

THE PAST: HERITAGE AND INDIGENOUS PROCESS IN CHILE:

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Country of Origin: Chile

Serving in: Chile

INTRODUCTION

This presentation will share the history of the Nazarenes in Chile from the prism of the inheritance received and the corresponding national contribution. It is impossible to consider all the personnel, missionaries, pastors and lay people, who have contribute to the formation of the Church of the Nazarene in my country.

I will begin by reviewing the statistics and the history and then the legacy which I consider being the most important, and will finish with an analytical glimpse at the work that was done during the recent past, or namely, the indigenous process which this conference is asking us to share.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Currently the Church of the Nazarene in Chile has 1,700 full members which meet in 40 churches divided between four districts. The Church of the Nazarene extends from Arrica in the north to Lanco in the south with a presence in eight of the thirteen regions of the country.

There are three national district superintendents, and one missionary district superintendent who also serves as Rector of the Seminary. There are 23 ordained ministers and 17 licensed ministers.

As well as the Nazarene Bible Seminary, there are six extension centers. The resident modality was restarted a year ago and at this present time, there are 50 ministerial students. These statistics sum up the last 42 years of our history.

The church needs to be understood beyond this set of numbers. The years of history invite us to think about the people who are behind those numbers and have made them possible, with their virtues and defects, successes and errors, the church remains.

In order to understand our present situation we need to go back to the past, and from there attempt a response. For this, we will see some of the history.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS: WHAT WE HAVE RECEIVED

The expression of the formative years refers the first years of the Nazarene presence in Chile. The Church of the Nazarene officially started the work in 1962 when the Independent Holiness Mission joined the Church of the Nazarene, including properties and international missionaries. Many of their ministers asked that their credentials be recognized by the Church of the Nazarene, including Rev. Boyd and Neva Skinner, who had been working in Arica since the early 1950's. They are considered to be the founders of the Church of the Nazarene in Chile. By

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the time they joined the Nazarene Church, the Skinners had organized a church in Arica and many others in the Chilean Altiplano.

In 1967, Chile was declared a district with the office in the capital, Santiago, where the work continued under the leadership of North American missionaries. The work extended to the south of the country. By the end of the 1970's, the church had been established in Concepción.

The church began to experience years of great growth and development. A significant number of national workers were incorporated, thanks to the endeavors of missionaries and national leaders. This included participation in leadership, development of congregations and self-supporting congregations. Land was bought and the majority of church buildings that we currently have in Chile were constructed as this time.

The local churches began to show signs of healthy development and the seminary was full of students wanting the train for the ministry. All the local churches were pastored by Chilean pastors. At this time, Rev. Skinner established a church in the southernmost part of the world, Lanco. This small work still faces challenges. This cycle finished in the mid 1980's with the division of the country into districts. During 1984, the country was organized into three districts and in 1985, another district was added. Two national pastors became district superintendents. At this point, a period in which could be called adjustment occurred. Growth was minimal, the formation of pastoral leadership was in the districts and financial responsibility was assumed by the local congregations.

Missionaries, national pastors and lay leaders have contributed to the building up of our church. It is only fair to recognize the inheritance as fruit of their labor. In the first place, we received the church. Without the work of those pioneers, we would not have her. So we need to thank God that because of these missionaries, we have our church.

We also inherited a theological tradition, a doctrine which characterizes our way of thinking and molds the lifestyle that identifies us: the gospel of holiness and the call to a holy life. This includes defined and clear ethical principles; a way to do things and to plan for the future; and our spirituality, devotion and liturgy. The result of this is an attachment to the Scriptures and the academic calling rooted in our identity and that characterizes Nazarenes in the context of the denominations.

Another aspect of the heritage is administrative order that goes along with the organization of a congregation and the guidelines about the form of government of the church in its different levels.

We also received a love for missions and a sense of mission that moves us to look at the work of God on a global level. We have received an international church.

TRANSITION

I consider the period of the division into four districts as "transition" because national leadership assumed responsibility for the church. The growth dynamic in those first years was slow. Leadership training was done through extension programs; the national leadership was

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active in buying properties and constructing buildings but at a slower rhythm than the previous period, and the missionary presence was reduced to one couple.

Different evangelistic and development programs were carried out with various results. This situation has started to change.

There are positive signs of reactivation, and new commitment from national leaders that gives up hope.

ANALYSIS

I would like to close by evaluating what we have received and what we have done well or badly, in the most objective way possible:

1. I point out, in first place, that we received a gospel oriented only to rescuing lost souls without taking into consideration the whole person. This has led to leave to one side our social responsibilities.

The evangelistic effort was oriented to eschatological urgency: the Lord's return is imminent and we must save souls.

The vision to start to more social ministries is just now taking shape. In the last few years we are recognizing the need to project the work of the church in these areas.

2. I consider that the fact that the entrance of the church in Chile was somewhat incidental, has contributed to the lack of direction that would permit us to evaluate advances or setbacks according to a national long-term plan.

Also, evangelism was centered on rural sectors. By the 1970's, 75% of Chile's population had moved to the cities, however, it was not until the 1980's that the church began to put emphasis on the cities.

3. The formation of leadership and their incorporation into the highest levels of decision-making is clearly a determining factor in the future of any institution, and with greater reason, the church.

However, the transfer of leadership from missionaries to nationals was done very slowly, with poor timing and without the necessary investment in training at the higher levels.

4. The lack of financing from national sources has affected the development of the Chilean church. We still have not been able to support our own work.
5. During the years, the work of starting new churches has continued. The efforts of missionary work at a local level are a challenge which we feel God is asking us to assume.

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6. One important legacy is theological education, at the basic training level for ordination and at the Diploma or *Bachillerato* level in theology.

CONCLUSION

I thank God for allowing the Church of the Nazarene to come into my country, because what I am I owe in great part to this church and her people.

After almost, ten years the church is starting to show hopeful signs. It is possible to see some evidence of greater vision for ministry. That is what we are hoping for.

What we have before us is the great challenge to make the church, with foundations in the past, with the errors corrected, with her virtues empowered, and with her good points leading the way, the church that God wants and of which the pioneers dreamed.