

May 26, 2009

Dear friends in Christ,

Greetings! Things are pretty much back to normal here in Mexico after the precautions concerning the flu epidemic that were taken a month ago. Undoubtedly, many businesses are still trying to recover and there are many economic after-effects that continue to present a serious challenge for people. The school year has also been prolonged slightly due to the school days missed. However, life in general has resumed its previous pace—which means lots of people, cars, and movement everywhere in this city of 20 million.

As I mentioned in my last newsletter about a month ago, last April 25 the Lutheran Church in Mexico ordained its first three woman pastors, graduates of Augsburg Lutheran Seminary, where I serve as professor. Because I thought this wonderful news might be overshadowed by concern over the problems associated with the flu epidemic, I decided to wait to share more information about the ordinations until now.

The three women ordained were María Elena Ortega, Sofía Tenorio, and Angela Trejo. (That is the order in which they appear in the photo where the three of them are standing alone.) María Elena is one of five daughters of Maximino Ortega and his wife Carmen. Back in the early 1960's, Maximino had wanted to become a pastor himself and had studied at the Augsburg Lutheran Seminary that was a predecessor to the present one, but was not able to finish his studies or be ordained. Thus it was very special for him to see his daughter ordained as a pastor. María Elena was the first woman student at the Lutheran Seminary, starting her studies in 1999, the year after the Seminary reopened. In 2002, she received a grant from the Lutheran World Federation to study for some time in Argentina, where she also worked in a couple of rural congregations. When she finished her studies here in 2005, she began to work at one of the Lutheran congregations in Mexico City (Holy Trinity), but she took a while to fulfill her thesis requirement, finally finishing last year. She will continue to serve at the same congregation, and has a real love for mission.

Sofía started at the Seminary a year after María Elena did, receiving a scholarship from ELCA Global Mission to finance her studies. While she was studying, she also began to work at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Mexico City, originally directing the Sunday School and later serving in other areas, including preaching, leading worship, and administration at both the congregational and synodical level (prior to studying for the pastoral ministry she had been employed in business administration). Sofía also became involved in other ministries related to counseling and working with the terminally ill. Primarily because of her administrative duties (she was the Legal Representative for the Lutheran Synod of Mexico for a couple of years), Sofía also took a while to finish her thesis requirement, but finally did so last year together with María Elena and Angela. Sofía has been called as one of the pastors at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, the congregation where we are active.

Angela is the wife of Rev. Dr. Moisés Pérez, who was the first graduate of our Lutheran Seminary following its reopening; Moisés is pastor at Christ Lutheran Church in Mexico City and also directs the Seminary. Angela is the daughter of Rev. Daniel Trejo, President of the Mexican Lutheran Church. Angela and Moisés were married 13 years ago and have two children, Elisa (12) and Elías (10). In 2002, Angela began to study at the

Theological Community of Mexico (the ecumenical consortium of seminaries of which Augsburg Lutheran Seminary forms part). A couple of years later, she decided she would study a full theological degree at the Seminary in order to become ordained, and she finished her studies and her thesis last year. In addition to continuing to serve as pastor with Moisés at Christ Lutheran, Angela's plans are also to be involved in teaching at the Theological Community.

Since they completed their studies at about the same time, María Elena, Sofía, and Angela decided to be ordained together. The ordination service was held at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd on Saturday, April 25. A number of Lutheran pastors from Mexico and the U.S. participated in the ordination, as well as ministers of several other denominations here in Mexico. Rev. Daniel Trejo performed the ordinations, and Rev. Raquel Rodríguez, Director of the Latin America/Caribbean Continental Desk of ELCA Global Mission, preached the sermon. While the church was fairly full, as can be seen in the photos, a considerably larger crowd was expected; a couple of days earlier, however, the government had announced the preventive measures for the flu epidemic and had strongly discouraged activities such as church services (which were cancelled at most Mexican churches that weekend and the following one). In spite of this, it was a joyous and festive occasion, as you can see in the photos that are attached.

May God continue to bless you all.

Yours in the service of our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Brondos', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Brondos
ELCA Missionary in Mexico







