



July 12, 1978

78-113

Ruiz Reaches Spanish  
In Mississippi Delta

By Tim Nicholas

CLEVELAND, Miss. (BP)--Frank Ruiz pulls his car up to a small white frame house with a dusty little front yard. It's already hot in the Mississippi Delta even in mid-spring. A light breeze makes the coat and tie Ruiz wears more bearable.

He knocks at the door and a middle aged woman answers, inviting Ruiz and his companion in.

She seems mildly glad to see Ruiz, but nervously eyes the camera around the neck of the stranger. Ruiz explains that the newcomer is a reporter writing a story on his work and wanting a picture of some of the people Ruiz visits in the course of his ministry.

Politely, but firmly, she refuses. "No pictures," she says, "the priest might see it."

The woman is a member of Frank Ruiz' "invisible" parish. There are dozens like her in the Mississippi Delta where Ruiz ministers to the Spanish speaking people whose families labor in the cotton industry.

Ruiz, a Southern Baptist missionary who has been assigned to the delta area since 1976, says some of those who are not afraid of the priest knowing that they talk with him, are afraid of the law. Some of the cotton workers are illegal aliens.

The fears make Ruiz' work even more difficult than it might be. His job is to establish ongoing ministries to the estimated 2,000 Spanish speaking people in the seven county Delta area around Cleveland.

Additionally, Ruiz is pastor of the year old Benjamin Burgos Memorial Mexican Baptist Church in Shelby.

On a typical day Ruiz might visit three or four families. "I tell them I'm trying to minister to them, give them portions of the Bible, pray with them." He says that 50 percent of the time he's not welcome at a person's home at first. "I'll stand at the door. Some are anxious to talk."

He always starts in Spanish, which he's still learning, to establish that special contact. "After several visits, they'll ask me to pray for them, and are open about their spiritual conditions," he says.

Ruiz feels a great need for the Spanish cotton workers is in literacy. Many cannot read Spanish or English. He says the Bible can easily be taught through a literacy ministry-- "a good project for a church."

Other possibilities for ministry include a radio program Ruiz is trying to get started, and a newsletter for the Spanish community which he would circulate.

If he stays long enough, Ruiz says, he'll open a Mexican restaurant, "not only for myself, but to give the people a little appreciation of their heritage."

Ruiz struggles with a people who feel they have enough religion by being born Catholic. "I go to visit and they say 'I'm Catholic and don't want to be bothered by another religion.' But after two or three visits, they'll invite me in for coffee or tea," he says.

-more-

Ruiz was reared in a Catholic home with 12 brothers and sisters and went to a Catholic school in Toledo, Ohio, where he grew up.

He says he didn't have much religious training, but that he had deep roots and felt he had the only true religion. "I felt other religions were of the devil," says Ruiz. "This is still the feeling of many Catholics."

At age 28, Ruiz made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. He'd been invited to go to a Baptist church simply because a man had offered to pick him and his wife up.

"I questioned the man's use of the Bible because he was not a priest, but I liked what I heard," says Ruiz. "After the third Sunday, I told my wife if it was true I could be saved, I'd give my life to Christ."

Ruiz' 'five year plan' is to have at least five churches or missions and five Spanish departments in Mississippi by 1982. "This can be accomplished very easily by Mississippi Baptists," he says. Already there is work at Shelby, Broadmoor Baptist Church in Jackson, and Harrisburg Baptist Church in Tupelo.

He says it isn't necessary for a language worker to do the starting of a Bible study in a home or to begin a Spanish department. Anybody can do it. The important thing is to have regular Bible study. Says Ruiz, "It's the only way to win them."

-30-

(BP) Photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Baptist Record.

Carter's Faith Creates  
Evangelism Opportunities

By Roy Jennings

Baptist Press  
7/12/78

GLORIETA, N. M. (BP)--Jimmy Carter may have made some mistakes as president "but bringing up that 'born again' stuff wasn't one of them," Laura Fry of Atlanta told hundreds of women and a sprinkling of men at the Bold Mission Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

President Carter's references to his faith create new opportunities for Christians to witness, reported the 30-year-old evangelism specialist, who has the newly-created assignment of equipping women in the Southern Baptist Convention to share their faith.

"People throughout the country are asking questions now," she said. "You know our country is more pagan than it has ever been. With people asking these questions, we have an opportunity to do something about it."

Outlining her formula for Christian witnessing--"Let Christ live through you and be available to answer questions"--Miss Fry called on the women to adopt a lifestyle of evangelism which she describes as an attitude and a purpose for living.

"When I got hold of that concept, it changed my whole life," she said. "That's my purpose. I'm on the mission field where I am."

Miss Fry urged the women to witness by relating their problems and how Christ helped them to solve them. "People need to see Christ as a living reality in you and as a part of the contemporary scene."

Employed six months ago by the evangelism section of the Home Mission Board after ministry assignments in New England, Miami and San Francisco, Miss Fry spent four months in research before going on the field.

As large groups of women flocked to the sessions to learn more about how to witness, Miss Fry said she expected to see the same type of positive response throughout the country. "There's an obvious deficiency in Christian witnessing among Baptist women," she said. "It's been there a long time. But women now want to do something personal."

-more-

A number of factors contribute to this growing concern of women to share their faith, Miss Fry believes. "There are more single parent families now and more women are co-providers in the home. Women are being pushed out of the kitchen and into the office."

Identified as Southern Baptists' woman evangelist by some people, Miss Fry, who does not intend to seek ordination, acknowledged she is receiving close scrutiny as she begins her work.

But the young graduate of Southern Illinois University and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary believes Southern Baptist women are accepting her. She's already booked solid between now and next April with evangelism workshops for women.

-30-

Baptist Church Damaged  
In Latest Beirut Action

Baptist Press  
7/12/78

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--The Badarro Street Baptist Church, associated with Southern Baptist mission work, was damaged during a recent outbreak of fighting in Beirut, Lebanon.

The church was the first one damaged since the two-year-long civil war ended in 1976. The latest skirmish involved Syrian peace-keeping forces and Christian militia. No missionaries were injured.

According to Finlay M. Graham, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board field representative for the Middle East, missionaries in Lebanon have "a very high morale," and those currently in the United States plan to return to Lebanon on schedule. Local Baptists have used the Badarro Street Church's basement as a bomb shelter.

A hospital operated by another Christian organization was slightly damaged during the conflict, but no one was hurt.

-30-

Home Mission Board  
Appoints 26 Persons

Baptist Press  
7/12/78

ATLANTA (BP)--Directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board appointed 26 persons to mission service during their summer meeting in Atlanta.

Eight missionaries, four missionary associates, one US-2 missionary and 13 mission pastors will join the more than 2,800 home missions personnel serving in the United States and its territories.

Named missionaries were Everett and Nancy Anthony of Hoffman Estates, Ill.; Leon and Marie Grosdidier of Lubbock, Texas; Herman and Gwendolyn Rios of Oklahoma City, Okla.; and William and Clemontene Rountree of Silver Spring, Md.

Appointed as missionary associates were Richard and Patricia Alford of Andalusia, Ala., and Winford and Martha Oakes of Joshua, Texas.

Paula Wilkinson of Heflin, Ala., was appointed as a US-2 missionary to serve two years in the Home Mission Board's mission program for college graduates.

The Anthonys will serve in Chicago, where he will direct associational missions for the Chicago Metro Baptist Association. Anthony, an Oklahoma native, is a graduate of Oklahoma State University and holds a bachelor of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Prior to appointment, he was pastor of First Baptist Church, Hoffman Estates, Ill., and has served as pastor in Skokie and Mt. Carmel, Ill., and Wheaton, Mo.

Nancy Clayton Anthony, also an Oklahoma native, is a graduate of Oklahoma State University and has attended Southwestern Baptist Seminary. She has worked as a school teacher since 1967.

-more-

The Grosdidiers will continue to live in Lubbock, where he will direct Christian social ministries for the Lubbock Baptist Association. Grosdidier, a native of Corsicana, Texas, is a graduate of Sam Houston State University and holds a master of education degree from Texas A & M University. Prior to appointment he was special education supervisor and coordinator in El Paso, Texas.

Marie Bishop Grosdidier, also a Texas native, has attended East Texas Baptist College. Since 1975, she has directed day care for the Mount Franklin Baptist Church, Lubbock.

The Rios will move to Atlanta, Ga., where he will serve as a national evangelism consultant in ethnic evangelism for the Home Mission Board's evangelism section. Rios, a native of Puerto Rico, is a graduate of Cameron State University, Lawton, Okla., and holds a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Seminary. Prior to appointment, he was staff evangelist for the Exchange Avenue Baptist Church, Oklahoma City.

Gwendolyn Fillman Rios, a native of Stillwater, Okla., is a graduate of North Texas State University and has worked as an English teacher.

The Rountrees will serve in Washington, D. C., where he will direct the Johnenning Baptist Center. Rountree, a native of Graniteville, S. C., is a graduate of Howard University and holds master of education and doctor of physical education degrees from Springfield College. Prior to appointment, he taught at Howard University in the District of Columbia.

Clemontene Watkins Rountree, a Virginia native, is a graduate of Bennett College and has worked as a teacher.

The Alford's will serve as language missions program leader in Mississippi. Alford, a Louisiana native, is a graduate of Louisiana College and holds a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Prior to appointment, he was minister of education at First Baptist Church, Andalusia, Ala. He also has served as pastor in Alabama, minister to the deaf in Gulfport, Miss., and has taught in high schools.

Patricia Kerr Alford, an Alabama native, is a graduate of William Carey College and holds a master of religious education degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Prior to appointment, she was a teacher's aid in public kindergarten and has worked as a teacher since 1964.

The Oakes will live in Denton, Texas, where he will serve as a language missionary, specifically as a mission and church starter. Oakes, a Texas native, has attended Dallas Baptist College and Southwestern Baptist Seminary and has served as pastor of Reece Prairie Baptist Church, Burleson, Texas.

Martha Jordan Oakes is a homemaker, originally from Lamar County, Texas.

Paula Wilkinson, an Alabama native, will serve in Waterbury, Conn. She is a graduate of the University of Alabama with a bachelor of social work degree. She has twice served as a summer missionary and plans further study in seminary or graduate school.

-30-

**CORRECTION:**

In (BP) story mailed 7/11/78, entitled "Poll at SBC Shows Support for Carter," No. 3 of the poll results from graph six was accidentally combined with No. 2. It should read:  
2) "President Carter's Support of the Panama Canal Treaties": Approve, 33 percent; Disapprove, 52 percent; Undecided, 15 percent.

3) "Does President Carter Keep His Campaign Promises": More than other presidents, 31 percent; less than other president, 11 percent; About the same or undecided, 58 percent.

Pick up at No. 4.

Thanks, Baptist Press Staff

