



The Drum Family

November 2013

The Church Bar, The Realtor Chapel, And other interesting places

Something that continues to break my heart here in Spain is the decline of the church and the decline of any kind of belief in anything. Facts I have learned during the past few months are staggering:

- In Andalucía (my state in Spain), there are over 700 towns that have no church presence.
- There is a 'lost generation' in Spain. A generation in which adults fell away from the church and religion, and the children of those adults (now adults themselves) have never been to a church nor has the church ever reached out to them. Family ministry and children's ministry have not been the focus of the church. Therefore, an entire generation has fallen away. The church is declining... dying.
- Did you know that Spain is considered post-Christian? All of Europe, for that matter, is post-Christian. Although by statistics, Spain is a majority Catholic country, most people who call themselves Catholic also admit to not being practicing-Catholics. The vast majority of them confess to not having been in the church for many years, except for the occasional fiesta or the Easter mass. As far as protestants / evangelicals go, Spain is 1% evangelical (non-Catholic). Of that 1% of the population, half of the evangelicals are immigrants (not Spaniards).

All of those statistics and occurrences are disheartening to me. But there is something more.

Billy and I walk every day. We walk as a part of our daily exercise regimen. We walk to get from one place to another because nothing is too far from home. We walk because it is part of the culture here. And we walk because there is probably no better way to really learn and experience the people, the culture and the daily ways of life. Walking makes you slow down and really see what is going on in the community, see patterns to how life works, see the rhythm of the day. So we walk.

On our walks, I noticed that there are several churches that are no longer churches. There is one that we pass every morning. It still looks like a church on the outside and I always assumed that it was. It still carries the church sign made of ceramic tiles on it's wall, and it still carries the cross on

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The Church Bar...

the roof. But one day, I took a second look. It is a bar. It was sold off and the new owners opened a bar. I had heard of this happening all over Europe, but I hadn't actually seen it, and now it was staring me in the face. A lovely, historic church from the 1600s is now a bar.

On another day, I realized that the corner chapel that I pass frequently is not a chapel at all... not any more. It has been turned into a realtor's office. Another historic church building is now a block of business offices. And today I found another one, the crème de la crème - a huge historic church building dating also to the 1600s, with two bell towers and beautiful iron crosses on top, is now a block of apartment homes. Because of the façade, I always assumed it was still a church. But when we walked by and noticed a 'for sale' sign in one window, we investigated. An apartment in the building is for sale. The entire building has been rebuilt into apartments.

Many of the other beautiful, historic cathedrals and church buildings in our town do not hold regular mass or services any more. They are now being used as visitor centers, museums, and tourist stops on the summer walking tours. One of the most significant and oldest cathedrals in our town sits next to the ancient fortress and castle that dominates our city. Dating back to the 1500s, this church holds a prominent place in the history of the city, in the time



when wars were waged over city walls and palaces and religion. Our town is the sight of many battles. Spain has seen her share of battles between Rome and the Moors, Jews and Christians and Muslims. And this historic building is void of pews or services. It houses a large movie screen and runs a movie for visitors about the history of the city. Occasionally, plays and theatrical acts are held in her vast sanctuary, small orchestras stage concerts, or a clown show is held on her front steps. A couple of times a year, she hosts a religious service to honor a saint or a virgin or an Easter mass.

When I walk in these beautiful buildings with all of their stone carvings and delicate woodwork, I am astonished and awed by the presence-of-place, the spiritual history that these walls have seen, and my heart is struck by the amazing architecture and beauty that was erected many centuries before me, without the benefit of modern tools and machinery and financing. But mostly, I am sad for the emptiness that is here. I have only once been greeted by a priest at a cathedral here. I have yet to see anyone within these beautiful buildings worshipping.

Occasionally, I see a flower or two left outside the church doors. I would like to think that in those flowers, I see hope... hope that someone is still worshipping and someone still has devotion to a faith that seems to be escaping this country. This is, by far, the most difficult mission assignment we have ever had.

SUFFERING AND SUCCESS GO TOGETHER. IF YOU ARE SUCCEEDING WITHOUT SUFFERING, IT IS BECAUSE OTHERS BEFORE YOU HAVE SUFFERED; IF YOU ARE SUFFERING WITHOUT SUCCEEDING, IT IS THAT OTHERS AFTER YOU MAY SUCCEED.

-EDWARD JUDSON, ADONIRAM'S SON

Praises and Thanks for Prayers! Last month, we reported that our visas were ready and we would be traveling back to Texas to finalize them. Well, that became a nightmare that involved our two-day trip to TX to become a 17 day ordeal of us being caught in the middle of some bureaucratic mess. It's a very long story. But we are now back in Spain, visas in hand, and official RESIDENTS! YEA!!! Thank you for all the prayers! Thanks to the folks who made our 17-day craziness a little less stressful. Thanks for everything!

Praises and prayers for us to continue to build relationships and lay the groundwork for ministry here in Spain. Little by little, we are learning about the culture and the people here and we are building those relationships. We are meeting immigrants and beginning to have meaningful discussions about ministry with them and with the church.

Prayers for Sarah's school situation. Billy and I feel like we are going through the 5th grade all over again, but in Spanish this time, and in a completely different educational culture. It is soooo different! Sarah has 4 hours of homework each night. It is tough. She needs lots of support and help from us right now, which means we also have 4 hours of dedicated work each night. I can't even begin to tell you all the differences... many nights, Billy and I are learning right alongside her and having to adjust our own thought processes to figure out what she is being asked to do. Pray for all of us as we attempt to pass the 5th grade in Spain!

My 'Preciosa' Hair

I won't lie to you. I have a ridiculous fear of finding hair stylists. Seriously. There is a part of me that feels like this is really serious business - what my head looks like - and there should be some kind of interview process, a look at a portfolio, several references, and maybe a sneak drop-in visit to watch the hair dresser in action before actually choosing the person that you are going to trust to attack your head with scissors and a round brush.

I haven't gone to get my hair cut since moving to Spain. Again, fear. The dread of finding a good stylist. So I let my husband go first. A few weeks ago, he went to get his hair cut at a place close to our new home. When he returned, he looked great! It was even actually a little longer than his usual cut, which is a mistake in a good direction - you can't do much about a mistake in the too-short direction!

I began with my battery of questions for him. "Are they professional? Was it a woman in her bathrobe with a cigarette hanging out of her mouth, watching a soap opera while she cut your hair in her kitchen/salon? Did the scissors and combs and salon appear clean? Did the stylist have purple hair or a tattooed face or anything that would make me fear for the fate of my hair?" He assured me that all was well, that it was clean, that they were professional, that it was a real salon, etc. So I agreed to try.

Today was the fateful day. All three of us needed a trim. My daughter went first. (Okay, I admit to letting her be a guinea pig, but I was pretty sure they couldn't mess up "cut an inch off the bottom.") After a few minutes, she was washed, she was trimmed, she was dried, and all was well. Great!!! This might actually work out!

Then it was my turn. I was washed and set up in the chair. I showed the stylist the photo that I always take in with me. She looked at it, as did the two other stylists in the salon. "Que preciosa! Muy elegante!" (How precious! Very elegant!) Hmm... score one for me! That sounds promising! I asked her to please not trim my bangs any shorter than they are right now, to which she agreed. Great again! Okay, now down to business... she combed, she separated hair into parts and clipped up areas with pins and clips so she could attack, umm, I mean "style" the back.

With the first cut, I knew I was in trouble. You see, there just isn't much you can do when someone holds the scissors vertically up the back of your head and cuts from neck to crown in one fail slice. Yep. There it goes. You can't replace that big hunk of hair that just fell to the salon floor. And you can't exactly quit now, seeing as there is a giant hunk of hair missing from the back of your scalp!

The hair continued to fall, and fall, and fall. And I thought, "This is it. This is the nightmare that I always feared would happen in a salon." I began to think back to the two blog articles I had read by other mission women on this very subject. Want to know what women go through in other cultures trying to get a simple hair cut? Worth a read are [Scissor Hands](#) and "[Pavos, Flecos, Bangs!](#)"

While my stylist is having a heyday on the back of my head, my husband is seated in the chair next to me for his cut. He looks over and sees the mayhem that is ensuing. He tries to not let it register on his face. He is unsuccessful. He tries to assure me that it will be okay. Also unsuccessful. He decides to close his eyes for the rest of his cut. I think I'm supposed to think that he is relaxing, but I KNOW that he is praying... praying for a miracle, praying that I don't kill him for convincing me that this was a good salon, praying that our night/weekend/life is not forever effected by this episode. Probably praying that he can get out of his chair first and run before I am finished!

Just as she finishes my hair, she says, "I just love how you have let your gray hair grow and blend in with your blonde. It looks like it was frosted. So silvery. Preciosa! Que Preciosa!" Hmmmm... I'm not sure how to take that, seeing as literally every single person in the salon has on a cap smeared with hair color - including the stylist! The only ones without caps and dye are me, my husband, and our nine-year old daughter. So I'm not sure that my hair color really is so "preciosa". I think it is just a novelty that I don't color it. Maybe sarcasm, maybe a hint... whatever, it didn't feel very preciosa at the time.

So here I sit, staring at my reflection in the computer screen. My daughter took one look at me and her eyes bugged out and she said, "That is not the picture you showed her". No kidding, Baby, no kidding. Is it any consolation that everyone in the salon commented and said, "Que Preciosa!" as I walked out?

The hair salon... a sure-fire road to the pit of culture shock.

~ Laurie ☺

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