Poverty & Marginalization In Mexico

John Neagle
In an interview published June 27 in daily newspaper Uno Mas Uno, Fr. Pedro Arellano Aguilar, director of the Episcopal Social Pastoral Commission and Caritas de Mexico (the Catholic Church's aid branch), said that some 20 million Mexicans are currently living in conditions of absolute poverty. The priest said the deterioration of living standards experienced by the majority of Mexican citizens is "pathetic." Arellano Aguilar referred to a study based on official data and developed by the Commission at the request of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM). He said that the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI) defines 84% of all Mexicans as living in poverty. INEGI statistics, he added, indicate that more than 2.5 million households accounting for some 14 million people receive incomes below the minimum wage. Arellano Aguilar said Mexico needs to generate at least 1 million new jobs per year to absorb the increasing numbers young people entering the labor market. According to Arellano Aguilar, absolute poverty is another term for socio-economic and political marginalization. This phenomenon, he said, has a corresponding culture characterized by frustration, aggression, violence, rebellion, escape/avoidance of reality via alcohol and drugs, as well as theft, drug trafficking, prostitution, and smuggling activities.