

Free Presbyterian Youth Council



'Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth' - Ecclesiastes 12:1

REPORT ON 2007 SUMMER OUTREACH TO SPAIN

By Joanne Greer

On the 4th September, a group of 9 young people from various Free Presbyterian congregations left Dublin airport for a week's outreach in Spain. We travelled to Cortijos Nuevos, where Miss Joy Gillespie lives and where the church meets, and from there we went out to various villages and towns in the area to put tracts through the doors. Overall, we enjoyed a favourable response from the people we met, and the few fluent Spanish speakers in the group were able to converse with several people about the church and the teaching of God's Word.

The main purpose of our visit, however, was to do outreach on an annual pilgrimage in the town of Alcaraz. On Saturday, 8th September, devoted Roman Catholics from all parts of Spain and other European countries converged in Cortes to venerate the Virgin Mary, in remembrance of her alleged appearance to a shepherd in 1222. During that appearance, she apparently commanded that a church be built for her image so that worshippers could come there to pay her homage.

We were deeply saddened to observe the evident blindness and superstition that grips these people, as we witnessed over ten thousand Roman Catholics (some barefooted) follow the image for 7 km in the heat from the church in Alcaraz (where the image stays during the year) to the sanctuary in Cortes. A few worshippers even crawled on hands and knees up the hill, and those who lined the streets chanted "Viva la Virgen!" We overheard others remark, "Isn't she beautiful! She is more beautiful than last year."

In spite of the sense of evil and darkness that pervaded the scene, we were encouraged by the number of tracts given out – 3500. The church members were especially heartened by the opportunities that arose for personal conversations, since this had not occurred in previous years. Several people accepted New Testaments or other literature after talking with us for some time. From others we received an antagonistic response, but in a sense this drew even more interest from the crowds and at least raised awareness of the presence of evangelical Christians.

The week was not all work, however. We enjoyed swimming in the nearby river, touring the Alhambra in Granada, and visiting a castle in Segura which dates back to the time of the Moorish occupation. We had devotion times each morning (when one of the group would bring a short word and we would spend a season in prayer), and we sang hymns and choruses on a couple of evenings – and on into the morning! We also enjoyed a warm welcome from the believers in Cortijos Nuevos as we worshipped with them on Sunday and at the Wednesday night prayer meeting. They joined with us in our witness at Cortes, and the missionaries were encouraged by some believers taking part there for the first time. We want to record our sincere thanks for the hospitality shown by church members, by the Boyd family, and especially by Joy, who put up with us with admirable patience and kindness. We trust that the Word sown will yet bring forth an abundant harvest and that the Lord will open the eyes and hearts of these dear people.