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# A New Future? The Catholic Church, Grassroots Justice, and Accountability

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# **The Social Practice of Human Rights: Charting the Frontiers of Research and Advocacy**

2017 Conference of the University of Dayton Human Rights Center

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**Research Panel:** Faith-Based Perspectives

**Presenter:** Regina Menachery Paulose, A Contrario International Criminal Law

**Title:** A New Future? The Catholic Church, Grassroots Justice, and Accountability

**Abstract:**

Between the 1970s and 1980s, Guatemalans, particularly the indigenous populations, were targets of a state-sponsored genocide. Several years after the genocide, Catholic Bishop Juan Gerardi of Guatemala City took the lead in creating the Recovery of Historical Memory Project, which was an independent investigation into the events of the genocide. Gerardi was murdered before the report was made public. This paper will briefly discuss Gerardi's work and his contribution to local justice in Guatemala. The author will then explore what contributions the Catholic Church could make in creating similar fact-finding missions. Could a grassroots mechanism such as the one Gerardi created be a more effective response in particular situations, given the political gridlock of local and national governments? This paper will explore this question and utilize an ongoing situation to examine whether it could be more effective than a government body.

**About the presenter:**

Regina Menachery Paulose, an international criminal law and human rights attorney, earned a J.D. at Seattle University School of Law (2004) and an LL.M. at the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute at the University of Torino (2012).