

ANGELA TREJO, NEW COORDINATOR OF AUGSBURG LUTHERAN SEMINARY

On August 20, at the meeting of the Board of Augsburg Lutheran Seminary where I serve as professor, Rev. Angela Trejo was chosen to be the new Coordinator for the Seminary. Angela succeeds her husband, Rev. Dr. Moisés Pérez, who is now the Dean (Academic Vice-rector) at the Theological Community of Mexico, the consortium of seminaries of which Augsburg Lutheran Seminary forms part. Angela becomes the first woman to head up any of the Seminaries that make up the Theological Community.

Angela has always been active in the church, as the daughter of Rev. Daniel Trejo and granddaughter of Rev. Roberto Trejo, both Presidents of the Mexican Lutheran Church, a member of the Lutheran World Federation. After working closely with her husband Moisés at Christ Lutheran Church in Mexico City for a number of years, in 2001 Angela decided to study a Diploma program in Biblical Studies at the Theological Community in order to prepare herself better for the activities she was involved in at church. Upon completion of that course of studies, in 2004 Angela decided to study the 4-year Theology degree offered at the Seminary and the Theological Community, and graduated in 2008. Angela already had a degree in History from the University of Guadalajara.



Shortly after finishing her Theology degree, Angela was asked to teach church history at the Theological Community, and since then she has been teaching there and at the Seminary. Angela was also one of the first three women ordained as pastors by the Mexican Lutheran Church in April of 2009. Following her ordination, she became co-pastor at Christ with her husband Moisés.



Angela (far right) at her ordination; her husband Moisés is at the left.

When the Seminary needed a new Coordinator following the appointment of Moisés as Dean at the Theological Community, the Board agreed that Angela was clearly the best candidate for the position due to the leadership skills she has displayed, her academic formation, and her proven commitment to the vision of the Seminary.

Among the things Angela says she hopes to promote as Seminary Coordinator is a greater participation of women in the programs and activities of the Seminary and Theological Community, not only as students and professors but in other ways as well. For example, Angela has been very active in the Mexican Lutheran Church Women's organization, and recently started up a new on-line magazine for Lutheran women called "Xaris" (from Greek *charis*, "Grace") together with Rev. Sofía Tenorio, another ordained Lutheran pastor (second from left in above photo), and Karina García, a student at the Seminary. Besides continuing to do research on women in the ministry and helping to teach in and develop the Seminary's new online course program, Angela also hopes to help the Seminary become more involved in addressing ecological concerns from a theological and pastoral perspective.

Please keep Angela in your prayers as she begins her new responsibilities. I am looking forward to continuing to work closely with Angela and thank God for the many gifts she brings to the Coordinator position and the passion she has displayed for the work of the church, especially promoting ministry by and among women.

MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE AND THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF MEXICO

In Mexico, Independence day is September 16. Last year Mexico celebrated the bicentennial of its independence from Spain, which was declared by the Mexican Roman Catholic priest Miguel Hidalgo on that date in 1810. The struggle for independence continued on for another 11 years, during which time Hidalgo was captured and executed by the Spanish. Curiously, at his trial Hidalgo was condemned for being "Lutheran," though he vigorously denied that charge. At that time, the Spanish Inquisition was still active, and thus it was common for any rebellious Catholics to be branded Lutherans. Because the pope was on the side of the Spanish, Hidalgo was convicted of rebelling not only against the Spanish authorities but against the Church.

The fact that Mexico's political and religious history are closely tied together is evident as well from Hidalgo's use of the Virgin of Guadalupe as the symbol of the revolutionary insurgents. Unlike many other virgins and saints in Mexican Roman Catholicism, the Virgin of Guadalupe was not brought to Mexico from Spain but was believed to have appeared to a poor Mexican Indian named Juan Diego in the 16th century, shortly after the Spanish conquest of Mexico. When the Spanish Roman Catholic bishop in Mexico refused to believe Juan Diego's story that the Virgin had appeared to him, the Virgin imprinted her image on Juan Diego's cloak, and thus the bishop had no choice but to believe Juan Diego. The Virgin therefore became a symbol of Mexican Roman Catholicism and thus Mexican identity.



Following Mexican independence, the Roman Catholic Church continued to dominate Mexican life and politics; education, public records, and up to a third of Mexico's territory remained in the hands of the church. Protestant churches were banned and non-Catholics continued to be persecuted.



Later on in the 19th century, a reform movement seeking to separate the Mexican state from the Church was able to come to power, and in 1870 Protestants finally were permitted to have churches in Mexico. Nevertheless, Protestants were persecuted by the Roman Catholics, and the Roman Catholic Church struggled to regain political power well into the 20th century. Following the Mexican revolution (1910-1920), a strong separation between church and state was established, and for a brief period of time the Mexican government even closed all of the churches and prohibited any type of mass or worship service.

Over the past several decades, tensions between Roman Catholics and Protestants have decreased considerably, especially in urban areas. However, many people in Mexico continue to think, as Hidalgo did, that to be fully Mexican is to be Roman Catholic. The two most recent Mexican presidents have both been openly Roman Catholic and come from the political party that was originally formed to promote Roman Catholic interests. Thus the relation between religion and politics continues to be a much-debated subject in Mexico, and will no doubt remain so as Mexico looks forward to its own presidential elections in 2012.

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E-mail: dabrondos@gmail.com