

Maria Eduarda Grill da Silveira
April 2026

Some documents were never meant to survive repression. The *Vicaría de la Solidaridad* — the Chilean Catholic Church's human rights bulletin, built to shield victims of Pinochet's regime — was produced under a government that disappeared people for speaking truth. It circulated in the shadow of state terror, documented what the regime denied, and named what power refused to acknowledge. Decades later, its pages are catalogued and preserved at the Hesburgh Library, a few miles from where I sit.

The question that brought me to that catalog search began with an unsettling contradiction. The Catholic Church — universal by definition, accountable to one Pope, one doctrine — responded to nearly identical authoritarian violence in two neighboring countries in ways that could not be more different. In Chile, it built an organization to protect the disappeared. In Argentina, it looked away. Explaining that contradiction required sources I wasn't sure existed.

The research began with scholarship. Through OneSearch, I built a literature review that spanned political science, sociology of religion, and Latin American history simultaneously. Hesburgh's journal subscriptions surfaced peer-reviewed articles from the *Journal of Latin American Studies*, open-access pieces from *Religions*, and book chapters I would never have identified through any other route. When sources fell outside Hesburgh's direct holdings, the Interlibrary Loan system retrieved them without interruption, collapsing the distance between what the research demanded and what I could reach. JSTOR deepened the archive further, giving me access to decades of scholarship on Church-state relations in Latin America.

What the literature revealed, however, was its own limitation: each scholar explained one factor in isolation — institutional autonomy, military clergy, ideological change — without examining how these factors interacted. The more I read, the clearer it became that the question required something the secondary literature could not provide — the Church's own words.

That realization sent me back to OneSearch with a different kind of search — not for scholars writing about the Church, but for the Church writing about itself. What came back was something I had not anticipated. The Hesburgh General Collection holds official publications of both episcopal conferences: *Evangelio, ética y política* from the Chilean Episcopal Conference (1984), and both *Documentos del Episcopado Argentino* and *Líneas pastorales para la nueva evangelización* from the Argentine. The Notre Dame Annex holds the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad* journal itself — issues from 1977 through 1987 — alongside *La Vicaría de la Solidaridad: una experiencia de Iglesia*, the Vicariate's own 1978 institutional report. Two editions of *Nunca Más*, the report of Argentina's National Commission on the Disappeared, sit in the General Collection as well. Every primary source the research required had survived repression and decades of obscurity — and arrived, somehow, at a Catholic university in Indiana.

These documents transformed the project. Rather than synthesizing what scholars had already argued, I could now analyze the Church's own language — coding pastoral letters, episcopal communiqués, and Vicariate bulletins against a framework organized around three dimensions: episcopal cohesion, institutional autonomy, and regime strategies of influence. The tool that made this methodology conceivable was Atlas.ti, which I learned in my Research Design for Global Affairs course with Professor Emma Murphy. Atlas.ti is a qualitative data analysis platform that allows researchers to upload textual corpora, build coding schemes derived from theoretical frameworks, establish network links between co-occurring codes, and trace patterns across documents systematically — doing in hours what manual close reading across dozens of sources could not. As part of designing the methodology, I began building and testing the coding scheme within the software — mapping how episcopal documents reflected cohesion, autonomy, and regime influence, and what patterns emerged between codes. What I built this year is a proposal, but not an abstract one —Atlas.ti turned a methodology on paper into something already in motion.

Managing a project of this complexity — primary sources in Spanish and English, secondary literature spanning five decades — required organizational infrastructure that, fortunately, I had already built. A workshop at the Navari Family Center for Digital Scholarship, where Daniel Johnson introduced me to Zotero, had changed how I approach every research project since. Before that session, my sources lived in disconnected tabs, downloaded PDFs with generic filenames, and notes I could not search. Since then, I have maintained a single living archive across all my work: sources tagged by thematic category, annotated with my own analysis, and formatted into citations with a single click. For a project whose reference list spans episcopal conference publications, human rights testimony, and peer-reviewed journals across three languages, that infrastructure was not supplementary. It was structural.

The physical spaces Hesburgh provides shaped the research in quieter but equally real ways. The reading rooms on the upper floors became where I read and where I thought — where I worked through the tension between a document that said one thing and a scholar who argued another, where I drafted and redrafted until the argument held. There is something particular about doing this kind of work inside a library, surrounded by the accumulated evidence that questions matter and that inquiry is worth the effort even when — especially when — what it uncovers is difficult.

What I could not have anticipated, when I first typed that research question into a blank document, was how completely Hesburgh would shape the answer. The OneSearch infrastructure that surfaced decades of scholarship in minutes. The Interlibrary Loan system that filled the gaps. The Atlas.ti license Hesburgh provides that made systematic coding a practice rather than an abstraction. The Zotero workshop that turned a scattered archive into something navigable. Each resource appeared at the precise moment the research demanded it, not as a supplement to the project, but as its foundation.

Some documents were never meant to survive repression. That they did — and that they are here, catalogued and preserved and available to a student asking hard questions about institutional courage and complicity — is not incidental to what Hesburgh Library is. It is

exactly the point — and at Notre Dame, a Catholic university sitting with these documents on its shelves, it is also a responsibility.