

“Economic Pilgrimage in Southern Ontario: Vincenzo Pietropaolo’s Photographs of Migrant Mexican Workers,” paper presented for *Latin America and the Caribbean Made in Canada*, Universities Art Association of Canada Conference, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, October 29, 2011.

Working in Canada has been a reality for thousands of Mexicans since the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program expanded beyond the Caribbean in 1974 to include Latin America. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Vincenzo Pietropaolo followed these migrant workers from their farms in southern Ontario to their local towns back home in central Mexico, visually documenting their economic struggles and emotional hardships with his camera. In my paper I compare Pietropaolo’s photographs of transnational labour with Mexican ex-votos, small paintings on tin sheets that narrate miraculous events and offer thanks to Catholic devotions for divine favours. Although ex-votos are a form of religious popular art, they provide a deeper window into the cultural life of Mexicans, and in certain cases they pictorially represent larger social and economic issues of “seasonal” or “offshore” workers. Pietropaolo drew upon the religious imagery of ex-votos and popular Catholicism in Mexico by entitling his collection of photographs *Harvest Pilgrims: Mexican and Caribbean Migrant Farm Workers in Canada* (2009). Through each image one is able to follow the economic pilgrimages that Mexicans make for up to eight months a year to provide for their families.