

The Spirit of Truth



A Newsletter Published by The Spirit Of Truth Ministries
Richard Awtrey Evangelistic Association

Trip Report From Evangelist Richard Awtrey

On the last trip to the Philippine Islands I spent twenty-five days ministering the Word of God, holding Crusades and laying the ground work for a future permanent ministry in Bacolod City. The following is a report of some of the events that took place during this recent trip.

Every day brought a new experience - some wonderful; some very trying; and some that were difficult to comprehend.

The most important things that happened were:

1. From eleven nights of holding crusade meetings in different poverty areas of Bacolod City. There were 875 adults and over 21 x 10 young people who accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
2. We delivered over \$6000.00 worth of medical supplies to the Hinigran Emergency Clinic for the Poor. This was made possible through the generosity of several Wichita physicians.
3. We purchased a home for a pastor and his family. This facility will also serve as a church. It is in an area that for several years was held by bandits and the Red Scorpion Army. Our ministry was able to donate half of the funds required for this project, and attorney Ike M. Barredo, one of our board members, made a matching donation.

A Nation Engulfed in Poverty

The poverty that I witnessed in the Philippines was very sobering. It is still hard for me to believe some of the things I saw.

On a tour of a government hospital in Bacolod City I couldn't believe what I saw! There are approximately 600 bed spaces and still there were people being laid on the floor. Many women who had given birth to children were placed on the floor because there were not enough beds for them. Several people told me that many times the only medicine available was aspirin, and then sometimes even that ran out. One person affiliated with the hospital told me. "It's a good thing the mortuary is across the street because so many people die here."

Medical Supplies Donated to Hospital in Hinigran

At the hospital in Hinigran the mattresses for the beds were made of bamboo. The on-hand medical supplies and equipment were reminiscent of turn-of-the-century. The operation and delivery room were so ill equipped that it is hard to believe that anyone would go there for medical attention. There is no such thing as bed linens or surgical garments. The hospital was happy to receive the medicines that were so generously donated by physicians in Wichita. While visiting there a little baby was brought to the hospital with pneumonia. It was ironic that the medicine needed to treat the child was in the newly donated supplies.

Life of the Pastor

The one philosophy I find that they may have learned from the Americans and have taken to the extreme is keeping their ministers poor. The average income of a pastor ranged from \$14.00 to \$40.00 (US). Many of these pastors had good jobs and gave them up to follow Jesus Christ. They preach as many as seven times on Sunday and then every night in a different village. None of the pastors I met had fancy cars. Most had to either walk or ride public transportation to get where they were going. Even those who did have cars, I wasn't too sure I wanted to ride in them. Many of the pastors live in thatched covered huts with dirt floors and other primitive conditions.

Ministry to Pastors

Because of the plight of the Philippine Pastor, we have formed a program that will enable individuals groups of churches to adopt a pastor through a monthly commitment. The pastor will be chosen based upon certain criteria:

1. Involvement in the promotion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Willingness to begin new work in areas where people are not being ministered to.
3. Hardship / need.

The pastors will be selected for adoption by our Philippine Board staff and Mr. Nelson Ayala of Houston, Texas and myself after consideration and prayer.

Currently we need \$30.00 per pastor per month. Any individual, group or Church may contribute this in total. Any smaller amount will be combined with other small amounts to equal the \$30.00.

For \$500.00 we can put up a church building; \$200.00 pays for a tin roof on an existing church. Any regular monthly contribution (or one-time donations) could be a tremendous help to the ministry in the Philippines. We pray that more people and churches will become involved in our adoption program.

Living Conditions Are Difficult

I was invited into the home of a large family. The house looked like a small tin barn. There were ten people living in a space about the size of one of our average living rooms. That afternoon I was privileged to lead 6 of the 10 to the Lord. The majority of the homes have open wells where they get their daily water for cooking, drinking and bathing. This well was hared by over a hundred other people. Men, women, and children take a bath right at the well. It was almost inconceivable to me that even a simple thing like bathing can be difficult for these people.

Many of the churches there only have a palm roof, hand-made wooden benches and no padded cushions. There is no air-conditioning, and nothing to keep the heat and flies off but a small hand fan. Would we quit church if we were forced to worship like this?

Would our pastors quit the ministry if they had to preach seven times every Sunday or if they had to drive from village to village in a 20-year-old car between each service? Would they quit if there was no money for the offering or if they were paid only \$14.00 a month? These are the normal conditions for the ministers in the Philippines.

Miracles

One night after preaching in one of the crusades. I walked off to the side of the crowd as Brother Ike Barredo was instructing the people in Ilingo how to receive Jesus Christ. As I looked over the crowd. I saw people in their 80's and 90's standing as a witness that they wanted to receive Christ in their hearts. As I looked over the crowd the Lord spoke to my heart, that these people had spent all their lives living in darkness, in the clutches of the Enemy and False Religion, never knowing the real gospel the "Good News of Jesus Christ." Never being assured of their salvation, yet that night had been reserved for them from eternity past. Every night was a night of old people receiving Christ. Young men in their twenties and thirties, jumping in the air with their arms raised, because they wanted us to see that they were making a commitment to follow Jesus. People would be listening and watching from the 2nd floor bedroom of their thatched roof homes and raising their hands also as an indication that they had prayed to receive Christ. From barangay to barangay, night after night, it was the same. Men, women and children being redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb. All the glory, honor and praise belongs to Jesus.

Our nightly crusades were held in school yards, open fields, and alleys, in the poorest areas of the city any place we could get electricity for our sound system and projector. We would show one reel of "Pilgrims Progress" on a movie screen made from white sheet. I would then preach followed by an invitation and counseling. Then we would show the last reel of the film. People old and young would come to see the movie and hear the preaching, from as far away as they could hear our sound system and the kids yelling.

Our Team in the Philippines

I think my team in the Philippines was somewhat relieved when I lost my voice and we had to cancel the rest of our nightly crusades. They were ready to drop from exhaustion. They arranged and assisted me in conducting two pastor and lay workers conferences; preaching on television; preaching in churches over twenty times in a three week period; conducting several prayer meetings; one-on-one witnessing; ten feeding programs; a Christian Businessmen's Conference; and a Professional Christian Women's Conference. We toured three hospitals and visited other islands and cities for future ministry work. Many of my team ministers have churches and feeding programs of their own, but they gave so willingly to be used of God. Our meetings would not have been the success they were had it not been for their deep desire to see their people come to Jesus. I have never found a people as open to the Gospel as the Filipinos are. It's like they are a sponge and they want to soak up every drop of Jesus we can give them. They are excited about evangelism, about building churches, not big monuments and fancy churches. They want to meet the needs of the local people. They have zeal to know God.

Our Next Philippine Trip

We are hoping that God will allow us to return to the Philippines again this fall. If you would like to participate in a life changing experience, please email us at rlwtrey@spritoftruthmin.org for more information.