

# ROSA MÍSTICA

A classic vignette of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria

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“Rosa Mística”, empeñada en brindar una seria formación espiritual de impronta ignaciana a todas sus integrantes”.

† Fco. José Arnaiz, SJ, Obispo Auxiliar de Leges, Emérito

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BY BLANCA R. ANTÓN, M.D.

# Rosa Mística

Rosa Mística was founded by Dr. Rosalba Roberts, under the direction of Rev. Father Felipe Rey de Castro, S.J. around 1947 or 1948 in Havana, Cuba. It started in a rented house near the Colegio Baldor, where Dr. Roberts taught religion classes to girls in their fourth year of high school. Those classes provided the candidates for the Congregación Rosa Mística, associated to the Roma Prima Primaria, chief of all the Marian Congregations in the world.

Rosalba was the wife of Dr. Armando Ruiz Leiro, the best internist in Cuba and one of five original founding members of the ACU. Rosalba had two careers; she was a professor in the University of Havana School of Pharmacy and a psychology professor at the Universidad Católica de Santo Tomas de Villanueva. They were not able to have children and Father Rey de Castro, who was her spiritual director, thought that it was providential for her to be able to found a University Congregation for young women, so that the ACU men could find equally formed women to date.

Rosa Mística started with a few students from Baldor School, including Chany Hevia and her sister (who became a nun), Betty Crab, and others. When I met Rosalba she was my religion teacher. I was a 16 year old student, in my fourth year at Baldor in 1949, from a family of non-practicing Catholics. Rosalba convinced me to attend a three-day Spiritual Retreat given by Father Feliz, S.J. and I then started to attend the the Rosa Mística “Study Circles” — a weekly meeting to discuss morals and religion— in a little house a few blocks away from Baldor School. In my fifth year of high school, I rarely attended because of my heavy load. But I consistently attended once in the University. By then, Rosa Mística had moved to another rented house near the University of Havana and started a residence for a few students, along with the Congregation. Rosa Mística had previously started a night school for non-university girls. One of them went on to the university and became a congregante of Rosa Mística. Today she is a cloistered nun in the Monasterio Carmelita de San José in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Sor Rosario de la Santa Faz.

According to my “medalla de congregante” (congregante medal), I was initiated on December 9, 1952. Father Rey de Castro gave me the medal. In 1958, I married a member of the ACU whose medal had also been given by Father Rey de Castro, on December 8, 1952. Our son is a congregante of the ACU and was one of the founding members of the ACU in Atlanta, Georgia.

Rosa Mística rules were the same as the ones in the ACU. You became a postulante when you started attending the weekly Sunday Mass and the “circles.” After a given time you became an aspirante and finally you received the medal and became a congregante. Rule 34 of the Congregaciones establishes what we should aim for: daily mass, daily Rosary and meditations, and some apostolic work.

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BY BLANCA R. ANTÓN, M.D.

# Rosa Mística – cont'd

Father Rey de Castro died on February 12, 1952. Father Llorente was appointed Director of the ACU, but being 33 years old it was considered that an older person should direct Rosa Mística. Father Teodoro Bercedo, S.J., who at the time was the director of the Church called Iglesia de Reina, became our spiritual director until he had to leave Cuba under Castro's expulsion of the Jesuits.

Because Rosalba was the wife of an ACU founding member, the relationship between the two congregations remained very close. Many marriages occurred between ACU and Rosa Mística congregantes, mine among them.

There were several young women who served as president of Rosa Mística and went on to have careers in their own right. Chany Hevia moved to Mexico. Betty Crab died in New England. Hena Cintra lives near Chicago. Marta Maraboto moved to California. Maria Los Angeles died in exile in Miami, Florida.

When Castro expelled the Jesuits from Cuba, our sodality closed in Havana. My "Rosa Mística madrina," Eradia Hurtado re-started Rosa Mística in Miami, Florida (1960 or 1961). She rented a house on Flagler Road and had residents there who were members. At the time, I attended the "circles" for married members. Father Izquierdo, S.J., was our director. He knew many of us and liked Rosa Mística. Eradia's father arrived in Miami, and she had to leave the house to be with him. Rosa Mística moved to another rented house and Gloria Ramos took over directing it. At this time, I moved away for a job in Georgia and Father Izquierdo moved to either Santo Domingo or Puerto Rico. Gloria was married and had children, so she did not live in the house and her supervision was not as direct. Several new girls started attending who were not of the same ideology. A new priest was appointed as director and when he went to get acquainted on a Saturday circle, these new girls were there and started to say that the Church needed to have women priests and consider abortion, etc. The new father was horrified and reported that Rosa Mística was infernal or something similar. The Jesuits took away their support and this was the end of Rosa Mística.

Many of our congregantes now belong to a community (CIX in Acción). There was a congregante July Alvira who left Cuba and went to Puerto Rico with her husband. They could not have children. Apparently she did a lot of apostolic work in an extraordinary manner. Her funeral was attended by thousands of people. I knew her in Cuba but did not keep in touch with her in exile. Sister Rosario of the Santa Faz was close to her in Puerto Rico, before she went to the convent and called me to tell me they wanted to make her a saint.

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# A thing inherent in Christian life

*This letter is of a Cuban girl Sodalist. She sent it from the prison to her brother, in exile. Written after a long experience of an inhuman jail, it reveals the secrets of a life in perfect union with the suffering of Christ. As far as it concerns ourselves, it is an invitation to pray Our Lord that He may give to our distressed Cuban brethren the grace to be able to follow Him faithfully on the way which goes to Calvary, place of death and resurrection.*

“Dear brother, you understand that we have to suffer a great deal, myself and all who are in the same situation as well as you who are undergoing a severe test. However, we who are here, did we not feel a tear of Jesus fall on our sorrowful heart, an invisible fear which sweetened our suffering, inspired us with joy and strength and restored us to life? The Lord is asking us not to refuse to suffer with Him. He wishes that we consider suffering as a thing inherent in Christian life. He desires that we learn to suffer and to suffer well, that this suffering does not separate us from God, that it does not make us discontented, begrudgingly yielding to our sufferings, but on the contrary, that it unites us more closely to Him. His love can turn everything to good account, provided we live on in Him and are humble enough to receive from His hand, with a smile on the lips, even the most unpleasant things.

Dear brother, join yourself to Jesus Our Lord; do not hesitate to have confidence in Him, abandon yourself without fear or reserve to His divine Will, which is our peace.

This is the way to save ourselves in this world, full of hates and rancors. A world which daily goes towards its perdition, since it is about to withdraw itself from true happiness.”  
– Mary Abbad

*Carta de una congregante cubana. Se la envía desde la prisión a su hermano en el destierro. Escrita tras una larga experiencia de prisión inhumana, nos revela los secretos de una vida enteramente unida con los dolores de Cristo. Para nosotros es una invitación a que oremos pidiendo al Señor en favor de nuestro hermanos tan probados la gracia de seguir fielmente a Cristo por el camino que conduce al Calvario, lugar de muerte y Resurrección.*

“M hermano, tú comprendes que estamos sufriendo mucho, todos como yo y también Uds. se encuentran pasando una grande prueba; pero, ¿quién de los que aquí estamos no hemos sentido caer sobre nuestro corazón desolado una lágrima de Jesús, lágrima invisible que ha devuelto a la vida? El Señor nos pide que no rehusemos sufrir con El. Quiere que consideremos el dolor como algo consustancial a la vida del cristiano. Que sepamos sufrir y sufrir bien, que el dolor no nos distancie de Dios, sufriendo irritados, refunfuñando o semirresignados, sino que por el contrario nos una más íntimamente con El. Su amor sabe de todo sacar fruto a condición solamente de que nosotros permanezcamos en El y seamos lo bastante humildes para recibir de Su mano, con una sonrisa en los labios, cosas tan molestas como puede ser esta.

Hermano mío, aférrate a Jesús Nuestro Señor; no titubees en confiar en El, entrégate sin miedos y sin regateos a Su divina voluntad, que es nuestra pas.

Así será cómo salvaremos a este mundo lleno de odios y de rencores, que se pierde cada vez más porque se aleja de la verdadera felicidad.”

– Mary Abbad

# Sodalists in exile, but still active

The female Sodality, called *Rosa Mística*, exiled from the Cuban homeland, is being split up among several American countries. They have opened up two clubhouses in Miami and in Puerto Rico, they already have recognition from their respective Ordinaries, and they have 200 members in Miami and 100 in Puerto Rico. The other countries where a number of Sodalities have made their way to assist in the setting up or the rejuvenation of university Sodalities are Panama, Colombia and Venezuela: in all these places, Cuban women are using their experience, acquired in Cuba during their university careers and in the open fight against communism, and are cooperating with their initiative and according to their possibilities, never imposing their own ideas, but adapting themselves to the prevailing circumstances in each country.

La C. M. femenina denominada *Rosa Mística*, desterrada de su patria cubana, se va diseminando por varias naciones de América. En Miami y Puerto Rico han abierto dos casas sociales, tienen ya el reconocimiento de sus respectivos ordinarios y cuentan con 200 miembros en Miami y 100 en Puerto Rico. Las otras naciones adonde se han dirigido algunas congregantes para ayudar en la fundación o rejuvenecimiento de C. M. universitarias, son Panamá, Colombia y Venezuela: en todos estos sitios las cubanas prestan su experiencia, adquirida en Cuba durante su vida universitaria y en la lucha hubiera contra el comunismo, y cooperan según sus iniciativas y posibilidades, nunca imponiendo ideas, sino adaptándose a las circunstancias de cada país.

# Sodalists in exile, but still active - cont'd

During the 1960s a group of young women from "*Rosa Mística*," a Marian Congregation founded in Havana by an agrupado, his wife and ACU's founder, Felipe Rey de Castro, SJ, embarked on apostolic work for the benefit of migrants at the South Dade Labor Camp in Florida City. Their agrupado counterparts joined in some time later. The work of *Rosa Mística* congregants was with mothers and daughters of that migrant community, while agrupados ministered to men. The experience was not long-lasting, but it did show the apostolate DNA of the ACU and *Rosa Mística* at work.

Durante los años 60, un grupo de jóvenes de la Congregación "*Rosa Mística*" comenzó un trabajo apostólico con personas de "South Dade Labor Camp" en la ciudad de Florida City. Después de algún tiempo los agrupados de la ACU decidieron participar. El trabajo lo hacían las congregantes de la *Rosa Mística* con las madres e hijas de esa zona de migrantes, y los agrupados con los hombres. La experiencia no duró mucho, pero demostró que en el ADN de la Agrupación y *Rosa Mística* está el apostolado.

CONGREGANTS IN THE PATIO OF THEIR HOUSE IN HAVANA · ROSA MÍSTICA · CONGREGANTES EN EL PATIO DE SU CASA EN LA HABANA



Top row: ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?

Middle row: ?, ?

Bottom row: ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?



FR. BERCEO CELEBRATING MASS IN THE PATIO OF THEIR HOUSE IN HAVANA · ROSA MÍSTICA · P. BERCEO CELEBRADO MISA EN EL PATIO DE LA CASA DE ROSA MÍSTICA EN LA HABANA





# Session of Spiritual Exercises Rosa Mística in Havana (1956)

Top row: ?, ?. Annie Lee Swan, Magaly Gutierrez, ?, ?, Zeida Morejón, Alicia Fernández Rocha  
2nd row: ?, Margarita Alonso, Marta Alonso, María Rivero Catá, ?, Carmen G.(?), Emelina Genoris Saker, ?, Gloria Ramos, ?, Nina Callejo Arenas, María Elena  
3rd row: ?, ?, ?, ?, Angela Mireya González Rivas, ?, Rita Fojaco, M.D., "Carmenhu", ?, Mariana, Emilia Luzárraga Fernández, Gloria  
4th row: ?, ?, ?, ?, Eradia Hurtado, Mercedes Ramos, ?, ?, Carmen Laura Bofill, Carmen, ?, ?, Divora, ?  
Bottom row: Tushnelda (Tatica) Menció Valdés Larralde, ?, Betty Rodríguez (Dir. del coro), Blasco Antón, M.D., Rosita Herrera (Sor Rosario de la Santa Faz, en clausura),  
Fr. Amando Llorente Villa, SJ, ?, ?, Eduvige "Lula" Santos, Raquel Olivia María Espin

<b>Col. 1 Arriba</b>	X	1	2	X	4	X	5	6	X	7	X	8	9	X
<b>Col. 2</b>	1 a media cara	2	3	4 María Elena Rivero Catá, (Married to congregante)	5	6 Carmen G. ?	7 Emelina Genoris Saker	8	9	10	11 Nina Calejo Arenas	X	12	X
<b>COL. 3</b> COLUMNS (VERTICAL)	X	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Rita Fojaco, M.D.	8	X	9	10	11 Emilia Luzárraga Fernández	12
<b>Col. 4</b>	1	2	3	4	5 Eradia Hurtado, Arquitecta (Restored RM in Miami)	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<b>Col. 5 Abajo</b>	1 Tushnelda (Tatica) Menció Valdés Larralde	X	2	3 Betty Rodríguez (Dir. del coro)	4 Blanca R. Menéndez Antón, M.D.	5 Rosita Herrera (Sor Rosario de la Santa Faz, en clausura)	X	6 P. Amando Llorente, SJ	7	X	8 Lula Santos	9	10	X

# Dr. Rosalba Roberts

Dr. Rosalba Roberts lived in New Orleans, where her husband taught at Loyola. Both of them received innumerable awards both academically and religiously. He died first and then Hurricane Katrina destroyed Rosalba's house. Her niece took over and moved her to South Carolina, in a home for the elderly. She saw her life-long job, Rosa Mística, destroyed, lost her husband, her home, her friends from New Orleans. She recognized my husband and called him by his name when we visited her in South Carolina. We prayed the rosary together.

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# Cibele Vidaud, M.D.

When I started attending Rosa Mística, Cibeles was a resident and a medical student. She must have been three or four years older than me. She attended the movies given at the University at night and suggested them to me. I lived far from both Rosa Mística and the University and my family would not allow me to go alone at night and come home around 11 p.m. Cibeles offered to take me home after the movies on public transportation and she then returned the same way to Rosa Mística; she was a perfect example of loving your neighbors. She fled Cuba and became a psychiatrist in New York.

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# Rita Fojaco, M.D.

She left Cuba with her M.D. The University of Miami gave a test to the people who were to take the real Foreign Medical Exam, just a sample of the real test. Only about five people passed it. Rita was one. She was allowed to start her medical internship right away. She continued her career in Miami and received awards.

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# Virginia Miranda Balbona

She left Cuba with her M.D. The University of Miami gave a test to the people who were to take the real Foreign Medical Exam, just a sample of the real test. Only about five people passed it. Rita was one. She was allowed to start her medical internship right away. She continued her career in Miami and received awards.

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# July Alvira

She did a lot of apostolic in Puerto Rico, where they want to canonize her.

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# Rosita Herrera

Is a cloistered nun at Monasterio Carmelita de San José in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

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# Emelina Ginoris Saker

Married Alex Saker, M.D., from the ACU. Her son was one of the founding members of the Atlanta ACU. She had a very successful career with Coca-Cola and later as a consultant to the Georgia Department of Human Services.

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# Blanca R. Antón, M.D.

Married an ACU congregant, Manuel P. Antón, M.D., and her son (Manny) was one of the founding members of the Atlanta ACU. Her son is a physician and her daughter a full-professor at Georgia Tech. In her professional career, she completed two residencies at Emory University; the first in General Psychiatry and the second in Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. She was director of Unit II at Central State Hospital in Milledgeville, Georgia where she was responsible for 3,000 patients. Upon moving to Atlanta, she became director of the child/adolescent unit at Georgia Regional Hospital. Later, she was director of Outpatient Child Psychiatry at Grady Hospital. She later founded the first private in-patient child psychiatry unit in Georgia at Parkwood Hospital. She retired after 30 years of private practice in 2001.

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## PROFILES

# Lourdes López Chaves

Obtuvo una licenciatura en Letras en la Universidad de Santo Tomás de Villanueva, en La Habana. Es miembro del Instituto Secular de Derecho Pontificio Las Oblatas Misioneras de Maria Inmaculada. Publicó cinco libros de poesías religiosas. YouTube: <https://youtu.be/sHayKRmWXUo>

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AGRUPADO LUÍS VALDÉS LARRALDE & ROSA MÍSTICA THUSNELDA VALDÉS

## **Fr. Amando Llorente, SJ**

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- Marriages between agrupados and congregants of Rosa Mística were very common

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This is work in progress. Please collaborate  
with us. [Efrain\\_Zabala@icloud.com](mailto:Efrain_Zabala@icloud.com)

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