



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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October 22, 1980

80-168

Desire To Serve Others
Marks New Missionaries

By Marv Knox

ATLANTA (BP)--Eighty-seven mission workers joined the ranks of more than 3,000 Southern Baptist missionaries in the United States as the SBC Home Mission Board commissioned them to service in Tifton, Ga.

"These men and women will minister to Mexicans, Cubans, blacks, Japanese and Anglos," said Irvin Dawson, missionary personnel director.

"They'll serve in rural areas and the hearts of our cities; they'll spread their influence from the tip of Florida to the extremes of the Northwest," he added. "They are one of the largest groups of missionaries ever commissioned by the board."

Board President William G. Tanner told the missionaries they would encounter opposition, spiritual need, despair and change, but added they must never give up on their venture to reach all Americans for Christ.

"If you don't understand our nation is lost, then we'll never be able to win it," he said. "We cannot win it unless we feel a kindred spirit for all people—even the unlovely and those in sin. As Christians and missionaries, ours is the task of rescue, of reaching out with the redemptive value of salvation."

A desire to spread the redemptive value of salvation was exactly what brought many of the missionaries to the point of committing themselves to mission service, some of them related.

"I've become absolutely convinced that God has as his top priority the lives of people," said Steve Morse of Clovis, Calif., who gave up a career in business to attend seminary and prepare for the ministry. Now a church planter apprentice, he will spend the coming years starting new churches.

Similar feelings were expressed by Pamela McCoy, director of Marrowbone Baptist Center in Hellier, Ky.

"Marrowbone is the center of the lives of local kids, most of them children of coal mining families," she said. "Their parents don't care about religion and don't want them to go to church. But at the center, they know they're loved."

"I thank God for people who love and support missions like you do," McCoy told the Tifton congregation. "I wish I could bring my 85 kids here to tell you, 'Thank you.'"

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Explaining that he is "a product of home missions," Santos Martinez Jr. said he is indebted to mission Vacation Bible School groups and Woman's Missionary Union chapters for turning his life toward Christ.

A catalytic language missionary in Trinidad, Colo., Martinez was raised in a poverty-stricken area of the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. He said Baptists were the ones who provided him with an opportunity to attend college and seminary.

"People can make a difference in other people's lives," he said. "I am what I am because of Christ, but some very special people—Baptists—have made a difference.

"As a Southern Baptist missionary, I want to make a difference in the lives of people, too."

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A NEWS ANALYSIS

Baptist Press

Catholic Bishops Shift
To Practical Suggestions

By C.B. Hastings

VATICAN CITY (BP)--"Too many people look on our moral teachings as a laundry list of do's and don'ts based more on historical accident or institutional concern than a gospel mandate," said the Archbishop of Cincinnati, Joseph Bernardin.

The Roman Catholic leader was coming to grips with a major problem facing the Roman Catholic Church on the subject, "The Role of the Christian Family in the World of Today." He reflected the shift away from pious platitudes to specific issues and practical suggestions on the part of many of the 219 bishops of the Catholic world in their second week of this Fifth Synod of Bishops meeting at the Vatican.

Bernardin went on to say, "So they (the people) pick and choose what they want and reject the rest." He knows that Catholic lay people increasingly are listening to the moral teachings of the Church and then exercising their own judgment. This has become critical in the matter of using forbidden means of contraception by as many as 75 percent of Catholic couples in the U.S., contrary to the 1968 encyclical of Pope Paul VI, "On Human Life."

Catholic leaders are more and more moving away from ecclesial fiat to pastoral persuasion. Bernardin admitted, "We cannot take it for granted that people understand and accept a natural law ethic" (the basis of much of the Church's teaching against contraception and abortion).

He called for "a greater evangelistic effort. Before people can fully live by the values Jesus taught us, they must experience conversion," he said. "They must come to know and love the Lord. They must experience him in their lives: his love, mercy, understanding and compassion must be real to them. Only then will they be willing to commit themselves to him and accept the demands he makes. Only then will they be ready to make that surrender which is expected of every Christian."

So far the U.S. bishops have set a new standard of quality in their "interventions" (speeches or written statements to the synod).

Frankly in the previous three synods (which have met every three years since 1971), I have not been that impressed with the U.S. delegation. But these five bishops have clearly outstripped other national delegations in the depth and range of their contributions.

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A major profit in coming through the years to these synods for this Baptist observer is that it affords a view of what is happening in the rest of the Roman Catholic world. The speeches of the bishops, especially from the Third World, reflect their unique concerns, their personal hurts and their cries for understanding and support. But in this article I must try to do justice to the Americans.

Bishops Francis Stafford, auxiliary bishop of Baltimore and chairman of the U.S. Catholic Conference's Commission on Marriage and Family Life, has clearly done the most homework. In a fine effort to set Christian marriage in the context of the mission of the family to society he has given an excellent description of the family: "Sacramental conjugal love is a love between equal persons as the spouses affirm each other in their total personhood. The husband loves his wife with an intimate and total love to the degree that he supports and strengthens her as his closest friend, as a sexual person, as a mother, as a citizen and active participant in the social, economic and cultural life.

"Similarly, the wife's love for her husband is intimate and total when it is a deep, personal friendship which also affirms him in his sexuality, as father and as a public person. Parents love their children with a total love when they aid them in growth as persons who can share themselves with others in loyal intimacy and in social responsibility."

But he is not content to allow the family to be an end in itself, noble as it may be. If their understanding "causes them to minimize their Christian engagement in the struggle for social, political and economic justice, they have misunderstood the full nature of the sacrament."

Some of these concerns for justice were featured by Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York in his intervention on the problem of abused children. He reported estimates indicate up to one million children are maltreated in the U.S. every year, causing 4,000 deaths from abuse and neglect. He attributed much of this to "the shattering of the ability of families to cope" with oppressive economic conditions on the one hand and "confused and insecure parents lacking human support systems" on the other.

The cardinal focused also on the desperate condition of the estimated 20 million refugees in the world today, greater than in all previous history. More than 60 percent of these are children under age 16 and the majority of the adults are women. He singled out the plight of hundreds of thousands of Indochinese refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos with "not a single comprehensive program for the unification of family members" at work.

As can be expected of one caught up in the grim realities, the Archbishop of Santa Fe, Robert Sanchez, sought practical means of ministering to migrants. The acceptance of illegal immigrants by local parishes is sometimes a difficult human and social problem. In many areas of the world migrant workers, who often must leave their families for months at a time or carry them along in difficult circumstances, present a challenge to Christians "to open their hearts and their homes to the migrant, for he is truly a brother in need."

Bishop Stafford also addressed the increase of "mixed marriages" between Catholics and non-Catholics, which has now reached almost 40 percent of all marriages involving Catholics in the U.S. This is of such major concern to Baptists as well.

The world-renowned worker with the poor and the dying in Calcutta, Mother Teresa, spoke last week to the full assembly, as well as one couple from West Germany and another from the Congo.

An interesting small conference called to coincide with the synod is that of "Women and Men in Today's Family, Society and Church," meeting in a hotel basement room outside the Vatican. The group of men and women, single and married, lay and ordained, hope to "make their voice heard and bring to the bishops and to the world an echo of the multiple responses which humankind can give to today's challenging questions of sexuality, love and human relationships."

They are not too optimistic in the light of their view that the Church is weighed down with a load of traditional baggage gathered through the centuries: from the Greco-Roman world, St. Augustine's very carnal view of sexuality, the dominant patriarchal cultures of the Church in many nations, and a kind of Mariology which has worked to keep womanhood submissive in society.

But it is encouraging that the U.S. bishops, among others, are trying to live out the Lord's description of the wise steward who brings out of his treasure things old—the eternal values of the gospel—and things new—a modern pastoral ministry to the wholeness of persons living in families in today's world.

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(C.B. Hastings is associate director of the Department of Interfaith Witness at the Home Mission Board and specializes in Catholic-Baptist relationships. This is the fourth synod of bishops he has covered as a special correspondent for Baptist Press.)

Volunteers Needed To Provide
Medical Team Shot In the Arm

By Mike Livingston

Baptist Press
10/22/80

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--While Southern Baptists' overseas health care ministry may not be on its last leg, the program suffers from an acute lack of personnel, says Harold Hurst, medical resources consultant of the Foreign Mission Board.

"There is a desperate need for the medical personnel just to adequately carry on the health care ministries we are already committed to," Hurst said.

Hurst said needs include both short-term volunteers to work with the four medical disaster relief teams, as well as long-term, career medical missionaries.

Short-term needs include doctors, dentists, nurses and logistic experts to rebuild the disaster teams, all seriously understaffed, especially in physicians.

Long-term needs are critical, Hurst says, as requests for medical missionaries far out-distance actual appointments.

What is needed around the world, he said, is for "Southern Baptists to put people where their mouths are and to send out professional people who are willing to lay their lives on the line in developing a health care ministry that will reach out and touch."

The disaster medical teams of 12 to 15 men and women must be ready to leave their jobs in the United States and respond within 48 hours to natural disasters anywhere in the world.

Since the teams were formed in 1977, there has been an average of three alerts per year, mostly in response to earthquakes and hurricanes in the Caribbean.

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Conditions the teams serv under are often comparable to wartime, and Hurst is quick to inform would-be volunteers of that fact.

In the September issue of "Missionary Medicine," a quarterly bulletin which Hurst edits, he wrote: "Medical disaster personnel needed. Willing to serve two to four weeks, no salary, no expense provided. No frills. No comfort. Long hours and fatigue guaranteed. Many spiritual blessings."

Hurst said medical team No. 1, which is always the first unit called, has had as many as 20 members, but is now down to 12. The other teams also are operating without sufficient personnel.

But if Hurst's concern for short-term personnel is serious, his concern for long-term needs is critical.

"In 1978 we had requests for 95 career medical missionaries with 43 of those being for physicians," he explained. "We appointed four." This year, with 34 career physician requests, none has been appointed.

Hurst said that even if all of the requests were met, there still would only be enough personnel to maintain the health care ministries Southern Baptists are already committed to. "I wonder if we dare call that bold?" he asked.

"I believe if Southern Baptists are informed and if they are challenged, the medical professionals needed around the world will be found," he said.

Hurst suggested a formula by which the needs can be met: "If every state convention were to produce only one physician, two nurses, an occasional dentist, plus some ancillary personnel every two years, all of our needs would be met."

"I don't believe anything less could be called bold health care advances," said Hurst. "And there are probably no better doors for reaching people for Jesus than through medical evangelism."

"Medical evangelism is really what we are talking about," he said. "Every medical missionary has as his goal to place before every individual to whom he ministers the claims of Christ on his life. Hurting people listen, and listening people hear Jesus Christ speaking to them."