

ANDRÉS MELENDEZ

Spanish Lutheran Hour Speaker

BORN: **DECEMBER 29, 1902** *Fajardo, Puerto Rico*

DIED: **JULY 24, 1999** *Arlington Heights, Ill.*

ANDRÉS AVELINO MELENDEZ WAS A NATIVE OF PUERTO RICO. By the age of 7, he was an orphan living with foster parents. One day he was playing with friends on the sidewalk when a Lutheran Sunday school teacher stopped and invited them to come the following Sunday. Melendez made up his mind to go, and the decision changed his life. At Sunday school, his teacher told stories about Jesus from the Bible. Melendez wanted to learn more and kept going. In fact, he went to Sunday school for years and had perfect attendance. Much later, his first Sunday school teacher would become his father-in-law; Melendez married the man's daughter, named Nieves.

When Melendez was in high school, his pastor encouraged him to consider entering the ministry. There was a great need for Spanish-speaking pastors and Melendez wanted to do something to bring the message of Jesus to others. He attended college in Puerto Rico, then he came to Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Ill. In addition to his ministerial training, Melendez learned both English and German, and his skills as a preacher were honed. He preached his first sermons not in Spanish, but in German!

In 1930, Melendez was called as pastor of Trinidad Lutheran Church in San Antonio, Texas. During this time, he traveled widely to preach at various congregations that had no Spanish-speaking pastors. He also started publishing a periodical called *Noticiero de La Fe* (Newsletter of Faith), much like the *Lutheran Witness*; he would serve as its editor for many years.

In 1941, Melendez was named speaker of "The Spanish Lutheran Hour" ("Christo Para Todas Las Naciones" or "Christ for all the Nations") program. In this new role, Melendez became one of the most well-known Spanish preachers in the world. He delivered

sermons and taught about the Bible across radio stations in Latin America, the West Indies, the Philippines, Spain and the United States for 31 years.

In 1944, while he remained *Lutheran Hour* speaker, Melendez was called to be the Director of Spanish Literature for the LCMS. He translated the Book of Concord, Luther's Small Catechism, several volumes of Luther's Works and a Lutheran hymnal, *Cantad Al Señor*. He also translated tracts, devotional texts and Sunday school materials and books for children, such as *Little Visits with God*.

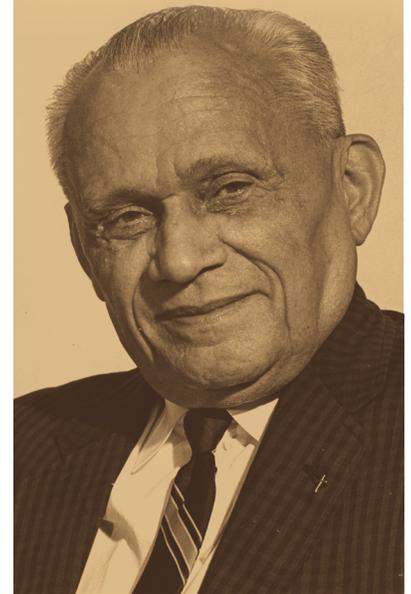
In 1953, Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield conferred upon Melendez the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Throughout his long career, Melendez traveled across Latin America preaching, teaching and expanding the work of the church. He faithfully proclaimed the Gospel, the message of Jesus, which he had treasured as a boy and dedicated his life to bring to others.

For more information about the 175th anniversary of the LCMS, visit lcms.org/175.

DISCOVER MORE

Aaron Hannemann, "Rev. Dr. Andrés A. Melendez," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 86, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 31–38.



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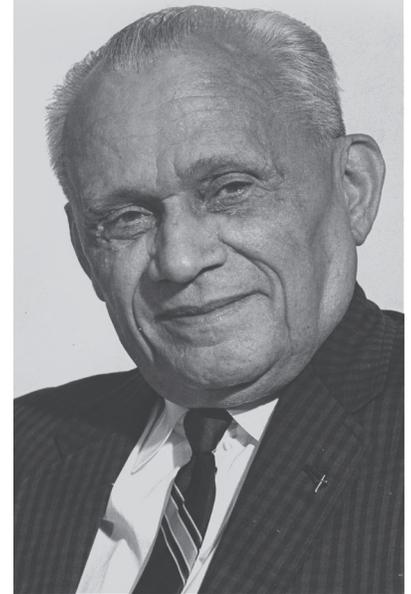
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