

**“The Gospel must be ours:”
Peruvian seminary trains leaders in holistic ministry**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

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Lima, Peru (LAMNS)—The Gospel was brought to Latin America by Christian missionaries from North America and Europe.

But now, becoming firmly established in Central and South America, it is taking on a character and ministry of its own.

And, Latin American theologians and pastors are being raised up to claim it as a Latin American faith, not a foreign faith imposed on a local population.

“The Gospel needs to be rooted in the people’s soil,” affirmed Dr. Reubén “Tito” Paredes, an LAM

missionary who serves as the Director of Lima’s Centro Evangelico de Misiología Andino Amazonica (CEMAA), a theological training school for pastors and church leaders. The school’s name in English is Andean-Amazonian Evangelical Missiology Center.

“The Gospel must become ours, not a foreign religion,” Paredes said. “If it is ours, we will fight for it and we will die for it.”

Until the late 1970s, missionary sponsored churches often prohibited indigenous Quechua-speaking churches from using their native instruments or music in worship services.

“In Peru, the Christian expression has a diversity,” Paredes said. “We have the Indian groups and the Mestizo groups and the Spanish groups, but they have ignored each other and not had a good rapport.”

For that reason, many indigenous groups began to develop methods to reach people of their own culture. “The movement took off in terms of growth once the Indian leaders understood that the Gospel was not a foreign gospel, but theirs,” he said.

Today, Paredes is working with other Christian leaders in Peru to provide what he describes as a holistic view of ministry and the Gospel and to train churches in reaching out to the social as well as spiritual needs of their people.

“At CEEMA we have developed a dialogue with the social sciences to help students look at different theories of analysis,” he explained. “We look at all approaches through the criteria of the scriptures and from a Christian perspective.”

“I have a vision of a holistic ministry,” said Pastor Humberto Reyes of Trujillo, a town several hours north of Lima who is studying at CEMAA. “My ministry should not just involve preaching, but should include the total community.”

Reyes, who is the pastor of an 80-member independent Pentecostal church that has planted 14 daughter congregations in Peru, said that the evangelistic message of the church should be used to serve both members of the church and members of society.

“There are many Pentecostal churches that want to do something about the needs of their people,” Paredes explained. “They are more open to that here than are Pentecostal churches in the U.S.”

CEMAA provides what Paredes calls a “qualified and holistic view of the Gospel” to its 12-15 students each year. “Many people go to seminary and study the Bible and theology, but they are lacking in social studies,” he said.

“We provide a dialog between the social sciences and theology with an emphasis on missions,” Paredes said. “We don’t just study sociology, but we make an effort to integrate sociology with the Christian faith.”

To help with that dialog, Paredes, who studied at both Fuller Seminary and UCLA, has written a book that integrates the disciplines of anthropology and theology. Titled *El Evangelio: un tesoro en vasijas de barro* (The Gospel, a treasure in a jar of clay). The book is available from the Latin America Mission.

Paredes said that his ministry began out of the concerns of indigenous Christian groups in Peru and continues to focus on the Andean region. However, he has been involved in wider responsibilities throughout the region as the General Secretary of the Latin American Theological Fraternity.

He plans on giving up that responsibility, however, to devote more time to study, writing and research. “I’m interested in studying more about the Charismatic movement,” he explained.

Paredes wife, Joy, has worked for over ten years with a program of discipleship for women church leaders. She leads five or six retreats a year to encourage women to develop their gifts and talents. “We live in a society where women are not appreciated as they should be,” Paredes said.

Latin America Mission works in partnership with churches and Christian agencies throughout Latin America and supports missionaries and projects in many Latin countries as well as in Spain. LAM is seeking to place new missionaries throughout the region. The U.S. headquarters can be reached at Latin America Mission, Box 52-7900, Miami, FL 33152, by e-mail at info@lam.org, or by calling 1-800-275-8410. The mission's web site may be found at <http://www.lam.org>. LAM's Canadian office is at 3075 Ridgeway Drive, Unit 14, Mississauga, ON L5L 5M6.

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