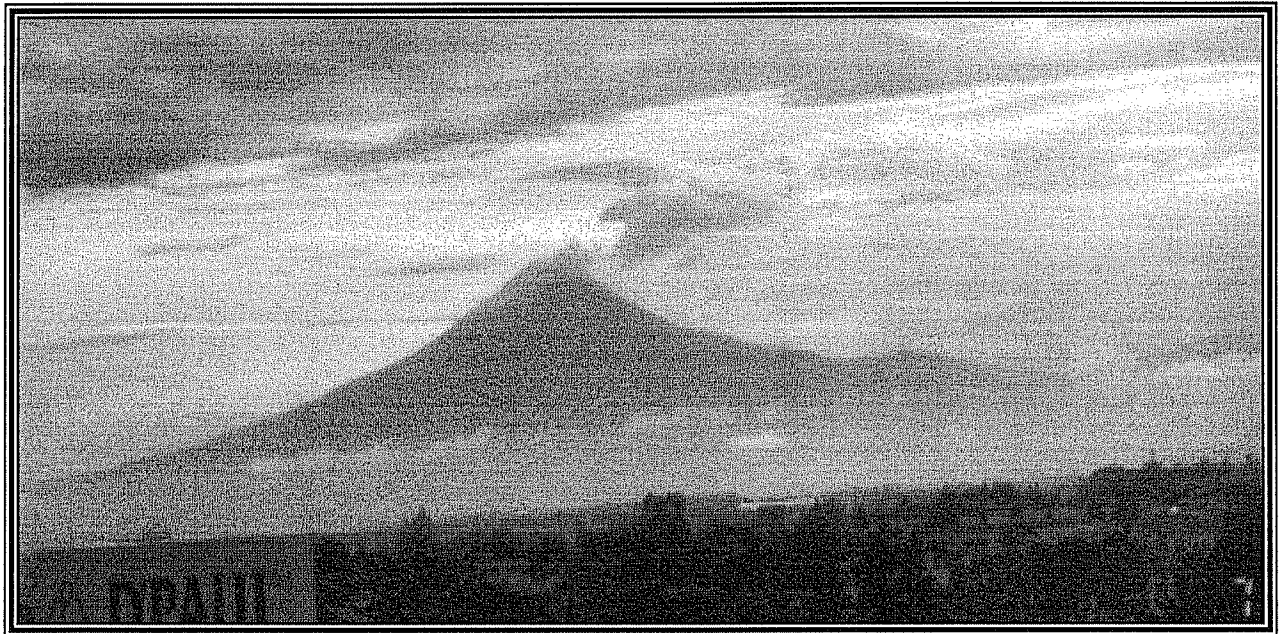


Los Angeles De Puebla

God's Grace to his Confessional Lutheran Church: *Cristo Glorificado* in the city
of Puebla, Pue. Mexico. 1967-2003.



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The City of Puebla de Los Angeles

They say that the angels came out of heaven to build the city of Puebla. The title that the bishop Ramirez de Fuenleal among others gave to their grand new city on March 27, 1531, shows their belief in this celestial occurrence. In the shadow of the volcano Popocatepetl, lies the large yet peaceful city of Puebla—Roman Catholic in its beginnings and continued progress. The angels, however, do find a place to ‘peer’ as we ^{are} told by scripture into the wonder of God’s people. They are a people who continue to be faithful to the revelation of God’s word found in scripture. They are the members of the Confessional Lutheran congregation of Cristo Glorificado (Christ Glorified) in Puebla, Mexico.

While the angels had no active role in the city’s foundation and building, God has sent his angels or messengers to that city to share the good news of the empty tomb with his people. We’ll now take a journey in the shadow of El Popo that spans more than 30 years and discuss the beginnings of the congregation, its angels or messengers, its struggles, and its faithful people who continue to labor for the Lord.

The Beginnings

Nothing can be said about the congregation of God’s people in the city of Puebla, Mexico without first mentioning about the beginnings of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Mexico (IELC—Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Confesional).

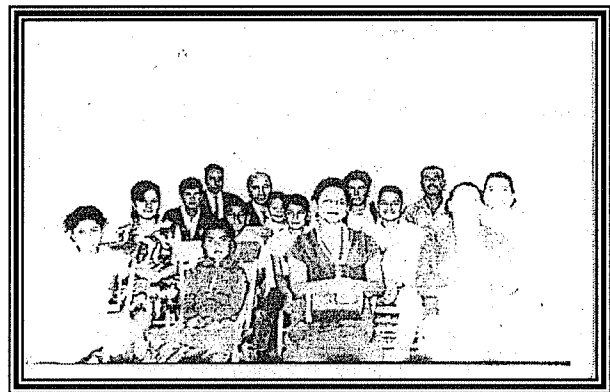
Pastor David Orea Luna and his seminary student David Chichia Gonzalez (*right*) were led in 1968 to apply for membership into fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. Pastor Chichia claims that they had become disheartened after they had begun to see a decline in confessional



Lutheranism in the American Lutheran Church with which they were in fellowship.¹ Edgar Hoeneke, at that time the Executive Secretary for the Board of World Missions wrote that Pastor Orea Luna of Mexico City, “had protested for years against the tolerant attitude being promoted toward false doctrine and unionistic practices in the Mexican Lutheran Church.” Orea Luna had claimed that a growing number of fellow seminary professors were guilty of promoting “new theology” in their Augsburg Seminary of Theological Studies.²

His student, Pastor Chichia, was completely in agreement with his professor and followed him in the effort to defend against the liberal theology that was sweeping through the Mexican Lutheran Church. In May of 1968, the two of them, professor and student met in colloquy in Tucson, Arizona with favorable results. The men were accepted in fellowship in 1970 at which time Pastor Chichia was sent to Mexico City to begin work in the congregation there.

Already in March of 1967, the beginnings of a Lutheran congregation had begun in the city of Puebla. *(right)* Pastor Chichia had begun a congregation that had grown to 15-20 souls. Unfortunately, at the word that Pastor Chichia had left the American Lutheran Church fellowship and joined with Wisconsin, this congregation was led to



continue with the American Lutheran Church. They disbanded shortly thereafter due to the lack of a spiritual shepherd.³

¹ Taped Interview with Pastor David Chichia, 01/02/03

² “The Lord Calls Us to Mexico.” Hoeneke, Edgar. *The Northwestern Lutheran*. 09 June 1968, p. 186-187.

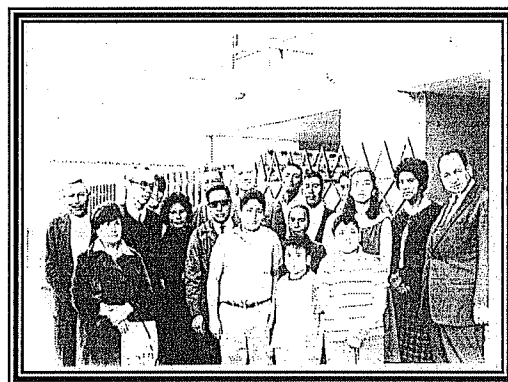
³ Taped Interview with Pastor David Chichia, 01/02/03

With Pastor Chichia undertaking the work in the nation's capital of Mexico City, Pastor Carlos Avandeno Castro (*right below, with congregation*) was assigned to work with a new group of confessional Lutherans that had formed in the city of Puebla.

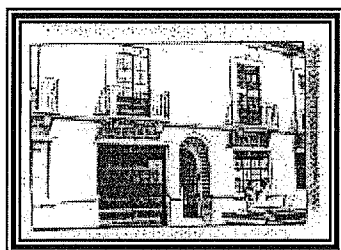
Cristo Glorificado (IELC)

In 1970, a woman named Catalena Pani from the town of Tonantzintla, a small town just outside of Puebla, met with and had dinner with Pastor

Avendano at which occasion he told her once again about the love of Christ for her. This had not been her first encounter with this news. A lady friend of



hers had invited her to join in hearing God's Word at the congregation that met at the street 17 Poniente, Colonia Carmen (*below left, 1st meeting place*) in the city of Puebla. She had just been



married in August of that same year, and her husband joined her in attending. They formed a group in their township of confessional Lutherans, and began to attend and join in with the group in Puebla. She recalled the switch that took place in 1971 with a new pastor,

Pastor Felipe Luna. He also came to her house in Tonantzintla and taught her and her husband about the love of Jesus.⁴

Hermana (Sister) Cata recalls numerous occasions when the Lord had been her shield and strength—providing and protecting her. On one occasion, she had ^{planned} plans to eat breakfast with her parents-in-law when the roof of their home fell in, injuring and killing many of her family members. She, however, was not there. She recalls sitting and praying while asking God, “Why

⁴ Taped Interview with Herman Catalena Pani, 12/29/02.

wasn't I there? What am I going to do now? Where am I going to live?" At that moment, the police came and aided her in finding a place to live and arranged for her to be taken care of until back on her feet. To these tragic events she replies, "The Lord continues to be my strength."⁵

It was in March of 1972 when the confessional Lutherans at Cristo Glorificado received their third pastor in three years—and for a goodly amount of time, their only. Pastor Jose Perez Sandozal became pastor in March of that year. He entered into the Confessional Lutheran Church of Mexico from a Pentecostal background studying in the seminary of Mexico City under Professor Orea Luna. Accompanying him was a sizeable family.⁶

Difficult Times That Strengthen

1972 through the late 1980s, Pastor Perez served the congregation of confessional Lutherans in Puebla at Cristo Glorificado. Herman Cata (*below, top-row far left*) recalled the services in the congregation of that day as very similar to those of today. However, one advantage she claimed was the additional bible studies that are offered today. Attending mostly were herself, her husband, and the family Perez. In 1979, the Lord called home Catalena's husband. The Lord used the opportunity to strengthen his daughter as she claims that when there was no service, ^{she} herself and the other women would meet to pray and read the bible together accompanying it all with a hymn-sing. The Lord continued to strengthen her as her own Roman Catholic family continued to beckon to her to join with them in mass in her town of



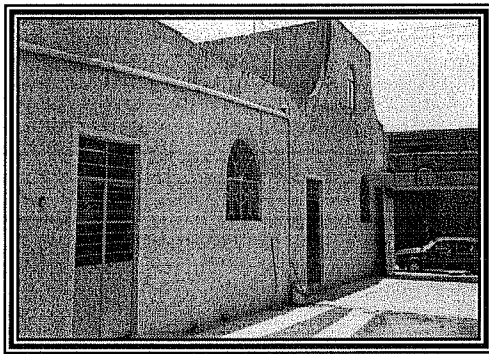
⁵ Taped Interview with Herman Catalena Pani, 12/29/02.

⁶ Taped Interview with Pastor David Chichia, 01/02/03

Tonantzintla. She recalled the difficulty of not being able to join in with them on the Roman Catholic holidays when it was a normal custom to be involved with cooking and visiting. She confided that on numerous occasions her sisters have demanded of her to honor the priests and pope as her spiritual leaders and ambassadors to God, ^{OF} however, she takes no part in it. When they ask her on the religious holidays, “Why don’t you go with us?” Hermana Cata only feels bad for her family because as she told me, “What the law asks us, we can’t do perfectly.” She continues to this day in her efforts with her grandnieces and nephews in providing for them opportunities to hear God’s Word.⁷

New Building

Already in 1970, the congregation Cristo Glorificado had purchased land in the Colonia



America Norte in the city of Puebla in hopes of one day having a building of their own. That prayer was answered when on May 21, 1984, the first stone was laid for the church building (*photo left*) of Cristo Glorificado—the same stone dug to be used in the

building of the church in the city of Juarez bordering El Paso, Texas. The building was

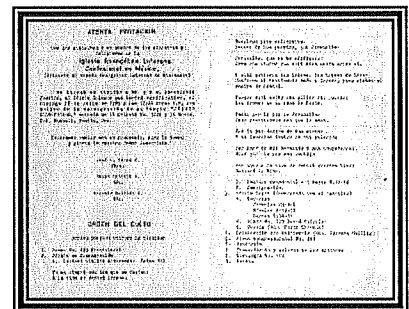
completed and on June 28, 1985, the confessional Lutherans of

Puebla held their building dedication service. Pastor David

Chichia preached the first sermon in the new building, and

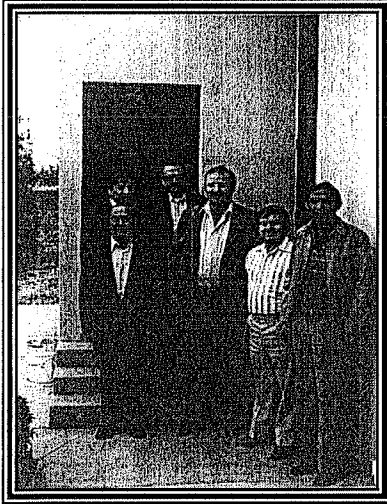
Pastor Jose Perez directed the liturgy.⁸ (*right, Bulletin from*

Dedication Service) In attendance on that Sunday was the family Perez accompanied by Hermana Cata.



⁷ Taped Interview with Dona Catalena Pani, 12/29/03 02

The Lord Sends Angels To Share His Message



Missionary Larry Schlomer (*left, with Mexican National Pastors*) began making trips into Mexico in the early 1990s as a mission counselor to the churches of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Mexico. On one occasion, he attended Cristo Glorificado in Puebla. In normal conversation after the service with Pastor Jose Perez, he asked if the various newborn babies in the congregation had been baptized. The reply was indicative of the message being preached. Perez replied, “That’s right, you Lutherans baptize infants.”⁹

It became more and more evident in the latter part of the 1980s in the ministry of Pastor Perez that he was returning slowly but steadily to his Pentecostal roots. On numerous occasions, ^{the} current pastor of Cristo Glorificado commented that it was evident in the sermons of Perez that he was preaching things contrary to what ^sscripture declared. Nearing retirement age, he was asked to retire and would not be allowed pulp^{it} fellowship in the congregation.¹⁰

Prior to these unfortunate occurrences, the Lord saw fit to send middle-aged man and his family to the congregation in Puebla. Carlos Cajas Monzon together with his wife (*Family Photo Right*) became aware of Cristo Glorificado in 1989 by a set of odd occurrences that the Lord caused to take place. In the fall of the year, Cajas’ wife, Paulina took a trip to the bank next to the church building in Colonia America Norte to register their two children, Adriana and Andres, for



⁸ Taped Interview with Pastor David Chichia, 01/02/03

⁹ Taken from various conversations with Missionary Larry W. Schlomer, 2001-2002

¹⁰ Taped interview with Pastor Carlos Cajas Monzon, 01/02/03.

school. She returned home with the news that there was a Lutheran Church in Puebla. Cajas had been raised Lutheran (ALC) in his home state of Chiapas in the southernmost part of Mexico bordering the country of Guatemala. At once, they began attending the church. However, at that time, Pastor Perez was of retirement age and not actively involved in the church except for occasional preaching on various Sundays. Pastor David Chichia was running both services in two cities, 100 miles apart. He would conduct a worship service in Mexico City and then make the 100-mile trip to Puebla for worship. Cajas commented that the service would start sometimes at ten o'clock, sometimes at eleven, or at times, twelve. He and his family would stand waiting for sometimes up to 2 hours before Pastor Chichia would arrive into Puebla. Being a self-proclaimed impatient man, on one occasion, Cajas vowed that if Pastor Chichia would not arrive on time, they would leave and never return. To him, it was a sign that this congregation was not serious about its work. That Sunday, Pastor Chichia arrived minutes after Cajas had made the comment to his wife, and they continued to attend to hear the word of God.¹¹

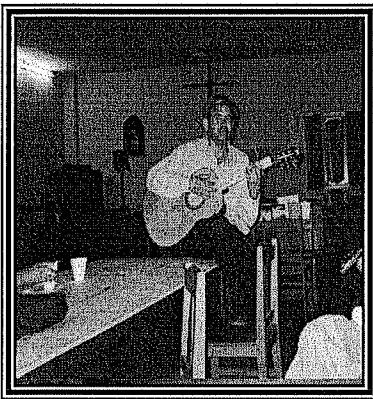
It was impossible for Pastor Chichia to continue ~~on~~ serving two congregations every Sunday. To ^{help solve} aid the problem, Missionary Schlomer assigned a pastor from the city of Guadalajara, Pastor Josue Saucedo, to travel every other weekend to Puebla to serve the congregation that was in need of a pastor to serve them at the vacancy of Pastor Perez. The two, Chichia and Aucedo, shared the duty until 1992. During that time a number of confirmations were completed when an unfortunate set of circumstances attempted to scatter the flock in Puebla. Pastor Saucedo was caught in adultery with a daughter of the former Pastor Perez. In need of solutions, Cajas went to the Synod Convention of 1993 held in Monterrey, Nueva Leon.¹²

¹¹ Taped Interview with Pastor Carlos Cajas Monzon, 01/02/03

¹² Taped Interview with Pastor Carlos Cajas Monzon, 01/02/03

Solutions were provided when the president of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Mexico formally expelled the two from fellowship when it became evident that no repentance had been viewed. Pastor Ernest Zimdars asked Cajas to guide the congregation for ^atime until a new pastor could be called. ^{This} lasted for 3 years when in November of 1994, Cristo Glorificado called Pastor Vicente Guillen, a former student of Professor Orea Luna, to serve the congregation in Puebla. He accepted and came to Puebla in February of 1995. It was during that time that Cajas remembered that the Lord blessed the work of Pastor Guillen, and the Holy Spirit added numbers to the small group of Lutherans in Puebla. ¹³

During the vacancy of 3 years until the ministry of Pastor Guillen began, Cajas recalled a set of disturbing things taking place. In an effort to help the congregation, a layman from the city of El Paso, Texas, was sent to aid in the congregation's ministry. Cajas became frustrated when this individual confronted members of the congregation, including Cajas (*photo left*), with



a necessity of change in the cultural aspects of the congregation to make it 'more Lutheran.' This infuriated Cajas, who has a self-claimed large temper, because of his stand that the Bible gives us freedom in areas that are neither commanded nor forbidden. The man's intentions were honorable; however, Cajas was almost out

of patience with the Lord's work in Puebla. ¹⁴

Then came a man to the congregation during that time simply known and loved by the congregation as Hermano Juan. Juan calmed Cajas and encouraged him to stay and continue

¹³ Taped Interview with Pastor Carlos Cajas Monzon, 01/02/03

¹⁴ Taped Interview with Pastor Carlos Cajas Monzon, 01/02/03

striving for the gospel work being done in Puebla. Cajas pointed to Hermano Juan's calming, brotherly advice as to the reason why he is still there aiding in the Lord's work.¹⁵

During the ministry of Vicente Guillen, the wife^{of} the pastor, Susana became a wonderful influence^{on} to the children at Cristo Glorificado. A student of the pastoral ministry herself before becoming confessional Lutheran, she became a wonderful influence^{on} with the young girls of the congregation in her teaching of Sunday School and Vacation Bible school held in the congregation. Another positive step forward for the National Church during the ministry of Pastor Guillen, Cristo Glorificado called Seminarian Ezekiel Eliu Sanchez, taught by the Seminary Professor Larry Schlomer, to serve as Vicar for the congregation.¹⁶

Unexpectedly in 1996, Pastor Guillen retired due to health problems with diabetes and returned to his home in the city of Juarez. The congregation called Vicar Sanchez to aid the congregation while the vacancy existed. Sanchez served for 1 year and received a call to the congregation in the city of Torreon. He accepted and once again Cristo Glorificado was vacant.¹⁷

Cajas had been on numerous occasions encouraged to enter into the ministry. However, when thinking about the transition, he always felt that he had several flaws, much the way every honest pastor evaluates himself. He confided in this author how he is very impatient and easily driven to anger. In his own words, "If something bothers me and it doesn't seem right to me, I say so!"¹⁸

The vacancy brought the congregation to the realization that Cajas was the angel, or messenger, for the call to be pastor of the congregation. They called him to be their pastor with

¹⁵ Taped Interview with Pastor Carlos Cajas Monzon, 01/02/03

¹⁶ Taped Interview with Pastor Carlos Cajas Monzon, 01/02/03

¹⁷ Taped Interview with Pastor Carlos Cajas Monzon, 01/02/03

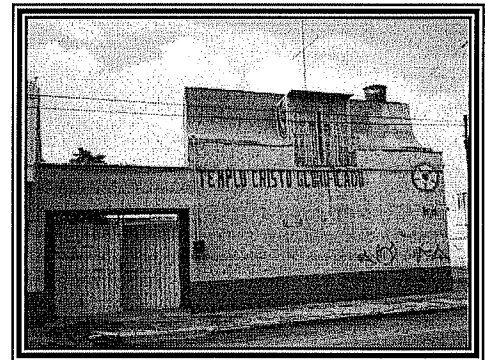
¹⁸ Taped Interview with Pastor Carlos Cajas Monzon, 01/02/03.

the condition of studying in the Mexican National Lutheran Seminary under the supervision of Professor Schlomer. To this day, he continues to study and grow in the knowledge of Christ Jesus and his saving work while at the same time serving as the pastor of Cristo Glorificado.¹⁹

Closing Thoughts

In [§]scripture, we have the hidden picture revealed to us as to the great love and care that the angels offer in their ‘peering’ into the [§]scripture and longing to see the great work of our Lord Jesus. They protect the message of the gospel. They were its very messengers on occasions recorded in [§]scripture, and at the same time they long to see the wonder of God’s people gathering around it, hearing and learning it. (*Building, right*)

God sends his angels, or messengers as well to speak about his son’s saving message. When the situation dictates, God is immediate in sending the angel to speak his message. In the city of Puebla de Los Angeles, in the



state of Puebla, Mexico, God has been faithful in sending his “angels” to spread his saving message which nourishes the soul. While angels, the superior beings, may not have built the city of Puebla de Los Angeles, God’s angels continue to peer into the wondrous things the Holy Spirit has done with his people there.

¹⁹ Taped Interview with Pastor Carlos Cajas Monzon, 01/02/03.