

FOUR YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF SEMINARY ONLINE COURSES

This past summer at Augsburg Lutheran Seminary in Mexico City we marked the fourth anniversary of the beginning of our online course program, of which I serve as Coordinator. In the two free introductory courses we offer, we have had over 900 students enroll from all over the world, and almost 300 have finished one or both of the courses.

Our purpose in the free courses is to share an alternative vision of the faith, the church, and the Bible, and also to provide students with a basis to do one or both of our Diploma Programs. Our Diploma program in the Christian Faith includes general courses in history and Bible. Our Diploma in the Lutheran Tradition looks at Lutheran teaching, history, and identity from a Latin American perspective.



We have a wide variety of students from different levels and backgrounds, including pastors and people of many different professions. Omar Dalinger, for example (see photo), is from a city called General Ramírez in Argentina, where he works as a builder. He is also active as a lay preacher at his church, where he is putting to good use what he learns in the courses. Omar is currently finishing the last of the 13 courses we offer!

Among our other current students in our Diploma programs are a government worker, a high school teacher, a medical student, and pastors or pastoral students from Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, Bolivia, Puerto Rico, and even one from Australia!

**FOR MORE NEWS AND INFORMATION,
VISIT: sites.google.com/site/dbrondos
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MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN MEXICO

On September 16, Mexico will celebrate its independence from Spain, which took place in 1810. The leading figure was a Roman Catholic priest, Miguel Hidalgo, who is said to have proclaimed independence in the name of the Virgin of Guadalupe.



When Mexico gained its independence, the Roman Catholic Church continued to be a very powerful force in Mexico. Some estimate that two-thirds of Mexico's land was in the Church's hands. The Church was also in control of all education, records such as birth, marriage, and death certificates, and cemeteries. Protestant churches were not allowed.

In the mid-1800's, there was a movement to wrest power from the church and establish a civil government. This was known as the Reform movement. While it was in part successful, it was not until the Mexican Revolution (1917) that the division between church and state took place in definitive fashion. Much of the Church's property was expropriated and laws aimed at limiting the Church's power were passed.



Whereas almost 99% of Mexicans identified as Roman Catholic in 1900 and 96% in 1970, that number has now fallen to 81%. Evangelical and Protestant churches now make up 9% of the population and continue to grow. About 10% of Mexicans do not associate with any church.