of religion and spirituality in coping with adversity and, in the other hand, to propose alternatives for the establishment of strong social networks for this population.

From a qualitative perspective, the study seeks to determine some of the effects that displacement due the violence has on the Colombian population. This in-course research is focused on four specific topics: the meaning of the possession of the land, basic institutions for socialization, the spirit of the law and religious imagination, assessed within a group of 120 displaced people in four different small towns and rural zones. This presentation is referred specifically to this last point about the religious beliefs and the relationship with the psychological strategies of coping.

The project has three main stages: 1) building the theoretical framework and conceptualization; 2) collection and analysis of data; 3) conclusions, debriefing to communities and suggested pastoral practices.

Currently, the research is in stage two. Researchers have been using unstructured interviews and observing participation in order to collect data about the way in which these displaced people experience their situation. Among some initial conclusions, researchers have found that in many cases the religious orientation, instead of be considered as a problem, allows people to return to their ordinary lives after displacement. This specific presentation introduces some of the findings on this topic.