

## NEW SEMESTER

At the Theological Community and Lutheran Seminary here in Mexico City, we began our new semester on January 24. In Mexico, classes at the university level typically start later in January and don't end until the beginning of June. This semester I am teaching four classes: the Life and Thought of Martin Luther, in which we read Luther's biography and his writings; Contemporary Theologies, where we look at many different Christian theologies from all around the world and analyze their relevance for us today; a Liturgy Workshop, in which students get practice in organizing and leading worship activities, especially in creative ways; and Lutheran Doctrine at the Lutheran Seminary. I have also been asked by the Lutheran Seminary to coordinate its new program of online courses, and will be working quite a bit on that in the coming months.

Through an agreement with the Swiss Reformed Church, we also have a visiting professor from Switzerland give a one-week all-day workshop to our students in February every year. This year Dr. Pierre Bühler from the University of Zurich taught a course on Hermeneutics in the 21st century (see bottom photo).



Students in my Liturgy Workshop



## OUR NEW DIRECTOR

Last month we installed our new Director (in Spanish, "Rector") of the Theological Community of Mexico, Rev. Dan González. He is originally from northern Mexico (Torreón), and is a pastor of the Mexican Presbyterian Church. Dan did his PhD studies at ISEDET in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and returned to Mexico with his wife and three children in 2009. I have known Dan for over a dozen years; in fact, he was my student! Please remember Dan and his work at the Theological Community in your prayers!



**THREE KINGS DAY IN MEXICO**

While January 6, or Epiphany Day, is usually not a big deal in the U.S., in Mexico it is an important holiday. Traditionally, most children get gifts not at Christmas but on January 6, known as Three Kings Day. Prior to that day, they write a letter to the three kings to tell them what they want, and then attach it to a helium balloon and send it up into the sky. They may also visit men dressed up as the Three Kings, in a way similar to how children in the U.S. visit Santa Claus before Christmas. They leave their shoes out the night before January 6 and the Three Kings come at night to fill them with candy and leave them gifts.



The same day, people throughout the country eat the traditional Mexican oval-shaped sweet bread called "Rosca de Reyes" (Reyes means Kings). These are usually anywhere from about a foot to a yard across in size. Inside the Rosca are little white plastic dolls that measure a little over an inch long. Everyone has to cut their own piece, and whoever gets one of the little dolls (right photo) in their piece is supposed to buy or make the tamales on February 2—see the next column.



**FEBRUARY 2, "CANDELARIA" DAY**

According to Luke 2:22, 40 days after Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph took him to the Jerusalem temple to present him there. The 40th day after Christmas Day is February 2, which in Mexico is known as Candelaria Day. Typically, people take the baby Jesus (called Niño Dios), like those used in nativity scenes but larger, to get all dressed up. Then they take him to church to get blessed and then back home. The clothes used to dress them up can get quite fancy and expensive.



That day, those who got the plastic doll in their Rosca have to bring tamales for everyone to eat. The tamales are made from pre-cooked corn meal, stuffed with meat and peppers or fruit, wrapped in corn husks or banana or avocado leaves, and then steamed in a pot. Hundreds of varieties exist.



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