

Knowledge and Vital Piety:
Lucia de Costa's Enduring Witness

Lucía Carmen García was born into a middle class family in Buenos Aires in 1903. As a child, she had high educational aspirations, envisioning herself as a future university graduate. Her exemplary piety led her to participate in many church groups, including the Daughters of Mary. She felt called, especially, to bring the Catholic faith to Argentina's rural Indians and applied to a Franciscan school for training. She was advised to complete school and reapply.

A misfortune forced the Garcías from their nice home into a boarding house, where the C. H. Miller family, newly arrived missionaries, also came to live. Lucía attended devotions in the the Millers's apartment and experienced an evangelical conversion in 1919. She was the first Nazarene convert in Argentina. She testified to the grace of entire sanctification the following year.

She became a full-time Christian worker. She and two other women were in the first class of seven Argentinians who received preachers licenses in 1924. She was the first graduate of the Nazarene training school for Christian workers in 1927 and became a licenced district minister the following year. She was in Argentina's first class of ordinands when J. B. Chapman conducted the district assembly in 1931.

Her public ministry was diverse: pastor, church planter, evangelist, and educator. In the early and mid-1920s, she evangelized and led Bible studies at various sites in greater Buenos Aires with Miss Soledad Quintana. In 1927, she became pastor of a circuit of churches that included Merlo, Morón, and Moreno. Three years later, her

circuit included two additional churches at Castelar and Ituzaingó. The first Nazarene church building in Argentina was erected at Castelar under her leadership.

In 1935, Lucía married Natalio Costa, an Italian immigrant who had united with the church in Castelar. Her lifelong thirst for knowledge had not abated, and she refocused her ministry at this time, teaching until 1953 at the Nazarene Bible Institute in Buenos Aires. She continued to pastor churches on the weekends and entered the University of Buenos Aires. She mastered nine languages, including Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and was awarded a doctorate in linguistics in 1950. Lucía used her linguistic skills in editorial and translation work.

Among her early translations were Hannah Whitall Smith's devotional classic *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, J. O. McClurkan's *Wholly Sanctified*, and Amos Binney's *Theological Compend*. Later, she translated half of the abridged version of Adam Clarke's commentary and several volumes of the *Beacon Bible Commentary*. She also edited the holiness paper, *La Via Mas Excelente*.

In 1953, her ministry changed course. She and Natalio turned to church planting, organizing and nurturing seven churches over the next 16 years. Lucía did most of the preaching and pastoral care, while Natalio distributed Bibles and other Christian literature and engaged in extensive witnessing. They returned to Buenos Aires in 1969 and Lucía resumed teaching in the Bible Institute. Even so, the Costas planted one more church--that in San Antonio de Padua. In 1972, retiring missionary John Cochran praised the Costas for organizing one third of the district's 39 churches.

Lucía remained active until her 80th year and died in 1984. Natalio preceded her in death the year before.