



A UNITED THANK OFFERING STORY

THE TRACT RACK WOULD DISAPPEAR...

Mary, while you are at the parish house will you please pick up a couple of tracts on the creeds? I have a friend who is asking some questions.

Jenny, please let me borrow your altar guild manual. There's something I want to look up.

Bob gave me a grand new Bible commentary for my birthday. He couldn't have chosen a more useful gift for this new church school teacher!



Such statements are not unusual, but just imagine what it would be like to have no Anglican publications in English other than the *Bible* and the *Book of Common Prayer*. The tract rack would disappear, the shelves in the parish library would be bare, and, as for that friend who is "asking some questions," you would either have to make a visit and tell her about the creeds or write the answers yourself.

This situation fairly well describes the state of affairs in Latin America before the establishment of *El Centro de Publicaciones Cristianas*.

About five years ago a plan was conceived for a publications center for the Church in Latin America. The center would be, not only a focal point for the translation and production of printed materials in Spanish, but an agency to encourage original writing. In addition, it would co-ordinate the many things being done by individuals in different countries.

In 1961, through a grant from the United Thank Offering, *El Centro de Publicaciones Cristianas* opened in San José, Costa Rica. An additional grant in 1964 enabled hiring the center's first director, a Colombia-born priest, educated in universities at home and in the United States. He is a man who combines the disciplines of theology and linguistics.

The organization of the Centro is simple. It is an agency of the Overseas Department of the Episcopal Church in the United States, and the Centro's director is responsible to the head of that department. To assist and advise the director a committee was formed of representatives of various Latin American jurisdictions of the Church.

The duties of this committee are many: It serves as a link between the Centro and the jurisdictions; interprets and publicizes the program of the Centro; and provides the editorial office with information about current needs. The committee also assists the director in setting editorial policy and making long-range plans.

The offices in San José are staffed by three local employees: a bilingual secretary, a proof-reader-editor, and a shipping clerk.

WHAT DOES THE CENTRO PRODUCE?

Among the Centro's publications is a small booklet of daily Bible meditations called *El Pan Nuestro* which is issued five times a year. Originally, it was translated from *Forward Day by Day* and is patterned after it. Eventually, it was felt that it would be of greater use to the Church in Latin America for the booklet to be produced locally. It is now written by clergymen of that area,

which helps to insure its direct application to the cultural milieu to which it is directed.

A wide variety of pamphlets and tracts for training and evangelistic use have been produced and many more are being developed. Several full-length books, translations of works in English, have been published, as well as teaching aids for Christian education programs. Other books, including volumes by C. S. Lewis, are now in preparation.

Even though many of the missionary districts in Latin America publish their own diocesan magazines, it was felt that some communication was needed which would unite the widespread jurisdictions and provide information about the Anglican Church at large. Therefore, in April 1965, a brief newsletter called *Nociero Episcopal* was launched. This publication reaches sixteen countries including Spain and the United States.

Future plans of the Centro call for short booklets and tracts on a wide variety of subjects including evangelism, ecumenicity, stewardship, U.T.O. grant stories, worship, sacraments, prayer, and social relations. Other basic tools such as the *Constitution and Canons of the Church*, parish registers, and service registers will be printed soon.

The first steps toward development of a program of audio-visual aids have been taken, and research is underway in that area. The possibilities of the future seem limitless. Much will depend, of course, upon the direction which the missionary strategy of the Anglican Communion takes in Latin America.

And so, perhaps, the next time we casually pick up that little tract, or look up a fact in *Chapters in Church History*, or read a little U.T.O. leaflet, we'll pause before the Blue Box for a moment of thanksgiving for the availability of the printed word in our language; and drop in a coin so that more of God's people may receive information in languages other than ours.

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*Our gifts to the United Thank Offering
have made and will continue to make important
differences to many people throughout
our nation and our world.*

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