

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
Telephone (615) 244-2355  
W. C. Fields, Director  
Jim Newton, Assistant Director**REGIONAL OFFICES****ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Editor/161 Spring Street, N.W./Atlanta, Georgia 30303/Telephone (404) 523-2593**DALLAS** R. T. McCartney, Editor/103 Baptist Building/Dallas, Texas 75201/Telephone (214) RI 1-1996**WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Editor/200 Maryland Ave., N.E./Washington, D.C. 20002/Telephone (202) 544-4226

October 20, 1966

**Catholic Priest Preaches  
At Florida Baptist Church**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (BP)--When a Roman Catholic priest preached to a packed crowd at the First Baptist Church of Tallahassee, the response was "fabulous."

This is how the pastor of the 4,400-member church, C. A. Roberts, described reaction to the televised morning worship service which featured a sermon by Lawrence Cunningham, chaplain of the Catholic Student Center at Florida State University here.

Roberts, current president of the Southern Baptist Pastor's Conference, was speaking at the Baptist Student Union Convention in Fort Worth, Tex., on the Sunday (Oct. 16) the Catholic priest filled the pulpit.

It is believed to be one of the first times that a Catholic priest has delivered the sermon at a worship service in churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Everything I have been able to interpret concerning the reaction of the church has been positive," Roberts said. "Of course, I expect some negative response, especially from those who did not hear the sermon, but I'm not bothered about that."

"We've come to the point when we must face the fact that the Gospel is being preached by someone else besides Baptists," Roberts said.

Roberts hailed the event as another instance of improved relationships between Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics.

"You can talk about progress in our relationships all you want, but until we actually do something, we may not be making much headway," Roberts said.

Cunningham preached on the theme of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, said Roberts who had listened to the tape recording of the message. He told the congregation how justification by faith sets Christianity apart from other world religions, tracing Christian history on this theme since the time of Christ, Roberts added.

About 1,600 attended the worship service, with an additional 400 watching via closed-circuit television in another auditorium downstairs. The worship service was televised as usual by station WCTV in Tallahassee.

Cunningham said in his sermon that he had listened to Roberts' sermons for four or five years, and that Roberts had never said anything from the pulpit that he (Cunningham) did not believe wholeheartedly.

In the church's weekly news bulletin, Roberts wrote in announcing plans for Cunningham to speak that on several occasions at service clubs, Cunningham had made the statement that "doctrinally he is probably closer to Southern Baptists than to anyone else."

Roberts said that Cunningham, in his opinion, was the best preacher in the area, and that his sermons especially appealed to students. A big percentage of the church's membership includes college students, he added.

"At first Larry didn't think he would be able to accept, since he would have to get permission from his bishop," said Roberts. "But when the bishop said he was delighted that the invitation had been extended, Larry even cancelled a mass he was to lead at that time in order to preach at our church." Numerous Catholics attended the service, he added.

The week before the service, the deacons at the First Baptist Church had voted 45-3 to uphold the pastor's invitation to the priest.

Roberts said that one of the deacons who first was opposed to the invitation met his plane when he returned from Texas to tell him of the church's response.

He said there were two groups of people at the church, Roberts recalled. "The majority were happy because of the tremendous worship service conducted by the Catholic, and a few were disappointed because this young man did not abort the service and because he did such a good job."

The deacon told Roberts that the priest's sermon was similar to the content of Roberts' last four or five sermons, and that his style was like that of Billy Graham.

In the church bulletin distributed just before the Sunday service, Roberts acknowledged that he was "sure it will immediately raise some eyebrows around the church to know that a Catholic priest is going to supply for me. No one who hears him will have any concern whatever.

"You can be sure," he wrote, "that the pulpit will not be defiled. In fact, I think you are in store for a very delightful experience."

A native of St. Petersburg, Fla., Cunningham serves as assistant at the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in addition to his work with the Catholic student center at Florida State University.

-30-

#### Baptists Politically Asleep, Says Speaker

10/20/66

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--It's time for Baptist men to wake up to their responsibilities in political action, declared Jimmy R. Allen of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission in Dallas in a message to the Missouri Baptist Men's Convention meeting here.

With election time in the United States close by, Allen observed here that "Southern Baptist men are like religious Rip Van Winkles in the matter of applying Christian principles to political action."

He said, however, Baptists should have no ambition to become a bloc in voting power. "Baptists should realize that their political action in its Christian dimension should be issue-oriented rather than group-oriented action."

Treading on ground where Baptists have traditionally invoked the "keep politics out of the church" response, Allen told the state men's group that Christians cannot be true to God and ignore the world of political action.

"We must claim all we touch in the name of our Lord. The world of political structures is in God's plan as an instrument for restraining evil and as a channel for creative good," he stated.

Issues calling for involvement, he said, are (1) the issue of existence, primarily that of the nuclear potential for destruction; and (2) the issue of the kind of existence present, including the problems of public morality, hunger and want, and racial tension.

-30-

#### 100 Preachers Sought For Africa Crusade

10/20/66

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board has been asked to enlist about 100 preachers for a simultaneous revival crusade in South Africa, now scheduled for September 1967.

Eual F. Lawson, associate in the board's division of evangelism, will direct the effort, which will be similar to the 1965 crusade in New Zealand.

"The Baptist Union of South Africa voted in an assembly meeting to request our help," Lawson said. "We will take about 100 evangelists and I will work with local Baptist officials in planning and organizing the crusade."

There are 138 Baptist churches in South Africa, with about 15,200 members, Lawson said. A few churches in Rhodesia and Zambia also will participate.

Lawson said the Baptist Union has set a goal of training at least 5,000 lay people to mount an intensive personal witnessing campaign during the months leading up to the revivals.

"I think nothing could be better for the denomination, because the emphasis will not only be placed on visitors coming from overseas and evangelistic campaigns, but first and foremost in the witnessing church," C. W. Parnell, general secretary of the Baptist Union, wrote in extending the invitation.

"Southern Baptists are requested to pray now and without ceasing for this tremendous crusade. We cannot do the work of God without the power of God," Lawson said.

-30-