

October 21, 1964

Barcelona Church
Richer By Suffering

By John J. Hurt

BARCELONA, Spain (BP)--This is the story of a home which became a church which in turn desperately needs a new building to accommodate the people who are being turned away at every service.

It also is the story of a pastor with a police record for preaching the message of Jesus Christ.

The story is not unique in Spain where pastors and people are enjoying for the first time a goodly amount of religious liberty. It heralds a new day for evangelism and, with development of leadership and erection of new buildings, points to Spain as possibly the richest of European evangelistic fields.

"This is a suffering church," explains Pastor Juan Perez Guzman of his Third Baptist Church congregation. "Suffering is good for a church."

It was back in 1957 that the little fellowship acquired an apartment only to have the police order it closed. One of the church families invited the church to occupy their apartment. Attendance grew and the family moved out so walls could be torn down and other arrangements made to improve facilities. Services continued for six years without a police permit, finally received last year.

The new building isn't far away if Guzman's optimism is correct. "The permit is for our very life," he says to explain the major barrier has been crossed. "The building permit is for expansion."

"We hope if it is OK with the Lord we will be in our new building next year and then for the first time we will really be in a church. We will invite people and there will be a place to worship."

Application for the permit is on appeal. Both the pastor and missionaries are confident it will be granted. The Spanish government has assured evangelicals fair treatment in this nation where the Roman Catholic Church has imposed one restriction after another.

Evangelical churches are not permitted buildings but instead rent apartments. They cannot place an identifying sign outside the apartment. All this is changing and a new law being promised assures a new day.

Visit the little church on a Sunday night and you can see the zeal of a people who have known persecution. Two rooms have been thrown together in what serves as the main auditorium. Sixty persons are crowded on the crude pews. Thirty more are in the corridor and in the pastor's study where they can hear but not see. Thirty or so children are in the nursery.

Two neatly lettered signs are on an arch which separates the two auditorium rooms. "Dios merece el respecto y reverencia de sus hijos," reads one. "God merits the respect and reverence of his children." The other reminds: "El silencio es reverencia"--"Silence is reverence." The pulpit drape has in gold letters "Dios es amor"--"God is love."

Chief among memories of the service is the reverence of the people. There also is the memory of a pastor who, without notes, preached with fervor--making his emphasis with voice levels and also with gestures so much a part of the Spanish people.

Guzman is one of Spain's better-educated Baptist pastors. He is a graduate of the Baptist seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland; has a law degree, and is studying now for a degree in philosophy. He plans to combine teaching with his pastoral ministry for "we need very much to have trained men."

He is thrilled about possibilities for a new building. "We now say to our people, please don't invite. We do not have room. Then, for the first time we will say invite people."

The new building also will give the church its first baptistry--if \$600 or \$700 is available. Spain's economy is improving but the people still lack the resources for building new churches. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board will provide the \$20,000 or so for these facilities and the membership about \$1,000.

The church has 71 members with 10 awaiting baptism and 10 more in a class preparing for membership. Spanish Baptists require new Christians to study in these classes for six to nine months, then stand an examination with questions from the congregation.

Guzman dismisses his police record as unimportant and especially in this new day of some religious freedom.

"One of the times we were holding services in Valencia," he said, "the police broke in and I was in prison for three days. It was 1947. Now things are different."

Things are different because Spanish evangelicals like him and his people made them different. They continued to worship, like the early Christians, despite persecution. Their prayers for complete freedom may soon be answered.

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2 Million Tithers
Set As 1965 Goal

10-21-64

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist stewardship leaders have set a 1965 goal of at least two million tithers among the denomination's 10.4 million church members.

This would mean an increase of 600,000 since 1.4 million is the estimated present number of those giving one-tenth of their incomes to religious purposes.

According to the office of the Southern Baptist Convention Stewardship Commission here, state Baptist conventions set their own goals. These add up to slightly more than two million.

Largest goals were set by Texas, 350,000, and North Carolina, 237,000, these being the largest states in terms of church members in the SBC.

Those in the 100,000 category include California, 192,563; Tennessee, 160,392; Alabama and Georgia, each 150,000; Florida, 139,000; Oklahoma, 120,000; Arkansas, 104,000, and Kentucky and South Carolina, 100,000 each.

The goals of others, alphabetically, are Alaska, 2000; Arizona, 12,000; Colorado, 9000; District of Columbia, 10,000; Hawaii, 1470; Illinois, 35,000; Indiana, 7500.

Kansas, 10,000; Louisiana, 85,277; Maryland, 11,193; Michigan, 6750; Mississippi, 99,000; Missouri, 95,000; New Mexico, 25,000; Ohio, 52,828; Oregon and Washington (combined), 6500, and Virginia, 97,000.

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Refugee Awaiting
Resettlement Killed

MIAMI (BP)--A Cuban refugee, survivor of the Bay of Pigs invasion and two years of prison in Cuba, was shot here just two weeks before his marriage and resettlement in Nashville, Tenn.

According to Miss Lucille Kerrigan, director of the Baptist Refugee Center in Miami, Carlos Bravo, 26, a temporary employee of the Miami Herald, was on his way to work Oct. 14.

He drove into a filling station shortly after midnight and was shot by the attendant, who said he thought Bravo planned to rob him. The station had been robbed three weeks before.

Woodmont Baptist Church in Nashville had agreed to sponsor Bravo's resettlement in that city, and work had been secured for him and his bride-to-be, Mary Lou Plain of Miami.

Miss Plain, a native of Cuba, came to the United States when a child and is now a citizen of this country. Her father is a medical doctor and she is a medical secretary.

Though Bravo was not a Baptist, he had attended the First Baptist Church of Hollywood, Fla., near Miami, where Miss Plain was a member.

Resettlement plans were made through the Baptist Refugee Center, sponsored by Miami Baptists and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Their marriage, scheduled for Oct. 29, had been delayed for the arrival from Spain of his parents, whom he had not seen for six years. They arrived in New York the day after his death.

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Furman Sets Date
For Inauguration

10-21-64

GREENVILLE, S. C. (BP)--Furman University, Baptist college here, will inaugurate its eighth president, Gordon Williams Blackwell, April 20, 1965. Douglas M. Knight, president of Duke University, Durham, N. C., will deliver the inauguration address.

The inauguration will be held in Furman's McAlister Auditorium.

Blackwell, currently president of Florida State University, Tallahassee, will assume his duties at Furman next February, succeeding John L. Plyler.

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