



The Costa Rican Lutheran Church celebrates

## **First Lutheran Bishop to be ordained in Costa Rica**

On April 27, pastor and sociologist Melvin Jiménez Marín will be ordained as the first Lutheran bishop in Costa Rica.

Jiménez' ordination will strengthen ecumenical relationships – particularly with the Catholic Church – by allowing differing historically Christian denominations to “embrace the causes of justice, peace, and fraternity: signs of the Kingdom of God among us,” said the spiritual leader. He added that this celebration is a response to the requests of Lutheran communities of faith, which through their growth and development called “a pastor of pastors and a voice within the church, aimed toward society.”

The pastor, who has a Master's degree in theology, said that through “face to face” encounters the church hopes to include and empower the voices of women, adolescents, and people with diversity. As bishop, he will focus on promoting a participative democracy for decision-making among members and leaders of the church.

As the president of the Costa Rican Lutheran Church (ILCO), Jiménez has stood out on the national and international level because of his active participation in defense of human rights and Costa Rica's most vulnerable groups.

### **A Church without walls**

For Lutherans, the situation in Central America, and in particular Costa Rica, has created a favorable place to put into practice a faith shared together with the most poor, indigenous peoples, those without homes, immigrants, and peasant farmers without land.

Since the foundation of the ILCO in 1988, Melvin Jiménez has preached social justice through the promotion of projects in favor of multiculturalism, inclusion and solidarity, in urban and rural communities.

The ILCO is present in more than 30 communities in Costa Rica, benefiting about 5,000 people through its social action programs. The “Church with Open Doors” has been characterized by its defense of the rights of people in situations of exclusion and vulnerability. It has an advocacy agenda and accompaniment program in different current political and socio-economic themes, such as the promotion of the rights of people with HIV and AIDS and the fight for the defense of fair trade agreements. Additionally, the ILCO focuses on supporting of movements against xenophobia and favoring the autonomy of indigenous peoples. Furthermore, the ILCO has stood out on the national and international level in the promotion of labor and environmental rights.



**The ceremony.** In the framework of the 20th Anniversary of the Costa Rican Lutheran Church, the ceremony will be held Sunday, April 27, 2008, at 10 a.m. at its headquarters, located 600 meters southwest of the Catholic Church of San Cayetano.

The ceremony will include the attendance of delegations and Lutheran bishops from the United States, Sweden, Germany, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, as well as Protestant bishops from El Salvador and Costa Rica.

The color used in the celebration will be red. This is the color of solemn celebrations, and also of celebrations when martyrs are remembered. Therefore, a red stole will be placed on the elected bishop and spiritual leader, which symbolizes carrying on his shoulders the burdens of the community, and the responsibilities and projects of the church.

Other symbols forming part of the ceremony will be the Bible, the cross, and the mitre, which is a piece placed on the head of the ordained and symbolizes the authority that exudes from the church. Also, the future bishop will be given the staff, which gives one the authority to lead, guide, and illuminate the path so that his church follows him and is lead well by him.

**Profile.** The future Lutheran bishop was born June 23, 1956. He has two sons, Gabriel, 25, and Julian, 22. He studied sociology at the University of Costa Rica, and holds a Master's degree in theology from the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, in the United States.

Jiménez was ordained as a Lutheran pastor in 1990, and since 2000 he has been president of the Costa Rican Lutheran Church. Additionally, he is founder and director of six non-governmental organizations that promote informal education, credit, sustainable agriculture, social economy, and the rights of children and adolescents.

## Lutheran Church

The mission of the Lutheran Church is incarnated in the reality of the poor and marginalized of the world, in order to build with them justice and peace among human beings and between human beings and the environment. In all of its activities, the church takes into account aspects of gender, environment, and participation that is both engaged and democratic.

Lutherans formed the first Protestant church that first emerged in Germany as a result of the reform movement initiated by the Augustine monk Martin Luther.



Among Lutherans, the form of worship service and liturgy are very similar to those of the Catholic Church, from which Luther retained many things. However, Luther put emphasis on the doctrine of a "priesthood of believers." With this, one understands that a Christian, individually, has access before God and receives his salvation by grace. Luther accepted as sacraments those that Christ established, such as baptism.

Lutherans do not depend on Rome. Furthermore, women form part of the clergy, and ministers are allowed to marry.

Lutherans are found in 80 countries and number more than 70 million. In Costa Rica, Lutherans have a presence in 30 communities, benefiting more than 5,000 people.

**Ministries in Costa Rica are directed with priority toward: Indigenous peoples, peasant farmers, immigrants, women, children, youth, and people living with HIV/AIDS.**

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